

## ABSTRACT

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MINORITY NATIONALISM IN INTERWAR  
YUGOSLAVIA

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This study traces the (ethnically German) Danube Swabians' embrace of national identity in interwar Yugoslavia with attention to the German national movement's antecedents in Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina under the Habsburgs. We examine the important role of German national activists in Yugoslavia and survey the institutions they built to stimulate, shape and mobilize Yugoslavia's German population as a specifically national minority based on the Swabians' history and collective memory as colonists in the region. Finally, we discuss the rift that emerged inside the German minority during the 1930s, when the German leadership and its conservative variety of German nationalism were confronted by brash, young challengers who sought to "renew" the German minority in a Nazi image. These young enthusiasts for National Socialism directed their extreme nationalism not at the repressive Yugoslav authorities, but rather at their older rivals in the Germans' main cultural and political organization, the *Kulturbund*. German culture and national authenticity became key criteria for German leadership in this struggle to control the *Kulturbund*. Meanwhile, German Catholic priests

also resisted the Nazi-oriented *Erneuerungsbewegung* insurgency. Ultimately, in this clash of generations, we see both support for and resistance to local manifestations of Nazism in Southeastern Europe.

One of this study's major finds is the stubborn endurance of national indifference and local identity in Southeastern Europe throughout interwar period, when national identity was supposed to be dominant. Many Germans embraced national identity, but certainly not all of them. The persistence of this indifference confounded the logic of twentieth century nationalists, for whom national indeterminacy seemed unnatural, archaic, and inexplicable. Even after years of effort by German nationalist activists in the nationalized political atmosphere of interwar Yugoslavia, some ethnic Germans remained indifferent to national identity or else identified as Croats or Magyars. There were also those who pined for Habsburg Hungary, which had offered a dynastic alternative to national identity before 1918. Still others' identity remained shaped by confession as Catholic or Protestant. We conclude therefore by observing the paradoxical situation whereby Nazi-oriented extreme nationalism coexisted with instances of German national indifference in Yugoslavia until the eve of the Second World War.

AFTER EMPIRE: ETHNIC GERMANS AND MINORITY NATIONALISM  
IN INTERWAR YUGOSLAVIA

by

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to E. Wilson Lyon and Carolyn Bartel Lyon, whose love, guidance and wisdom always touched everyone who knew them.

## Acknowledgements

No work as great as a dissertation is ever the product of the author alone. Over the many years required to complete coursework, conduct research, and write the final product, every doctoral student draws upon a lifetime of guidance and encouragement. I should first begin by thanking my parents, John and Rosemary Lyon and my sister Julia, who always stood by me and were never short of loving support. I wish to additionally thank Barbara Hadley, who believed in me from a young age at the Maret School and taught me to see the world in a whole new way. Special thanks also go to Ivana Primorac, my first Croatian teacher and my best Croatian friend. She taught me her language and penned the many recommendation letters that fueled my research funding in Europe and the United States. Hvala lijepo, Ivana! I wish also to thank Megan Wilson, for her tireless support and irrepressible optimism during my final months of writing.

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## Introduction

October 1977's *National Geographic* featured "The Danube: River of Many Nations, Many Names," an article whose author followed the Danube from its source in Donaueschingen, Germany to the Romanian delta where it meets the Black Sea.<sup>1</sup> Along the way, the magazine celebrated the peoples along the banks of the *Donau*, as the river is known in German, and devoted numerous pages to the countries of Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Remarkably, however, the article never mentioned the one people in those countries for whom the river had held such meaning as to literally define them. The *Donauschwaben*, or "Danube Swabians", were ethnic Germans who had settled along the Danube in the two centuries before Second World War and who endured (in greatly reduced territory and numbers) into the postwar era.<sup>2</sup> *National Geographic* dwelled at some length on the German town of Ulm but failed to mention that many of the Danube Swabians' forbearers had struck out from that very city centuries earlier as colonists bound for the recently conquered lands of southern Hungary. So forgotten had the Danube Swabians become by the 1970s that an article devoted to peoples and cultures along the Danube's banks overlooked the one to whom the river had given its very name.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Danube is said to begin where two rivulets, the Breg and Brigach, converge to form a river that is still little more than a stream. Before this, several springs vie to be considered the "true" source of the Danube.

<sup>2</sup> *National Geographic's* only reference to the Danube Swabians is indirect, a single sentence which almost dismisses the millions of Donauschwaben as unimportant. After conversing with a man of Slovak descent in northern Serbia, the article's author notes that "Austria also settled Germans in this region, called Vojvodina" after vanquishing the Ottomans. Mike Edwards, "The Danube: River of Many Nations, Many Names," *National Geographic*, October 1977. 472.

<sup>3</sup> The omission of the Donauschwaben is all the more astonishing because Romania remained home to many thousands of Germans until the early 1990s. Many of these were in Transylvania, but others were in the Swabian regions of Banat.

The villages of Slavonia and Vojvodina, are aggressively claimed as “Croatian” or “Serbian” today but such assertions ignore the area’s complex history before the mass flight or expulsion of the region’s German population at the end of the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Ethnic Germans were once numerous in the region, forming large pluralities or even outright majorities in many villages and towns. Indeed, some places, such as Novo Selo near Vinkovci (also formerly known as Neudorf) were exclusively German, but their Swabian roots are today obscured behind South Slav populations and names. Tombstones endure, however, and local cemeteries quickly betray a history of German settlement, cultural exchange, and even assimilation. The proud family tombs of German burghers often reveal adaptations the Germans made to their Slavic surroundings, such as the adoption of Slavic first names and the writing of German surnames names using Slavic orthography. German inscriptions on building façades likewise recall their former owners, and the trained eye even today may distinguish a foreign hand in regional architecture and town planning, relics of imperial colonization.

The interwar period in Yugoslavia was at once a time of suppression for the ethnic Germans but also one of self-discovery, growth, and organization. The break up of the Habsburg Monarchy was shocking but nevertheless offered the Swabians new opportunities for national organization, education and expression which had been highly circumscribed in the Hungarian Kingdom and its Croatian dependent. Men who had been local German leaders in pre-Trianon Hungary redoubled their efforts as national activists in the Yugoslav Kingdom. The Paris peace settlements had transformed Central and Eastern Europe’s old empires according to the national

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<sup>4</sup> A sizable population of Magyars remains today in Vojvodina.

principle. Now Yugoslavia's German leadership hoped to rouse the Swabian peasantry, which may have been German speaking but was not necessarily nationally conscious.

The following study pursues several lines of inquiry in order to evaluate the Danube Swabians' embrace of national identity in Yugoslavia. As we shall see, German ethnicity was no sure predictor of German national identity.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, the below an investigation of the process by which the Germans "became national" between the world wars, with attention to the antecedents of the interwar German national movement in Habsburg Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia). This study is furthermore an examination of the content of the Swabians' "minority nationalism."<sup>6</sup> We analyze the important role of German national activists in Yugoslavia and survey the institutions they built to stimulate, shape and finally mobilize the German national movement in the country. Finally, we discuss the deep rifts that emerged inside the German minority during the 1930s, when the Swabians' dominant leadership and its traditional variety of German nationalism were confronted by brash, young challengers who sought to remake the German minority in the image of National Socialism.

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of ethnicity has recently been problematized by such scholars as Jeremy King and Pieter Judson, who correctly observe that many persons in Eastern Europe would have been bilingual (at least) and well-versed in the various traits and customs of Germans, Magyars and/or South Slavs. For the sake of presenting a coherent narrative, I will frequently speak of ethnic Germans and Swabians in this study. Nevertheless, I have noted throughout the enduring cultural and linguistic overlap in Eastern Europe's individuals which frequently allowed them to actually *opt* for one ethnicity or nation over another when pressed to do so. For more, see Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). See also Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Judson's book, which was published only shortly after my own research had been completed, is particularly germane to my work as he focuses on similar German populations in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy. My own work focuses on the Germans in Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina, which was part of Hungary, of course.

<sup>6</sup> To borrow a phrase from Rogers Brubaker which we shall discuss shortly.

This dissertation began as an inquiry as to why the Danube Swabians abandoned their customary national indifference and embraced German national identity during the brief interwar period. Since the Swabians lacked nationally-oriented institutions in the first interwar years but concluded the era in a single, nearly universal organization, I cautiously expected this embrace of national identity to have been as rapid and total as the nationalists' own rhetoric sometimes suggested. Closer examination, however, revealed Swabians to have turned to German nationalism not at all abruptly. To be certain, many Swabians did embrace national identity between the wars, but that embrace was neither immediate nor universal. Moreover, this "national awakening" was far less spontaneous than it was induced by the tireless labors of professional German national activists, who created a German national community from disparate Swabian settlements through a clever mix of culturo-linguistic politics, national conflict, and local appeal. Yet even as late as the eve of the Second World War, not all Swabians cared to identify as national. Indeed, many identified as Croats, Magyars or by region. Others pined for Habsburg Hungary, which had offered them a dynastic alternative. Still others' identity was shaped by confession as Catholic or Protestant. And naturally, Swabians' identity also frequently derived from a combination of some or all these influences.

The German movement in Yugoslavia was a conscious project led by a determined cadre of German national activists. These national activists labored to craft and impart an identity that was both nationally German but locally Swabian. My work traces their increasingly successful efforts to organize the Swabians as a coherent, nationally-based community through the press, a political party, and a

cultural-qua-political organization, the Swabian-German Cultural Union (Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund). The Swabian activists targeted their co-ethnics and worked to bind them to their organizations and ideas, arguing that Swabian needs could only be met by a German national agenda. They had no patience for the wayward or indifferent, whom they regarded harshly as deserters.

The original Swabian leadership which emerged in the 1920s achieved many successes. During the 1930s, however, a rival, more extreme vision of German national identity developed in the Nazi-inspired *Erneuerungsbewegung* (“Renewal Movement”), whose young protagonists directed their hyper-nationalism not at South Slav repression, but rather at the older generation of German leaders in the Kulturbund. The Kulturbund being the Germans’ principal organization in Yugoslavia, German culture and national authenticity became the criteria for leadership of the minority. Thus the *Erneuerungsbewegung* insurgency frequently fought its battles on the basis of national legitimacy, of allegedly being the “most German” group for its adherence to the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* emanating from the Third Reich.

One of this study’s more unexpected finds was the stubborn persistence of German national indifference in Yugoslavia until late in the interwar years and even beyond. The defiant survival of such ambivalence challenged the logic of the nationalist, for whom national indeterminacy seemed unnatural, indeed, inexplicable and consequently intolerable. Perhaps nothing so frustrated the Swabian nationalists than their coethnics who took no interest in their allegedly urgent project. That said, such national indifference was plainly out of step with the prevailing mood in

Europe's new nationally-based order. As we shall see, even such cosmopolitan institutions as the Catholic Church ultimately found it necessary to address their Swabian flock in national terms in order to resist the Erneuerungsbewegung. Not everybody may have embraced nationalism, but the German nationalists (and the South Slavs) certainly labored to create the impression that a national worldview was the only legitimate game in town. And their efforts were hardly without success.

In summary, the below investigates the process by which the Swabians came to embrace German national identity belatedly and incompletely during the 1920s and confronted mutually antagonistic visions of that identity during the fateful following decade. This intense conflict over German identity was, in fact, a competition for moral authority and institutional power within the minority, and the Erneuerungsbewegung ultimately prevailed in this struggle. Nevertheless, their elders resisted fiercely and only surrendered after years of deep division within Yugoslavia's German community. Thus, I reveal that German identity in Yugoslavia, frequently assumed to have been monolithically National Socialist by the 1930s, actually remained complex, nuanced and contested. As we shall see, the rather conservative variety of German nationalism which had characterized the German community during the 1920s lingered even until the Third Reich's invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941. Ultimately, much of what follows is the history of the Swabians' interwar crisis of identity, a conflict for hearts and minds waged on highly politicized, nationalist terms between elites.

To insist that not all Swabians were boundless enthusiasts for National Socialism is not to question the broad support the Nazi-oriented

Erneuerungsbewegung came to enjoy, especially among younger Swabians. Many Swabians were Hitlerites, of course, but their understanding of National Socialism was often questionable. The Nazis had successfully equated National Socialism and Germandom in the minds of many ethnic Germans abroad, whose own Nazi-oriented leaders further encouraged that equation. Others, particularly the Swabian Catholic clergy, opposed Nazism and its sympathizers outright. In fact, the Yugoslav Germans were at once less nationalistic and more conflicted about their own identity than is often assumed. They came to understand themselves in German national terms only slowly and remained very firmly anchored in a local identity as Donauschwaben.<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to underestimate the resonance of the Swabians' regional and historical identity, unarticulated though it might have been before the twentieth century. Many Swabians who would have found the notion of German national identity foreign or exotic nevertheless possessed a powerful local and ethnic identity as the descendents of German colonists who had come to southeastern Europe at Imperial request. Thus, the German national activists and their Erneuerungsbewegung rivals constantly turned to the collective memory of this colonization in their effort to forge a German national community from the country's Swabian peasant settlements.

They would mobilize the memory of long deceased colonists in the service of a

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<sup>7</sup> Actually, the term "Donauschwaben" was not indigenous to Yugoslavia but rather was the interwar product of the field of *Suedostforschung*, the academic study of Germans in southeast Europe. The term's creation is often attributed to German academic Herman Ruediger in 1922, although at least one account attributes its invention to Robert Sieger in 1920. Sieger was head of the Department of Geography at the university in Graz and he led a reorientation of the department toward human geography. Whatever its exact origins, certainly Ruediger popularized the term to describe those Germans in southern Hungary along the Danube and distinguish them from the Transylvanian Saxons, with whom they shared neither history nor confession. As editor of the Stuttgart-based Deutsche Ausland Institut's influential journal, *Der Auslanddeutsche*, Ruediger was well placed to popularize the "Donauschwaben" term. GenealogyROGroup, "Some Basic Info on Banat" <http://www.genealogy.ro/cont/1.htm> (accessed July 31 2008). Swabian leaders in Yugoslavia were already using the term in public discourse by 1923. "Das Doppelfest in Weisskirchen," *Deutsches Volksblatt* August 29 1923. Then and thereafter, it was broadly adopted by Yugoslavia's Swabians.

modern German national identity. Profound though sometimes vague, the local and historical aspects of Swabian identity were less subject to controversy than its specifically German national quality. Indeed, Swabian identity underwent a reification during the interwar years, literally being cast in stone as monuments at anniversary celebrations marking the centennial, sesquicentennial, and even bicentennial celebration of Swabian colonization. Meanwhile, the rise of National Socialism in Germany forced a new urgency onto the matter of national identity, rendering the German minority ever more suspect to Yugoslavs and provoking a generational struggle and confessional confrontation which deeply divided the German minority in Yugoslavia just as it coalesced into a proper community.

### Sources

The German national movement and the Swabians' internal conflict of the 1930s was a public debate conducted between elites, often in the pages of the extensive German press in Yugoslavia. These elites founded newspapers, which circulated broadly and served as not merely the bearers of news but also as the transmitters of ideas and identity. Ultimately, the Third Reich's initial successes in economics and foreign policy were needed to draw Swabians en masse into the Kulturbund, which local activists intent on educating and mobilizing their German coethnics in the national spirit founded in 1920. Nevertheless, public debates did shape "regular" people's ideas and stimulate their German national consciousness. Such debates occurred frequently and with much passion in the very public forums of the press, pulpit and public commemorations. As such, the copious editorials, articles,



letters and sermons in the surprisingly sophisticated Swabian press form a treasure trove from which this dissertation draws heavily. Of particular importance were *Deutsches Volksblatt*, *Volksruf*, and *Die Donau*, which were respectively associated with the mutually hostile original leadership of the Kulturbund, the Nazi-oriented *Erneuerungsbewegung* or “Renewal Movement,” and the Catholic Church. Even before the appearance of *Die Donau* in 1935, German Catholics in Yugoslavia explored themes of nationalism and nationhood in *Jugendruf* and *St. Raphaelsblatt*, while German Protestants expounded upon the same in the pages of, *Neues Leben*, *Gruess Gott* and *Kirche und Volk*.

In addition to editorializing, the Swabian press regularly reported happenings in Austrian, German and Yugoslav politics as well as internal Swabian matters. As such, the press serves as a valuable barometer of German attitudes toward South Slavs, Austria, Germany, democracy and National Socialism. Furthermore, the Swabian press monitored such cultural happenings as art exhibitions, festivals, and public commemorations in the Swabian community itself. In the process, newspapers became deliberate shapers of identity and community consciousness and therefore yield particular insight into the strategies of the various national activists. Their pages contained numerous articles designed to create historic memory, erect national symbols, and craft public identity. By asserting a noble vision of the Swabian past, the German press sought to inspire national confidence among the sometimes indifferent or insecure German peasantry and weld them into a community of common national interest. The Swabians’ press also revealed the *limits* of the German national movement in Yugoslavia, for its pages contained frequent complaints about

indifferent co-ethnics alongside boasts of great accomplishments. A public forum for the mutually antagonistic factions and visions which defined the Donauschwaben in the 1930s, the German press represents a nearly bottomless source of information on the issues which shaped Swabians' identity and community during the interwar years.

Whenever possible, I have drawn on original statutes, papers, and publications from the German's eponymous political party, the *Partei der Deutschen*, as well as from the Kulturbund and that organization's 1930s Slavonian rival, the Culture and Welfare Association of the Germans, known in German as *Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen* or KWVD. Though the Erneuerungsbewegung was the principal rival of the original leadership of the Kulturbund during most of the 1930s, it was never a proper organization with statutes of its own. Rather, the Erneuerungsbewegung is best understood as a movement, a loosely organized group which followed Jakob Awender and his associates at the *Pančevoer Post* and *Volksruf*. Less than an organization, the Erneuerungsbewegung was nevertheless more than a simple opposition current within the Kulturbund.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the KWVD effectively was an institutionalized variant of the Erneuerungsbewegung in Slavonia.

Although I have approached the Swabians' internal leadership dispute at the elite level, where the richest debates occurred, I have nevertheless also sought more "grassroots" input and evaluations of nationhood wherever possible. The Swabians being largely a peasant people who were poorly educated compared to their contemporaries in, say, Germany or France, such grassroots evidence is rare and

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<sup>8</sup> Johann. Wuescht, *Beitrag zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Jugoslawien, 1934-1944* (Kehl am Rhein: Johann Wuescht, 1966). 22.

difficult to come by. The files of the various police and security forces in Yugoslavia do nevertheless contain evocative descriptions of the state of German nationhood and identity among the Donauschwaben. These frequently belie both the sometimes confident public claims of the Swabian national activists and the apocalyptic histrionics of Serbian and Croatian nationalists. The files of the German foreign ministry are also sources of valuable evaluations of the state of Germandom in Yugoslavia.

Research for this project was conducted in Croatia in Zagreb at the Croatian State Archive (*Hrvatski državni arhiv*), the Croatian Institute for History (*Institut za povijest*) and the National and University Library (*Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica*). In Osijek, the Museum of Slavonia (*Muzej Slavonije*), the Gallery of Visual Arts (*Galerija likovnih umjetnosti*) and the State Archive Osijek (*Državni arhiv Osijek*) proved to be rich sources of information, as was the library of the German National Union (*Njemačka narodnosna zajednica*). I found further original sources from Yugoslavia and Germany itself at the Institute for Danube Swabian History and Regional Studies (*Institut fuer Donauschwaebische Geschichte und Landeskunde*) in Tuebingen and in Stuttgart at the Institute for Foreign Relations (*Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen*). The latter is the successor organization to the German Foreign Institute (*Deutsches Ausland Institut* or DAI), which during the interwar period was a leading *Volkstumarbeit* organization, i.e. an organization working to promote the cultural welfare of ethnic Germans beyond the borders of Germany and Austria.

A study of this sort is complicated by shifting borders and jurisdictions, multiple place names, and frequent statistical disagreement as regards census data.

The sections that follow seek to address these challenges and provide a demographic overview of the German presence in Yugoslavia.

### Demographic Disputes

There is much disagreement in the historical literature about the accuracy of various sets of population data for the Germans of Yugoslavia. The principal sources for demographic information about the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia are the Austrian and Hungarian censuses of 1910 and the Yugoslav censuses of 1921 and 1931. Owing to methodological discrepancies and shifting political pressures, these censuses were frequently suspected of inaccuracy and manipulation. Contemporary Germans questioned the 1910 Hungarian data and roundly rejected the Yugoslav census data. The Kulturbund leadership, for example, asserted the German population was higher than recorded and was widely supported in this conclusion by various Volkstumarbeit organizations such as the *Deutsche Ausland Institut*. DAI's highly influential journal, *Der Auslanddeutsche*, claimed that the Yugoslav German population was 600,000 in 1925 and 710,000 by 1937.<sup>9</sup> Since this dissertation is a political and cultural history and not an evaluation of statistical methods, I shall conservatively rely whenever possible on the official Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav census data and the figures published by the West German Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War-Injured in the Yugoslav volume of its series

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<sup>9</sup> "Die Lage der Deutschen in Jugoslawien-Suedslawien," *Der Auslanddeutsche* 8, no. Sonderheft (1925). 33. See also "Suedslawien," *Der Auslanddeutsche* 20, no. 5 (1937). 364.

*Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*  
("Documentation of the Expulsion of the Germans from East-Central Europe").<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, neither methodology nor political context were consistent across the Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav censuses, making it difficult to compare their results with total exactitude. Moreover, shifting political winds as well as genuine multilingualism, multi-nationality, opportunism and national indifference rendered census measurements of nationhood imperfect at best. Indeed, the above mentioned West German documentation series' volume on Yugoslavia observes that the situation in such a nationally diverse region as Yugoslavia defied all reified expectations of nationhood.

In a nationally mixed zone (*Voelkermischzone*) like Yugoslavia, with areas with different political and cultural histories, the common, official and standard high level languages were often used alongside one another, blended together, or the areas of their appropriate use overlapped. The close interleaving of the various settlement areas and the intermixed nature of the nationalities in individual parts of the country encouraged the exchange of nationhood, forging a "floating" nationality in border zones, that decided for this or that nationality according to opportunity or was assimilated by the then-people of state of the dominant nationality in the region in question. Germandom was also subject to this process, whose effects had been in evidence since the previous century, since there was no longer any recourse to an all-

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<sup>10</sup> According to Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, more than 14,500,000 ethnic Germans fled or were expelled from eastern Europe at World War II's end and shortly thereafter. More than 2,100,000 Germans perished or disappeared in the process of their flight or expulsion. In order to contend with the massive influx of refugees, West Germany established the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War-Injured (*Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, Fluechtlinge und Kriegsgeschaedigte*) in 1949 with the task of integrating and caring for the refugees and the like from Europe's east. The ministry also sought to document the mass expulsions and terror visited upon ethnic Germans in eastern Europe and thus produced the remarkable, multivolume "Documentation of the Expulsion of the Germans from East-Central Europe" (*Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*). For this project, leading German historians gathered witness testimony, original documents, and contemporary reports in order to provide an overview of the events following the Second World War. For more in English on these events, see Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, *A Terrible Revenge: The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

state-dynastic identity option in the wake of the Habsburg Monarchy's collapse.<sup>11</sup>

Under such circumstances, even the best-designed census could be confounded by qualities of national amphibianism.

The Austrian and Hungarian censuses from 1910 found a total of 577,252 ethnic Germans in the lands that would become Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Of these, the majority or 312,507 were in Banat, Batschka (Bačka) and Baranja, and 133,855 were in Croatia-Slavonia.<sup>13</sup> The census also found a considerable number of Germans in Slovenia, where they numbered 106,377.<sup>14</sup>

Yugoslavia did not conduct its first census until 1921, so the actual size of its German minority was uncertain for many years. New borders, wartime deaths, and postwar migrations rendered the already questionable Austrian and Hungarian censuses numbers even more so. As such, early German estimates put the German population between 560,000 and 1,000,000. (Census figures from formerly Hungarian areas were particularly mistrusted as too low.) Several months before the census in 1921, future Kulturbund Chairman Johann Keks estimated Yugoslavia's total German population to be around 700,000.<sup>15</sup>

The Germans sought to justify their claims to certain cultural privileges in the Yugoslav Kingdom based on a strong showing in the 1921 census. Through the census they hoped to demonstrate that they were a significant portion of the

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<sup>11</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, Fluechtlinge, und Kriegsgeschaedigte, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*, ed. Theodor Schieder, Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, vol. 5 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 1961; reprint, 2004).9E-10E.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 3E.

<sup>13</sup> Figures for Croatia-Slavonia include Murinsel, Krk and Castua (Kastav). Ibid. 3E.

<sup>14</sup> Figures for Slovenia include include Prekomurje. Ibid. 3E.

<sup>15</sup> Johann Keks, "Das Deutschtum in Jugoslawien," *Kulturbund-Kalender des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes* (1921). 24.

population and not merely a “contemptible minority.”<sup>16</sup> However the German nationalists feared their coethnics would fail to identify themselves as Germans to the Yugoslav census takers, as they suspected had occurred in the past. In the days before the census, the front pages of Novi Sad’s new German daily, *Deutsches Volksblatt*, urged, “Germans, do not deny your mother tongue on the census!”<sup>17</sup> and “Fellow Germans, take care to properly fill out Point 8 of the census!”<sup>18</sup> The Swabian national activists were particularly anxious that their co-ethnics would misunderstand the census questionnaire, which was written in Serbo-Croatian. To avoid such misunderstandings, *Deutsches Volksblatt* printed a step by step explanation of the census questionnaire in German.<sup>19</sup>

The 1921 census results were a disappointment for the German minority, which again received them skeptically. Even allowing for methodological differences and the manipulation of results, the 1921 census revealed some remarkable changes in the ethnic German population since 1910. Overall and in most regions, the number of ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia had declined precipitously by 1921. However, the German population in Batschka, Baranja, and Banat, that is, the Germans’ main settlement area, actually increased to 328,173. Slovenia showed the greatest German

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<sup>16</sup> The actual German phrasing was “verächtliche Minderheit.” “Die Volkszählung,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 9 1921.

<sup>17</sup> Despite the similarity of name, this newspaper was distinct from the pre-WWI Ruma weekly. “Deutsche, verleugnet bei der Volkszählung eure Muttersprache nicht!,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 3 1921.

<sup>18</sup> I translate “*Volksgenossen*” here as “Fellow Germans” but the translation does not fully capture the meaning behind the term. *Volksgenossen* implies a kind of national comradeship, a bond of membership and destiny that is difficult to render succinctly in English. Unfortunately, there are many such terms in German, usually involving the term “Volk”, which is frequently translated as “people” or “national” but loses an earthy, organic, blood-borne dimension in the process. “Volksgenossen, achtet auf richtige Ausfüllung des Punktes 8 der Volkszählungsliste!,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 26 1921.

<sup>19</sup> “Die Volkszählung,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 30 1921.

losses both absolutely and as a percentage.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the preliminary results for the 1921 census found 513,472 Germans in the Kingdom of Serb Croats and Slovenes. However, this figure was later revised downward to reflect territorial adjustments from 1923, when the town of Jimbolia (Hatzfeld) and its Banat surroundings were ceded to Romania. Ultimately, then, the final census results found 505,790 Germans in the country. At 4.2 percent of the overall population, therefore, Germans were Yugoslavia's largest minority.<sup>21</sup> Germans were located in many parts of northern Yugoslavia, but they were most concentrated in Vojvodina.<sup>22</sup>

What explains these changes, especially the losses? In part the decline of the German population from 1910 to 1921 may be ascribed to the Hungarian policy of Magyarization, which persisted until the kingdom's dismemberment in 1918. And though the process of Magyarization may have been interrupted by Hungary's collapse, the parallel process of Croatization in Croatia and Slavonia was not. On the contrary, in many respects, Croatization only intensified after 1918.<sup>23</sup>

Section VII of the Treaty of Trianon and section VI of the Treaty of St. Germain also worked to reduce the German population. These sections had allowed for the relocation of German and Hungarian individuals and guaranteed the right to

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<sup>20</sup> There the German population declined from 106,377 to a mere 39,377. Additionally, the German population of Croatia-Slavonia fell by 11,019 souls to 122,836. Slovenian statistics include Prekomurje. Statistics for Croatia-Slavonia include Murinsel, Krk and Castua.

<sup>21</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene. 119E. The census additionally found 467,658 Magyars and 439,657 Albanians. Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, A History of East Central Europe, vol. IX (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> In March 1921, *Deutsches Volksblatt* reported the final census results for Vojvodina's main city, Novi Sad, according to which Germans comprised 16.6 percent of the city's population. Germans' relative population was greater elsewhere in the region, but owing to Novi Sad's commercial importance and central location in Vojvodina, that city quickly emerged as a key center of the German movement in Yugoslavia during the interwar years. Germans were 16.6 percent of the city's population. Magyars comprised 32.5 percent of the town's inhabitants and "Serbo-Croats" comprised another 41.8 percent. "Resultat der Volkszaehlung in Neusatz," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 24 1921.

<sup>23</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene. 12E.-13E.



opt for citizenship in either Austria or Hungary, should one choose not to remain in the successor state of one's current residence. In practice, these apparently very reasonable "Clauses Relating to Nationality" of the Treaties of Trianon and St. Germain would be later used to justify political discrimination against Germans and Hungarians in Yugoslavia. For those who wished to relocate to the truncated Austrian and Hungarian states, however, the clauses promised new citizenship, the right to emigrate and the right to export property. Unsurprisingly, many people expressed their lack of confidence in the Habsburg successor states by voting with their feet. No doubt many Imperial officials also opted to emigrate to Austria after the interwar borders had become clear.

Perhaps the greatest factor in the decline of German numbers was simply the reduced birthrate among the Germans themselves. Owing to the limited supply of land, Germans had long restricted the size of their families, following a "one or two children system" so as to preserve the size of landholdings across generations. This was more typical of wealthier families but the pragmatic practice also gradually spread to the lower and less prosperous levels of German society.<sup>24</sup> It was eminently practical, of course, but for German nationalists (and Swabian clergymen), it was a perennial source of concern. Both before the First World War and in its aftermath, contemporary Swabian observers regularly remarked on Yugoslavia's declining German birthrate with considerable apprehension.

Having been a part of Cisleithania (Austria), which was torn by national conflict during most of the Ausgleich period, Slovenia had a different history from Slavonia and Vojvodina, and interethnic relations there were considerably more

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.13E.

strained.<sup>25</sup> The nationality competition which had so paralyzed Cisleithania had been particularly intense between Slovenes and Germans and grew worse during the First World War.<sup>26</sup> In Yugoslavia, however, the tables were decisively turned in favor of the Slovenes, who launched aggressive policies designed to both “denationalize” the Germans and deprive them of their livelihoods in the evident hope that many would indeed choose to emigrate.

In terms of religion, Yugoslavia’s German-speaking population was overwhelmingly Christian, though it did include a handful of Jews. The 1921 census, which had asked respondents for their mother tongue and religion, found a total of 64,746 “Israelites”. Thus Jews made up a mere .54 percent of the Yugoslav population in 1921. Ten years later, Yugoslavia’s 1931 census found 68,405 Jews or .49 percent of the population.<sup>27</sup> Of these, only 10,026 also declared German as their mother tongue. 2788 lived in Croatia-Slavonia while Batschka contained 3282 and Banat 1874. Belgrade itself counted 653. Finally, Bosnia-Herzegovina and eastern Srijem featured 521 and 539 Jews respectively.<sup>28</sup>

Yugoslavia’s Jews seemed little interested in the Danube Swabians, though they were intensely concerned with anti-Semitic measures in Germany and Hungary

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<sup>25</sup> “Cisleithania” was the unofficial name of the lands in the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, that is, the Habsburg Monarchy after 1867. The lands of the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy were informally known as “Transleithania.” Both names derived from the Leitha River, which separated the Monarchy’s two halves.

<sup>26</sup> Such tensions were frequently instrumental inventions of the nationalists themselves, seeking to consolidate their own nationally-defined communities through negative integration. For more on German-Slovene relations, see Judson.

<sup>27</sup> Rothschild, Table 33, p. 203. According to Harriet Pass Freidenreich, by 1931 approx 40 percent of Yugoslavia’s Jews considered themselves native speakers of Serbo-Croatian. Half of the Ashkenazim considered German (24 percent) or Hungarian (26 percent) to be their native tongue. Meanwhile, two thirds of Yugoslavia’s Sephardic Jews spoke Ladino as their mother tongue in 1931. Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia: A Quest for Community* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979). 63.

<sup>28</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene. 11E.

during the 1930s. Likewise, Yugoslavia's largely rural Swabians seem to have been little attuned to the country's scattered and urbanized Jews, especially during the 1920s.<sup>29</sup> This changed somewhat in the 1930s, when Yugoslavia's Swabian Nazi imitators, the *Erneuerer*, launched their campaign against the original leadership of the Kulturbund.<sup>30</sup> The *Erneuerer* were quick to denounce Jews in the ways made familiar by their Nazi role models in the Third Reich and they sought to slander the Kulturbund's original leadership through association with Jewry (frequently conflated with Magyardom). For its own part, the original leadership never concerned itself much with Jews and possessed a vision of German national identity that was infused with Christianity. However, while that leadership did not engage in overt anti-Semitism itself, neither did it not bother to speak out against it. Meanwhile, their mouthpiece *Deutsches Volksblatt* regularly reported the passage of anti-Semitic laws in such a matter-of-fact way as to suggest tacit approval or at least acceptance of their content and/or spirit.

To be sure, anti-Semitism certainly lurked in the hearts of some Swabians and was indeed attractive to the *Erneuerer*, inspired as they were by Nazi racism. However, anti-Semitism does not appear to have been a prominent matter in the Swabians' discourse on national identity until the intrusion of Nazi ideology in the 1930s, when the young Nazis deployed it against their older rivals. Any study of the German population in Banat or the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War would have to devote considerable attention to anti-Semitism among the

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<sup>29</sup> Yugoslavia's Jews were also highly urbanized, with 77.5% of them living in towns by 1931. For more figures on the Jewish population in Croatia, see Melita Švob, *Židovi u Hrvatskoj, Migracije i promjene u židovskoj populaciji* (Zagreb: Židovska općina, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> The singular of "*Erneuerer*" is "*Erneuer*." In an attempt to remain true to the original German as much as possible, I have retained the German singular and plural forms in this work.

Swabians, who participated in the crimes of the Holocaust under local German (Erneuerungsbewegung) leadership. During most of the interwar period, however, Swabian anti-Semitism appears to have been a largely silent (if hardly non-existent) phenomenon. Owing to this and the limited number of German-speaking Jews, neither anti-Semitism nor Jews will feature prominently in this analysis.<sup>31</sup>

Although the majority of ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia were Catholic, a not inconsequential number were Protestants, divided among two churches. The 1931 census found 383,674 German Catholics in the country as well as a total of 100,806 German Protestants. 85,369 of the latter (84.69 percent) were members of the (Lutheran) German Evangelical Christian Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Deutsche Evangelische Christliche Kirche Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses im Koenigreiche Jugoslawien*), an institution which was formally constituted after Yugoslavia's proclamation and had a decidedly German nature.<sup>32</sup> The remaining 15,369 German Protestants (15.25 percent) belonged to the (Calvinist) Reformed Church of Yugoslavia (*Reformierte Christliche Kirche Suedslawiens*). By contrast with the German Lutheran Church, the Calvinist Church was predominantly Magyar. As such, it could not play the nationhood-reaffirming role for the Germans

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<sup>31</sup> For more on Jewry in the former Yugoslavia, see Freidenreich. For more on the role of anti-Semitism in Yugoslav society, see *Anti-Semitism, Holocaust, Anti-Fascism*, ed. Ivo Goldstein (Zagreb: Židovska općina, 1997). For information specifically on the Jewish community in Zagreb, see Ivo Goldstein, *Židovi u Zagrebu, 1918-1941* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2004). In addition to the above book by Melita Švob, another excellent source on Jewish history in Croatia is *Dva stoljeća povijesti i kulture Židova u Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj*, ed. Ivo Goldstein (Zagreb: Židovska općina, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> By "Evangelical" (evangelisch), the reader should understand "Lutheran." These Swabian Evangelicals were merely Lutheran Protestants and should not be confused with American Evangelicals.

that the German Lutheran Church did during the interwar period. Most Calvinist communities were located in Batschka.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, the Germans of Yugoslavia were not a huge population in absolute numbers. At 4.2 percent of the 1921 Yugoslav population and furthermore divided between Slovenia and distant Slavonia/Vojvodina, the Germans might even first appear to be a rather insignificant minority.<sup>34</sup> However, the weight of their presence was dramatically increased by their relative concentrations in Slovenia, Slavonia, and Vojvodina. Indeed, in 1921, they comprised 22.5 percent of the population of Banat, 23.9 percent of the population of Batschka, and 32.9 percent of the population of Baranja. As such, the Germans comprised 23.7 percent of the overall population of the country's most developed regions, where they frequently lived in German majority communities and tended to be among the more affluent inhabitants.<sup>35</sup> Under such circumstances, it was quite possible to live in a largely German world, even in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Indeed, anti-German discrimination in the military, commerce, and government employment encouraged the German community to turn increasingly inward.

The Germans of Yugoslavia lived in a variety of types of settlements, which were "easily recognizable by their cleanliness, orderly structure and well-cultivated farmlands," according to one Hungarian contemporary.<sup>36</sup> In some places they constituted the majority while in others they were but a minority, albeit an important one. Settlement types included monoconfessional and purely German villages,

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<sup>33</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene. 19E.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 119E.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 119E-120E.

<sup>36</sup> G.C. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians: German Populations in Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia and Hitler's Impact on Their Patterns* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967). 264.

ethnically and/or confessionally mixed villages, and ethnically and religiously diverse market towns, such as Apatin, Osijek, Palanka, Vršac, Zrenjanin and Vrbas, among others.<sup>37</sup> (Apatin, about which we shall read more in Chapter eight, had a large German majority.) Some German communities were purely agricultural places, while others were partly characterized by trade and administration. At 84 percent, the vast majority of Yugoslavia's ethnic Germans in their main settlement area of Baranja, Batschka and Banat lived in rural communities. 65 percent of the rural population and 30 percent of the urban population were involved in agriculture. However, more than 40 percent of Vojvodina's urban population and slightly less than 30 percent of its rural dwellers were involved in trade and industry, especially handicrafts (*Handwerk*).<sup>38</sup> The economic structure of the Germans was similar in Srijem. In Slavonia, the situation varied somewhat, though agriculture again predominated. The 1910 census found 52.6 percent of the German population there involved in agriculture, 26.8 percent in handicrafts (*Handwerk*) and 4.4 percent in commerce and lending (*Handel und Kredit*). Additionally, 5.9 percent of Slavonia's German population worked as day laborers.<sup>39</sup>

Finally it will be useful to consider Yugoslavia's Danube Swabians in the context of interwar Europe's other successor states. Sizable German minorities existed in nearly all of the states of interwar Eastern Europe, of course, but the situation of the Swabians differed from that of German minorities elsewhere in

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<sup>37</sup> Georg Wildmann, "Unterschiedliche Kulturelle Leitbilder bei der Katholischen Kirche und dem Kulturbund im Jugoslawien der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihre Wirkung auf die donauschwaebische Lebenswelt," in *Donauschwaebisches kirchliches und kulturelles Leben in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Stuttgart-Hohenheim: St. Gerhards-Werk, 1989). 18.

<sup>38</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene. 15E-16E.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 18E.

important ways. Unlike the 1,059,194 Germans in Poland,<sup>40</sup> Yugoslavia's Swabians had never been citizens of the *Kaiserreich*. Moreover, their lands did not border Germany and Germany did not harbor irredentist aspirations toward Yugoslavia. Compared to the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia, who did share a border with Germany, the Swabians were few in number and not nearly as mobilized or strident in their nationalist demands. Czechoslovakia's 3,123,568 Germans comprised 23.4 percent of its population,<sup>41</sup> whereas Yugoslavia's Germans made up only 4.2 percent of that country.<sup>42</sup> As such, the Yugoslav Germans had to content themselves with moderate demands for schools and the like while the strident Sudeten Germans were numerous enough to plausibly demand a real share in power and even regional autonomy. The Swabians in Yugoslavia also lacked the history of deep national tensions that characterized German relations with the respective nations of state in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the Germans of Romania lived in a state that was not the object of German irredentist intentions but was deeply coveted by Trianon Hungary, with which it shared a border. Romania also contained a huge Magyar (and Szekler) minority, of course. At 745,421 or 4.1 percent of the country's overall population, Romania's German population was larger than Yugoslavia's and considerably more diverse, since it included the well organized and Protestant Transylvanian Saxons as well as several hundred thousand (mostly Catholic) Danube Swabians in Banat.<sup>43</sup> (Smaller groups of Germans also lived in Bukovina, Bessarabia, Dobruja and elsewhere.) Finally, the Yugoslav Germans' situation even differed from

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<sup>40</sup> Based on Poland's 1921 census. Rothschild. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Based on Czechoslovakia's 1921 census. Ibid. 89.

<sup>42</sup> Based on the Yugoslav Kingdom's 1921 census. Ibid. 203.

<sup>43</sup> Based on Romania's 1930 census. Ibid. 284.

that of the Germans in Hungary. The Germans in rump Hungary (many of them Danube Swabians) typically felt genuine loyalty to that state as their historic fatherland. Even with the Habsburgs eliminated, the Hungarian state idea endured and retained a powerful attraction for them. Indeed, one could say that little had changed for them compared to the Germans in Yugoslavia and Romania, who at once had to accustom themselves to new borders, new peoples of state, and the dynasties of their recent, Orthodox enemies. And the Germans in the Yugoslavia had to deal not only with one aspiring nationalism but with three, in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia respectively.

#### Place Names in Yugoslavia

Swabians used the term *Siedlungsgebiet* or “settlement area” to informally describe the regions colonized by their ancestors. Within Yugoslavia, the settlement area typically meant the German-settled regions along the Danube, that is Vojvodina and Slavonia. Nevertheless, since Swabians also lived in the Romanian Banat and southern Hungary, these regions were likewise understood as part of the Swabians’ broader settlement area. This said, many Swabians had only a vaguely developed sense of land or nation beyond their immediate village or region, especially at the outset of the interwar years.

Usually the *main* settlement area was understood between the wars to include only the lands settled by Swabians along the Danube and thus excluded the German regions of Slovenia. The ethnic Germans of Slovenia had a long history distinct from that of the Danubian colonists. Until 1918 they had been part of Cisleithania while the



distant main settlement area of the Donauschwaben lay in the Hungarian half of the Monarchy. Though the Germans in Slovenia and the Danube Swabians became increasingly involved with one another during the interwar period, they nevertheless had different histories and traditions and are usually treated separately by scholars. German ethnicity notwithstanding, they themselves recognized this distinction. Slovenia's Germans, in point of fact, were not Danube Swabians.

Historical boundaries aside, it can be difficult to satisfactorily identify places across the *Siedlungsgebiet* with a single appellation. As noted above, the regions of German settlement in what ultimately became Yugoslavia were famously multiethnic. As such many places in the region have multiple names deriving from three or more languages. Unsurprisingly in this multiethnic, multilingual region, locals (who were often bilingual) did not always restrict themselves to place names in a single language or even their own language. Convention, official regulation and national consciousness competed to determine linguistic preference for place names. And while legislation and official usage may have often determined place names in monolingual terms, alternative appellations endured, of course.

Recognizing that the German appellations have faded, I will give general preference to Serbo-Croatian place names in this dissertation.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the Swabians who are the subject of this work frequently used German, Serbo-Croatian and even Hungarian names to describe their region and especially its major towns such as Novi Sad and Osijek. Indeed, the remarkable ethnic and linguistic diversity of the region

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<sup>44</sup> The single consistent exception I make to this rule is for Bačka, which the reader will note I write in the German fashion as "Batschka." I make this single exception as a reminder to the reader that the Swabians were also natives to this region and interpreted the landscape in their own way. Batschka contained the largest number of Swabians in interwar Yugoslavia.

was such that a monolingual approach to place names was neither possible nor desirable. To resolve any confusion, I include a table of important German place names and their Slavic equivalents in the Appendix of this dissertation. In conclusion, some agility will be required of the reader, but the linguistic topography of the land should quickly make itself clear.

This study will discuss the ethnic Germans of Yugoslavia as “Germans” and, when appropriate “Swabians.” It will do so mostly out of pragmatism, however, for identity was slippery and complex enough among the Swabians that they themselves continued to argue over who counted or not as a Swabian or German into the interwar years and beyond. As we shall see, assimilation was not uncommon, and Magyarized or Croatized ethnic Germans frequently considered German nationalism quite foreign. Discussing the challenges faced by the census taker, the leading German historian of Yugoslavia, Holm Sundhausen, commented on the protean nature of nationhood in southeast Europe. “If there is no general answer to the question of who or what a German was, then no accurate population numbers can be determined,” Sundhausen notes. “And if in light of the complicated ethnic relations in broad sections of Yugoslavia it was not uncommon to speak of a ‘floating nationality’ and ‘national opportunism,’ then there is no convincing reason to exclude the German minority from this same environment. Not all persons whose ancestors had come from the German speaking parts of Central Europe still understood themselves in the interwar period as Germans, and not all those who did understand themselves as such possessed a German heritage.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Sundhausen in Bade, 56.

Many readers may be familiar with the term “*Volksdeutsche*” and should think this term preferable to the more pedestrian “German”, as I once did. I will use the term only sparingly however, for the *Volksdeutsche* term did not properly emerge until well after the years in which this study begins. Thus the term threatens to be anachronistic in many cases here. And although the *Volksdeutsche* term did gain general acceptance by the German public, it was also frequently associated with National Socialism and is thus somewhat problematic for the historian. Though used by non-Nazis to denote those people beyond the Reich’s borders who were culturally and linguistically German but lacked Reich citizenship and thus were not German citizens or ‘*Reichsdeutsche*,’ such a pale definition fails to capture the full mystique of the Nazi concept of *Volksdeutsche* which was intrinsically bound to *voelkisch* notions of blood and race, themselves tied to history and destiny. In short, *Volksdeutsche* was an especially important term and concept for National Socialism.<sup>46</sup> “*Auslandsdeutsche*” was another term commonly used to denote ethnic Germans beyond Germany’s (or Austria’s) borders. This term generally lacked the connotations of blood and soil that rendered *Volksdeutsche* so compelling to National Socialists and the *voelkisch*-inclined. Since *Auslandsdeutsche* predates the interwar era and thus applies to the entire period of this study, I will frequently use it in place of *Volksdeutsche*. I will also use German, (Danube) Swabian and Donauschwaben to denote Yugoslavia’s ethnic Germans as appropriate. As with place names, then, a little terminological adroitness will be required of the reader, who must additionally

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<sup>46</sup> For an interesting discussion of the “*Volksdeutsche*” term, see Doris L. Bergen, “The Nazi Concept of ‘*Volksdeutsche*’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-1945,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994).

bear in mind that ethnic and national identities were often unformed or in flux in the region that became Yugoslavia.

### *On Nationalism Theory*

The topic of nationalism is infamously protean and literature on the subject is as broad as it is contentious. Indeed, even basic definitions of “nation” and “nationalism” are matters of dispute. The criteria for nationhood is disputed among scholars and variously includes language, religion, historical memory, common territory, and shared traditions. I take the approach of a selective scavenger in nationalism theory and have been particularly influenced in this study by the works of Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, Jeremy King, and Rogers Brubaker.

The theoretical discord of nationalism studies becomes quickly apparent when considering challenges to the influential “modernist paradigm.” Advocates of modernism such as Ernest Gellner, emphasize the transformative impact of modernization (industrial dislocation and such institutions as schools and the codification of high culture, both guided by intellectuals), to fashion proper nations.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* has been seminal for its observations of the transformative power of print capitalism and revolutions in conceptions of time.<sup>48</sup> Yet, as Anthony D. Smith has argued in both the *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, *National Identity*, and most recently in *Nationalism and*

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<sup>47</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism, New Perspectives on the Past*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>48</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised and extended ed. (New York: Verso, 1991).

*Modernism*, a nation cannot be created, invented or imagined out of thin air. Modern institutions are important and nationalism as a practice may “invent” nations, as Gellner asserts, but this is not to say that there are no limits as to what kind of community can be imagined or invented. Examining the premodern period, Smith writes that

I came to see clusters of myths, symbols, memories, values, and traditions emerging from the shared experiences of several generations of cohabiting populations, as the defining cultural elements from which ethnic groups emerged. On the other hand, their crystallization as self-aware communities, as opposed to other-defined categories, was the product of external factors such as folk cultures resulting from shared work and residence patterns; group mobilization in periodic inter-state warfare producing memories and myths of defeat and victory; and especially the impact of organized religions with scriptures, sacred languages, and communal priesthoods.<sup>49</sup>

Thus Smith argues for the importance of available “*ethnies*” or ethnic communities in the formation of nations.<sup>50</sup> True, in a very real sense nations are imagined communities. Still, there must be a limit to what can be invented and inventions must somehow build upon preexisting symbols and shared memory. Nations may “crystallize” as Rogers Brubaker also later observed, but they must crystallize out of something. Thus a worthy course of study would perhaps ask not only “what” but also “when” is a nation.<sup>51</sup>

Doubts about the limits of imagined communities, however, do not (even for Smith) challenge the fundamental notion of the nation as a fundamentally modern

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<sup>49</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1987). 192.

<sup>50</sup> To be certain, Smith does not argue that a core *ethnie* is essential for nation formation and cites the United States, Australia, and Argentina as places where waves of immigrants’ cultures were coalesced into a nation. In Latin America, nations formed in places where imperial rule had imposed a common language and religion in local provinces.

<sup>51</sup> I have been greatly influenced by my thinking here by Rogers Brubaker. For more, see Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

phenomenon. Though nations assert a historical pedigree and eternal destiny through what Eric Hobsbawm famously labeled “invented traditions”, nations remain modern products and modern institutions are essential to modern nationhood.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the social and economic dislocations of modernism and the existence of such modern institutions as schools are not by themselves sufficient to crystallize nationhood.

I concur with Anthony Smith regarding the importance of ethnicity in nation formation. Jeremy King reminds us in *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans* that one may be *ethnically* German or Czech (for example) without being *nationally* so. For that matter, King considers ethnicity itself a problematic term and observes many “biethnics” in the Bohemian city of Budweis.<sup>53</sup> King’s case study reveals that it was only during the later part of the nineteenth century that life and politics became nationalized as Czech or German in Bohemia. Indeed, his local history of Budweiser politics is not the story of Budweisers “awakening” from their national slumber to the sudden realization of their innate Czech- or Germanness. On the contrary, King’s history details a revolutionary transformation of politics, society, and indeed consciousness over the course of slightly more than a century. He argues basically that German speakers and Czech speakers came variously to embrace a national identity but insists that the events leading to this embrace were complex. Moreover, the process was not complete until the collapse of a triadic structure of identity (Czech, German, and Habsburg) under the Monarchy. I assert that a not dissimilar process unfolded later and at an accelerated pace for the Danube Swabians through

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<sup>52</sup> See *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>53</sup> King prefers to use the awkward dual appellation (Budweis/Budějovice) for place names so as to avoid implicitly assigning ethnicity to regions, towns and villages.

the First World War, the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy, and its replacement by Yugoslavia.

I have drawn from many authors in coming to my own understanding of nationalism, but the bulk of the influence on my thinking and analysis in this dissertation comes from Rogers Brubaker and Anthony Smith, whose work is not always harmonious, but whose observations nevertheless provide us with an understanding of nationalism generally as well as a framework for interpreting and understanding nationalism as it unfolded among the Swabians in the context of interwar Yugoslavia. Smith teaches us why many of the preconditions for nationhood were present with the Swabians and also points to the important role of national activists. Meanwhile, Brubaker explains why nationhood emerged as salient for the Swabians after 1918 and highlights the contingency of national identity.

After his groundbreaking *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Anthony D. Smith extended his analysis into the modern era. In *National Identity*, he seeks to explain the continuity between the premodern *ethnies* he detailed in his previous work and modern nations. That is, he seeks to identify the process by which modern nations were formed and created, especially in Western and Eastern Europe. *National Identity* is particularly useful for a number of reasons. First, Smith provides generally clear definitions and explanations, which are fundamental to the analysis of this dissertation. Likewise, he identifies different forms of nationalism and different roads to nationhood in Western and Eastern Europe. He furthermore identifies the key role of intellectuals in the ethnic nationalism that came to so characterize Eastern Europe. This attention to the function of nationalist intellectuals and their important role in the

crystallization and cultivation of national consciousness is especially helpful for my own study of Danube Swabians and enables us to interpret the Swabian national activists' penchant for history, language, music, symbolism, and culture.

Smith defines "nation" broadly as a "named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members."<sup>54</sup> The nation "signifies a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community all who share an historic community, all who share an historic culture and homeland."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, one function of the nation is to provide social bonds between individuals, groups and classes within an ethnic community by providing evidence of shared values, traditions, symbols and heritage. Such artifacts of the nation as anthems, emblems, uniforms, monuments, commemorations, ceremonies and especially flags have key functions here, he writes. The nation enables, even demands, members to feel exalted by their sense of common identity, and may thus be said to serve as a kind of "faith achievement group, " a vessel of collective consciousness and belief which to overcome challenges and surmount obstacles and hurdles.<sup>56</sup> In its many manifestations, the nation variously combines a civic and territorial aspect with an ethnic and genealogical aspect, yielding a multidimensionality and complexity that is also highly flexible and may be partnered with other movements.<sup>57</sup>

As Smith reminds us, the nation is not necessarily congruent with the state, though such congruence has been the aspiration of many nationalisms. Smith again

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<sup>54</sup> Anthony D Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1991). 14.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 14-15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>57</sup> Indeed, nationalism is so flexible that it has been successfully paired with ostensibly anti-national communism.



defines nationalism broadly as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation.”<sup>58</sup> Its core doctrine consists of the proposition that the world is naturally divided into nations with unique history, character, and destiny; that loyalty to the nation is paramount for it is the source of all political and social power; that an individual’s proper freedom and prospect to realize his full potential depends on his willingness to identify with the nation; and that peace and justice in the world require that nations be free and secure. In short, “nationalism is primarily a cultural doctrine, or more accurately, a political ideology with a cultural doctrine at its center.” It is an “ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity and identity of a nation.”<sup>59</sup> The reader should bear in mind such definitions when examining the actions of the German activists in Yugoslavia, especially during the first decade after the First World War. It was in large part through their efforts to spread awareness of their ethnic community’s history, myths, symbols, language and the like that the idea of national identity became crystallized in Swabian minds.

Smith identifies collective cultural identity as referring “not to a uniformity of elements over generations but to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unity of population, to shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit and to notions entertained by each generation about the collective destiny of that unity and its culture.” Continuity need not imply permanence, however. Changes in cultural identities plainly occur, often

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<sup>58</sup> Smith, *National Identity*. 73.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 74.

through profound or traumatic developments which shake up the basic “patterns of myth, symbol, memory and value that bind successive generations together while demarcating them from ‘outsiders.’” But disruptive cultural changes need not adversely affect the sense of common ethnicity. On the contrary, that sense of common ethnicity and identity may be *renewed* by such traumatic developments as war, exile, or religious conversion. Indeed, “a combination of often adverse external factors and a rich inner or ‘ethno’ history may help to crystallize and perpetuate ethnic identities,” Smith writes. Key forces in the process of the coalescence and survival of ethnic identification include state-making, warfare, and organized religion.<sup>60</sup> As we shall see, all three of these forces were important in the emergence of a specifically national consciousness in the Swabian (German) ethnic community in Yugoslavia.

Smith identifies two ideal models of the nation, a civic model which developed in Western Europe and an ethnic variety that emerged in Europe’s east. It is the latter variety that concerns the Danube Swabians. Briefly put, “historical territory, legal-political community, legal political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology” form the central components of the basic, civic model of the nation as it developed in Western Europe. However, in Eastern Europe a different concept of the nation developed, which retained the central components of the Western variety but reprioritized them and exaggerated the importance of ethnicity. Smith calls this alternative to the Western model of the nation the “ethnic conception of the nation”, which was most distinguished from the Western variant by its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture. In the ethnic variant,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 25-28.

nationhood is indelibly ascribed at birth, while the Western variety ostensibly allows for individual choice. The central elements of the ethnic concept of the nation were “genealogy and presumed descent ties, popular mobilization, vernacular languages, customs and traditions.”<sup>61</sup> It is primarily this latter, ethnic conception of the nationhood that concerns the Danube Swabians of this dissertation.

Nationalism is a myth at whose center stands the nation, Smith explains. It is a modern mythology but paradoxically asserts the nation’s ancient origins. The nation having allegedly lapsed into a deep slumber (often due to subjugation by another group), it becomes the task of the nationalist to reawaken the nation and restore and purify it such that it may realize its unique potential in a world defined by nations. By purging the nation of allegedly “foreign” elements and thereby supposedly recovering its original essence, nationalists promise group salvation and future national greatness using a language of past glory and achievement. The means to this end of salvation are historical symbolism, myths, anthems, celebration of the vernacular, and other such artifacts of nationhood.<sup>62</sup>

The path to nation formation which Smith identified in Central and Eastern Europe, that of popular or vernacular mobilization, differed from the above mentioned route of bureaucratic incorporation by an aristocratic community in that the bureaucratic state played a lesser and more indirect role. In this route to nation formation (and unlike in the West), the ethnic communities typically were subject peoples in large, polyethnic empires governed by ethnically “foreign” elites. These subject communities were often bound by religious bonds, whose scriptures, liturgy,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 11-13.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 19-20.

priesthood, and rituals and ceremonies provided the means of ethnic survival over the centuries by defining a distinct social and cultural space for the ethnic community. Transformation from ethnic community to nationhood for such communities was frequently slow and traumatic, however, and often resulted in a kind of ethnic exclusivity, since it was difficult for the nascent nation to break free from its “habitual conceptual ethnic framework and lifestyle.”<sup>63</sup>

Lacking a coercive authority such as the bureaucratic state, the ethnic intelligentsia played a key part in the development of a properly *national* consciousness on the vernacular mobilization route. In this model, the intelligentsia’s task is to “mobilize a formerly passive community into forming a nation around the new vernacular historical culture that it has rediscovered.” Nothing less than a “moral and political revolution” would be necessary in order to emancipate the people and form a political community of equal citizens. The interrelated processes of this revolution included

- “A movement from passive subordination of the community to its active political assertion
- A movement to place the community in its homeland, a secure and recognized compact territory
- A movement to endow the territorial community with economic unity
- A movement to place the people at the center of concern and to celebrate the masses by re-educating them in national values, memories and myths
- A movement to turn ethnic members into legal ‘citizens’ by conferring civil, social and political rights on them”<sup>64</sup>

The degree to which the above undertakings might be successful depended in large part on the embrace of a living and usable past by the intelligentsia. History would be made the common property of the people in which the people’s common sentiments,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 61-62.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 64-65

traits and traditions could be identified. Smith writes that the intellectuals sought to create “maps and moralities” for the ethnic community based on the history and landscape of the ethnic community’s claimed territory. In this way, such topographical features as mountains, valleys and rivers might assume new symbolic importance as representations and evidence of presumed national values or experience. Likewise, historical experience assumed a new importance. The people were the new source of national salvation. (Often imagined, idealized, sanitized or even fabricated) memories of a vanished national golden age were mobilized to offer the people inspiration and suggested a direction for national destiny that was simultaneously clear and Janus-faced. “Hence the return to that past through a series of myths of origins and descent, of liberation and migration, of the golden age and its heroes and sages, perhaps of the chosen people now to be reborn after its long sleep of decay and/or exile. Together,” Smith concludes, “these myth-motifs [could] be formed into a composite nationalist mythology and salvation drama.”<sup>65</sup>

In *National Identity*, Smith is principally writing about the process by which, for example, Croats, Serbs and Bulgarians emerged as nations from under imperial tutelage. However, many of his observations are highly applicable to the experience and collective cultural identity of the Danube Swabians, who developed a national consciousness during the interwar years as a local branch of the greater German nation. As we shall see, German intellectuals and activists played a central role in the development of national consciousness among the Germans. They furnished maps and moralities for the ethnic community that provided myths of common origins and descent, offered historical figures and heroes embodying the supposed national

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 66.

virtues and traits of these Danubian Germans, and held the landscape to be proof of German industry the legitimacy of the German presence in their adopted *Heimat*. In the history of wars against the Ottomans and the subsequent colonization of the Pannonian Plain, the intellectuals furnished a lost historical golden age. In contemporary Germany the intellectuals recognized a national homeland as well as proof of modern German greatness, which could likewise be attained locally by Swabians if only they would embrace their national identity, for national salvation lay in the people themselves.

Of the many volumes on nationalism, Rogers Brubaker's *Nationalism Reframed* has been especially important for this study. Brubaker provides a framework for analyzing the situation of the Swabians between the world wars and also provides a vocabulary by which to discuss the particularities of German and Yugoslav attitudes, policies, objectives and organizations. He also offers us the ability to distinguish between the nationalism of Germans in Germany proper and that of the Yugoslav Germans, who were different and sometimes pursued different goals or had different interests despite their common ethnicity. Finally, Brubaker's work yields a theoretical explanation for why German nationalism, after so many years of relative unimportance, suddenly became salient and meaningful as an organizing principle and basis for group cohesion outside of the churches and even in spite of confessional differences.

In *Nationalism Reframed*, Brubaker complains that scholars, though recognizing nations as constructs, nevertheless often treat them as substantial, enduring entities. Rather than treat the nation as a category of analysis, Brubaker

proposes that scholars reconsider it as a category of practice. Indeed, “nationalism can and should be understood without invoking ‘nations’ as substantial entities. Instead of focusing on nations as real groups, we should focus on nationhood and nationness, on ‘nation’ as practical category, institutionalized form, and contingent event.”<sup>66</sup> In this understanding, nationhood should not be accepted as a given but rather something that variously “crystallizes” in response to events. In large part, this dissertation is a study of such a local crystallization of German nationalism in Yugoslavia.

The drift of the category of “nation” eastward in the latter half of the nineteenth century meant a fundamental transformation of the way in which the region’s diverse empires were understood by their residents. Where before the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires had been experienced and understood as polyethnic, polyreligious, and polylingual, in the national age they were understood (and often resented) as multinational. The “principle of nationality,” the notion that states should be by and for a specific nation, “became the prime lever for reimagining and reorganizing political space.”<sup>67</sup> However, Brubaker points out, nationalism was not only the agent of the reorganization of political space in the empires of Central and Eastern Europe, it was also a byproduct of that reorganization process. “But the forms of nationalism that *resulted* from the nationalization of political space are different from – and less familiar than – those that helped *engender* it.”<sup>68</sup>

Brubaker observes a triadic interplay between three often antagonistic types of nationalism: nationalizing nationalism, homeland nationalism, and minority nationalism. Characteristic of states which perceive themselves as not yet fully

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<sup>66</sup> Brubaker. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 4.

realized nation-states, is a “nationalizing nationalism” which articulates claims in the name of an ethnoculturally defined “core nationality” that understands itself as the “owner” of the state. As happened in Yugoslavia, core nations may use state power to effect discriminatory measures against non-fellow-ethnics with the goal of fully realizing the nation-state. Such measures might include discriminatory language laws, school laws, laws on administration or state employment, ethnic preference in state employment and the awarding of state contracts, uneven land reform, and other measures to redress past “injustices” through an inversion of the former, “unjust” order by a new, national one. Nationalizing nationalism is simultaneously a reaction to perceived past injustices as well as an effort by newly dominant elites to reverse the situation by which their states are “insufficiently” national, that is, they are “unrealized” or “incomplete” nation-states.<sup>69</sup> States which seek to resolve this situation through the abovementioned discriminatory measures are “nationalizing states.” Interwar Yugoslavia was an example of such a state.

Where ethnic minorities find themselves beyond the borders of their own ethnoculturally defined state, nationalizing nationalism (and states) may collide with a “homeland nationalism” practiced by the declared nation-state of the ethnocultural minority. Homeland nationalism asserts its duty to monitor the welfare of its co-ethnics abroad. Typically, homeland nationalism activity may include cultural, educational, or linguistic support as well as political agitation for the rights for “its” minority coethnics abroad. It is a reaction to nationalizing nationalism. Indeed, homeland nationalism and nationalizing nationalism exist in a condition of direct opposition and conflict yet (or rather because) both share the common trait of

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 9.



addressing the “nation” which is understood as distinct from the citizenry of the state, that is, the nation to whom the nation-state ostensibly “belongs.”<sup>70</sup>

“Minority nationalism”, such as a strident local movement in the nationalizing state, completes the triad but may do so in unexpected ways. A national minority exists caught between conflicting nationalizing nationalism and the homeland nationalism which makes claims on its behalf. Brubaker cautions against automatically treating “national minority” as an ethnodemographic reality. Rather, “national minority” is a political stance, just as “external national homeland” or “nationalizing state.” “Minority nationalist stances characteristically involve a self-understanding in specifically “national” rather than merely “ethnic” terms, a demand for state recognition of their distinct ethnocultural nationality, and the assertion of certain collective, nationally-based cultural or political rights.” Like homeland nationalism, minority nationalism is a stance in direct opposition to nationalizing nationalism. However, minority nationalism and homeland nationalism may not always share the same interests or objectives. The two nationalisms need not always be harmonious and may in fact be divergent, particularly when the homeland pursues homeland nationalism for reasons parallel to, apart from or even contrary to the goals of the national minority. In other words, a homeland nationalist stance may in fact be deployed for strategic purposes quite distinct from the welfare of the national minority in question.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that the three fields in this nationalist triad exist with each other in a constant state of interaction characterized by mutual monitoring

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.110-111.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 5-6.

but also are themselves the loci of interaction and competition. They are “fields of differentiated and competing positions, arenas of struggle among competing stances. The triadic relation between these three “elements” is therefore a relation between relational fields.” This, Brubaker writes, “is part of what makes it so unstable and potentially explosive.”<sup>72</sup>

The Donauschwaben in Yugoslavia found themselves in a complex version of this nationalist triad. On the one hand, they were subject to the nationalizing nationalisms (themselves often mutually antagonistic) of Yugoslavia. Additionally, they were exposed to the homeland nationalism of Weimar and later Nazi Germany through state and private Volkstumarbeit organizations, organizations devoted to promoting the welfare of Germans abroad.<sup>73</sup> Finally, they expressed their own minority nationalism through the cultivation of a local Swabian identity and the establishment of German cultural and political organizations which sought, above all, to maintain a system of German schools. This effort was particularly difficult because of the intensity of Yugoslavia’s nationalizing nationalism, supplemented by the conflict between Serbs and Croats over the nature of the state.

War, political uncertainty, and inclusion in the new Yugoslav state transformed the Swabians’ social and political environment. Indeed, irrespective of how they viewed themselves, the new Yugoslav state plainly understood the Donauschwaben as Germans and discriminated against them as such. This in particular had a catalyzing effect, as ethnic Germans found themselves excluded from the political process and their lands targeted for redistribution by the new kingdom’s

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>73</sup> These were *gleichgeschaltet* or “coordinated” in line with Nazi principles and policy during the 1930s, naturally.

agrarian reform. Meanwhile, contact with ethnic Germans from Germany and elsewhere in the Habsburg Monarchy had inspired new feelings of national consciousness and ethnic solidarity among the hitherto passive Swabians. Thus shocked into a new self-awareness and group cohesion by the First World War, the Habsburg collapse, and South Slav triumphalism, Swabian national activism in Yugoslavia looked to nationalism as it had been locally pioneered and modeled by South Slavs. The Germans were spurred into redefinition, transformation, and mobilization by the agenda, actions and successes of the Serb, Croat, and Slovene nationalists, whose previous methods also provided a template.

German national identity developed particular salience among Yugoslavia's *ethnic* Germans because they were treated as *national* Germans, social and political aliens in the nationalizing state which was the Kingdom of the Serbs Croats and Slovenes. As its ungainly name suggested, this aspiring nation-state (which formally understood Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to be "tribes" of a single Yugoslav nation) was at best awkwardly suited to the nation-state paradigm and was furthermore inconveniently saddled with a large number of ethnic minorities. As such, the state (and its "tribes") were intent on promoting the assimilation of the minorities in their midst. The Swabians' almost two centuries of settlement in Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina and Germans' much longer history in Slovenia mattered little to the nationalists in Zagreb, Belgrade and Ljubljana. Additionally, the shock of the loss of the war and the respective destruction or humiliation of the Habsburg and German empires produced disillusionment and a crisis of identity among German ethnics and especially their elites. Thus along with the sudden disappearance of the possibility of

a Habsburg or supranational identity, they simultaneously discovered themselves to be an unwanted minority in somebody else's nation-state. The new circumstances led to the intensification of efforts by Volkstumarbeit organizations in Germany and Austria, as well as later Nazi advocacy on behalf of German ethnics abroad. In other words, both in Germany/Austria and in Yugoslavia, teams of German national activists and self-styled "awakeners" worked to stimulate and shape German identity and pride among the Swabian population. Their message found new resonance in these new circumstances after 1918.

While Anthony D. Smith identifies and argues for *ethnies* as the raw material from which to form nations, Brubaker holds that nationness should be understood as an "event," something that "happens" in response to circumstances. Thus nationness becomes for Brubaker a "contingent, conjunctually fluctuating and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action, rather than a relatively stable product of deep developmental trends in economy, polity, or culture."<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, Smith's and Brubaker's approaches are more complementary than contradictory. Smith does not argue for the exclusivity of ethnicity in nation formation, only that it is a necessary component. Likewise, Brubaker does not deny the salience of ethnicity. Rather, he asserts that an interplay of political and social forces activates ethnicity as meaningful, producing nationalism. Though Brubaker is skeptical of how substantially we should treat nations, both authors acknowledge that nations "crystallize" and are contingent. Mindful of Brubaker's triadic theory of interacting minority, homeland and nationalizing nationalisms as well of the work of Benedict Anderson, Ernst Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, this study will observe how mutually

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<sup>74</sup> Brubaker. 19.

antagonistic national entrepreneurs variously imagined the German community in Yugoslavia and competed to invent and command its traditions.

*The Road from Swabian to German*

This dissertation directs considerable attention to the 1930s, when the Swabian community was riven by ideological and personal division. However, the work also pays significant attention to the development of national identity in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and its antecedents in Austria-Hungary. The dissertation's structure is chronological and gradually reveals the contested content of the German national idea and how it was variously deployed by mutual antagonists who claimed to speak for the soul of the German *Volk* in Yugoslavia.

In the following chapters we show that the Danube Swabians were an ethnically aware but not nationally conscious, largely rural population which required the shock of the First World War and the twin influences of Yugoslav nationalizing nationalism and German homeland nationalism to stimulate its own national consciousness and minority nationalism on a broad scale. We additionally reveal the central role played by a handful of Swabian activists working tirelessly to craft and impart a German national identity upon their fellow Germans, who had frequently assimilated to their non-German milieu. Chapters One and Two outline the process of German colonization in Vojvodina and Croatia-Slavonia before 1918. Here we see the antecedents of Yugoslavia's interwar German national movement in the form of regional German political parties, newspapers, and the early involvement of certain *Kaiserreich*-based organizations devoted to "defending" and promoting Germandom

abroad. In Chapters Three and Four, we observe the effects of the First World War's military mobilization on the Swabians and their institutional responses to the new Yugoslav Kingdom, where they were a national minority in a foreign nationalizing-state. The Germans' responses included the creation of publishing enterprises, cultural associations, a specifically German political party, and the German Lutheran Church. In these chapters we maintain our attention to homeland nationalism emanating from the Weimar Republic. Chapter Five, considers the central role of the Swabian activists who led the German minority nationalism movement in the Yugoslav Kingdom and examines the content of the national identity they sought to impart to their German co-ethnics. In Chapter Six, we discuss the German movement in an environment transformed by the imposition of royal dictatorship in Yugoslavia in 1929 and the Nazis' accession to power in Germany in 1933. During this decade, the interaction of homeland, nationalizing and minority nationalisms resulted in both heightened German national consciousness as well as deep instability in the Swabian community. Here and in the following chapters we devote particular attention to the Nazi-oriented challenge to the conservative German identity which Swabian leaders had cultivated during the 1920s. Chapter Seven discusses the Swabian original leadership's attempt to resist their young, Nazi-oriented challengers (gathered loosely in a *Erneuerungsbewegung* or "renewal movement"), who sought control of the Swabians' principal organization, the *Kulturbund*. In Chapter Eight we turn to religious responses to the Nazi-oriented *Erneuerungsbewegung*. Our particular focus here is on the determined resistance movement led by the Swabian Catholic clergy but we also discuss the more ambivalent stance of Yugoslavia's German Lutheran

Church. Finally in Chapter Nine we review the triumph of the Erneuerungsbewegung in the Kulturbund and its imitation of Nazi models only after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the subsequent German advances that preceded the invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941.



Map 1.1 Europe before the First World War<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Georg Wildmann, Hans Sonnleitner, and Karl Weber, *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien, 1944-1998: Die Stationen eines Völkermords* (Munich: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 1998). 14.



Map 1.2 The lands of the future Yugoslavia before the First World War<sup>76</sup>

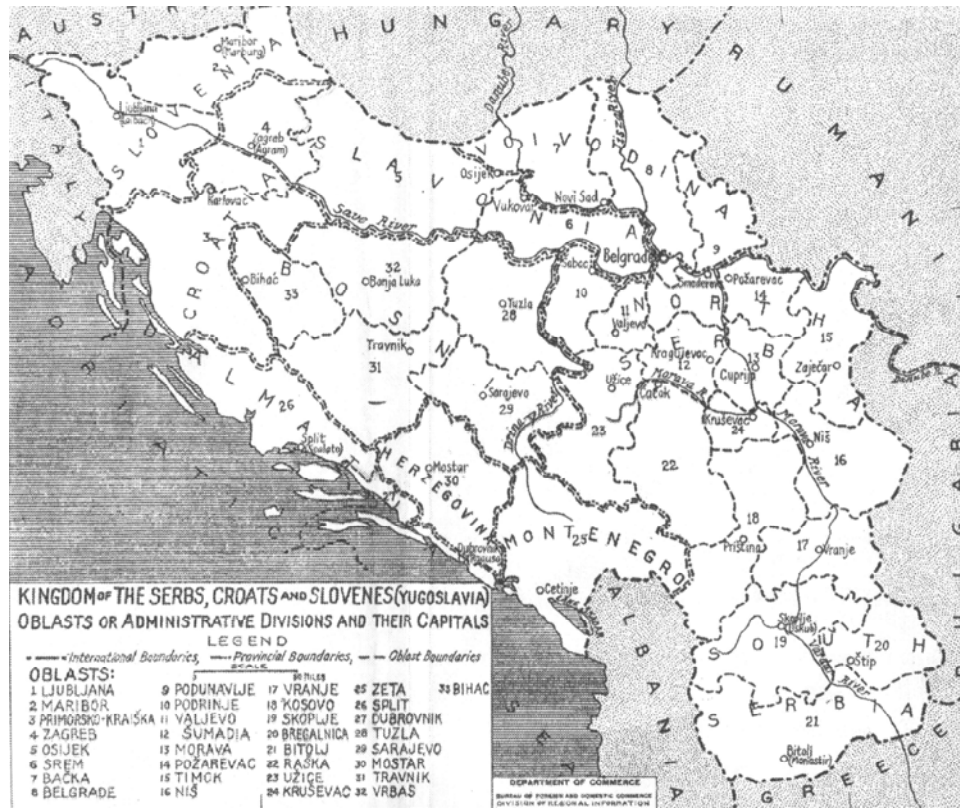
<sup>76</sup> Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). xv.





Map 1.3 Interwar Europe<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Wildmann, Sonnleitner, and Weber, *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien, 1944-1998: Die Stationen eines Völkermords*. 15.

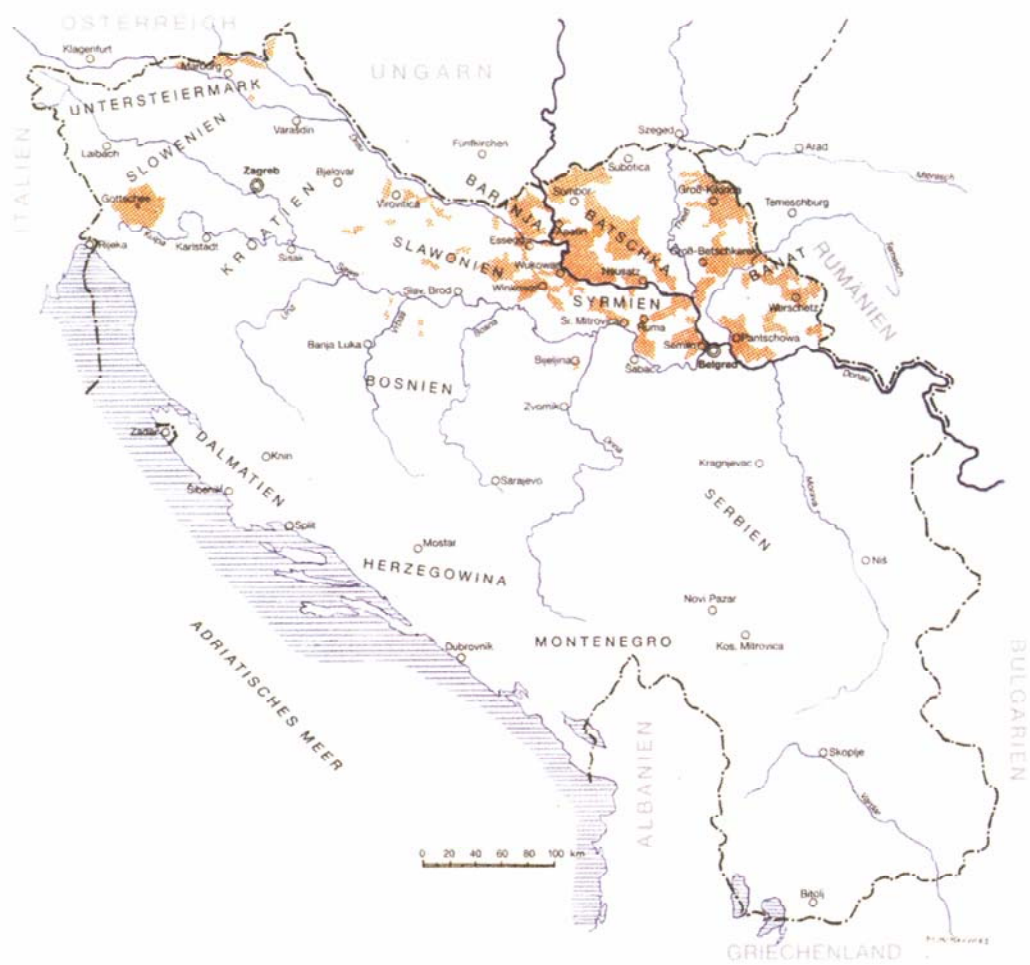


Map 1.4 Yugoslavia before 1929<sup>78</sup>



Map 1.5 Territorial Division of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1929-1939 (Banovinas)<sup>79</sup>

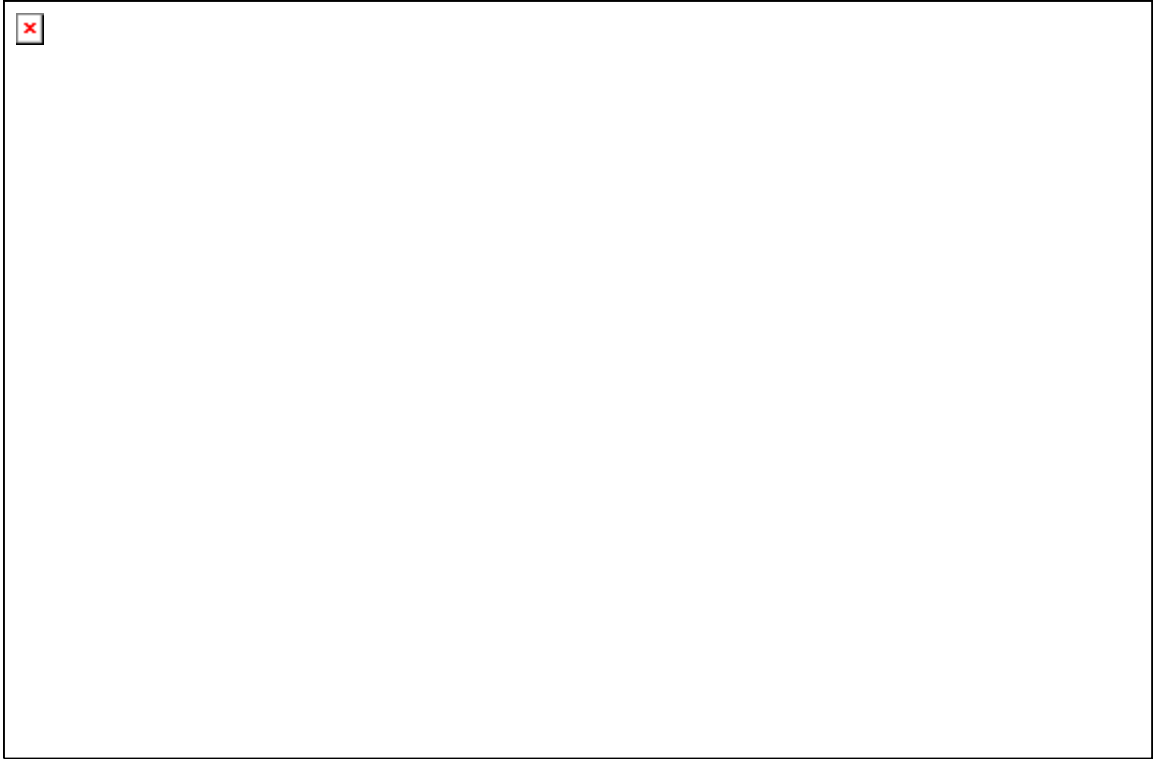
<sup>78</sup> Djokić. xvi.



Map 1.6 Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia before 1941<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006). xxiii.

<sup>80</sup> Wildmann, Sonnleitner, and Weber, *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien, 1944-1998: Die Stationen eines Völkermords*. 16.



Map 1.7 Ethnic Germans in Srijem, Banat, Batschka, and Baranja<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Sepp Janko, *Weg und Ende der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien* (Graz: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1982). Front end papers. See also Vladimir Geiger, *Nestanak Folksdojčera* (Zagreb: Nova Stvarnost, 1997). 21.

## Chapter 1: German Settlement and the Origins of the German National Movement in Hungary before the First World War

The Hungarian lands that were incorporated into Yugoslavia after the First World War provide two principal sites for analysis of the Danube Swabians. Those parts of the Hungarian Kingdom were Vojvodina and the associated but in certain respects separate Croatia-Slavonia, which then included Srijem. The Swabians in these two regions had experiences before and during the interwar years which were similar and yet distinct. We begin by discussing the colonization of the Hungarian lands which were reconquered from the Ottoman Empire in the decades after the Ottoman's 1683 defeat in Vienna. We then turn to the process of Magyarization by which many descendants of those German colonists variously embraced Magyar national identity. Finally, we turn to an important manifestation of resistance to official Magyarization in the activities of Edmund Steinacker and likeminded supporters who founded the basic political and media institutions of the German national movement in southern Hungary before the First World War. We will principally deal with German immigration to Croatia-Slavonia and the origins of the German national movement there in a separate chapter. Croatia-Slavonia enjoyed a certain autonomy inside Hungary before 1918 and the circumstances of that autonomy affected the Swabian experience there.

### Colonization in Hungary

The Germans' initial immigration to southern Hungary was principally driven by Habsburg economic and security considerations, not German nationalist expansion. On the contrary, the final *Schwabenzug*, or process of German immigration to Hungary, was over even before the French Revolution announced the new, national age in Europe. Thereafter, the Habsburgs had many reasons to distrust German nationalism, not act as its agent or sponsor. The colonization did have a certain political aspect but this was aimed at diluting or limiting the mass of troublesome Magyars who might otherwise reestablish their territorial claims and provide a source of resistance to Vienna. The dispatch of so many German colonists furthermore should be understood as part of the rationalizing administrative reforms of the 1700s. Ultimately, "hostility to Magyar nationalism was definitely a motive in the colonization in question, but it came second to the principal one of economic rehabilitation."<sup>82</sup> As for contemporary Serbs and Croats, they were also suspicious of the colonizing Germans. But their criticisms were often more symptomatic of their own nationalism than that of the German settlers, who generally remained indifferent toward German nationalism into the twentieth century.

Although this dissertation will concern itself principally with the Yugoslav Germans after 1918, it is impossible to discuss those Germans in isolation from other historic German populations in Trianon Hungary and Romania. The *Schwabenzug* in

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<sup>82</sup> Paikert. 16. John Lampe and Marvin Jackson similarly observe the Habsburg desire to limit or prevent the return of too many Magyars to the reconquered lands of southern Hungary. For more, see John Lampe and Marvin Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982).

the eighteenth century formed only one episode in the long history of German settlement in Hungary launched by St. Stephen himself.<sup>83</sup> The *Schwabenzug* followed the Habsburg victories over the Ottomans in Southeastern Europe in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These new Swabian immigrants interacted with the earlier German communities, but in many cases remained distinct from them.<sup>84</sup> In sum, Hungary's German colonists were a historic presence in the kingdom, invited en masse by Hungarian kings and Habsburg emperors as bearers of culture, engines of prosperity, defenders of the land, and factors of stability.

The eighteenth century colonization of the reconquered Hungarian lands differed from previous German immigration in several respects. It was far larger than the preceding immigration to Transylvania and the Carpathians and it was much more organized, featuring extensive imperial support and coordination. Whereas previous immigrants had largely been artisans or miners, the eighteenth century colonists were overwhelmingly, though not exclusively, peasant farmers. The *Schwabenzug*, as the colonization later came to be known, may be broken down into three waves, usually named for the Habsburg ruler under whom they occurred (Charles VI, Maria Theresa, and Joseph II) between 1718 and 1787. These waves of settlement were sponsored affairs, in which varying levels of financial and material support or privileges were guaranteed to settlers as incentives to move east. Many came to the region by boat, floating down the Danube in temporary crafts that were then dissembled for their

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<sup>83</sup> Oscar Jaszi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929), 38-9.

<sup>84</sup> Other important, historic German populations in pre-Trianon Hungary were the Transylvanian Saxons (*Siebenbuerger Sachsen*) of Transylvania and the *Zipser*, ethnic Germans who settled in the Zips section of the Tatra Mountains in modern Slovakia. These settlers were invited by Hungarian kings for economic and military purposes and they were guaranteed extensive privileges by royal charter during the thirteenth century. For more on the Zipser and Transylvanian Saxons, see Paikert. 2-3.

wood at the end of their one way journey to the land which they embraced as their new *Heimat*.<sup>85</sup>

Although the settlers came to be known among themselves and surrounding nationalities as “*Schwaben*”, the majority did not actually originate in the Swabian region of what is today southwest Germany. Rather, the German colonists had highly diverse origins, coming from Bavaria, Hessen, the Pfalz, Lothringen, the Saarland, and the Sudeten regions of Bohemia, among other places. Danube Swabian historian Vladimir Geiger suggests the “Swabian” appellation may be attributed to a preponderance of Swabians at the outset of colonization. The first two waves of emigration consisted exclusively of Catholics. According to Geiger, the Carolean wave consisted of approximately 10,000 people who were settled in 57 colonies. While the first of these were German artisans, later colonists were overwhelmingly peasant farmers. During the second, Theresian wave, approximately 5000 families settled in 50 new places and reinforced 30 preexisting colonies. These colonists went mostly to Banat. However, during the final, Josephinian wave, colonists also settled in Batschka. This wave of 3500 German families also differed from previous ones in that it included Protestants as well as Catholics.<sup>86</sup> True to its reforming sponsor, Joseph II’s *Ansiedlungspatent* of 1781 had offered limited guarantees of freedom of thought and freedom of religion.<sup>87</sup> Over the course of the eighteenth century, the colonization became progressively better organized to include not just supplies and

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<sup>85</sup> Such boats were often called “Ulm boxes” (*ulmer Schachtel*), named for the German city of Ulm from which many German colonists began their journey to the southeast.

<sup>86</sup> Vladimir Geiger, “Nijemci u Hrvatskoj,” *Časopis za istraživanje migracija i narodnosti* 7, no. 3-4 (1991). 321.

<sup>87</sup> Guenther Schoedl, “Die Deutschen in Ungarn,” in *Deutsche im Ausland, Fremde in Deutschland: Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart* ed. Klaus Bade (Munich: 1992). 79.



financial incentives, but also village layout and housing designs. Ultimately, more than 150,000 ancestors of the Danube Swabians emigrated to Hungary over the course of the eighteenth century as part of a sophisticated settlement enterprise. The settlers' and their descendents long favored large families, thus greatly swelling the German population in southern Hungary.

Colonization was an arduous affair, far more difficult than its organizers acknowledged when soliciting colonists in the Habsburg Monarchy and the west German lands with descriptions of tidy villages and bountiful harvests. The eighteenth century colonists came to a region devastated and depopulated by war. Economically, the region was economically underdeveloped and much of its land had never been cleared for cultivation. Extensive swamps had to be drained and forests cut back. Additionally, colonists had to contend with hunger, outbreaks of disease and, during the early years, occasional raids by Turkish forces. Many colonists perished or gave up and returned home. Indeed, many of the early settlements would not have endured had they not been reinforced by later colonists, and often the sacrifices of one generation could only be reaped by its successor. One common refrain, "to the first [generation] death, the second danger, and the third bread" held that only the third generation of colonists prospered, after the first two had experienced death and peril.<sup>88</sup> Such tales of trial and toil became woven into the Danube Swabians' narrative of their ancestors' struggle and shaped their own sense of self as pioneers who had won their land through perseverance and sacrifice.

Ultimately, then, the Swabian colonization was a complicated and complex process featuring various patterns of settlement over many turbulent decades. Banat

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<sup>88</sup> "Den Ersten den Tod, den Zweiten die Not, den Dritten das Brot." Verbrechen, 18.

and Batschka were the first areas to be colonized extensively, while Croatia-Slavonia (including Srijem) received settlers only later. (As we shall see in the following chapter, these later German settlers were largely the descendents of earlier colonists north of the Drava and Danube rivers.) The extent of colonization was such that by 1787 the population of expanded Hungary was 9 million (up from 3.5 million in 1720). While this repopulation represented a form of success, it also had the consequence of transforming Hungary “into a multi-ethnic state in which the Hungarians [Magyars] lost their absolute majority.”<sup>89</sup> The colonists adapted to their surroundings, however, often embracing Magyar culture and language. Intermarriage, integration, and acculturation often blurred the lines between cultures, resulting in many hybrid identities or outright “defections” from Germandom. Blurring these ideal types of the contemporary nationalist were the parallel pressures of Magyarization and Croatization.

Though they were nominally joined, the relationship between the Kingdoms of Hungary and Croatia-Slavonia was never an easy one, being characterized by Budapest’s constant ambitions to dominate what remained a nominally separate territory and repeated Croatian resistance. As we shall see in the following chapter, tensions persisted between Budapest and Zagreb even after an 1868 arrangement designed to regulate relations between them. Meanwhile, Magyar control of Hungary proper was near total after the Austrian concessions in the *Ausgleich* of 1867. Policies of Magyarization accelerated and intensified during the dualist era and not dissimilar Croatization measures were enacted in Croatia-Slavonia. The upshot of this situation

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<sup>89</sup> Horst Hasselsteiner, "Cooperation and Confrontation between Rulers and the Noble Estates, 1711-1790," in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter Sugar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 143.

was that, depending on their place of residence, the Swabians in Transleithania effectively existed under two regimes as far as political matters and social and cultural issues were concerned. Swabians were subject to the Magyar and Croatian hegemonic nationalisms. These nationalizing nationalisms were intent on assimilating them but were sometimes at odds themselves. In such an environment, the nascent German national movement often encountered official hostility and popular impatience, but the Swabian national activists nevertheless succeeded in planting certain organizational and ideological seeds which would grow and bear fruit during the interwar era. To understand the beginnings of the German national movement in the lands that would become Yugoslavia is to study these early national protagonists. In their actions we see the methods which would be later deployed to stimulate German national consciousness and forge political unity in Yugoslavia.

### Magyarization

In 1924, the aged Hungarian German activist Edmund Steinacker recalled that, during the dualist era, Germans in Hungary were characterized by a certain national “tepidity” and that the Germans’ apathy toward nationhood derived from their history and circumstances in Hungary. Having prospered there, they considered Hungary their fatherland and were often sympathetic to the strivings of the Magyars in culture and against absolutism. The Germans, however, did not recognize the danger to their own national identity when legitimate Magyar cultural strivings evolved into assimilationist, Magyarizing tendencies, he claimed.<sup>90</sup> After the 1867

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<sup>90</sup> Edmund Steinacker, "Erweckung des voelkischen Bewusstseins der Ungarlaendischen Deutschen," *Der Auslandsdeutsche* 7, no. 15 (1924). 447.

Ausgleich, Hungarian Germans, naturally sought to benefit materially from the national political changes and join in the administration of the new state. Magyarization being the price of participation in the affairs of Ausgleich Hungary's state and society, however, Hungary's Germans lost their intellectual elite. This loss hobbled any prospect of a German national movement. Indeed, it was the urban Germans, who might otherwise have been the most inclined toward German nationalism, who were most susceptible to Magyarization.<sup>91</sup>

Broadly speaking, Magyarization was a kind of assimilation or acculturation, a process by which non-Magyar elements came to adopt Magyar culture and language. Magyarization reflected Magyar cultural hegemony within the bounds of the Hungarian kingdom and was regarded by proponents as a self-evidently good thing both for the Hungarian state and for the individuals adopting the state people's culture. Ultimately, however, Magyarization was more than a policy that could be turned on and off. It was a social current and pressure that permeated Hungarian society. Indeed, Magyarization was a kind of cultural hegemony that exerted a magnetic attraction on certain sectors of non-Magyar society and whose attractions radiated the values, lifestyle and prosperity of the Hungarian gentry. As a policy and social pressure, it was a manifestation of nationalizing nationalism for it was a strategy by which to consolidate the Magyar nation-state through policies designed to forge Magyars out of the many ethnic groups in the kingdom. Finally, some saw in Magyarization a civilizing mission to bring higher culture to the benighted peasantry, a kind of "Magyar's burden". Magyarization, thus, was at once coercive policy, voluntary assimilation, socio-economic betterment, cultural appeal and a social

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 447.

phenomenon. The Magyars believed themselves to have a historic duty to maintain their kingdom's independence, and recognized that strength to this end would come from the linguistic and cultural homogenization of the population. Indeed, advocates of Magyarization asserted that their assimilationist project differed little from what had occurred earlier in France, when Paris had reached out to the diverse French countryside in the interest of forging French nationhood and consolidating its state. Acculturation to Magyardom was regarded as a reasonable, self-evident, and even desirable requirement for socio-economic advancement and participation in the affairs of Hungarian state and society. Magyarization, thus, could be both an artificial kind of cultural engineering but also a natural form of assimilation. It operated through pressure but also through appeal.

Despite Hungary's vastly improved position under the terms of the *Ausgleich*, the country plainly remained incomplete according to the emerging paradigm of the nation-state. For the purpose of enhancing the position of Hungary *viz.* Austria in the joint state (and thereby becoming the dominant partner), assertive Magyar voices increasingly called for policies that would complete the transformation of Hungary into a modern nation-state by homogenizing its population in Magyar language and culture. The 1875 ascension of the Liberal regime meant an atmosphere of increasingly radical Magyarization saturated with mutual nationalist mistrust.

As contemporary Oscar Jaszi observed, the radicalization of Magyarization intensified across the *Ausgleich* era with each consecutive generation's assumption of power. Those who had concluded the *Ausgleich* remembered the conflict with the nationalities during 1848-49 and recognized that a more constructive approach would

have to be taken to secure the nationalities' cooperation in the new era. However, in 1875, a new generation assumed the helm of Hungary, led by Kalamán Tisza and the Liberal Party. This new generation was "a generation of the gentry which forgot the great lessons of 1848-49 and which regarded the situation of the country exclusively from the point of view of their momentary interests."<sup>92</sup> Tisza remained in office until 1890 and presided over an intensification and expansion of Magyarization measures and sentiments that paled only compared to the impatient Magyar nationalism of the succeeding generation in the 1890s and twentieth century.<sup>93</sup>

Though official Magyarization's opponents decried it as highly pernicious, the efficacy of state sponsored Magyarization was sometimes questionable. Oscar Jaszi has observed that Magyarization policies in education, for example, were often ineffective and even counterproductive. While Magyarization might have been more successful in urban areas, large sections of the overwhelmingly agrarian population remained far less affected by it. Those in the non-Magyar countryside who did attend schools in Hungarian often learned the language imperfectly at best, having scant

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<sup>92</sup> Jaszi. 318.

<sup>93</sup> Even before it became government policy, Magyarization had long been in evidence in the Hungarian kingdom. If the Magyarization that was so decried by its enemies in the later 1800s was a kind of "artificial" assimilation promoted through education, discrimination, and such, it must be said that Magyarization also predated such coercive measures as a kind of voluntary or even unconscious acculturation. In this, one must understand Magyarization as a kind of identity shift which was neither unnatural nor necessarily forced. Socio-political betterment in Hungary effectively required the embrace of Magyar language and cultural forms. In part this derived from Magyar chauvinism, and the social (and later governmental) pressure to embrace Magyarism became such that many acculturated individuals even Magyarized their names. However, others were genuinely drawn to Magyar culture, which had a "civilized" appeal and high cultural pretensions. Much of Magyarization's appeal came from the attractive and fashionable "gentry" lifestyle which Magyar culture seemed to represent. Thus, there was a voluntary aspect of Magyarization that was sometimes opportunist, perhaps, but was often very earnest. Additionally, there was an economic aspect to Magyarization, since many non-Magyar immigrants to towns during the post-1867 economic boom became subsumed by Magyar culture. Urbanization and industrialization (especially in Budapest) were unwitting accomplices of Magyarization, as was the creeping transformation of the Hungarian economy. Meanwhile, the assimilated and their descendants often became the loudest advocates of Magyarism, literally condemning those stubborn coethnics who clung to their own language and culture with the zeal of converts.

opportunity to use it after the end of the school day. The real tragedy in many such cases was that village students learned neither their native tongue nor Magyar with any sophistication.<sup>94</sup>

If Magyarization was often ineffective in basic education, it sometimes had unintended consequences in secondary education. Secondary schools were typically located in larger towns and cities, where the quality of both students and instruction were higher. In every such case, there was at least some Magyar milieu in which to use the language socially. Jaszi writes,

As a matter of fact, the greater part of the intelligentsia of the non-Magyar peoples learned the Magyar language very well, nay some of them became excellent Magyar orators and writers. But from the point of view of Magyar assimilation there was no advantage in this process because the non-Magyar youth, recruited from these schools, became the most ardent supporters of the claims of their races, and the mechanical drill of Magyarization had as its result the embittered fight of these “Magyarized” elements against the school system of assimilation and sometimes against the Hungarian state itself which they identified with the system of forcible Magyarization. Another part of the non-Magyar youth went abroad into the schools of their co-nationals beyond the frontiers and this intercourse kindled even more the fire of irredentism.<sup>95</sup>

Most of the men who first assumed leadership of the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia in the interwar period would have come from precisely such an educational background and many had studied in Austria or Germany.

Ultimately, Magyarization may be best described as a kind of “soft oppression,” or perhaps a “guided repression,” whose end goal was theoretically the enrichment of the assimilates and the state. Its main instruments were education, the

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<sup>94</sup> This was also the case across Slavonia and Srijem, where the German population was subjected to Croatization policies, including in education, and often spoke or wrote a form of German that borrowed heavily from Croatian, as we shall see.

<sup>95</sup> Jaszi. 330-331.

Magyar monopoly on the public sphere and administration, discrimination, prejudice, the reflexive assumption of Magyar cultural superiority, and finally the expectation that professional success in Hungary necessarily and self-evidently required assimilation. The Catholic Church was also a promoter and vehicle of Magyarization. Many of its priests were themselves Magyarized from German, Slovak or other ethnic stock and embraced the Hungarian state project passionately. Ultimately, the Church and instruments of public policy and social expectance aimed at compelling an identity shift among the huge non-Magyar populations of the state. It reflected the ascendant national principle in Hungary, by which Magyars reconceived Hungary as being not merely polyethnic but regrettably multinational. Magyar nationalism became increasingly imperialistic in Hungary after the 1880s, when “it became a political axiom that either the Magyars would assimilate the nationalities or the nationalities would destroy the Hungarian state.”<sup>96</sup> The cacophonous chaos of multinational Cisleithania only confirmed Magyar convictions of the imperative of national unity and the drive to Magyarize.

#### *Magyarization and the Danube Swabians*

Hungary’s many nationalities considered official Magyarization menacing until the very end. Some groups were clearly more disposed to assimilate than others, however, and numerous factors, including demographics, geography, ambition, prosperity, religion, education, and occupation served as key determinants of this interethnic emigration. Indeed, susceptibility even varied within groups. The Germans

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 320.



of central Hungary in particular were quite susceptible to assimilation, their transformation being most notable in booming Budapest.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the rural Germans of southern Hungary remained comparatively immune to the seduction or coercion of Magyarization and endured into the twentieth century, when they formed the basis of southeastern Europe's interwar German minorities.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Hungary had successfully trained a competent class of Magyar state administrators and had thus embedded Magyar national feeling throughout the state apparatus. Particularly in the cities of the central part of the country, public life became Magyar life and Magyar nationhood was ascendant in language, custom and public spirit. Magyarization consolidated its biggest gains in central Hungary, especially in the towns, among immigrant Jews, the German burghers, and other immigrants from the kingdom's fringe who swelled the ranks of the urban working class.<sup>98</sup> Between 1880 and 1910, more than half a million Germans acculturated to Magyardom, especially in Budapest and the kingdom's interior.<sup>99</sup> Such Magyarization "success" was hardly decisive, however, and as late as 1910 Magyars only constituted 48.1 percent of the kingdom's population.<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, Magyarization effects were much more limited on the kingdom's peripheries, as we shall see.

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<sup>97</sup> For more on the Germans of Budapest, see Robert Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). For a broader discussion of the history of Germans in nineteenth century Hungary, see Ingomar Senz, *Doanuschwaebische Geschichte*, Reihe III des Donauschwaebischen Archivs, Muenchen, vol. 2 (Munich: Universitas Verlag, 1997).

<sup>98</sup> C.A. Macartney, *Hungary: A Short History* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1962). 186-7.

<sup>99</sup> Schoedl. 82.

<sup>100</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, Fluechtlinge, und Kriegsgeschaedigte, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Ungarn*, ed. Theodor Schieder, Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mittleuropa, vol. 2 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 1956; reprint, 2004). 1E.

<b>Table 1.1: Germans in Selected Cities of Hungary<sup>101</sup></b>				
<b>City</b>	<b>1880</b>		<b>1910</b>	
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Absolute</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Absolute</b>
<b>Budapest</b>	33.0	119,902	8.9	78,882
<b>Novi Sad</b>	25.1	5353	17.6	5918
<b>Vršac</b>	57.5	12,839	49,6	13,556
<b>Bela Crkva</b>	69.4	6825	52.6	6062
<b>Timișoara</b>	56.6	18,539	43.6	31,644

In Vojvodina, German population declines were not so sharp and the German population even increased in some cases. Unlike the Germans in the towns of central Hungary, those in the south benefited from rural surroundings thick with German settlements. In many cases, the towns had close ties with the surrounding German villages, which somewhat insulated them from the pressures and attractions of Magyarization. Although each isolated village in many ways constituted a “world unto itself”, the peasantry did regularly travel to the towns to sell their produce.<sup>102</sup> In this way Swabian burghers and peasants enjoyed circumstances of mutual cultural support and economic interaction. Several market towns such as Vršac, Ruma, Novi Sad, and Pančevo would emerge as early centers of nascent the German national movement in Vojvodina. Nevertheless, German national consciousness before the First World War was rare among the region’s ethnically German but nationally indifferent inhabitants. Moreover, the urban dwellers and well to do peasantry were also not immune to the appeals of Magyar culture.

<sup>101</sup> Adapted from Guenther Schoedl, ed., *Land an der Donau*, Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1995). 362.

<sup>102</sup> “Die Deutschen in Ungarn” in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, April 24, 1904 #17. p. 1.

### *Shades of Assimilation and German Identity*

Assimilation is best understood not as an absolute but rather as a continuum, a spectrum of acculturation that allows for total conformity but also the simultaneous coexistence of multiple loyalties and traits. As immigrants of highly diverse origins, the Germans along the Danube underwent several acculturations: both to fellow immigrant German groups as well as to the peoples and circumstances of new homeland. New dialects developed through interchange between the various German colonists' *Stämme*, and the appropriation of words from Hungarian and Serbo-Croatian. Customs brought from German lands evolved and often gradually adopted local (Hungarian, Serbian, Croatian) elements. The settlers brought new architecture, methods of construction, crops and advanced farming techniques, all of which had to be adapted to their new environment.<sup>103</sup> Succeeding generations embraced, to varying degrees, Magyar (or Croatian) culture, language, values, and political outlook. As we have seen, this process of acculturation accelerated in central Hungary, where the German-Hungarian bourgeoisie so assimilated during the 1800s that it no longer played a role as Germans in the cities by the twentieth century.<sup>104</sup> Yet if the Germans in the central part of the country (most notably Budapest) “disappeared” into Magyardom, those in the southern periphery of the country remained isolated in their own ethnic milieus, nationally indifferent, and politically passive.

A subtle but important shift occurred slowly and incompletely in the consciousness of many Germans in Hungary during the nineteenth and early

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<sup>103</sup> Senz. 13.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 288

twentieth centuries, from “*Deutschungarn*” to “*Ungarndeutsche*.”<sup>105</sup> This exchanged placement of noun and modifier signaled a response to the nationalizing Magyar state project and betrayed the intrusion of modern German national identity. “*Deutschungarn*” and “*deutschungarisch*” had long described a kind of state patriotism, a German loyalty to the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. Saint Stephen had been an early advocate of diversity in his kingdom, and the dynastic principle was such that there had long been no contradiction between one’s personal ethnicity and loyalty to the Hungarian state and king. One might be ethnically German, yes, but one’s political loyalty was vested in Hungary and the Habsburg dynasty. One was therefore, an ethnically German Hungarian. Over the course of the (especially late) nineteenth century, however, the “*deutschungarisch*” viewpoint became ever less tenable in a country which was so transformed by the Magyar national movement and the Ausgleich that the nationalities came to be considered a regrettable liability and an obstacle to the consolidation of Hungary as the nation-state of the Magyars. Gradually, the switch toward an “*ungarndeutsch*” perspective occurred, signifying not disloyalty to the Hungarian kingdom but rather indicating a new appreciation of German ethnicity that specifically legitimized a non-Magyar identity and recognized the Germans of Hungary as a uniquely Hungarian branch of the greater German *Volk*. This notion of being a Hungarian German was gradually displacing the idea of being a German Hungarian, but its penetration was gradual and still shallow by the outbreak of the First World War.

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<sup>105</sup> For more, see Guenther Schoedl, "Am Rande des Reiches, am Rande der Nation: Deutsche im Koenigreich Ungarn (1867-1914/18)," in *Land an der Donau*, ed. Guenther Schoedl, Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1995).

Swabian historian Ingomar Senz provides a useful taxonomy of assimilation in Hungary. The unassimilated countryside defines one extreme of assimilation's continuum. Scattered across the continuum's middle lie the so-called "*Kulturdeutsche*," people of German heritage who outwardly adopted Magyar forms and language, but nevertheless retained a lingering German sensibility and may have preferred German in the home. Finally, the fully assimilated Magyarones occupied the other extreme of the continuum of Magyarization.

Unassimilated ethnic Germans requiring little explanation, we begin with a discussion of the *Kulturdeutsche*. Consciously or unconsciously, the *Kulturdeutsche* worked to reconcile their German heritage and Hungarian patriotism, indeed identity, with the country's increasingly assertive Magyar nationalism. They were only rarely political, however. In any event, the *Kulturdeutsche* often coped with their situation through partial assimilation or a progressively deeper embrace of Magyar culture, norms and language.<sup>106</sup>

If the *Kulturdeutsche* sometimes struggled to reconcile their proud German heritage and real or opportunistic enthusiasm for Magyardom, Magyarones did not share their dilemma. These assimilationist zealots effectively sought a total break with their ethnic origins as Germans and identified totally with the Magyar nation and nationalism. Theirs was the most extreme form of assimilation and often involved the Magyarization of names and surnames as an outward demonstration of their total embrace of things Magyar. Whether out of social insecurity or nationalist rapture, Magyarones in many cases sought to further prove their legitimacy by advocating the

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<sup>106</sup> Senz. 307-310

most nationalist of policies and showing the least tolerance of ethnic dissent. Their assimilation was ecstatic, extreme, and often very public.

By the mid-nineteenth century, there was still no *ungarndeutsch* association or group to speak of. Moreover, there was basically no German national elite that could lead such a movement outside of Transylvania.<sup>107</sup> However, the increasingly chauvinist nature of Ausgleich Hungary would change this to a limited degree. In the decades after 1870, Hungary's Germans frequently displayed either an accelerating inclination to Magyarize or else showed a flickering interest in vague notions of a transborder German *Kulturnation*. Nevertheless, no German national movement emerged in the kingdom before the twentieth century.

Why did German national identity continue to lack much appeal in Hungary even after the erection of Bismarck's Reich and the intensification of the nationality competition in neighboring Cisleithania during the nineteenth century's later decades? After all, German nationalism was increasingly strident elsewhere during these decades. Confessional differences, historical difference, physical distance, and the lack of German national unity in Austria itself must each be recognized as being partially responsible for frustrating the emergence or appeal of a German national movement in Hungary. The German state of the Hohenzollerns only confirmed that German unification would proceed without the Germans of the Monarchy and thus may have undermined German identity for many. Moreover, the German Reich was too distant and too Protestant to spark much inspiration in Hungary, where most ethnic Germans were Catholic. Moreover, inside Hungary, confession divided the

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<sup>107</sup> The Transylvanian Saxons were well organized with important urban centers and an educated elite. However, their distant, Protestant and comparatively ancient society retained a distinct identity and largely looked after itself.

Catholic Swabians from the more nationally conscious, confident, and Protestant Transylvanian Saxons, who also had a very long and distinct history.<sup>108</sup> Thus there was little sense of ethnic unity among most of the country's Germans. Additionally, Magyar culture continued to retain its appeal for many ambitious Germans, particularly in the kingdom's core regions. Yet even as the German burghers of central Hungary embraced Magyardom or at least quietly coexisted as *Kulturdeutsche*, a small contingent of nationally conscious Germans became convinced that action was necessary to rescue the country's Germans from further assimilation. German national identity being weak in central Hungary's cities, they turned their attention to the rural settlements in the country's southern periphery, where Magyarization had made fewer inroads.

*Edmund Steinacker and the Origins of the German Movement in Hungary*

The story of German political organization in southern Hungary is inextricably bound with the name of Edmund Steinacker. In his 1929 obituary, Novi Sad's *Deutsches Volksblatt* proclaimed Steinacker "the dean of the German movement" in Hungary.<sup>109</sup> Ten years later, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, Osijek's *Slawonischer Volksbote* would call him the "political awakener of the Danube Swabians" and one of the men principally responsible for the Germans' "national rebirth" and "rescue from national extinction and being forgotten"<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Schoedl, "Am Rande des Reiches, am Rande der Nation: Deutsche im Koenigreich Ungarn (1867-1914/18)." 365

<sup>109</sup> "Dr. Edmund Steinacker," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 23 1929.

<sup>110</sup> Hans Bertram, "Edmund Steinacker zu seinem 100. Geburtstag," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, August 19 1939.

Indeed, it was Steinacker who recognized the potential constituency for a German national movement in the rural Swabian population of Vojvodina. Even before his own years of political activity, however, Steinacker was seemingly always at the center of the German national movement in Hungary. Born in Debrecen in 1839, he attended an Lutheran elementary school (*evangelische Elementarschule*) before attending *Gymnasium* in Sopron and Weimar, and finally the *Technische Hochschule* in Stuttgart.<sup>111</sup> Returning to Hungary in 1867, he married the daughter of Eduard Glatz, long-time editor of the *Pester Lloyd* newspaper and one of the earliest opponents of Magyarization. In these years, Steinacker also became acquainted with leading Transylvanian Saxon members of parliament and their own struggles in Hungary.

Though raised in a German home pervaded by a devotion to Hungary, in his origins and his thoroughly German education Steinacker came to feel ever more German. Still, by his own admission, there was little cause for German national agitation in the first years after the *Ausgleich*, when the tolerance and equal rights promised by the 1868 Nationalities Law seemed as if they might become an enduring reality.<sup>112</sup> It was only during the negotiations on the unification of Budapest in the mid-1870s that Steinacker was stirred to action, when it was decided that the administration in the newly unified (but still hugely German) city would not be bilingual, as before, but in the Magyar language alone. Steinacker organized a petition demanding the continued use of German in city affairs, but his effort was

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<sup>111</sup> Located only 60 kilometers from Vienna and known in German as Ödenburg, Sopron had a large German population.

<sup>112</sup> Edmund Steinacker, "Selbstbibliographie," *Der Auslanddeutsche* 10, no. 16 (1927).



unsuccessful and the Magyarization of Budapest rolled onward. Nevertheless, Steinacker was not deterred and continued his advocacy for the country's Germans.

Steinacker had been optimistic about the *Ausgleich*, which seemed to offer much hope for the liberalization and modernization of Hungary. As a member of parliament in 1870s and 1880s, however, he soon recognized that entrenched feudal interests would sacrifice such liberalization and modernization to preserve their own eroding position in the state, society, and economy. Magyarization of the nationalities was one goal of such a policy. Indeed, in the Hungary of Kalman Tisza and his successors, Steinacker's ideas became positively anachronistic. Where before Steinacker had hoped that the *deutschungarisch* burghers would serve as a driving force in the modernization of the whole state and society, he now recognized that this was unlikely.

During these years, Steinacker gradually came to recognize that the urban Germans of Hungary's center were too complacent or too Magyarized to form the basis of a successful German national movement. The Transylvanian Saxons retained their proud tradition of ethnic solidarity and limited autonomy, but they were already organized as *Transylvanian Saxons* and showed little interest in a broader German movement. Thus it was that Steinacker eventually turned to the Swabians in the kingdom's south, especially in Banat. There, the Swabians dwelled either in Timișoara, which boasted so many Germans that it was frequently called Temeschburg, or in smaller towns or villages where Magyarization's successes had been relatively superficial.

Although Steinacker was instrumental in fostering and organizing the German national movement in Hungary, he was never disloyal to the kingdom and felt wounded by accusations to the contrary. Rather, Steinacker sought to preserve the Germandom of Hungary by organizing it politically and reinforcing it culturally. Germans should be free and encouraged to be German in spirit, language and culture, he believed. Furthermore, they should be tolerated as such by their fatherland, which was Hungary. Though it appeared positively insurrectionary or even treasonous to many Magyars, the small movement he led was a loyal one. As such, Steinacker was defined by two cultures, being “German in his heritage, ways and thoughts but manifoldly devoted to the Magyar people, bound to the Hungarian homeland, and loyal to his fatherland Hungary.”<sup>113</sup>

As late as the final decade before the outbreak of the First World War, German national identity remained weak even in the kingdom’s Danubian south.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, the Monarchy’s final decades witnessed the gradual development of a small Swabian-based German movement in Hungary. This movement crystallized due to a number of factors, including provocative actions by the state and socio-economic changes in the countryside. The Germans reacted to their circumstances, and the conditions of late nineteenth century Hungary were ones of increasing national intolerance and aggressively integral Magyar nationalism, as we have seen. Where before one could expect to exist unmolested as a German-speaking *Hungarian* patriot in Hungary, in the *Ausgleich* era one was increasingly expected to transfer not only political loyalty but even personal identity to the *Magyar* state and culture. Gradually

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<sup>113</sup> Senz. 320-321.

<sup>114</sup> "Ursachen unserer Lauheit," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, June 19 1904.

this pressure to totally Magyarize engendered resentment among many Germans, who increasingly recognized that Transleithania offered them neither place nor prospects as such. The 1898 Magyarization of place names provoked further exasperation among the minorities.

As the nascent German national movement organized in Hungary, it faced repressive measures by the Hungarian government, the displeasure of threatened Magyars and expressions of Magyar cultural chauvinism. Naturally, such unpleasantness provoked much disquiet among many Swabians, who began to suspect that this country was not for them. Many more Swabians were shaken from their political passivity and indifference to national identity by political developments in the Monarchy's last decades, especially the crisis of 1903-06 and the installation of the strident Magyar nationalist coalition cabinet, which succeeded the long, liberal regime. These developments alienated broad sectors of Hungary's national minorities, shocked many Swabians from their political lethargy, and conferred a new urgency upon the German national movement, first manifest in the form of rallies, articles, the founding of newspapers and new, local political groupings.<sup>115</sup> It was in this atmosphere that Edmund Steinacker and a likeminded circle of ethnic Germans reasoned the timing ripe for the establishment of a German political party in Hungary.

During the 1890s, a relatively lively associational life developed in the Swabian villages of Vojvodina and Srijem. As we shall see in detail in Ruma in Chapter Two, a limited number of Germans became increasingly aware around the turn of the century that they had to organize themselves politically to forestall their being collectively disadvantaged and subsumed by Magyardom (and Croatdom in

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<sup>115</sup> Senz. 368.

Croatia). To this end, German-oriented local reading clubs, volunteer fire brigades, singing clubs, and gymnastic associations were founded and even held regional gatherings. In many cases, the German clubs were inspired by the already extant nationalist organizations of their neighboring nationalities (especially Serbs and Croats) whose national movements were far more developed than the Swabians'. But it was principally the appearance of men who understood how to articulate Swabian dissatisfaction and channel it into a political program that transformed German social and economic discontent and flickering national identity into a proper, if still nascent, political movement. Such men, often connected to local newspapers, served as the distillers and mobilizers of German national identity in the towns of southern Hungary. Many of the men who would become leaders in interwar Yugoslavia thus gained experience in prewar Hungary's young German institutions under the guidance of Steinacker. He was the movement's unofficial but broadly acknowledged leader and his extensive contacts in Austria and especially Germany were indispensable for the movement's success.<sup>116</sup>

Newspapers were of key importance in the German national movement in pre-Trianon Hungary and the interwar successor states. Hungary had long had many German language newspapers, but few advocated for the German national cause or could be described as German-national in spirit. (The Hungarian authorities often ensured that this remained the case through legal measures.) Abroad, the Germans were little informed about Germans in the Hungarian Kingdom. As such, one task for Steinacker and his collaborators was to raise awareness abroad about the circumstances of Hungary's Germans. Meanwhile, at home they resolved to launch a

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid. 364-365.

nationally-oriented German newspaper in order to propagate national consciousness among Swabians and offer them a German nationalist perspective on the news.

Steinacker began his own career in print with “On the Waking and Strengthening of National Consciousness in German-Hungarian Circles” (“Zur Weckung und Staerkung des nationalen Bewusstseins in den deutschungarischen Kreisen”), an article series he wrote under the pen name “Sincerus” for the *Preßburger Zeitung* in the 1870s. Perhaps predictably, the controversial articles provoked outrage in Magyar nationalist circles, as did his many speeches as a member of the Hungarian parliament.<sup>117</sup> The year 1888 was a watershed moment for Steinacker. When finally accused that year by Prime Minister Kalman Tisza of seeking to spread hatred against Hungary abroad, Steinacker resigned his seat in parliament and moved his residence to Klosterneuburg, Austria. Although Steinacker lived thereafter in a form of exile in Austria, he nevertheless remained active in German national matters in Hungary and continued to promote awareness in Cisleithania and the Reich about the Hungarian Germans’ circumstances. Moreover, he often returned to Hungary and traveled to Banat. There he collaborated in the 1899 establishment of the short-lived Timișoara daily, *Deutsche Tageblatt fuer Ungarn*, and its successor, the weekly *Deutschungarische Volksfreund*. Steinacker was a regular contributor to both newspapers.

Having established a supraregional German-national press to nurture the nascent German movement in Hungary, Steinacker and his likeminded collaborators turned their attention to politics. Their efforts culminated in the establishment in 1906 of the Hungarian German People’s Party, known in German as the *Ungarlaendische*

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<sup>117</sup> Steinacker, “Selbstbibliographie.” 550.

*Deutsche Volkspartei* or UDVP. Ludwig Kremling, who would later become the formal head of the *Partei der Deutschen* in interwar Yugoslavia, served as the UDVP's chairman. The party's founders intended the UDVP to be a nationally oriented party that would transcend region and speak for all Hungary's Germans. The party was founded at a time of much nationalist suspicion, however, and its establishment was certainly not appreciated by the Hungarian authorities. As such, the UDVP had to tread somewhat cautiously. The UDVP held its constitutional meeting in Vršac in 1906 and subsequent meetings across Banat in Bela Crkva, Velika Kikinda and Novi Sad, and Timișoara.<sup>118</sup> Thus the UDVP had a presence in many parts of Batschka and Banat which would be awarded to Yugoslavia after the First World War. The party hoped to create a greater sense of community among the country's disparate and indifferent German groups and resolved to participate in the upcoming election in 1918. The party additionally hoped to strengthen ties between the Germans of Hungary and those of Cisleithania and Imperial Germany.

The UDVP's party program called for a new legal arrangement guaranteeing German minority rights as well as the proper implementation of already existing legislation to the same end. It demanded modernizing, liberalizing, and electoral reforms, including "the universal, secret, direct and equal right to vote," and the free use of the German language, especially in churches and schools. Moreover, it called for tax reforms and legal protections for the peasantry and all other "productive classes." The UDVP's program furthermore explicitly insisted upon the Germans' loyalty to their Hungarian fatherland and language and was signed by UDVP Chairman Ludwig Kremling as well as 5000 other Germans from across the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 551.

kingdom.<sup>119</sup> Five UDVP candidates, including Steinacker, competed in the 1910 elections in Hungary, but the party failed to win any seats. This was a disappointment, but the existence of the party and Steinacker's newspapers revealed that the German national movement was indisputably growing in southern Hungary. In fact, Steinacker's achievements were such that they even attracted the attention of some important Transylvanian Saxons.

The founding of the UDVP in Vojvodina was a historic event for the nascent German national movement in Hungary. Although small, its existence offered the prospect of greater German mobilization in the future. Local or regional political parties of Germans had existed before in Hungary but the UDVP was the first to seek to organize Germans on a transregional basis on the basis of national identity.<sup>120</sup> Success was often elusive, even in the central towns of southern Hungary, however, owing to the thin stratum of nationally conscious Germans interested in political activity. Confession, distance, and the disapproval of Hungarian authorities were also hindrances, but by 1912 the UDVP boasted 60 local chapters with over 10,000 members.<sup>121</sup> Even as it adopted the *Ungarndaendische Volksfreund* as its official mouthpiece, however, the UDVP was never more than a marginal group in Vojvodina and there was little change in the pre-national attitude of the bulk of Swabian peasants.

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<sup>119</sup> UDVP Program in Ludwig Kremling, "Das Erwachen der Deutschen in Ungarn," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, March 23 1907.

<sup>120</sup> The UDVP excepted from its activities Transylvania and also Croatia-Slavonia, which had its own national initiative in Syrmien. Schoedl, "Am Rande des Reiches, am Rande der Nation: Deutsche im Koenigreich Ungarn (1867-1914/18)." 410.

<sup>121</sup> Senz. 399.

*Volkstumarbeit: Help from Abroad before the First World War*

At this stage it is necessary to introduce briefly Volkstumarbeit, a subject to which we shall return in Chapters Three and Seven. Volkstumarbeit was the field concerned with the study and reinforcement of ethnic German communities outside of the core regions of German settlement in Europe, that is, in lands where the Germans were minorities.<sup>122</sup> Some Volkstumarbeit organizations were strictly academic, cultural or charitable while others such as the Pan-German League were overtly political, chauvinistic, anti-Semitic, or xenophobic. In many cases, such as the General German School Association (which was principally interested in supporting German schools abroad with materials, books and funding) Volkstumarbeit activities might have seemed innocuous enough but actually would have been intensely political in the nationally charged context of Cisleithania.<sup>123</sup>

The nature of the Volkstumarbeit field varied over time as did the names and goals of the key players in it. Before the First World War, however, the Volkstumarbeit field was relatively small and characterized by few institutions. They were particularly active in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy, where the Czech national movement in particular seemed to threaten the dominant position of the German language, culture, and persons in Austria's political, economic, and social affairs. By contrast, Volkstumarbeit organizations paid little attention before 1918 to the Hungarian half of the Habsburg Monarchy, where there were far fewer Germans.

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<sup>122</sup> At its broadest, the field of Volkstumarbeit even addressed the health and welfare of German communities in Africa, North America and especially South America. However, the vast bulk of Volkstumarbeit attention and endeavors concerned the Germans of Eastern Europe.

<sup>123</sup> Originally founded in 1881, the General German School Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein*) later evolved into the Association for Germans Abroad (*Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland* or VDA), which was one of the most important interwar Volkstumarbeit organizations.



Nevertheless, some Volkstumarbeit attention and funding did come to Hungary before the First World War, largely as a result of Edmund Steinacker. Living in Austria near Vienna, Steinacker was well informed of the nationality conflicts in Cisleithania. He was also well connected to the *Kaiserreich*-based Volkstumarbeit organizations and secured essential funding for the nascent German movement in Hungary.<sup>124</sup> Ultimately, we may say that the German movement in Hungary did not occur in isolation. There were connections to the broader German national movement in Germany and Austria. Nevertheless, Hungary's Swabians and particularly the Danube Swabians received considerably less attention or funding than did allegedly "endangered" German populations in Cisleithania.

In conclusion, the German movement largely remained in its infancy in Vojvodina on the eve of the First World War but it had made important progress under the guidance of Edmund Steinacker. Indeed, Steinacker was indispensable in the German national movement in Hungary. He served as a journalist, parliamentarian, and founder of the first political organization to properly embrace the Germans of all Hungary. However, he was additionally significant for the work he did to raise awareness and resources abroad for the Hungarian German movement.

Steinacker's recognition that the foundation of that movement could no longer be the

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<sup>124</sup> Ingomar Senz writes that the Pan-German League's financial support was "indispensable" for the German movement in Hungary. The League developed a Hungarian German Working Program (*Ungarndeutsches Arbeitsprogramm*) and provided financial and other support for Swabian publishing activities, electoral activities, organizations' operating costs, and Swabians' study abroad in Germany. The Pan-German League additionally cooperated with the UDVP, a cooperation Senz describes as "unimaginable" without Steinacker. All this begs the question of how beholden to the Pan-German League the nascent German movement in Hungary might have become. According to Senz, Steinacker was the gatekeeper and center of this cooperation between the UDVP and the Pan-German League. Though he certainly worked with the Pan-German League, he nevertheless always kept the interests of the Hungarian Germans paramount and primary. That is, Steinacker, who held tightly to his dream of a Hungary of a pretty multinational character, believed that the Swabians in Hungary should not be the object of a greater *Mitteleuropaische* game. Senz. 402-404.

cities, where Germans had already become too Magyarized, would have lasting impact for the Swabians of Vojvodina. It was in his *Ungarlaendische-Deutsche Volkspartei* that many of the future German leaders of Yugoslavia first experienced a political movement based on German national identity. Steinacker's work thus gave major impetus to the future German movement in Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, a group of German activists and agitators was pursuing a program similar to Steinacker's across the Danube in Croatia-Slavonia in a town called Ruma. Like Steinacker's, their efforts, to which we now turn, would yield valuable experience and lessons for the coming interwar era.

## Chapter 2: German Settlement and the Origins of the German national Movement in Croatia-Slavonia before the First World War

German settlement in Croatia-Slavonia differed from that in Vojvodina by beginning earlier after key Turkish defeats in the region and accelerating in the late nineteenth century after a long lull, during which colonists mostly went to Batschka and Banat. The initial German settlers in Croatia, especially before the mid-nineteenth century, had shown little inclination to assimilate. On the contrary, they displayed a sometimes haughty attitude to the South Slavs in their midst for their supposedly evident backwardness. Nevertheless, scholars generally agree that Germans, Croats and Serbs came to get along well in daily interaction and at the individual level.<sup>125</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, a great many Germans in Croatia had assimilated or were at the least indifferent toward German national identity. Yet it was in town of Ruma in east Srijem that the Swabians of Croatia-Slavonia took some of their earliest and boldest early steps in Transleithania. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the experience gained by German activists in Ruma under the Habsburgs would prove highly valuable during the interwar era.

### *German Settlement in Croatia*

In addition to the state sponsored colonization measures discussed in Chapter One, many colonists who came to Batschka and Banat responded to the private

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<sup>125</sup> Valentin Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien* (Stuttgart: Donauschwabische Kulturstiftung, 1989). 45.

initiatives of local lords, who required settlers in order to make their lands prosperous. Such was also the case with the German settlements in Slavonia and Syrmien, although some German administrators and artisans also settled the towns of Osijek and Petrovaradin only shortly after the Ottoman retreat.<sup>126</sup> Most German colonization in Slavonia and Syrmien represented a third pattern of settlement, however, which stemmed from the rising price of increasingly scarce land in the regions north of the Drava and Danube. There, the practice of primogeniture, according to which the Swabians did not divide landholdings into smaller plots, compelled the unfortunate sons who did not inherit property to either seek land elsewhere or pursue another profession. In this manner, many *Tochtersiedlungen* or “daughter settlements” sprung up across Slavonia and Srijem, where land was more cheaply and readily available. Such *Tochtersiedlungen* were also planned affairs and frequently were the result of noble initiative or invitation.

The majority of the German immigrants to Slavonia and Syrmien, thus, came not from afar, but rather from previous settlements in Vojvodina from the mid-nineteenth century even until the First World War.<sup>127</sup> Besides overpopulation and scarce, expensive land north of the Drava-Danube line, new opportunities in the later nineteenth century drove colonists to settle the still relatively untamed regions of Slavonia and Srijem. These included opportunities deriving from the end of serfdom as well as the 1859 lifting of the immigration ban for Protestants. Finally, the 1881

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<sup>126</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 6E. Many of these colonists were Magyars but some were also Germans.

<sup>127</sup> Holm Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Jugoslawien," in *Deutsche im Ausland, Fremde in Deutschland*, ed. Klaus Bade (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992). 60.

imperial decree announcing the incorporation of the Habsburg military border made available yet more land for settlement.

In the wake of the mid-century liberation of the serfs, a second form of settlement, *Einsiedlung*, became typical in Slavonia. By contrast with previous settlements directed by the state or lords, *Einsiedlung* was a disorganized affair. In essence, *Einsiedlung* was merely the purchase of land and housing by German families or groups of families in preexisting villages, often populated by non-Germans. Ultimately, such German settlers would come to comprise two thirds of the Swabians in Slavonia. In some cases the German settlers were so numerous that South Slav villages became majority German over the course of a relatively short period. No such result was guaranteed for *Einsiedler*, however, and many German families ultimately became assimilated by the South Slav communities in which they settled.<sup>128</sup> The organized settlements of Vojvodina, it seems, were often better able to maintain ethnic/national cohesion than the scattered *Einsiedler*. As such, the nature of *Einsiedlung* and its extent in Slavonia must be considered an important contributing factor to the population's comparatively weak German national consciousness and the high degree of German assimilation there under the Habsburgs.<sup>129</sup> Such immigration was most intense during the later nineteenth century and continued in reduced numbers into the twentieth.<sup>130</sup>

The German population in Croatia-Slavonia rose from 83,139 in 1880 to 134,078 or 5.1 percent of the total population in 1910 according to Habsburg census

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<sup>128</sup> Holm Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Kroatien-Slawonien und Jugoslawien," in *Land an der Donau*, ed. Guenther Schoedl, Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1995), 313.

<sup>129</sup> For more details, see Ibid. 313.

<sup>130</sup> Oberkersch. 31.

figures. German settlements stretched from Djakovo in the west to Srijem in the east. More than half of the German population lived in German majority communities and 61,500 were concentrated in Srijem, which had been part of Slavonia since 1745.<sup>131</sup>

### *Der Deutsche Michel*

The German movement in Slavonia began against a background of Swabian indifference and even shame regarding German national identity. Moreover, it began in the context of long-standing hostility towards things German in Croatia and amid important changes in Croatian (and Serbian) politics. Anti-German hostility was institutionalized in various legal measures as well as in the Croatian press, which bemoaned the German colonizers as intruders and was suspicious of their intentions.<sup>132</sup> Croatian nationalists became increasingly intolerant of the limited but conspicuous German presence, which seemed an affront to Croatian aspirations to assert the Croatian national character of their historic kingdom. Some regarded the Swabian presence as evidence of a German *Drang nach Osten* from which Europe's smaller peoples could only expect to lose. For their own part, the German peasants and burghers typically lacked the national identity and zeal of their South Slav neighbors.<sup>133</sup> Most, especially the newer immigrants, were fundamentally interested only in improving their livelihoods. Quicker to organize and faster to agitate, the Serbs and Croats provided many of the models upon which the eventual German

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<sup>131</sup> Census criteria was mother tongue. Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Kroatien-Slawonien und Jugoslawien." 314.

<sup>132</sup> In politics particularly, the colonization of German farmers was resented after the 1880s, when Ban Khuen-Hedervary attempted to promote Magyar settlement, stoking Croatian fears of a wave of new foreigners. This also attracted the scrutiny of the press. Oberkersch. 41.

<sup>133</sup> Vladimir Geiger, *Nijemci u Dakovu i Dakovštini* (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2001). 79.

movement in Croatia-Slavonia would later base itself in the Monarchy's final decades. Yet even after some important successes, the region's German movement was still a work in progress in 1914. While the German national movement had scored many successes in Ruma and its surroundings, its limited impact in Osijek, Slavonia's principal city, was a daily reminder that the future of Germandom in Croatia-Slavonia was far from assured on the eve of the First World War.

Croatia-Slavonia's status inside Hungary resembled Hungary's position in the overall Habsburg Monarchy as a result of the *Nagodba*, an 1868 arrangement between Zagreb and Budapest. According to the terms of this arrangement, Budapest formally recognized Croatia-Slavonia as a distinct entity under the suzerainty of the Hungarian crown. That is, Croats attained the status of a political nation in Hungary, with which they formed a single state. Croatian nationalists bristled at continued Hungarian political influence in the kingdom, however. Indeed, the *Nagodba* was signed with Budapest only after the withdrawal of the National Party from the Sabor. It was the Hungarophile Unionist party that concluded the arrangement with Budapest. Even after a revised *Nagodba* was signed in 1873, Croatian nationalists felt that the arrangement left Croatia-Slavonia far too dependent on Hungary. Nevertheless, compared to other lands in Hungary, Croatia-Slavonia enjoyed considerable autonomy in its daily affairs.<sup>134</sup>

Resentment of Budapest in Croatia-Slavonia perhaps reached its post-*Nagodba* apogee during the administration of Ban Karolyi Khuen-Hedervary from

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<sup>134</sup> For more on the terms of the *Nagodba*, see Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia, a History* (London: Hurst & Co., 1999). 82-84.

1883 to 1903.<sup>135</sup> Among other things Khuen-Hedervary, was accused of violating the terms of the Nagodba by introducing the Magyar language and Hungarian symbolism where inappropriate and of undermining liberalism and Croatian autonomy.<sup>136</sup> In Croatia-Slavonia, Magyarization was regarded not with the benevolence it enjoyed across the river in Batschka, but rather as an existential threat. Indeed, in Croatia-Slavonia, even hints of Magyarizing measures were sufficient to provoke a Croatian nationalist backlash. Thus, Croatian sensitivities meant that anti-Hungarian and anti-German sentiment and Croatizing pressures pervaded policy and society, making the press, school, and streetscape loci of contention for the nascent German national movement. Budapest's pretensions to political and social dominance in the contentious relationship with Zagreb rendered Croats quite ill-disposed toward non-Croatian influences in their country. One result of Croatization pressures was national uncertainty and attrition among the region's Germans, many of whom increasingly identified as Croats out of shame, confusion, or opportunism.

Germans in Croatia lived overwhelmingly in Slavonia and Srijem. The population of Slavonia's principal city, Osijek, was majority German at the turn of the century,<sup>137</sup> and the nearly 60,000 German speakers in Srijem comprised more than 16 percent of that region's population.<sup>138</sup> Despite a historic presence in Croatia-Slavonia, the Germans there were characterized by indifference toward national consciousness around the turn of the twentieth century. Even as the Hungarian,

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<sup>135</sup> The "ban" was a viceroy appointed by Budapest to administer Croatia-Slavonia.

<sup>136</sup> John R Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country*, 2 ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). 62-63.

<sup>137</sup> Velemir Petrović, "Kroatische Einflüsse im Essekerischen," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice 2* (1996). 108.

<sup>138</sup> "Die Nationalitaetenfrage in Syrmien und ihre Losung," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, May 23 1908.



Serbian and Croatian national movements consolidated and asserted themselves, the Germans of Croatia-Slavonia remained politically passive qua Germans. A brief essay in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* observed the lamentable state of Germandom in the country in 1906.

A large part of the Germans in Croatia-Slavonia as well as in Hungary is not only indifferent in a national sense, but all too often is also not grounded in their character. The Germans form the most turncoats and renegades. Some have too little and others absolutely no national self-awareness. They feel and behave all too often as Croats in Croatia-Slavonia and as Magyars in Hungary. They cannot distinguish between the concepts of geographic and ethnographic. Many of these Germans don't know what disgrace, what abasement they bring upon themselves in denying the privilege of their German ethnic identity (*Stammeszugehoerigkeit*).<sup>139</sup>

As late as the early twentieth century, thus, many Germans in Croatia-Slavonia (and elsewhere in southern Hungary), were not only indifferent toward German national identity but were actually confused about the very meaning of the concept, freely describing themselves as Croats and Hungarians based on their place of residence or political loyalty.

The reasons for German assimilation to Croatdom were generally similar to those for the “defection” to Magyardom across the Drava and Danube rivers. There was considerable Croatian pressure to assimilate and Swabian recalcitrants frequently had to endure anti-German remarks or epithets. Moreover, as with Magyarization, there were undeniable material advantages in work, school, and society for those who “unburdened” themselves of their Germandom.<sup>140</sup> Living in Croatian surroundings, assimilation was a gradual and even unreflective process for many Germans. As with

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<sup>139</sup> Wf. Ein Banater Schwob in der Ferne, "Sind die Deutschen in Kroatien Kroaten und in Ungarn Magyaren?," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 11 1906.

<sup>140</sup> "Duerfen und sollen wir Deutschen bleiben?," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, February 21 1904.

Magyarization in Hungary proper, the assimilation of the educated seriously depleted the ranks of the German intelligentsia in Croatia-Slavonia. German nationalists therefore regarded Croatization as doubly problematic, for it reduced the overall German population and stymied the formation of a Swabian intellectual class. As in Hungary, therefore, one major cause for local Germans' national "timidity" or apathy was the near absence of an intelligentsia to lead a national movement.

The goals and methods of Croatization will be familiar from our study of Magyarization. Precisely because of that Magyarization and simmering tensions with Croatian Serbs, Croats remained jealous of their autonomy and the Croatian character of their lands even after the Nagodba. Suspicion of things German or especially Hungarian was particularly intense and the Swabians in Croatia-Slavonia found themselves affected by national issues greater than themselves. Generally speaking, Croats failed to correctly perceive German immigration for what it primarily was: economic migration driven by the scarcity of available and affordable land in Batschka and Banat. Instead, Croats tended to see in German immigration "an act of high politics, by which the 'outposts of the *Drang nach Osten*' were being brought into the country."<sup>141</sup> The authorities sought to affirm Croatian identity of Croatia and Slavonia through schools, the subsidizing of Croatian theater and denial of the German stage, discrimination in daily life, glorification of all things Croatian, a hostile press, and the official imposition of the Croatian language. Many Croats perceived a surreptitious program of German or Magyar imperialism in German immigration and condemned it accordingly. The press was especially vocal in this

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<sup>141</sup> Oberkersch. 42.

regard.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, Germans were pressured to consider themselves Croats based on their residence in Croatia-Slavonia and the notion that those who “ate Croatian bread” must logically be Croats, as a contemporary saying went.

Though it seems that Germans and Croats (and Serbs) generally got along well at the personal level, tensions were definitely mounting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such tensions generally derived from the relatively recent immigration of the Germans, their enviable prosperity, and their propensity for reproduction and land acquisition. Moreover, they were often regarded as stubborn aliens by Croats, already prickly from national competition with Hungarians and Serbs. Such tensions often manifested themselves in vituperative articles and speeches, personal confrontation, discrimination and public pressure not dissimilar to Magyarization, and legal measures against the German language. After the 1860s, Croatian authorities increasingly placed restrictions on or impediments before German language schooling. The Catholic Church in Slavonia (under Djakovo Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer after 1849) was increasingly reluctant to provide German-speaking priests or hold church services in German.<sup>143</sup> As in Hungary, schools and especially the church thus became agents of what German nationalists called “denationalization”, in this case, Croatization. Finally, the Swabians sometimes found themselves caught in the nationalist crossfire between Croats and Serbs in Slavonia and Srijem.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 41-43.

<sup>143</sup> More than merely a Catholic priest or bishop, Strossmayer energetically pursued a leading role in Croatian politics, culture and thought. He was especially known for his advocacy of Illyrianism, Croatian national identity, and Yugoslavism.

The political situation in Croatia during the final decades before World War I was complex and often unpredictable. The Croatian Ban Khuen-Hedervary had ruled since 1883, using his office to enable Hungarian encroachment on the terms of the Nagodba while forestalling the kind of opposition that had undermined his predecessor Levin Rauch by generally privileging Serbs and stoking the fires of Serb-Croat division as part of a divide-and-conquer policy in Croatia. Meanwhile during the 1890s, the supporters of Bishop Josip Strossmayer and many followers of Croatian Party of Right cofounder Ante Starčević had agreed to come together to form the United Croatian Opposition in the Sabor, Croatia's assembly, which was elected from a narrow and elite franchise. The twentieth century would bring further important shifts in Croatian politics and a radicalization of public opinion on Croatian national issues. 1903 was a year of important changes not only for the Germans of Ruma, who took major organizational steps that year, but across the region. That year, a coup in Serbia, ushered out the Obrenović dynasty and its Habsburg-friendly foreign policy, inspiring many Serbs in the Monarchy to cast a wondering gaze across the Danube. In the Budapest parliament, the Hungarian opposition began a test of wills with Vienna that would evolve into a major constitutional crisis for the country. Finally, Khuen-Hedervary resigned as Croatia's ban to become Hungary's prime minister in a climate of Croatian nationalist hostility and public protest.

These Croatian anti-Magyar and anti-German demonstrations of 1903, known as the *Narodni pokret* or "National Movement", led to the forced removal of certain place names in German. Also around this time, the *Novi kurs* or "New Course" movement emerged with the task of uniting Serbs and Croats against the alleged

Hungarian and German threat. "In the center of the New Course's ideology stood the thesis that the most dangerous enemy of the [Croatian] nation was the [German] *Drang nach Osten* and the system which served it. Accordingly arrangements were sought with all those who were likewise threatened by this danger."<sup>144</sup> Among the primary goals of this "New Course," therefore, was the consolidation of organized opposition to the perceived economic and demographic *Drang nach Osten*. Such suspicions of German imperialism and ambition led to general animosity toward things German and those who had connections with German interests, which would not abate until the end of the First World War.<sup>145</sup>

Croatian resentment toward things German was nothing new, but the open, anti-German hostility of the New Course and the gradual radicalization of public opinion after 1903 were not welcome developments. Indeed, the Germans felt the uncomfortable pressures of multiple nationalist trends. On the one hand, the various Starčevist currents asserting the exclusively Croatian character over a very broadly conceived Croatia were unwelcome, for they implied potential Croatian chauvinism and tension with Serbs. Such could have the consequence of further Croatization of Germans. On the other hand, Yugoslavism in its most extreme form threatened the integrity of the Monarchy, which was their home. This was undesirable because the Habsburgs still provided a dynastic roof which offered at least some resistance to the

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<sup>144</sup> Stjepan Matković, "Der Schwabe aus Syrmien: Ferdinand Riestler u hrvatskom političkom životu," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* 7 (2001). 37. See also Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). 97-98. Banac's "National Ideologies" chapter offers a useful discussion of contemporary national politics in the lands that would become Yugoslavia. Nicholas Miller's study is also helpful for understanding the complexity of national politics in Croatia in the years before the First World War. Nicholas Miller, *Between Nation and State: Serbian Politics in Croatia before the First World War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

<sup>145</sup> Stjepan Matković and Vladimir Geiger, "Savez Nijmaca u Hrvatskoj I Slavoniji: Osnivanje i razvoj u osvjet Prvog svjetskog rata," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* 10 (2004). 190.

nationalization of socio-political space and territory. Moreover, even in its lesser form, Serb-Croat rapprochement threatened to render the Germans yet a smaller *relative* minority. Genuine Yugoslav solidarity furthermore threatened to potentially transform the Monarchy in ways that might well be detrimental to the German interests or national development.

In summary, Germans (especially the nationally conscious ones) in Croatia had considerable ground for disquiet in the decade before the First World War. The above political developments suggested that dark days had arrived indeed. Nationally conscious Germans saw little benefit in Yugoslavism and real menace in the exploitation of the Monarchy's weaknesses. The political shift, moreover, had the added disadvantage of introducing Cisleithania's cancerous ethnic relations into Croatia, where Germans were hopelessly outnumbered. The peasant Swabians, some of whose ancestors had arrived as Habsburg colonists during the 1700s, stood accused of being the vanguard of German or Hungarian imperialism. German attempts to organize themselves became seen by nationalists as proof that the dreaded *Drang nach Osten* was real. Meanwhile, some Germans increasingly came to regard themselves as a threatened minority. That is, they assumed the self-understanding and stance of a national minority viz. Croatia-Slavonia and its nationalizing pretensions. Though Croatia's Swabians had long been characterized by political passivity, a growing group now perceived the need for organization.

*The Birth of the German National Movement in Croatia-Slavonia*

German national activists in Syrmien railed against their guileless coethnics for their susceptibility to alleged Slavic manipulation. They feared that Croatian Germandom, heir to one of the world's great cultures and part of the celebrated nation of 90 million, would disappear in Croatia-Slavonia because "der Deutsche Michel," the proverbial embodiment of the simple-minded and easy-going German everyman, could not be roused out of his national indifference. Or could he? In 1903 a group of likeminded German nationalists in the east Srijem town of Ruma resolved to try. The following sections will discuss the aspirations and institutions of the German movement in Srijem as well as contemporary Croatian reactions to it. We will consider the Germans relationship to the Catholic Church and the Germans' relationship with Germans elsewhere in Hungary, Austria and Imperial Germany. Finally, we will consider the state of the German community in Slavonia's largest city and evaluate the German national movement's impact upon it.

The German national movement in Croatia-Slavonia began in the market town of Ruma in eastern Srijem. German colonists had first come to Ruma in the eighteenth century. Srijem was then as it largely remained in the early twentieth century, a region of good soil whose peasant population was mostly engaged in agriculture. Croatization had made significant inroads in west Srijem but had been less successful in the region's east, which contained a Serb majority in addition to Swabians and Croats. The presence of so many Germans irritated Croatian nationalists, but the Swabians also represented an opportunity for Croatian nationalists, frustrated by the numerical superiority of Serbs in this most eastern

region of Croatia-Slavonia. Such frustration conferred an added urgency to already aggressive Croatizing efforts during the later 1800s, since it was hoped that the Croats could improve their numerical inferiority in the region by absorbing Germans. The result was an atmosphere increasingly punctuated by outbursts of Croatian and Serbian nationalism. In such an environment, many Swabians did sheepishly assimilate or at least come to identify as Croats.<sup>146</sup> Others, however, reacted negatively to such nationalist pressure and began to develop a distinct national consciousness as Germans.

A kind of German middle class had formed during the nineteenth century in Ruma, which was one of Srijem's principle towns. With its sizable German population (over 31 percent), the market town was receptive to both goods and ideas. In recent years, some Germans had gone abroad to study in Cisleithania's German provinces, the *Kaiserreich*, and other German areas in Hungary proper. There they had become attracted to the ideas of German nationalism, which was variously locked in conflict with Slavs in Austria, struggling to fully realize Germany as a Great Power, or engaged with Magyardom in Hungary. They returned to Ruma having developed a German national consciousness and were able to articulate local frustration with Croatization measures, especially in education. In connection with local affluent farmers and entrepreneurs, they formed the basis of a spirited German national movement.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> The religious barrier usually prevented Germans from assimilating into the Orthodox Serb milieu.

<sup>147</sup> Franz Wilhelm, *Rumaer Dokumentation, 1745-1945: Mittelpunkt der deutschen Bewegung in Syrmien, Slawonien und Kroatien*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Donauschwaebische Kulturstiftung, 1997). 98-99.



<b>Year</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Croatian/Serbian</b>	<b>Total</b>
1910	15,447 (31.8%)	26,662 (54.77%)	48,675

In November 1903 Ruma's nationally conscious German notables gathered to establish the Publishing House of German Books and Periodicals (*Verlag deutsche Buecher und Zeitschriften, AG*), an enterprise through which they planned to publish a nationally oriented newspaper and rouse coethnics from their indifference toward German national identity. The resulting *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* (initial circulation 2000<sup>149</sup>) would quickly become the most outspoken German newspaper in Croatia-Slavonia and the principle indigenous transmitter of German nationalism across the region.

The newspaper's premier issue set the new tone. Ruma German Josef Servatzky sought to reinforce the Swabians' pride and sense of history and legitimize their historic presence in the region in the prominent article "An die Deutschen Syrmiens." He emphasized the Swabians' origins as colonists who had brought culture and economic prosperity to Srijem and now comprised 15 percent of its population. He encouraged Swabian pride in the face of Croatian nationalism and called upon Germans to embrace their national identity just as Croats and Serbs took pride in their own. The time had come, he asserted, for Swabians to come together in a community of their own national interest.<sup>150</sup>

"An die Deutschen Syrmiens" was a rallying cry for the region's Germans. Servatzky reviewed their desperate state even as he proudly announced recent moves

<sup>148</sup> Measuring for mother tongue. Matković. 35.

<sup>149</sup> "Novi švapski list," *Hrvatski branik*, January 9 1904.

<sup>150</sup> Josef Servatzky, "An die Deutschen Syrmiens," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, January 10 1904.

by Ruma's self-styled national awakeners. Something had to be done to counteract the Germans' "ever more far-reaching indifference" toward their own nationhood! To this end, the newspaper explained, Ruma notables had established the Publishing House of German books and Periodicals to promote German national identity and expose Srijem's Germans to the written word of their beloved mother tongue. The men behind the publishing house resolved to serve as activists and advocates on behalf of the "syrmier Schwabenschaft." Servatzky laid out their agenda,

We will instruct our readers not only of the events in matters of social and economic life, agriculture and crafts – we will also endeavor to awaken in our coethnics the love of our precious mother tongue and of our nation; we want to strengthen and consolidate German [national] consciousness.

To that end, we will strive to see that no German of Srijem, seduced by the conceit and self-interest which unfortunately often accompany the struggle for existence, discards and denies his Germanness, but rather that every German assert himself as such under all circumstances.

We will encourage the Germans of Srijem under all circumstances and at all times to thank God for leading our ancestors' steps to blessed Srijem, which has become for us our beloved fatherland, whose welfare and prosperity we wish to promote by every means along with all inhabitants of this land, irrespective of nationality and religion.<sup>151</sup>

This was less a program than an outlay of German national sentiment and aspirations. Later, however, the German movement in Syrmien would articulate the specifics of its platform more boldly. Far from being a mere journal of record, or "just another Ruma newspaper," the staff at *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* openly regarded their weekly as an instrument of resistance against undesired assimilation and German national indifference.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> "Rumaer Zeitung oder deutsches Volksblatt?," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, January 22 1905.

Unsurprisingly, the nascent German national movement in Ruma was not well received by many Croats. Mitrovica's *Hrvatski Branik* marked the appearance of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* by calling it a "pan-German newspaper" which did not hide its subversive intentions. "The first issues," *Hrvatski Branik* charged, "have already shown that the land which these newcomers settled is not sacred to them, nor do they plan to adapt to their new homeland, Croatia."<sup>153</sup> Several years later, *Hrvatski Branik* again decried the "pan-Germanism in Srijem" and bemoaned its successes, especially the spread of German language reading rooms. The newspaper was noteworthy for its observation of the foreign origins of the German movement in Srijem. This "pan-German" movement in Srijem dated from only the past ten to fifteen years, the newspaper charged, and was instigated by Germans who had studied abroad in Vienna and at other German universities. There they had imbibed pan-German ideas "and returned home to begin spreading German thought among our countrymen." Indeed, *Hrvatski Branik* remarked, the Ruma pan-German headquarters worked tirelessly at activities which would be considered high treason in Hungary proper. "To hear their speech and see their symbols," it claimed, "is to think one is in Prussia!"<sup>154</sup> Thus, while the Germans feared imminent absorption by Croatia, *Hrvatski Branik* accused the Germans of executing a *Drang nach Osten* and refusing to learn the Croatian language.<sup>155</sup>

Despite Croatian fears of looming pan-Germanism, much of the press in Croatia-Slavonia was actually published in German at this time, and many educated Croats would have known the language. The fact of appearing in the German

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<sup>153</sup> "Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien," *Hrvatski Branik*, January 16 1904.

<sup>154</sup> "Pangermanizam u Srijemu," *Hrvatski Branik*, February 24 1906.

<sup>155</sup> "Slavoniji prijeti opasnost," *Hrvatski Branik*, October 16 1909.

language, however, did not necessarily imply that a newspaper had a German national orientation. On the contrary, most German language newspapers did not express a German national outlook at all and would have been actively hostile to such a perspective. German nationalists often derided such newspapers as being written in German but lacking a German perspective. That is, they were *deutschgeschrieben* but not *deutschgesinnt*, in contemporary parlance.

In fact, the German language press in Croatia showed little enthusiasm for the nascent German movement in Syrmien. Osijek's *Die Drau* greeted the publication of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* not dissimilarly from the hostile *Hrvatski Branik*, *Narodna obrana*, *Agramer Tagblatt*, *Obzor* and the rest of the Croatian press. With the appearance of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* "'Pan-Germania' was extending its feelers," the Osijek broadsheet charged. *Die Drau* furthermore berated the Ruma weekly for its alleged ingratitude to the Germans' Croatian fatherland, its opposition to Swabian acculturation to Croatia, and for its rejection of all that was not German. Speaking for "our" (Croatian) nation, it continued,

Whoever lives in this land must first and foremost respect Croatia, and we demand that he socially and nationally nurture the [Croatian] people with all the unique attributes of his own nationality. The Germans who have lived here for hundreds of years and who, as they themselves admit, have achieved property and status, must possess much gratitude as to love the landscape which has brought them such abundant profit. They must strive to contribute to all national accomplishments which form the ideal of this nation, and thereby express their high intelligence in all areas. Any effort by the Germans to isolate themselves socially and nationally can bring them no success, but rather must lead to the spitefulness and opposition/resistance of the Croatian people, who will never allow a German-national island to unfurl in the heart of Srijem, the richest and most fruitful part of the entire country.

Finally, the newspaper concluded that Croats should establish cultural associations in the heart of Srijem, so as to win over the region's Germans to Croatian culture and language. "We [Croats] do not demand a denial of [the Germans'] heritage, the newspaper insisted, but the Germans must nevertheless aspire to take on Croatian culture." Second generation Germans should profess their love to the Croatian fatherland in the national language, Croatian. Thus, far from objecting to excessive Croatization, *Die Drau* insisted that there had not been enough. This Osijek German language daily plainly had little time for German nationalism. "The time of national islands," *Die Drau* cautioned, "is over."<sup>156</sup>

To be sure, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* wore its politics on its sleeve. Yet its celebration of things German in no way implied a denigration of local Swabian identities. On the contrary, the newspaper embraced both the national and local identities that characterized the German movement in both Croatia and Hungary proper. The population was at once both German and Swabian, and contemporaries regularly used both appellations.<sup>157</sup> The task for the German national movement was to convince Swabians of their belonging to the German *Volk* and persuade them of the *Volk's* supreme importance.

*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien's* staff sought to instill pride in its readers and enlighten them as to their history, the place of Germans in the world, and the situation of Germans in Croatia and Hungary proper. Articles regularly explored the history of German colonization in Croatia and Hungary, celebrated the beauty of the German language, and extolled the Germans as *Kulturduenger*, bearers of culture

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<sup>156</sup> "Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien," *Die Drau*, January 12 1904.

<sup>157</sup> As we have noted, the term "Donauschwaben" did not emerge until after the First World War.

who had effectively brought civilization to the Danubian region (and their Slavic neighbors).<sup>158</sup> Moreover, they soon demonstrated their connections with various German national associations in Germany and elsewhere in the Monarchy, such as Volkstumarbeit groups and the Association of German University Students from the Lands of the Hungarian Crown (*Vereinigung deutscher Hochschueler aus den Laendern der ungarischen Krone* or VDH). The VDH's members regularly contributed articles to the newspaper while spreading awareness about the Germans of Croatia through lectures and other activities in Cisleithania and Hungary.

The Ruma Germans' publishing house also sought to spread German national and Swabian regional consciousness by promoting works of German literature and *Suedostforschung*, the academic study of Germans in Europe's southeast. One way to shape a common German consciousness was through common national symbols and celebrations. To this end, serial newspaper articles were devoted to the German tricolor and cultural or historical notables. The Ruma publishing house promoted such works as *The German Language Islands in Southern Hungary and Slavonia (Die Deutschen Sprachinseln in Suedungarn und Slavonien)* and similar books in order to encourage a regional sense of collective German history and solidarity. Cultural ties to Europe's core German regions were also promoted. For example, the German movement and *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* made much of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Friedrich Schiller's death in 1905. On the date when celebrations in the poet's honor were held across Germany and Habsburg Austria, the German associations of Ruma organized a *Schillerfeier*, a celebration of Schiller's life and

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<sup>158</sup> *Kulturduenger*, a term used frequently by the German activists, translates rather awkwardly as "fertilizers of culture" or perhaps "cultural fertilizers."

work, in the town. Through this commemoration, the nascent German movement in Ruma sought to bridge the distance between themselves and the distant German heartland. Local participants would know that Germans hundreds of miles away were simultaneously sharing in the same rapturous emotions and celebration of their common national poet. In the Schiller celebrations, the German movement had found a common cultural moment which transcended time and space.

Like the Schiller celebration and the many historical articles in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, the display and veneration of the German tricolor was a component in the national activists' project to inspire and forge a common identity among the Swabians as Germans. When Ban Theodor Pejačević, Khuen-Hedervary's successor as Croatian ban, briefly visited Ruma in 1905, the town's Germans proposed to welcome their honored guest by hanging both the Croatian flag and the German tricolor from their homes. The tricolor was not illegal, after all, and therefore the ban's visit offered an occasion to welcome him as "German citizens of Slavonia." The dual flag display was forbidden by state authorities, however, prompting many offended Germans to refrain from welcoming celebrations altogether, on the grounds that one could not feel celebratory about the ban's arrival while repressed as a second class citizen.<sup>159</sup>

The Ban's visit and a later series of articles in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* on the German, Croatian, and Hungarian tricolors was revealing, for the Swabian leaders in Ruma insisted on a stance of dual loyalty to both the German *Volk* and the Croatian *state*. The Croatian flag, they explained, was a symbol of *Staatlichkeit* or statehood. By contrast, the German tricolor was a *Volksfahne*, the flag

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<sup>159</sup> "Der Banus in Ruma," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, October 22 1905.

of a nation, and not the flag of the *Kaiserreich*, as was often supposed in Croatia. As such, the German tricolor was merely a symbol of *Volklichkeit*, a symbol of Germandom unassociated with any state territory. “With the black-red-gold flag we document our Germandom, with the red-white-blue, on the other hand, we document our citizenship,” they explained.<sup>160</sup> Croatia was, after all, the *Vaterland* of the Srijem Swabians, who considered themselves not to be pan-Germanic aliens but rather natives of Croatian soil. During the interwar years, the Germans’ premier organization in Yugoslavia, the Kulturbund, would insist on a similar formulation of dual loyalty to the South Slav state and German nation. Such duality was never easily accepted by the South Slavs, however.

Professions of devotion to Croatia and such paeans as “Hail red-white-blue and black–red-gold”<sup>161</sup> aside, there was much tension between Germans and South Slavs in Croatia-Slavonia. Croats hurled epithets or worse at the Swabians, who themselves sometimes responded abruptly, as when a group of German burghers insisted upon the removal of the Croatian tricolor from a Ruma church tower in 1906 on the occasion of the parish’s annual *Kirchweih*, the yearly celebration of the consecration of the church. Nationally conscious Germans perceived themselves as very much second class citizens in the country, discriminated against in church, school and workplace. Shortly after the death of Bishop Josip Strossmayer, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* even observed that there was a national hierarchy in Croatia. The Croats were the people of the state with full rights below whom stood the Serbs, a people with lesser rights. Germans and Magyars, however, stood at the bottom of

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<sup>160</sup> The German tricolor is black-red-gold and the Croatian tricolor is red-white-blue. "Schwarz-rot-gold, rot-weiss-blau," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, September 22 1906.

<sup>161</sup> Siegfried von Rueben, "Schwarz - rot - gold," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, July 1 1906.



this hierarchy as the people with the least rights, the Germans being lucky to even get a parish priest who could speak their language.<sup>162</sup> As such, one of the consistent demands voiced by the German movement was the awarding of equal rights in exchange for their equal obligations to the state and church.<sup>163</sup> The two areas of greatest national concern for the Germans were education and religion, both of which they regarded as vehicles of Croatization.

The nationally conscious Germans regarded the Catholic Church as a willing agent of unabashed Croatization, a situation *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* addressed with particular urgency during its early years under the editorship of Karl Stürm.<sup>164</sup> Under Stürm, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* revealed particular alarm about the state of Christianity among the Swabians, a paramount concern in an era, in which religion remained highly important in everyday life and society. As such, the rarity of German language in the classroom or the pulpit was a situation of dire concern. The newspaper was particularly concerned about Germans in villages of mixed ethnicity. Protestant Germans were insulated from at least one instrument of Croatization by their separate churches. Not so the numerically vastly superior Catholic Germans, who often shared parishes with their Croat coreligionists. Frequently deprived in such cases of sermons or religious texts in their language, Germans' Christian knowledge and practice was visibly diminishing, according to *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*. The situation was particularly difficult for

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<sup>162</sup> "Gleiche Pflichten, ungleiche Rechte," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, June 4 1905.

<sup>163</sup> Actually, Germans believed themselves to bear a heavier burden than their neighbors in terms of taxes.

<sup>164</sup> Swabians generally had certain qualms with the Catholic Church and its (frequently non-German or even non-German speaking) priesthood in Croatia-Slavonia as well as Banat. Swabians remained religious however, and certainly continued attending the Church, even if they sometimes felt ignored by the higher authorities in the Church hierarchy.

children, who often had to learn in a foreign language owing to the lack of German schools, and therefore allegedly did not learn their lessons well.

Across Croatia-Slavonia, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* observed, the situation was everywhere different for German Catholics but rarely satisfactory. Though perhaps nationally indifferent in a political sense, most Germans of Croatia-Slavonia and especially Srijem were nevertheless aware of their everyday ethnicity as Swabians. Consequently, they often reacted negatively to the infiltration of their parish by Croatian nationalism and resented the absence of their mother tongue in religious services. Priests who either could not or would not speak German were increasingly dispatched to German parishes. Worse, such priests often spoke disdainfully of things German, they claimed. In the Monarchy's final decades, the situation gradually so deteriorated that pastors and their congregations sometimes even came to view one another incomprehensibly. True, the conservative German peasants did not formally break with the Church and continued attending mass. Nevertheless, their deeper connection to their church weakened considerably.<sup>165</sup> The suspicious legacy of the Croatizing and Magyarizing priest would haunt the nationally conscious German priests in interwar Yugoslavia who sought to rally their flocks away from the seduction of National Socialism, as we shall see in Chapter eight.

*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* was pessimistic for Ruma, which was awaiting a new pastor in 1904. "It is probably out of the question to get a nationally conscious German priest," the newspaper declared, "because such priests may well not exist. The least that the people of Ruma can demand, however, is that they might

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<sup>165</sup> Wilhelm. 100.

be given a man who understands how to explain the word of God to them in their mother tongue, who understands how to read in the [spirit of the] German national soul, who delights in his parishioners and sympathizes with them, who does not see in us contemptible, stupid “Šwabe” or “pan-Germans” but rather as men, Germans and Christians who consciously love their fatherland.” We need, the article concluded, “a patient man and not a chauvinist.”<sup>166</sup>

The sharpest expression of German national bitterness toward the Croatizing Catholic Church came in the wake of the death of the Croatian/Yugoslav advocate and politician Bishop Josip Strossmayer in 1905.<sup>167</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*'s acid obituary of the bishop was nothing less than a total indictment of Strossmayer as man and priest. It was also a condemnation of his alleged Croatian chauvinism. “He was more of a politician than a priest” the newspaper charged, and he loved the Croatian people above all others. Of course, a preference for one nation was permissible even for a priest, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* allowed, but no priest should persecute other nations with the “burning hatred” that had so driven Strossmayer. Strossmayer neglected the spiritual needs of non-Croats, the newspaper continued, and was behind the creation of a chauvinistic priesthood which had worked to severely retard German national development in Croatia-Slavonia. Should Germans mourn the death of Strossmayer? “Not at all as Germans nor as Catholics,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* insisted. Strossmayer was a renegade who betrayed both his German heritage and the non-Croat Catholics of his diocese.<sup>168</sup> “In

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<sup>166</sup> “Benoetigen wir deutsche Predigten?,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, July 31 1904.

<sup>167</sup> Syrmien belonged to the Djakovo diocese.

<sup>168</sup> Born in Osijek in 1815 to a Croatian family, Strossmayer's family ancestry was originally German, as his surname suggests.

spite of his German origins, he was the greatest enemy of the German nation in Croatia-Slavonia, and as such he forgot his clerical duties toward his German Catholics,” the newspaper charged.<sup>169</sup> The editors’ condemnation of Strossmayer, who was widely popular among Croats, is highly significant. The bitterness of that condemnation of Strossmayer indicated the degree of the German national activists’ frustration with the Croatian national project in so far as it seemed to threaten their own survival as Germans. The men at *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* elected to remember Strossmayer not as a Catholic priest or Croatian politician but as a German traitor.

As in Hungary proper, the nationally conscious Germans in Croatia-Slavonia were concerned about education. They feared that Croatia’s elementary schools and middle schools (*Volksschulen* and *Mittelschulen*) were failing them in two ways. On one hand they failed to properly educate German students. At the same time, they failed to inculcate a proper sense of German nationhood and, worse, Croatized the student body through the curriculum, language, and discrimination. By 1904, one nationally conscious *Rumaer* complained, “the notion had appeared that an elementary school should be nothing less than a Croatizing institution and have no other task.”<sup>170</sup> Middle schools and *Gymnasien*, Swabians feared, were only even more advanced institutes of assimilation.

Language, curriculum and even the instructors themselves attracted Swabian ire. *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* complained that Swabians were usually denied a German education even when laws seemed to guarantee a German school based on

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<sup>169</sup> Siegfried von Homberg, "Bischof Strossmayer," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, April 16 1905.

<sup>170</sup> "Volksheitschulen," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, November 20 1904.

local population. Moreover, many of the few allegedly “German” teachers, were not even native German speakers and often had an insufficient command of the language in which they were meant to instruct. Language was key, the Swabians believed, for one could only expect to properly grasp classroom material in one’s mother tongue. Thus, instruction in anything other than one’s native language was an impediment to proper learning and an act of discrimination. Finally, the nationally conscious *Rumaer* feared, in some cases even those teachers with proper German origins had been raised to love Croatian, not German, nationhood. Such renegades could not be trusted to instill a spirit of German pride among the young, impressionable Swabians, and the failures of the whole system of education were clearly manifest in the Swabian children.<sup>171</sup> Added to such institutionalized Croatization, schoolyard taunts of “*Švabo*” (meant as an epithet) or “*švapski gad*” (“Swabian scoundrel”) often had the poisonous effect of compelling young Swabians to identify as Croats.<sup>172</sup>

The situation of German schools only deteriorated in the years leading to the First World War, as Croatian increasingly displaced most lingering German in the classroom. In 1907, there were 16 municipal (“*kommunale*”), 10 confessional and 6 private elementary schools with German as the language of instruction. These had approximately 12,500 pupils. Croatian gradually penetrated even these few schools however. A January 29, 1910 government decree required that the Germans schools should henceforth be bilingual, but the “bilingual” aspect was usually applied only in larger communities. Elsewhere, Croatian was to become the exclusive language of

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> "Der deutsche Schuler im kroatischen Mittelschulen," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, December 18 1904.

classroom instruction.<sup>173</sup> In 1913, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* complained that there were no purely German schools in Croatia-Slavonia and that only the elementary schools in Ruma, Indjija and Putnici properly enjoyed partial German instruction. Yet even these schools often lacked enough properly German teachers.<sup>174</sup> As such, one cannot speak of truly German schools in Croatia-Slavonia during this period.<sup>175</sup> However, cautions Danube Swabian historian Vladimir Geiger, neither can one speak of any forced assimilation. Though confronted with Croatian nationalism, the pressure of that nationalism, Geiger believes, was less intense than proper Magyarization in Hungary.<sup>176</sup> Be that as it may, the two processes plainly were sometimes not so dissimilar in means or aims.

*From Multi-Ethnic Clubs to German Associations: Gruendet Volksvereine!*

Swabians had been slower to embrace the national principle than their South Slav neighbors, who had eagerly established nationally oriented clubs or adapted already existing associations to this purpose during the 1800s. The nationally conscious Swabians of Ruma, however, sought to change this situation and promote a thriving, German associational life, not only in their own community but elsewhere in Croatia-Slavonia. There were already numerous civic associations, of course, even in remote Slavonia and Srijem. Many towns had long had fire brigades, for example.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Josef Volkmar Senz, *Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben im Koenigreich Jugoslawien*, Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben von 1918-1944, vol. 2 (Munich: Verlag des Suedostdeutschen Kulturwerkes, 1969). 20.

<sup>174</sup> "Unser Volkstum und seine Gegner," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, October 16 1913.

<sup>175</sup> Senz, *Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben im Koenigreich Jugoslawien*. 20

<sup>176</sup> Geiger, *Nijemci u Đakovu i Đakovštini*. 79.

<sup>177</sup> These latter organizations were non-political but the question of the *Kommandosprache* (German or Croatian?) assumed much political importance in the years after the turn of the century. Ruma's Feuerwehr dated from 1874.

A German choral society was founded in Ruma in 1894, but far more typical in Slavonia was an associational life that included both Croats and Germans, often without overt national orientation. Vladimir Geiger has revealed in his study of Germans in Djakovo that associational life around the turn of the century and before the First World War was frequently not segregated along ethnic lines.<sup>178</sup> That is, before there was a German associational life in Croatia-Slavonia, there was a multiethnic one.

German nationalists considered the multiethnicity of these associations a sham, however, at least as regards their intent. They suspected that these organizations, although they may have had both German and Slav members, had been commandeered by Croats as Croatian national associations on the model of the Czech Sokols and other such Slav groups. Themselves recognizing the change, Serbs in some cases had left to form their own groups. “Der deutsche Michel”, however, had patiently stayed on and often found himself in groups devoted to the exaltation of another nationality. German nationalists found this intolerable. Worse still, they lamented, the multiethnic associations diverted potential German membership and talent from German ones, thereby retarding the German national movement in Croatia-Slavonia even further.

To be successful, the German national movement would need to grow and spread beyond Ruma. The men who founded the German publishing house in Ruma had never intended to confine their efforts to that town, of course. The publishing house’s founding meeting was attended by men from surrounding towns as well as

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<sup>178</sup> For a useful local study that investigates German life in detail in Djakovo, see Geiger, *Nijemci u Dakovu i Dakovštini*.

Ruma, and it was immediately resolved to post representatives of the publishing house in places of significant German settlement in Srijem. Moreover, they resolved to establish “[German] national libraries, reading and choral groups, which would be active in every German part of Croatia-Slavonia.”<sup>179</sup> From its organizational inception, then, the German national movement in Srijem had been thinking in terms of growth beyond its immediate region.

The German Choral Society of Ruma which was established in 1894 was about more than just music. Rather, such groups were ways of likeminded men to gather and discuss the matters of the day in a framework conducive to cultivating national identity. Other German associations were established in the following decades. To promote Swabian economic prosperity, Karl Stürm, founding editor of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, was also instrumental in establishing the *Deutscher Volksbank A.G.* in Ruma in 1905. This Ruma-based bank soon became the largest financial institution in the town and consciously maintained its German national character.<sup>180</sup> Many other cultural groups were established elsewhere in the region with the help of a coordinating committee to promote them. One of the most important associations was the German “*Turnverein*” or gymnastics club, which was founded in Ruma in 1909. German gymnastics clubs had a long and nationally oriented pedigree dating back to Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (commonly known as “*Turnvater Jahn*”) and German reactions to Napoleon in the early 1800s. In Ruma, the Swabians consciously borrowed from this tradition and also looked to the Czech Sokol and its Croatian and Serbian variants as models. That is, in a pattern that would

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<sup>179</sup> "Auf zur Versammlung!," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, September 18 1904.

<sup>180</sup> Wilhelm. 101.



be repeated in the coming three decades, the Swabians found inspiration in the Slavic nationalities around them.<sup>181</sup> The German gymnastics club was not an end in itself, however. Rather, it also served as the basis of one of the earliest gatherings of Germans in Croatia-Slavonia to date, the German gymnastics festival, or *Turnfest*, held in Ruma in August 1909.

This 1909 *Turnfest* was a peaceful “festival of all Germans” in Croatia-Slavonia as well as an event to rally the German community against Serbian and Croatian chauvinism. In the years before the First World War, the language of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* and the Swabian leadership increasingly became one struggle and even warned of “Slav efforts” toward the “eradication” and the “extermination” (“*Ausrottung*” and “*Vernichtung*”) of the Germans in Austria-Hungary.<sup>182</sup> At the 1909 *Turnfest*, for example, German citizens of Croatia-Slavonia were called upon to join together and form a bulwark against looming [Slav nationalist] dangers.<sup>183</sup> Meanwhile, German participants came from Novi Sad, Indjija, Nova Pazova and especially Zemun, whose German men’s choral society and German gymnastics club performed. (Zemun and Indjija were also early centers of German nationalism in Srijem.) *Turnfest* organizers read out greetings from the editorial staff of the *Semliner Volksblatt* (from Zemun) and the Association of the Germans from Hungary in Berlin (*Verein der Deutschen aus Ungarn in Berlin*). The stars of this 1909 national festival, of course, were the gymnastics clubs of Ruma and Indjija. Nevertheless, the greater purpose of the event was the creation of a common

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<sup>181</sup> “Besonders die Tsechechen in Boehmen, welche musterhafte “Sokol”-Turnvereine haben. Auch unsere sebischen und kroatischen Landesleute gruenden solche. Warum sollen wir nicht auch [?]” Landerlich Landau, “Gruendet Turnvereine!,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, July 9 1905.

<sup>182</sup> “Deutsche Maenner! Deutsche Frauen!,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, December 12 1909.

<sup>183</sup> “Wilkommen!,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, August 21 1909.

space and moment for the Germans of Srijem to gather and demonstrate their Germanness to themselves and others.<sup>184</sup>

### Swabians and the Karpathendeutsche Movement, 1911-1914

Ruma and its Germans took part in one of the largest movements to build bonds among Transleithania's Germans before the First World War, the Karpathendeutsche movement, in spite of their remoteness from the Carpathian mountains for which the movement was named.<sup>185</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, Edmund Steinacker's *Ungarlaendische Deutsche Volkspartei* was the first organization to take an all-Hungary approach to the political organization of the Germans of Transleithania on a national basis. The UDVP was not the only group addressing itself to the country's Germans however, and four major rallies devoted to promoting German pride, culture and welfare were held in the years before the First World War under the Karpathendeutsche banner. These *Tagungen der Karpathendeutschen*, or "Carpathian German Conventions," were held annually from 1911 until the outbreak of the war, and Ruma played host to the second annual gathering. Officially the conventions were not political events, but they had major political aspects, of course, and featured speeches by several prominent UDVP leaders. Their purpose was ostensibly cultural and the annual gatherings sought to forge a kind of common consciousness among the Germans of Hungary (and

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<sup>184</sup> "Einig und Treu," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, August 28 1909.

<sup>185</sup> Although the Carpathian mountains are located in modern Slovakia, Poland, and Ukraine as well as Romania, and thus might seem rather northern or central European, it was not uncommon for contemporaries to include the Germans there among the Germans of "southeastern" Europe. "Karpathendeutsche" is sometimes also spelled "Karpattendeutsche."

especially those of the Carpathian Mountains). They were, moreover, networking opportunities for the Germans of Hungary to get to know each other and forge contacts with Volkstumarbeit activists from Cisleithania and the *Kaiserreich*.

The Karpathendeutsche movement was inseparable from the name Raimund Friedrich Kaindl. Kaindl's importance to the German cause in Hungary was double in that he was both a founder of systematic research on east and southeast European Germandom and also one of the Hungarian Germans' earliest and most important organizers.<sup>186</sup> A professor by trade, he authored many publications, including the multivolume *History of the Germans in the Carpathian Lands (Geschichte der Deutschen in den Karpathenlaendern)*, which was excerpted in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* and other newspapers as part of their identity-creating project. As an organizer, he was the founder of the Association of the Christian Germans in Bukovina (*Verein der christlichen Deutschen in der Bukowina*) and the principle driver and organizer behind the annual Karpathendeutsche rallies.

The first such Karpathendetsche convention was held in Kaindl's native Czernowitz from June 30 to July 4, 1911 in conjunction with the first German *Turnfest* there. Attendees included "the eminence grise and father of the German-Hungarian movement," Edmund Steinacker and also the General secretary of the Berlin Association for the Spread of Germandom Abroad (*Verein zur Verbretitung des Deuschtums im Auslande*). Ferdinand Lindner, editor of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, came as representative of the Germans of Slavonia. Many others also attended, including members of parliament, priests, and notables from German

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<sup>186</sup> For a partial biography and list of publications by Kaindl, see "Raimund Friedrich Kaindl," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 31 1926.

oriented groups across Hungary. One speaker championed German solidarity in Hungary under the slogan “To be German, means to be unified!”, which became a kind of leitmotif at the gathering.<sup>187</sup> In a speech on the convention’s first evening, Kaindl observed that the event marked the first occasion to actually gather Germans from all Carpathian lands.<sup>188</sup>

*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* editor Lindner spoke on behalf of the Germans of Slavonia (which included Srijem) and rather lamely apologized for the limited Slavonian attendance, which he blamed on the harvest. His assurances of Slavonian enthusiasm for Germandom must have been compelling, however, for the leaders of the Karpathendeutsche movement decided to hold their next annual convention in Ruma. Preparations for that 1912 convention were extensive and involved German choral societies and gymnastics clubs from all over Srijem and elsewhere in Hungary, especially the Swabian south. Croatian authorities made a late effort to prevent the convention, yet its organizers persevered and from August 18 to August 20, 1912, Ruma became the focal point of the German movement in Hungary and Croatia.<sup>189</sup> In addition to Kaindl, the movement’s founder, speakers included editor Lindner, Edmund Steinacker, the Transylvanian Saxon parliamentarian Rudolf Brandsch, and German notables from Vienna, Timișoara and Novi Sad. Up to 3000 onlookers gathered at the gymnastics field during the gymnasts’ three hour performance. Convention participants celebrated German language and folk song in poetry readings and concerts. Additionally, Franz Moser, Sabor member for Ruma, addressed a crowd of 3500 in connection with the 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday of Kaiser Franz

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<sup>187</sup> "Die erste Tagung der Karpathendeutschen," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, July 8 1911.

<sup>188</sup> Kaindl in *Bukowiner Nachrichten*, reprinted in *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Wilhelm.121.

Josef.<sup>190</sup> It was always good form to honor the Austrian Emperor and Hungarian King, of course.

1913 was also a momentous year for the German movement in Transleithania, being marked by further gatherings, a new organization, and an important date for *Deutsches Volksblatt in Syrmien*. The annual Karpathendeutsche convention was held not in Hungary but in Vienna during that year, from May 10-13. Vienna was chosen in order to facilitate the participation of Germans from central Europe, who organizers hoped would learn more about the Germans of Hungary and form personal connections with the Karpathendeutsche attendees.<sup>191</sup>

This third Karpathendeutsche convention was held much in the spirit of the previous two. Convention organizers hoped to raise Karpathendeutsche awareness and stimulate more Volkstumarbeit organizations' involvement in the cause of the Hungarian Germans. (Compared to Cisleithania, Volkstumarbeit organizations took little interest in Hungary, as we have seen.) One purpose of the gathering, Kaindl intoned, was to reintegrate the "estranged" brothers of the east into the German *Muttervolk* and reestablish connections with Europe's core German regions. The

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 122.

<sup>191</sup> The list of sponsoring organizations was long and reflected the broad interest of Volkstumarbeit organizations in Hungary's Germans from Berlin to Bucharest. Sponsors included the German National Council for Vienna and Lower Austria (*Deutscher Volksrat fuer Wien und Niederoesterreich*), the German School Association (*Deutscher Schulverein*), the Association for the Preservation of Germanism in Hungary (*Verein zur Erhaltung des Deutschtums in Ungarn*), the Association of the Christian Germans in Bukovina (*Verein der christlichen Deutschen in der Bukowina*), the Alliance of Christian Germans in Galicia (*Bund der christlichen Deutschen in Galizien*), the Association of the Germans in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Verein der Deutschen in Bosnien und Herzegowina*), the Transylvania Association in Bucharest (*Verein Transylvania in Bukarest*), the Association of the Transylvania Saxons in Vienna, Graz and Munich, (*Die Vereine der Siebenbuenger Sachsen in Wien, Graz und Muenchen*), the Association of the Germans from Hungary in Berlin (*Verein der Deutschen aus Ungarn zu Berlin*), the Association of German University Students from the Lands of the Hungarian Crown (*Vereinigung deutscher Hochschueler aus den Laendern der ungarischen Krone*), and the Association of the Banat Swabians (*Verein der Banater Schwaben*).

UDVP was again present and Steinacker, Brandsch and Kaindl all spoke, as usual. The Association of German University Students from the Lands of the Hungarian Crown (*Vereinigung deutscher Hochschueler aus den Laendern der ungarischen Krone* or VDH) also held a meeting on the occasion of this year's Karpathendeutsche rally. There, the main speaker was an impressive young Swabian and VDH member named Stefan Kraft,<sup>192</sup> who would become one of the most prominent German activists in interwar Yugoslavia, as we shall in Chapter Four.<sup>193</sup>

### Early German National Voices in Politics

*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* promised readers that 1913 would be no ordinary year. 1913 marked the newspaper's tenth anniversary and the editorial staff used the occasion to both survey what the German movement had accomplished and what remained to be done. Over the years, the newspaper had consistently defined the German movement as a defensive struggle and rejected accusations of pan-Germanism or that the Swabians sought to Germanize their neighbors. Gradually, the German movement had become more confident and considerably more strident in its language. As we have seen, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* had adopted a vocabulary of struggle and even apocalypse on occasion. The German movement, according to its mouthpiece, explicitly refused to be cowed by its "enemies" and their "attacks." The newspaper spoke of "dangers" and "threats" to Germandom and assured readers that the movement would be "fearless and loyal" in its service to the German nation. Reviewing its accomplishments, the newspaper (very optimistically)

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<sup>192</sup> Stefan Kraft's name was sometimes written as "Stephan" by contemporaries.

<sup>193</sup> "Es Tagt!," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, May 22 1913.

observed that the majority of the Germans in Croatia Slavonia had awoken from national indifference and had engaged in the struggle to maintain German customs and language and improve Swabian economic standing. Furthermore, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* announced that it had become a *Kampfblatt*, a newspaper which would fight for the national, economic, and social position of the Germans in Croatia-Slavonia. These were important accomplishments to be sure, yet the movement's success was far from certain.<sup>194</sup>

The Ruma Germans had recently had a political voice in the venerable Ferdinand Riester, a long time German activist who had also been Ruma's mayor, a Sabor member, and finally a member of parliament in Budapest before his unexpected death in 1911.<sup>195</sup> He had long spoken on behalf of the Germans and shaped the Ruma Germans' values. In fact, he had been so influential that the 1912 Karpathendeutsche convention in Ruma included an official service of commemoration at his graveside.<sup>196</sup> Riester's name, thus, must be central to any history of the Germans of Ruma and his career is synonymous with early German political strivings in Croatia-Slavonia.<sup>197</sup> Though men of German origins had certainly been involved in politics before, Riester distinguished himself as a pioneer by participating in politics as a nationally oriented German.<sup>198</sup> Riester's successor,

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<sup>194</sup> Having launched these fireworks, the editors also requested that more Germans subscribe, now for the quarterly price of only 2 crowns. "Zur Jahreswende", *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, January 2 1913.

<sup>195</sup> Riester was succeeded by Heinrich August Voltmann as Ruma *Buergermeister* in January 1912. For an in depth treatment of Riester and his elections to the Sabor and Hungarian Parliament, see Oberkersch. 59-92.

<sup>196</sup> A monument to Riester would be unveiled in Ruma in 1923.

<sup>197</sup> Riester's first election to the Sabor came on May 5, 1906.

<sup>198</sup> One peculiarity about Croatia was the fact that people of German descent had become quite active in politics but had always done so as Croats. Thus, German surnames were no stranger to the Sabor and such proud Croats as Illyrian Ljudovit Gaj and Bishop Josip Strossmayer had German heritage.

Franz Moser, was actually a kind of stopgap candidate, a compromise agreed upon to ensure that the Sabor seat of the Ruma electoral district remained in German hands after Riester's abrupt death in 1911. Moser's election, therefore, demonstrated that the German movement had reached sufficient political maturity that it could survive even the loss of its leading political figure.<sup>199</sup>

Moser's selection was significant in that it announced a new organizational phase for the German movement in Srijem. On September 3, 1911, representatives from the Ruma electoral district held a meeting and agreed unanimously on Moser's compromise candidacy. Moser would stand as a government-friendly, independent candidate against the candidates of the Serbian Radical and the Serbian Independent Parties.<sup>200</sup> Rather than formally join the government party, the Germans offered it their backing in exchange for concessions to German priorities, which would be worked out at an upcoming meeting on September 3. "The meeting was therefore of considerable importance, because Swabians came together for the first time in a "rally of the Germans of Croatia and Slavonia", laid down their position on fundamental constitutional and legal questions, proclaimed the need of an independent organization of Germans and set down its tasks. As one might expect, this meeting and proclamation were not well received by Croatian-and Yugoslav-oriented parties. Likewise, the Croatian press decried it as yet further evidence of pan-Germanism in Srijem."<sup>201</sup>

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Riester was significant in that his politics were specifically oriented toward the interests of the German community in Croatia-Slavonia. For this, he was often derided in the Sabor and the Croatian press as a pan-German, among less savory epithets.

<sup>199</sup> With Moser, the Ruma Germans successfully elected a German to the Sabor for the fourth consecutive time since 1906.

<sup>200</sup> "Ein Sieg der deutschen Einigkeit," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, December 16 1911.

<sup>201</sup> Oberkersch. 93-94.



By this time, the Germans considered themselves ready for their own political organization. They had already worked toward a formal, if non-political, organization since earlier in the year. The election of Moser and the process by which the German meeting on September 3 both confirmed his candidacy and hammered out a German program, however, proved a heady tonic.<sup>202</sup> That month, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* announced the need for an “independent organization of all the German comrades [*Volksgenossen*] of our Croatian fatherland”, since the government party could not be fully trusted to preserve German interests and consequently there was no point in formally joining the government party. The newspaper’s editorial staff announced at year’s end that the German movement had proven its political unity and a wide network of German associations had been established. The situation therefore was ripe for the establishment of a political party. The combined accomplishments of the past decade were “as if a crown prince had kissed awake the Sleeping Beauty, the love of nationality, in our *Volksgenossen*,” the editors claimed.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, based on the September 3 program, this “independent German party in Croatia-Slavonia, should already be said to exist” in practice, the newspaper confidently announced, even if it did not yet possess its full framework and structure.<sup>204</sup>

On June 17, 1913, the authorities in Zagreb approved the statutes of the “League of the Germans in Croatia and Slavonia” (*Bund der Deutschen in Kroatien und Slawonien*), the first German-oriented organization to embrace all of Croatia-

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<sup>202</sup> The main demands of the program included increased press and association freedom, guaranteed use of German in the schools church and community (and implementation of existing legislation to that effect), acceptance of German petitions by the authorities, and certain economic demands. For details, see “Kundgebung der Deutschen Kroatiens-Slawoniens,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, September 9 1911.

<sup>203</sup> Schriftleitung, “Zur Jahreswende,” *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, December 30 1911.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

Slavonia's Swabians. The organization's statutes specifically proclaimed the group to be a "non-political association" authorized to work across Croatia-Slavonia and having its seat in Ruma. Articles 2 and 3 listed the Bund's purpose as the "promotion of the national, cultural and economic interests of its members", which would be accomplished through the publication of printed materials "of economic and instructive content," the holding of economic lectures, the promotion and founding of economic associations and loan offices, the promotion of German primary schools (*Volksschulen*), the promotion and founding of German libraries, and the holding of nationally oriented social gatherings. Article 5 made membership open to men and women and article 6 allowed for the establishment of a local chapter any place with more than 10 members. According to article 9, a party congress would be held annually.<sup>205</sup> The Bund's statutes were published in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* on August 28, 1913 and the organization was formally constituted on September 28, 1913.<sup>206</sup>

There was little time for the Bund to become active before the outbreak of the First World War, of course. Nevertheless, the organization quickly established itself and was able to boast a network of 30 local chapters and 2373 confirmed members by its first annual congress on June 2, 1913.<sup>207</sup> The Bund hardly contained the majority of the region's Germans, of course. Nevertheless, in the Bund, the German movement had demonstrated that it was capable of regional organization. Moreover,

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<sup>205</sup> Bund der Deutschen in Kroatien und Slawonien, "Bund der Deutschen in Kroatien und Slawonien – Satzungen," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, August 28 1913.

<sup>206</sup> Geiger, "Savez Nijmaca u Hrvatskoj I Slavoniji: Osnivanje i razvoj u osvit Prvog svjetskog rata." 209.

<sup>207</sup> So many recent applications were still pending by that occasion that Secretary Lindner asserted actual membership would likely exceed 3000.

in recent elections the Germans had proven that their votes were important for political victory in Srijem.<sup>208</sup> Yet even as the movement reached its prewar crescendo, events were occurring elsewhere in Europe that would result in the fall of the Habsburgs and the dismemberment of Hungary. Such events would also transform and accelerate the German movement in Croatia and the future Yugoslavia, shifting its center definitively across the Danube to Novi Sad.

*Osijek: Immigration, Acculturation, Ambivalence*

While Ruma revealed that the German national movement had indeed taken root in Croatia-Slavonia, Osijek demonstrated that the German activists would have to swim hard against a tide of Swabian acculturation, linguistic assimilation, and national indifference elsewhere in the country. As the avowed center of the German movement in Slavonia (then including Srijem), Ruma unsurprisingly boasted the largest total membership in the Bund with 283 regular members and 22 founding ones. In contrast, Osijek had a far larger population of ethnic Germans but counted only one founding and one regular member as late as the Bund's 1914 annual congress.<sup>209</sup> Osijek was one of the earliest places of German settlement in Croatia-Slavonia soon after the Turkish expulsion. For those early settlers, life had been difficult. Indeed, so many Germans had died during the early years of settlement in Osijek that the city became known as "a cemetery of Germans." Two centuries later, however, the city was a German cemetery in quite another sense as far as the German

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<sup>208</sup> Geiger, "Savez Nijmaca u Hrvatskoj I Slavoniji: Osnivanje i razvoj u osvit Prvog svjetskog rata." 197.

<sup>209</sup> "Die 1. Hauptversammlung des Bundes der Deutschen in Kroatien und Slawonien," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 4 1914.

nationalists were concerned, for Osijek's German population was by then characterized by assimilation to its Croatian surroundings and ambivalence toward German identity. The German nationalists in Ruma disapproved, remarking acidly in 1904 that "for those who were buried in the earlier cemetery we have sympathy and heartfelt regret; for those who are interred in the cemetery of today we have burning shame and fury."<sup>210</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* was especially concerned about Croatization in Osijek, which it considered rampant. And indeed, as the city's token Bund membership suggested, Germandom was far from "awakened" in the Slavonian capital even in 1914.

In the nineteenth century, Osijek was heavily settled by Germans who came to form the city's largest ethnic group by the second half of the nineteenth century. If according the 1857 census 10,020 Croats and Serbs, 3272 Germans and 408 Magyars lived in Osijek, by the turn of the century the situation had changed dramatically. The 1900 census found that the 5516 Croats, 1602 Serbs and 1328 Magyars in the city were outnumbered by the 10,657 Germans. As Velimir Petrović notes in his study of the German dialect peculiar to the town, "the German *ethnic* [though not necessarily national – my italics] element had the main role in the cultural and economic life of the city of Osijek all the way until the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918." Meanwhile, the city was a mosaic of multilingualism and multiculturalism.<sup>211</sup>

*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* noted the population of Osijek in 1910 was approximately 32,000, of whom around 12,000 or one third of the city's population

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<sup>210</sup> "Duerfen und sollen wir Deutschen bleiben?."

<sup>211</sup> Velimir Petrović, "Esserski – Što je to?," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* 1 (1995). 108.

identified as native-German speakers. This represented a notable decline from 1900, when self-identified German speakers made up 52 percent of the city's inhabitants. Observing that the decline could not be counted for by German deaths, the newspaper blamed German losses on Croatization. Schools, it charged, were to blame for they were the surest means of "denationalization" and there were no properly German schools. It complained that German language newspapers such as *Die Drau* and *Die Slavonische Presse* had large circulations but were not properly German newspapers. Though printed in German, they were not German national in spirit. On the contrary, they often joined with the Croatian nationalist *Narodna obrana* in attacking *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* and the German movement in Croatia. The Ruma paper complained that many men with German names held leading positions in the city but they had been Croatized or were ambivalent about their heritage. German associations were lacking. Worse, Germans could be found in many South Slav associations, including Sokol and the choral society "Lipa." Indeed, many associations that were originally founded without national orientation had been captured by Croatian nationalists and redirected toward Croatian purposes, often without losing the participation of the hapless "deutscher Michel". Osijek lacked a German theater and also lacked a movement to push for one, the population being satisfied by a handful of German language performances by visiting troupes annually. As in Vinkovci and elsewhere, there was also pressure to replace German with Croatian as the fire brigade's language of command. In sum, from a German nationalist perspective, the situation of Osijek's Swabians was dire indeed.

If Osijek had lacked a German national consciousness in the past, at least its German inhabitants had raised their children not as Croats necessarily but as *Essegger*. (Deriving from Osijek's German name "Essegg," "Essegger" connoted Osijek residency and frequently implied German ethnicity but it was not a German national term.) By 1904, however, the situation had changed precipitously in Osijek, and cunning Croatian nationalism had gotten the upper hand, the Ruma German nationalists charged.<sup>212</sup> Ten years later, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* lamented the degree to which things Croatian had permeated society and even the German sense of self in nearby Osijek,

Recognize the truth in your hearts, German citizens, that there indeed lies a mighty difference between Germans and Croats. I know, of course, that that is today more difficult to admit, because today Germans and Croats frequently bear the same names, because it is typically believed that the educated and the intelligentsia must be Croatian, because the entire country, even in its German areas, has been marked with the stamp of Croatism [*Kroatismus*], because it is considered offensive to Croatian patriotism to promote the German language instead of only the official Croatian national language.<sup>213</sup>

At such a rate of decline, soon there would be no Germans left in Osijek, the newspaper complained.<sup>214</sup>

*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* was consistently critical, indignant, and even baffled by the German population of Osijek and its frustrating ambivalence toward German national identity. Not only did the city's Germans have a weak national consciousness, they offered little to no resistance to Croatization. Rather than

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<sup>212</sup> "Gibt es in Kroatien u. Slavonien Deutsche?," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, January 24 1904.

<sup>213</sup> Stiller Betrachter, "Das Deutschtum in Essegg," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, March 20 1913.

<sup>214</sup> Stiller Betrachter, "Das Deutschtum in Essegg," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, February 13 1913.

become a bulwark of Germandom, the multinational city had become a bastion of the Croatian national movement, even spawning Croatian radical nationalist Josip Frank. Unlike the Germans of Vršac or Novi Sad, who may have enjoyed close ties with the surrounding German countryside and thus enhanced national consciousness, the German bourgeoisie and peasantry were largely isolated from each other in Osijek, and the assimilation of both groups was foreseeable.<sup>215</sup> Further contributing to the separateness of the German population of Osijek was the fact that many Germans had settled there earlier and had different origins than those Germans who later settled the regions around them.<sup>216</sup> Indeed, in 1913 *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* scornfully observed that the Essegger Germans preferred not to be called Swabians.<sup>217</sup>

In 1914, Zagreb's *Obzor* printed a thoughtful appraisal of the state of German identity in Osijek, a city over which ambitious Croatian and German nationalists elsewhere argued. Identity in Osijek, *Obzor* claimed, was more complicated than statistics or appearances might suggest.

A large part of true Osijek citizens did not call themselves by any national name at all [in the recent past]. Those who spoke German, whom the statistics counted among Germans, knew only that they were "Essekeri" [Essegger], and those who spoke Croatian called themselves "Slavonians" a decade ago. These "Essekeri" today comprise the core of the Osijek Germans and in their national conviction, or better, non-conviction, nothing has changed. To speak of a national consciousness among them would be superfluous. They identify nationality and national struggle with politics and among them the principle holds: "I don't get involved in politics."

*Obzor* further noted that Germans were the element from which many "new" Croats had been recruited, and that Croatian schools had been so successful in this regard

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<sup>215</sup> Oberkersch. 59.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>217</sup> Stiller Betrachter, "Das Deutschtum von Esseg," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, February 27 1913.

that there was no longer any German youth to speak of in Osijek's upper or lower towns. Indeed, "the boy in Osijek who today calls himself a German is rare and an exception in a sea of Croatian youth." Even the children of the well-to-do German intelligentsia, who were anyway usually involved in the economy, were growing up Croatian under the influence of Croatian schools. As for pan-Germanism, that outlook was out of the question among the Osijek Germans, *Obzor* cautioned. Ultimately, *Obzor* concluded, the German element of the city was rapidly declining and therefore appeared harmless to Croatia. In fact, Germans would likely "disappear" in the future.<sup>218</sup>

Essekerisch, the aforementioned German dialect is a very useful tool with which to examine the multiethnic nature of life in Slavonia's capital city. Osijek German Lujo Plein recognized the importance of Osijek's German dialect between the world wars and compiled a five-volume collection of the local vernacular between 1929 and 1938.<sup>219</sup> More recently, Croatian professor Velimir Petrović has produced a study of the rich and unique Osijek dialect, which was part of the cultural heritage lost following the Swabian community's destruction at the end of the Second World War. Osijek featured such a cacophony of German settlers' different dialects already by the nineteenth century that Petrović surmises the various German colonists must have had a difficult time understanding each other, much less the Slavs and Magyars in their midst.<sup>220</sup> From their mutual interaction emerged Essekerisch, a very special

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<sup>218</sup> *Obzor* "Nacionalistička borba u Osijeku" reprinted in "Nacionalistička borba u Osijeku," *Narodna Obrana*, May 12 1914.

<sup>219</sup> For more, see Lujo Plein, *Die Essekerische Sprechart: Gesammelte Gespräche aus den Osijeker Gassen und Peripherie* (Osijek: Savez njemaca i austrijanaca Hrvatske, 2002).

<sup>220</sup> "The linguistic situation in Osijek during the 1700s must have been chaotic. In that small space were found, besides the Austrian variant of standard German in official use also the German of several



local dialect of German. Essekerisch (Croatian – *Esekerski*) was a mélange of mostly German but also Croatian, Serbian, Magyar and even Yiddish words and phrases. In addition to contributing vocabulary, neighboring languages also influenced the spelling of many words in written Essekerisch and even the dialect's syntax. Proper high German also endured in the socially stratified city, of course, and Essekerisch was commonly regarded as the purview of Osijek's less educated classes. Essekerisch did not represent linguistic degeneration, however, so much as the emergence of a unique and peculiar dialect, one which well reflected the everyday multi-ethnicity of the region.

There was an exchange of linguistic influences, attributes, and words in both directions between Croatian and German (as well as other languages), and even today certain German words persist in the Croatian spoken locally in Osijek. Osijek Germans borrowed Croatian words for those things for which German lacked a suitable term or for which the Croatian term seemed preferable or more appropriate.<sup>221</sup> Borrowed elements functioned just like other foreign words appropriated by German and were blithely integrated into sentences with no second thought. "In some cases, the borrowed Croatian element was combined with a German element to form a new, hybrid lexical unit," Petrović notes. He continues, "the speaker adapted the borrowed lexical unit to the system of the borrower." Thus from the Croatian verb *peglati* (German – *bügeln*, to iron) was formed the German participle *kpeglt*, for example. Sometimes a Croatian word such as *nogomet* (German - *Fussball*) was combined with a German one, such as *spielen*, to form the uniquely

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German dialects/vernaculars. A part of the settlers spoke only the vernacular/dialect of their native land." Petrović, "Esserski – Što je to?" 108.

<sup>221</sup> Petrović, "Kroatische Einflüsse im Essekerischen." 130.

Essekerisch verb *nogomet špiln*.<sup>222</sup> Meanwhile, the word order of Essekerisch was sometimes influenced by Croatian word order, to the detriment of the strict syntax dictated by high German grammar.<sup>223</sup> With little experience in writing German, many Swabians wrote in Esskerisch, frequently using Croatian orthography.

Perhaps the best description of Essekerisch was given by Osijek German author Wilma von Vukelich in her memoirs. Von Vukelich described Essekerisch as “not a language at all, but rather a mix of languages” with which locals grew up and communicated. It was “an idiom with swallowed final syllables, consonants, and vowels, no pure tone, but rather everything as if in a fog.” There was, moreover, “no sentence in which not at least a few foreign elements were mixed.” There was “no trace of syntax, grammar or orthography.” Esskerisch was a “conglomeration of the Hernals German imported by Viennese artisans and the Wuerttemberg-Hessian elements of the Swabian peasants.”<sup>224</sup> It additionally featured aspects deriving from the relocation of certain soldiers from Bohemia, copious “words and expressions from the vocabulary of the Jewish peddlers,” and the “underworld lingo of the drifter and traveling journeyman.” Moreover, it showed the influence of the Serbian population in Osijek’s lower town, “the corrupted official German and Croatian of the nearby military border, the poor style of the German local newspapers and the false stage pathos of the traveling theater troupes from Olomouc and Pressburg.”<sup>225</sup> The Croatian

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid. 131-133

<sup>223</sup> Petrović, "Esserski – Što je to?" 139

<sup>224</sup> Hernals is a region which has been part of the city of Vienna since the late nineteenth century.

<sup>225</sup> Wilma von Vukelich, *Spuren der Vergangenheit: Osijek um die Jahrhundertwende* (Munich: Suedostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1992).

common street language (*Umgangssprache*) in particular had considerable influence on Essekerisch.<sup>226</sup>

*Traces of the Past, Hints of the Future*

In summary, a German national movement was underway in Croatia-Slavonia before the First World War. Its leaders, the Germans of Ruma, considered themselves to have made good progress toward nationally “awakening” the Germans of Srijem and Slavonia by 1914. They had established their publishing house to make available printed materials for the Swabians of the region. *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* had successfully emerged as the mouthpiece of the nascent German movement and had become a platform from which to promote German national consciousness and also advertise the circumstances of Slavonia’s Germandom to other Germans and national activists in Hungary, Cisleithania, and Imperial Germany. The electoral successes of Ferdinand Riester and Franz Moser demonstrated that the Swabians could act as a coherent and significant political force and provided Croatia-Slavonia with its first nationally conscious German Sabor members. So confident did the German leadership in Ruma feel that it announced the existence of a *de facto* German political party by the end of 1911. Moreover, Ruma’s German national leadership brought the attention of the whole Hungarian-German movement to their small market town when they organized the second Karpathendeutsche rally there in 1912. Finally in 1913, as *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* celebrated its tenth anniversary and boldly trumpeted that it had become a proper *Kampfblatt* for Germandom, the movement won approval of the statutes of the Bund der Deutschen in Kroatien und

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□ Petrović, "Kroatische Einflüsse im Essekerischen." 145

Slawonien and soon had established a network of local chapters, just as it had earlier fostered German-based associations and clubs across the region. The Swabian activists looked to the future with pride and confidence.

Despite the positive pronouncements of *Deutsches Volksblatt Syrmien* and the assured speeches at Bund meetings about the spread of the German national movement, however, it was clear to all from the case of Osijek that the movement's impact in Croatia-Slavonia remained limited. Even in 1909, as *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* extolled Edmund Steinacker as a "hero of our German nation" and "an early fighter for our German mother tongue in Hungary" on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the newspaper lamented that readers in Croatia-Slavonia might be unfamiliar with his name.<sup>227</sup> Nevertheless, the incomplete accomplishments of the German movement in Srijem would prove to have lasting influence on the German movement as it evolved during the interwar era. The electoral politics of Ferdinand Riestler and Franz Moser foreshadowed German participation in the Yugoslav *Skupština*. As we shall see in the following chapter, Ruma provided a precedent and an example for the later political strategy of Stefan Kraft and his colleagues in the Germans' political party of the 1920s, the *Partei der Deutschen*. The annual Karpathendeutsche conventions revealed Swabian involvement (and Stefan Kraft's early participation) with students' organizations and Volkstumarbeit organizations from Germany and elsewhere in the Habsburg Monarchy.

The matters that had so troubled the Swabians in Ruma, such as anti-German hostility and insufficient German in the church and classroom, would also persist into

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<sup>227</sup> "Das 70. Geburtsfest eines Vorkaempfer fuer unsere Deutsche Muttersprache," *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, August 28 1909.

the interwar era. Swabian concerns about the weak state of German national consciousness would endure and inspire new generations of national activists determined to rouse Swabians from their national indifference or ambivalence. Finally, in *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* and the short-lived Bund der Deutschen in Kroatien und Slawonien, one observes models upon which similar organizations would be built in the interwar era. Indeed, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* would be the basis of the Swabians' main newspaper in the interwar era, Novi Sad's *Deutsches Volksblatt*. The 1920s and especially the 1930s would feature many activist newspapers and self-described *Kampfblaetter*, which sought to stimulate German awareness and construct German identity. Like the Bund der Deutschen in Kroatien und Slawonien, Yugoslavia's Schwaebish-Deutsch Kulturbund would ostensibly be non-political and exclusively devoted to cultural matters. Moreover, like the Bund, the interwar Kulturbund upon its simultaneous devotion to the *Volk* and loyalty to the state. Alas, as we shall see in the following chapters, the South Slavs in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were little more convinced of this dual German loyalty than had their predecessors been in Croatia-Slavonia and Hungary under the Habsburgs.

After Hungary's collapse in 1918, the center of the German movement would swing definitively toward Novi Sad and little attention would be paid to the Slavonian lands west of Ruma until the 1930s. Despite the successes in Ruma, German national identity in Slavonia seemed so weak that many in Yugoslavia's nascent German movement gave it up for lost after 1918 and focused their energies on Batschka and Banat, where they expected better results. Others would later recognize in neglected

Slavonia an opportunity for Volkstumarbeit, however. One such German national opportunist was the former Habsburg and Yugoslav army officer and Osijek native Branimir Altgayer, who would assume a leading role in Slavonia during the 1930s as we shall see in Chapter seven.

# Bericht

über

## die zweite Tagung der Karpatendeutschen.



Ferdinand Riefler (gest. 1911), erster deutsch-slawonischer Abgeordneter.

### Geschäftliche Mitteilung:

Anbei erhalten Sie ein Exemplar unberechnet als Teilnehmer an der Tagung.

Sie haben für dieses Exemplar den Betrag schon eingezahlt. Wir bitten Sie dieses Exemplar anzunehmen und I K für den Tagungsschab zu überschicken.

Die dritte Tagung findet im August 1913 in Wien statt.

Für die Hauptleitung:

Dr. Raim. Fried. Kaindl,

Gjermowitz, Bukowina, Rurowitzgasse 50.

Gjermowitz 1913.

Gjermowitzer Buchdruckerei-Gesellschaft.

Wilhelm, 124.

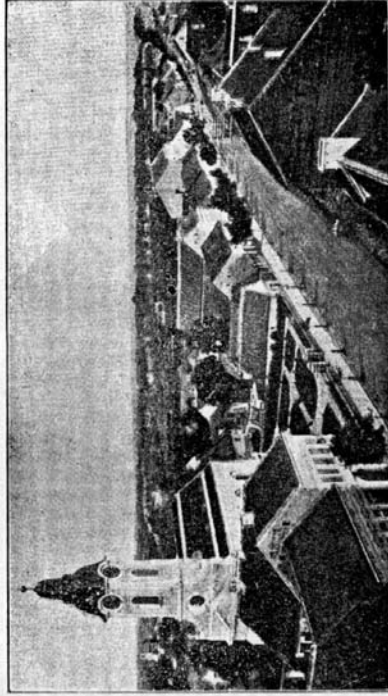
# Bericht

über

## die zweite Tagung der Karpatendeutschen

Ruma 1912.

Erstattet von der Hauptleitung der Tagungen in Gjermowitz.



Gesamtansicht von Ruma in Slavonien.

Gjermowitz 1913.

Der Bericht wird den Teilnehmern an der Tagung umsonst zugesandt. Gegen Zuforderung 1 Krone (1 Mark, 120 Bani) kann er von der Hauptleitung (Dr. R. F. Kaindl, Gjermowitz) frei bezogen werden. Ebenso der Bericht über die erste Tagung in Gjermowitz 1911.

Wilhelm 125.



# Deutsches Volksblatt

Erscheint jeden Donnerstags.  
Wojwodspreis: Vierteljährlich K. 2.—,  
halbjährlich K. 4.—, jährlich K. 8.—,  
Für das Ausland ganzjährlich K. 10.—,  
Einzelblatt samt Familien-Beilage mit  
... versehen. Rücksendung 20 Heller.

Organ für Politik und Volkswirtschaft der Deutschen  
in Kroatien-Slawonien.

Schriftleitung „Verwaltung“  
... Roma Eisenbahngasse Nr. 9. ...  
Telephon Nr. 5. ... Schreibstube bei  
Königl. ungar. Postamt Nr. 25588.  
Wohlfahrts-Verbindungen werden  
nach anliegenden Tarife berechnet.

Gegründet als: Deutsches Volksblatt für Syrmien.

Nr. 19.

Buda, Donnerstag, 8. Mai 1913.

X. Jahrgang.



**1903** **10 Jahre** **1913**  
**Deutsches Volksblatt**  
**für Syrmien**

sei der Gedanke, der uns heute das Geleit gibt. Selten sind die feste geworden, da begeisterte Aufopferung und guter Wille so schöne Erfolge feiern, als uns dies durch die zehnjährige Bestandesfeier unseres „Deutschen Volksblattes für Syrmien“ beschieden worden ist. Welch' Unsumme von freudiger Gemüthung, Stolz und Hoffnung auf künftige Erfolge bringt nicht diese Bestandesfeier für unser volksbewusstes Deutschthum in Syrmien, in ganz Kroatien-Slawonien!

Das schwache Reis, welches vor zehn Jahren eine Schar begeisterter deutscher Männer Syrmiens gepflanzt, ist ein ansehnlicher Baum geworden, welcher seine Zweige bereits über das ganze Land ausbreitet. Unser „Deutsches Volksblatt für Syrmien“ ist durch seine eigene Arbeit zum Führer der deutschen Volksbewegung in unserem kroatianischen Vaterlande emporgestiegen, um mit Tatkraft und Unererschrockenheit die völkischen und wirtschaftlichen Belange zu vertreten. Und zu Tausenden sind uns die deutschen Männer zugeeilt, der deutsche Bauer, der deutsche Handwerker und Gewerbetreibende, der deutsche Akademiker und dessen Standes heute noch die berufsleißigen Volksgenossen unseres kroatianischen Vaterlandes sind, um unsere Reihen zu stärken und unsere Kämpfe mit Siegen zu vollenden.

Heute ist es nicht mehr Syrmien allein, welches wachgerufen worden ist, das ganze Deutschthum Slavoniens ist rege geworden, das Volksbewußtsein ringt sich endlich auch unter unseren dortigen Volksgenossen durch und auch in den zersplitterten deutschen Kolonien des oberen Kroatiens zittert wie Frühlingsnahen das Erwachen zum Volksbewußtsein durch die treuen Seelen unserer Brüder.

So ist es der Wunsch unserer deutschen Volksgenossen des ganzen Landes geworden, daß unser „Deutsches Volksblatt“ anlässlich seiner zehnjährigen Bestandesfeier auch durch seinen Namen sein tatsächlich weites und reiches Arbeitsfeld kennzeichne, auf dem es bereits schwere Kämpfe geführt und auch umso schönere Erfolge erzielt hat. Deshalb erscheint heute auch das alte, liebe „Deutsche Volksblatt“ vor euch in neuem Kleide, nehmt es so liebevoll auf wie einst vor zehn Jahren, als es so schwächern an eure Thür pochte. Wie ihr es damals freundlich aufgenommen habt, bewahrt ihm auch weiterhin eure treue Freundschaft, auf daß es eine feste Stütze habe auf seinen künftigen Wegen!

Auf denn, zu künftigen Taten —  
Und deutscher Treue winkt der Sieg!

Photo by the author.



### Chapter 3: Constructing the Institutions of German Identity within Interwar Borders

In the autumn of 1918, the Swabians were faced with a chaotic and unprecedented situation. Following the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Swabians suddenly found themselves to be an unwanted minority in the aspiring South Slav nation-state known, awkwardly, as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The final boundaries of this state did not become clear for several years, but it was evident that the old order had been irreparably smashed. Hitherto collected in one Hungarian Kingdom, the Danube Swabians would now be divided among the three successor states of Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Numerically diminished, politically inexperienced, and generally lacking group coherence, much less a national consciousness, the German population would hence have to negotiate its way in the nation-states of other, often feuding, ethnic groups. The limited German leadership in Yugoslavia met this extraordinary challenge not through rejection of the state, as the Sudeten Germans initially did in Czechoslovakia. Nor did the Swabian leaders retreat into irredentism or nostalgia for the lost Hungarian fatherland. Instead, the Yugoslav Swabians pursued a patient strategy of working within the bounds of the Treaties of St. Germain and Trianon and relying upon the minority protection treaties negotiated between the successor states and the victorious allies. They embraced the uncertain framework for parliamentarism and liberalism in the new Yugoslav state and established their own political and cultural institutions. Finally, they sought to nurture and define the uncertain German community in the new kingdom by forging a new group identity and imbuing the country's Germans with a

sense of national purpose and ethnic cohesion. With the oppressive but stable hand of Hungarian hegemony finally lifted, the German future in Yugoslavia appeared fraught with uncertainty. Yet insightful Swabians recognized that the South Slav state also offered new opportunities for German national activism.

Although many of the original German leaders in Yugoslavia were roughly middle-aged in 1918, overall their ages varied, as did their origins in the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the Monarchy. As we shall see in Chapters Six and Seven, their later rivals for power would denigrate the early Swabian activists as the outmoded “old leadership” in the 1930s. Such a pejorative characterization was doubtless unfair, but it is not inappropriate to speak collectively of the men who launched the German national movement in Yugoslavia after the war’s end. As a group, they can best be thought of as the Swabians’ “original leadership” or “Swabian activists,” for they founded the Germans’ principle institutions in the 1920s and led them from the turbulent years after the Habsburg collapse until the late 1930s.<sup>228</sup> It was their vision of national identity that largely shaped the German national movement, its institutions and its sense of self during the interwar period. This chapter will deal principally with the chaos following the collapse of Hungary in 1918 and the cultural and organizational responses of the Swabian activists to their radically changed

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<sup>228</sup> Although not all of the German activists in Yugoslavia were actually descendants of the Danube colonists, I will nevertheless often refer to them collectively as “Swabian activists.” The Germans in Slovenia, of course, were not Swabians at all and had distinct traditions and a national consciousness that was comparatively highly developed. Nor did the Slovene Germans and Swabians have a shared historical experience, the former having lived in turbulent Cisleithania and lacking the history of colonization that defined the Danube Swabians. Nevertheless, several Slovene Germans assumed prominent positions in the original leadership of the German national movement and its institutions in Vojvodina. Accordingly, even such Slovene Germans as *Deutsches Volksblatt* editor Franz Perz and Oskar Plautz may be counted under the rubric of “Swabian activists”, for the bulk of their time and energy was aimed at the Swabians in Batschka, Banat, and later Slavonia.

circumstances in the post war era. In Chapter Four, we turn to the Swabians' premier political organization in the 1920s, the Partei der Deutschen.

### *Disintegration and Disorientation*

Until the end of 1918, the history of Germans in the South Slav lands was the history of Germans in Hungary, and Hungary was chaotic and disintegrating during the autumn of that year. Desperate to hold the Monarchy together, Emperor Karl issued an imperial manifesto on October 16 authorizing the reorganization of Austria along national-federal lines. That same day, Hungary renounced the Ausgleich and on October 31, Count Mihaly Karolyi was catapulted into the premiership as the result of a nearly bloodless coup in the streets of Budapest. This came just a week after Karolyi's limited supporters had established a National Council, which quickly transformed itself into a cabinet. Karolyi and his supporters took radical steps, including announcing Hungary's emancipation from its formal ties to Austria and proclaiming it a republic.<sup>229</sup> However, such moves to establish order in Hungary were swiftly overtaken by events, since the country was already in an advanced state of disintegration by late October. Defeated in war, the main threat to Hungary would now come from below, in the form of the long suppressed national minorities with their advocates in the West. As the traditional order broke down, various regional and national councils formed across Hungary, asserting their legitimacy based on national self-determination. These councils, such as Zagreb's National Council (*Narodno*

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<sup>229</sup> Tibor Hajdu and Zsuzsa L. Nagy, "Revolution, Counterrevolution, Consolidation," in *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). 298.

*vijeće*), produced declarations for or against a future in Hungary.<sup>230</sup> Additionally, the Allies authorized the military occupation of huge swathes of historic Hungary by troops from Romania, Serbia and the nascent Czechoslovak state. Finally, besides nationalist unrest, Hungary was also faced with peasant uprisings in the countryside and an increasingly radical labor movement in its cities.

Hungary's Germans were buffeted by the same storms that shook the Magyars during the autumn of 1918. However, lacking a developed political tradition, scattered across the kingdom, divided by confession, and having distinct origins and settlement histories, Hungary's Germans found themselves with unclear or irreconcilable visions of their future at the war's end. Resentful of their historic treatment in the kingdom but often lacking in national identity and generally concerned about the increasingly assertive (especially Yugoslav and Romanian) nationalisms in their midst, the Germans were pushed to collective action but were not always of the same mind on key issues. Moreover, as a traditionally unpolitical minority which was territorially separated from its ethnic motherland, the Germans were limited in their options compared to their South Slav and Romanian neighbors. Ultimately, there was no clear consensus on the road forward for the Empire among Hungary's Germans, and rival German national councils formed with different visions around the persons of Jakob Bleyer and Rudolf Brandsch. Bleyer and

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<sup>230</sup> On October 18<sup>th</sup>, Serb, Slovene and Croatian delegates had founded the National Council (*Narodno vijeće*) in Zagreb, with the goal of a sovereign state. On October 29, the Sabor proclaimed the unity and independence of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia as well as its recognition of the authority of the National Council.

Brandsch had cooperated in German matters in the past, but by the fall of 1918, their relationship had become a struggle for leadership in Budapest.<sup>231</sup>

While the Germans talked in Budapest, the situation was evolving on the ground in southern Hungary. Romanians and Slavs exploited the disorienting situation to claim territories for their respective states while the Swabians in their midst strove to defend their own interests. Living in Croatia-Slavonia (including Srijem), the Germans could expect that they would become part of an eventual Yugoslav state, should the Dual Monarchy collapse. However, the situation was far less certain in Batschka and the *Schwaebische Tuerkei* between Lake Balaton and the Danube, where Magyarization had made great inroads and where the Swabians were most inclined toward remaining in Hungary.<sup>232</sup> Meanwhile, in Banat, Romanian territorial claims competed with German and Serbian and Hungarian ones. Timișoara, Banat's largest city and home to a German plurality, was the prize coveted by all parties. The Swabians, for their part, were generally inclined to remain in Hungary but were also concerned to keep their Swabian settlement area intact. As such, if remaining in Hungary were not an option, many hoped for the wholesale inclusion of Banat in Yugoslavia or Romania.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Both Bleyer and Brandsch wished to keep their respective German regions in Hungary at this stage, but differed on details. Brandsch was from Transylvania, Bleyer was not. Schoedl, "Am Rande des Reiches, am Rande der Nation: Deutsche im Koenigreich Ungarn (1867-1914/18)." 446

<sup>232</sup> Oberkersch. 195-196

<sup>233</sup> According to GenealogyRO Group, the Swabian dilemma in the winter of 1918/1919 divided the Germans into several competing camps. Reinhold Heegn, the longtime Swabian activist from Vršac, desired Banat's union with Yugoslavia. A "moderate" group led by Kaspar Muth and the priest Franz Blaskovics hoped for an autonomous Banat Republic either under Hungary or as a French protectorate. Meanwhile, a more "radical" group, led by Viktor Orendi-Hommenau, Andreas Dammang, Johann Tengler, Josef Gabriel and Johann Roeser, pressed for Banat's unification with the Regat. During that turbulent winter, all would have to adjust their positions. Heegn served as governor (*Obergespan*) of Timișoara from February until the end of the Serbian occupation of that city in July 1919. GenealogyROGroup, "Banat's Historical Chronology for the Last Millennium" <http://www.genealogy.ro/cont/20e.htm> (accessed 2007).

City	1880 Mother tongue	1910 Mother tongue	1930 Nationality	1930 Mother tongue	1941 Ancestry
<b>Timișoara (overall)</b>	33,694	72,555	91,580		110,840
<b>Germans</b>	18,539	31,644	27,807	30,670	30,940
<b>Percentage</b>	55.0	43.6	30.4	33.5	27.9
<b>Romanians</b>	3,279	7,566	24,217	24,088	44,349
<b>Percentage</b>	9.8	10.4	26.4	26.3	40.0

Perhaps the most curious vision for the future of the region was the November 1, 1918 proclamation of the “Banat Republic,” an “independent” if ephemeral republic. Proclaimed from the balcony of the Timișoara city hall by Social Democrat Otto Roth, the Banat Republic was a short lived affair that sought to preserve Banat on a multiethnic basis. Its legitimacy supposedly derived from the military councils of the various ethnic groups which had met on October 31, when Roth had emphasized the urgency of establishing a Banat People’s Council as a body to represent all the region’s peoples. Seeking unification with the Regat,<sup>235</sup> however, the Romanians distanced themselves from the project, which never achieved meaningful international support and had only the briefest of existences.<sup>236</sup> To the degree that the Banat Republic existed in a meaningful sense at all, that life ended definitively with the entry of Serbian troops into Banat on November 15, 1918.<sup>237</sup>

The German national councils in Budapest, with their goals of maintaining Hungarian territorial integrity, were being overtaken by events. In Batschka, an overwhelmingly Serbian Great Popular Assembly (*Velika narodna skupština*)

<sup>234</sup> Table 3.1 based on Table 37 in Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Rumänien*, ed. Theodor Scheider, Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, vol. 3 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 1957; reprint, 2004). 15E.

<sup>235</sup> The lands comprising Romania before 1918 are colloquially referred to as the “Regat” or Romanian Old Kingdom.

<sup>236</sup> Richard Weber, “Die Turbulenzen des Jahre 1918-1919 in Temeschburg” <http://www.banat.de/geschichte/php/aufteil.php3> (accessed June 22 2007).

<sup>237</sup> Anonymous, “Banat Republik” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banat\\_Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banat_Republic) (accessed July 31 2008). See also similar web pages in German and Croatian.

gathered at Novi Sad on November 25, 1918 to proclaim the unification of Vojvodina with the Serbian Kingdom.<sup>238</sup> Less than a week later, Alexander (acting as Regent) proclaimed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Also that day, the Romanian army occupied Transylvania and the Romanian-Transylvanian National Assembly voted in Alba Iulia for unification with Romania proper.

The abortive Banater Republik a memory, Otto Roth organized a Swabian National Council (*Schwaebischer Nationalrat* or *Schwabenrat*) in Timișoara on December 8, 1918. Rejecting the territorial claims of the respective Serbian and Romanian national bodies at Novi Sad and Alba Iulia, protesting recent actions by Romania and the Yugoslav Kingdom, and ultimately pro-Hungarian in its orientation, this Swabian Council (*Schwabenrat*) produced a “Swabian Manifesto” that called for the fate of Batschka and Banat to be decided by plebiscite with the hope of asserting their indivisibility. The manifesto additionally demanded guarantees of minority rights, autonomy for Batschka and Banat and due representation at the Paris peace conference.<sup>239</sup> Such goals, however, were never to be realized by the Swabians, who were ignored by the victors in Paris.<sup>240</sup> Meanwhile, the Transylvanian Saxons had chosen to leave Hungary themselves. Their representatives (now including Brandsch) negotiated relatively favorable terms with Bucharest for their annexation by the

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<sup>238</sup> Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: The Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2 ed. (Belgrade: 2005). 29-30. Germans numbered only six in the assembly’s 757 members, who were overwhelmingly Serbian but issued fine promises to respect the rights to national development of other peoples.

<sup>239</sup> The “Manifest der Grossen Komitees des Schwaebischen Nationalrates” is available in Hans Rasimus, *Als Fremde im Vaterland: Der Schwaebisch-Deutsche Kulturbund und die ehemalige deutsche Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien im Spiegel der Presse* (Munich: Arbeitskreis fuer donauschwaebische Heimat- und Volksforschung in der Donauschwaebischen Kulturstiftung, 1989). 623.

<sup>240</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Nationalitaetenpolitik in Jugoslawien: Die deutsche Minderheit 1918-1978*. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980). 26-27.

Romanian state, and the Saxon National Assembly (*Nationalversammlung*) voted in Mediaș for unification with the Regat in January 1919.<sup>241</sup>

In sum, the Swabians' predicament in 1918 was extremely difficult. Unlike their South Slav or Romanian neighbors, they did not have a neighboring nation-state to sponsor or receive them. They could expect no army of coethnics to establish a new order and elevate them to the people of state. On the contrary, anti-German sentiment was strong in 1918, and realistically the Swabians had little hope for influence in the construction of a new, national order in southern Hungary. True, the destruction of old Hungary would mean a corresponding end to Magyarization measures, which was attractive to some Swabian minds. However, Hungary had seemed eternal to many ethnic Germans and it was, after all, their homeland. Lacking a nation-state to deliver them, the solution to their predicament seemed to lie in the reform of Hungary, not its destruction. As such, the Germans largely remained sympathetic to Hungary, opposed secession, and especially hoped to prevent the division of their broad area of settlement or separation from Timișoara. They were to be disappointed.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Schoedl, "Am Rande des Reiches, am Rande der Nation: Deutsche im Koenigreich Ungarn (1867-1914/18)." 450.

<sup>242</sup> To be sure, there was a minority of Germans who endorsed the Rumanian and Serbian/Yugoslav claims to southern Hungary because they saw the kingdom's destruction as meaning liberation from oppressive Magyarization. With the intention of waking national German consciousness, these Germans formed "Donauschwaebische Klubs" under the slogan "Los von Ungarn" in the region's cities and villages. However, the majority of Germans continued to prefer a future in Hungary to the uncertainty of life in Yugoslavia or greater Romania. Wehler. 26.



### A New Kingdom

The outline of the German community of Yugoslavia was determined by the peace treaties of St. Germain and Trianon from September 10, 1919 and June 4, 1920 respectively. The former treaty addressed the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy and thus concerned the Germans living in the western, Slovenian regions of Yugoslavia. It was the Treaty of Trianon that affected the bulk of Yugoslavia's Germans, however, simultaneously dismembering Hungary and dividing the Danube Swabians' main settlement areas in Batschka and Banat. By this treaty, Croatia-Slavonia and Srijem were also awarded to the Yugoslav Kingdom.

The basics of the Treaties of Trianon and St. Germain are well known but several details merit closer consideration in connection with Yugoslavia. Though intended to unite prewar Hungary's ethnic populations in their own nation-states, the Trianon Treaty had exactly the opposite effect on the country's Germans (who were not consulted anyway). The more than 1.5 million Germans in southern Hungary were divided between the successor states of Yugoslavia, Romania and rump-Hungary, with Romania receiving the largest share.

<b>Table 3.2: Official 1930s Census Statistics for Germans in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Population</b>
Yugoslavia	(1931) 499,969 (Mother tongue) <sup>243</sup>
Hungary	(1933) 477,153 (Mother tongue) <sup>244</sup>
Romania	(1930) 760,687 (Mother tongue) <sup>245</sup> 745,421 (Nationality)

Despite Swabian efforts to preserve its integrity, Banat was divided between Romania and Yugoslavia, the latter of which would also share Batschka and Baranja with rump

<sup>243</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 11E.

<sup>244</sup> Paikert. 3.

<sup>245</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene. 5E.

Hungary. Many Swabians in these regions would have preferred to remain in Hungary, but the Wilsonian principle of self-determination was interpreted such that the presence of a plurality of Slavs mandated union with Yugoslavia, even if a combined majority of Magyars and Swabians might have preferred to remain in Hungary.

Since the mosaic of the Habsburg Monarchy could not be disassembled without leaving some ethnic populations as minorities, the Allies included articles in the peace treaties obliging the successor states to respect the rights of national minorities and then negotiated specific minority protection treaties with the successor states. In practical terms, these treaties dealt with minority rights in education, religion, language use with officials, and the like and were to be enforced by the League of Nations. The original postwar Swabian leadership counted on the meaningful implementation of these treaty obligations and based their national goals upon them. The (largely Serbian) Yugoslav authorities, however, considered these obligations an offensive and unwarranted intrusion on their own national sovereignty and were thus reluctant at the state and local levels to allow Germans the opportunities and protections the treaties granted. In fact, the minority issue was so controversial that it was only after massive international pressure that the Yugoslav government consented to sign the conventions on minority protection.<sup>246</sup> As we shall see, the government's signature did not guarantee treaty enforcement.

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<sup>246</sup> Yugoslav reluctance to properly observe the minority clauses with regard to the Germans must be seen in the greater context of minority affairs there. Though a large minority in the kingdom, the Germans were hardly the only one and by denying the Germans the rights guaranteed by the minority treaties it became easier to similarly deny more pernicious (from the Serbian viewpoint) Magyar, and Albanian claims.

The situation in southern Hungary remained unclear throughout the winter of 1918-1919, with the Yugoslav, Romanian and Hungarian states making rival claims to many of the same territories and dispatching occupying troops to create facts on the ground, as we have seen with Serbia in Banat. According to the Wilsonian principles upon which the final peace settlement was to be based, the fate of these lands was to be decided by self-determination, with the possibility of plebiscites in contested areas. Given this possibility of plebiscites and the large numbers of Germans in Batschka and Banat, it behooved Yugoslav authorities to treat the Germans there generously and win their sympathy. The Yugoslavs also worried that lingering German sentimentality for Hungary could become outright irredentism.

In order to prevent the formation of a Swabian-Magyar irredentist front, the shrewd Yugoslav authorities initially privileged the Germans, offering them generous cultural concessions and opportunities that they had not enjoyed in Hungary before its collapse. An unprecedentedly free German press was tolerated as was German associational life. Having occupied Timișoara, the Serbs installed Banat German and early Swabian activist Reinhold Heegn as the region's governor or *Obergespan*<sup>247</sup> from February 17 to July 20, 1919.<sup>248</sup> Seeking to win the whole of Banat for Yugoslavia, the authorities also promised the Germans far-reaching educational rights. Thus, in the immediate wreckage of Hungary, the Swabians were able to develop their own schools as never before. The Serbs even promised the Swabians a

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<sup>247</sup> "Obergespan" is the German term for the head government figure in a Hungarian Komitat (county). I translate it here loosely as "governor." The term's origins are obscure but it may be a German construction based upon the Magyar term "ispan." Doug Holmes, "Obergespan" <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/GEN-MEDIEVAL/1998-05/0896280118> (accessed July 31 2008).

<sup>248</sup> Born in Werschetz in 1875, Heegn was a founder and leader of the Deutsche Buergerpartei there. He was an opponent of Magyarization in the schools and was one of the earliest German activists. He died after a long illness in January 1925. "Reinhold Heegn," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 2 1925.

German university, should they support the successful, wholesale inclusion of Banat in Yugoslavia.<sup>249</sup> Many of Belgrade's promises soon proved to be empty, however.

Ultimately, the Yugoslavs did not realize their maximalist claims in Banat, most of which was awarded to Romania. However, Yugoslavia did persuade the Allies in Paris to grant it extensive claims to Batschka, the territory in Yugoslavia which would contain the most Germans as well as a large number of Magyars. Meanwhile, the cultural and especially educational privileges the Yugoslav authorities had extended to the Vojvodina Germans in the immediate postwar period were gradually eroded after the signing of the Treaty of Trianon. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, the Yugoslav government interpreted Part III, Section VII of the treaty, "Clauses Relating to Nationality", as endorsing the actual *denial* of German political rights until early 1922, well after the 1920 election of the Constituent Assembly and its adoption of the Vidovdan Constitution. As we have seen, the Yugoslav government was hardly enthusiastic about the minority protection treaty. Thus, the very treaties that were intended to safeguard minority rights in the post Habsburg order were either selectively implemented, ignored, or even became instruments of exclusion in the hands of Belgrade. The country's Germans could have no voice in the affairs of state until the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had shaped the kingdom's constitution by themselves. "The South Slavs had sought minority rights with mixed success from Austria-Hungary before the war," John Lampe has observed. "The new Yugoslav Kingdom now faced the dilemma of respecting such rights or encouraging the breakup of the state."<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Anton Scherer, *Kratka povijest podunavskih Nijemaca* (Osijek: Pan liber, 1999). 98.

<sup>250</sup> Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country*. 116.

I have described interwar Yugoslavia as a nationalizing-state and sometimes as a nation-state. In fact, the country was dominated by the three rather distinct cultures for which it was named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Despite their different languages and alphabets, these were understood as three tribes of a single Yugoslav nation. Yugoslav authorities and the peoples in the state alternated over the years between insisting on a single integral Yugoslav culture and variously tolerating the differences of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian peculiarities.<sup>251</sup> There was considerably less tolerance of the country's minorities, however.

The Yugoslav Kingdom was a constitutional monarchy governed by a unicameral assembly known as the Skupština and with a relatively liberal constitution. It was a complex place however. In addition to the three tribes of the state nation, the country contained huge populations of Magyars, Albanians, Romanians and, of course, Germans. Although this paper only concerns itself with the lands formerly under the Habsburgs, Yugoslavia also included the Serbian and Montenegrin Kingdoms. "By virtually every relevant criterion – history, political traditions, socioeconomic standards, legal systems, religion and culture – Yugoslavia was the most complicated of the new states of interwar East Central Europe," historian Joseph Rothschild has observed.<sup>252</sup> During the interwar years the country would be dominated by competing unitarist and federal forces, a struggle which is frequently represented by a Serbian drive for centralized hegemony and a Croatian

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<sup>251</sup> For more on this debate in Yugoslav history, see Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>252</sup> Rothschild. 201.

defense of the autonomy and integrity of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia.<sup>253</sup> The country was ostensibly a *Rechtstaat*, a state governed by law. Yet as we shall see, the primacy of politics in Yugoslavia frequently trumped the niceties of law, and opposition politicians often found themselves under arrest.

With the single exception of Monsignor Anton Korošec, all of interwar Yugoslavia's prime ministers were Serbs. The brief tenure of Korošec, leader of the Slovene People's Party, followed the 1928 murder of the leading Croatian politician Stjepan Radić, who had dominated the Croatian Peasant Party until his death. Politics on the state level were ethnic politics and each nationality eventually embraced nationally-based parties. Thus, most Slovenes rallied behind the Slovene People's Party and most Croats supported the Croatian Peasant Party. Serbs also supported their own parties, but the Serbian political scene was more diverse as it included Serbian politicians from Habsburg Vojvodina and the old Serbian Kingdom south of the Danube. The most important political forces from the Serbian Kingdom were the Radical Party led by Nikola Pašić and the Democratic Party led by Ljubomir Davidović. The Democratic Party for several years also included the lead Serb politician from Vojvodina, Svetozar Pribićević and his backers. But after several years, Pribićević and his supporters withdrew from the common party to form the Independent Democrats. Additionally, Yugoslavia's Bosnian Muslims, Albanians and Germans had their own political parties. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which was quite strong for a brief period, was banned in 1921.

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<sup>253</sup> While there is considerable truth to this representation of affairs in Yugoslavia, it is also important to note that the Serbs themselves were quite divided. While the Croats were characterized by political solidarity in the Croatian Peasant Party, serious divisions existed on the Serbian side. Indeed, for many years the Serbs of the former Habsburg lands found themselves allied with the Croats against the centralizing dictates of Belgrade. For more on the search for a workable Yugoslavia, see Djokić.

*Becoming National in War and its Aftermath*

As we have seen, the German national politicians of the *Ungarlaendische Deutsche Volkspartei* and the editorial staff of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* had had to confront German national indifference or even incomprehension in the era before the First World War. The interwar period, however, was characterized by an increasing Swabian embrace of national identity, a development which asks the obvious question of what prompted the Germans of Yugoslavia to suddenly “become national.” In fact, the Swabians’ reorientation was not as sudden or spontaneous as it at first appears. The turn toward national identity, or differently put, the emergence of nationhood as politically salient, was both gradual and revolutionary, profound and incomplete. In large part, it was the result of the military mobilization, political organization, and religious organization which Anthony D. Smith has identified as among the most crucial forces for coalescing, that is crystallizing, a sense of national consciousness from an existing ethnic identity.<sup>254</sup> For many, it derived from the transformational experiences of the First World War, which shook many Swabians out of their provincial isolation and exposed them to new places, persons and ideas for the first time. National identity crystallized for many others in reaction to the heightened South Slav nationalisms before and especially after the war. The collapse of the familiar Hungarian fatherland (and its replacement by a nation-state based on a

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<sup>254</sup> Smith actually uses the phrase “state making”, not political organization. Obviously, the Swabians could not make a state of their own and were specifically excluded from the first years of the state making process in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, in the Partei der Deutschen, which we will discuss in the following chapter, the Swabians did become involved as voters in the affairs of state in unprecedented numbers. For more on these factors contributing to identity crystallization, see Smith, *National Identity*. 26-28.

nation to which many Swabians felt little or no sense of belonging) certainly provoked some self-reflection among the Germans.<sup>255</sup> Additionally, the eventual insensitivity and repressive policies of the Yugoslavs and their government toward the Germans had the unintended consequence of helping coalesce a collective sense of nationhood among them.<sup>256</sup>

Also essential to forging the Swabians' sense of nationhood were certainly the tireless efforts of a band of nationally conscious German activists. These men founded Swabian organizations in the wake of the First World War and would devote the next twenty years to the classic activities of "national awakening" pioneered by the ethnic entrepreneurs of nineteenth century Europe. This "national awakening" was anything but the natural process its advocates described it to be, of course. Rather, the Swabian national "awakeners" were faced with the formidable task of crafting a national identity, imparting it to the people and mobilizing it politically. As we shall see in Chapter Four, in the new Yugoslav nation-state, German leaders organized a German political party and mobilized a great many Swabians politically for the first time. Additionally, as detailed in Chapter Five, the country's German Protestants became organized in a specifically German Lutheran Church which had relatively close ties to Germany itself and cultivated an increasingly well developed sense of German identity under its young and ambitious head bishop, Philipp Popp. Ultimately, these institutions and others established by the original leadership shortly

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<sup>255</sup> It could not have gone unnoticed among the Swabians that the very name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes excluded the German population which had dwelled on its territory for nearly two centuries.

<sup>256</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 29E. For more on how such a process might work see Brubaker.



after the Habsburg collapse were instrumental in forging German group identity and purpose.

Although the establishment of the UDVP, the election of Ferdinand Riester to the Croatian Sabor, and the regular publication of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* before 1914 must be recognized as highly important achievements in themselves, their greatest significance would not emerge until the interwar period, when they served as models for a much more developed German life in Yugoslavia. As we saw in Chapters One and Two, the state of Germandom on the eve of the First World War was precarious indeed. Nonetheless, the German national movement did gradually develop in the first decades of the twentieth century. As such, one may say that the Swabians' embrace of national identity after 1918 was not as sudden as it might appear, since their interwar institutions were in part built on the pre-war traditions and expertise of the UDVP, *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien* and the like. The impact of the First World War and the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy cannot be underestimated as catalysts for national identity formation, however. Henceforth, the Swabians' embrace of nationhood as a political principle would occur at a notably accelerated rate.

The First World War and subsequent Paris peace settlement were revolutionary for the Swabians. Until that conflict, the Germans of Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina had frequently developed only a local consciousness that bound them to their village (*Dorfgemeinschaft*) or perhaps via family to a neighboring community. To a lesser degree, a feeling of belonging had evolved within the major

regions of German settlement themselves.<sup>257</sup> The First World War marked a turning point, however. During the conflict, many Swabians were exposed to other Germans in the armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary, with whom they shared the war's savage experience at the front. Marched in uniform beyond the confines of parish and village, they were thus exposed to new people, ideas and philosophies. In ethnic Germans from distant corners of the *Kaiserreich* and Austria-Hungary, they recognized commonalities and began to develop a sense of nationhood. Moreover, they learned that the Magyars' narcissistic celebration of their own fatherland was not absolute truth, nor should Magyar disregard for Swabians as country bumpkins go unquestioned. In the wartime military, the Swabians discovered a world where the Magyars were not everywhere lords and the language of command was their own, German. Furthermore, in *Kaiserreich Generalfeldmarschall* Gustav von Mackensen's 1916 Balkan campaign, the Swabians of Batschka and Banat saw firsthand how German forces were better equipped and visibly more formidable than the Hungarian National Guard, or *Honvéd*.<sup>258</sup> The Swabians were seized by the connection between Imperial German and Habsburg forces in their common struggle against the other Great Powers. They watched the unfolding of German power with astonishment and came to identify with it. This experience expunged the sense of inferiority from many Swabians, who had grown accustomed to Magyar dismissals of them as dimwitted and simple-minded, especially compared to the magnificent

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<sup>257</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 38E.

<sup>258</sup> The Habsburg Monarchy operated a single army, sometimes called the Joint Army for it consisted of forces contributed by both the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the Monarchy but was a common institution. The language of command in the Joint Army was German, though non-German units also used the language of the majority of their members. Additionally, Austria and Hungary had their own national guards, known respectively as the *Landwehr* and the *Honvédség*. For more on the Austro-Hungarian Joint Army, see Istvan Deak, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Magyar nation. Swabians in the military were exposed to modern German nationalism as well as the “*Heimat* novels” of Banat Swabian and German nationalist author Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn, who distributed his books among the Swabian troops on several occasions.<sup>259</sup> Finally, the Swabians could not help but take note of the Wilsonian principles of self determination and equality that were meant to define the postwar order and govern future relations between peoples.<sup>260</sup>

Thus liberated from assumptions of Hungarian superiority and Swabian inferiority, many Swabians came to aspire to a higher sense of nationhood. Indeed, on the occasion of the 1920 founding of a local chapter of the Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund, Chaplain Christian Mueller observed that a new spirit was in the air after the fall of Hungary.

This new spirit has now awoken the Germans. And just as our forefathers were greeted as Swabians by all others during the settlement and were not ashamed of this greeting but rather were proud of it, so will we also not be ashamed when somebody calls us Swabians. No, we want to be proud of it, we want to emulate our forefathers, since we have won back our self-confidence through the new spirit, we have recognized that as Germans we are worthy of this soil of the fatherland given to us by God.<sup>261</sup>

As among the Czechs and other central European nations, Swabian national activists portrayed this embrace of nationhood as a “revival,” a “reawakening,” or a “rebirth.” The turn to nationhood and nationalism was not something new, in this depiction, but rather the “winning back” of something ancient and authentic, which had fallen dormant. Allegedly the shock of the World War and the subsequent Trianon settlement had merely jolted the Swabians back to their senses.

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<sup>259</sup> Senz, *Doamuschwaebische Geschichte*. 15-16.

<sup>260</sup> "Einst und Jetzt," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 18 1921.

<sup>261</sup> "Deutsches Wesen und neuer Geist," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 21 1920.

Although the contemporary Swabian activists likely exaggerated the pervasiveness of the new German national spirit in their speeches and articles, there is no question that the destruction of old Hungary, Wilsonian idealism, the example of Slav nationalisms, and the wartime exposure to Germans from elsewhere in Austria-Hungary and the *Kaiserreich* had made a profound impression on the Swabians. The transformation of the political, cultural, and social landscape had been extreme. As one contemporary observer described the profound changes wrought by the destruction of old Hungary in 1920:

The sudden end of the greatest clash of nations of all time tore away the rotten roof from over the heads of us Germans of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It separated us from friend and brother and blocked all living connections with a single blow. There we suddenly stood, helpless and abandoned, divided in different national states.

The rawness of the postwar situation and the nakedness of the Swabian position were nothing less than shocking. Yet the war that had cast the Swabians from the familiar if oppressive security of Hungary had also imparted a new urgency to the question of Swabian identity and hope of deliverance in German nationalism. "The old world had sunk behind us," this observer concluded, "and before us in hopeful brilliance shone the sun of our newly invigorated national consciousness."<sup>262</sup>

The destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy was traumatic to be sure. However, the men who would emerge as the leaders of the nascent Swabian-German national movement recognized that the collapse of the old order also offered new opportunities. As the interwar Novi Sad daily *Deutsches Volksblatt* commented in 1921,

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<sup>262</sup> "Zum Geleite," *Kulturbund Kalender fuer das Gemeinjahr 1921* 1, no. 1 (1920). 21. This 1921 edition of the *Kulturbund Kalender* was written and published during 1920.

One cannot give enough thanks to fate, which cut us off from the source of our national misfortune and allowed us to finally breathe freely. What thinking Swabian would wish to return to the old Magyarophile, unfortunate circumstances? The Yugoslav state has held out to us the prospect of national freedom.<sup>263</sup>

True, there was much room for improvement in the Germans' position in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and such Swabian statements were no doubt partly intended to curry favor with the Yugoslav authorities. However, much sincerity also lay in such words. After all, was such an imperfect situation still not better than had been the case in Hungary?<sup>264</sup> True, the Hungarian state idea, even after it was eclipsed by a prewar rising tide of Magyar chauvinism, had always had a certain cosmopolitan appeal. Trianon, however, had eliminated it as an available identity option at least for those Germans in the Yugoslav Kingdom and Romania. Yet nationhood had survived the destruction of the old Hungarian state, eternal in its mythology. "Our Swabian *Volk*" wrote one contributor to *Deutsches Volksblatt* in 1920, "remains a *Volk* irrespective of the state to which it is politically bound."<sup>265</sup> Thus, the destruction of Hungary forced many Swabians to confront the inconvenient questions about their own identity and place in the post-Habsburg order.

The postwar transformations in the lands annexed by Yugoslavia were not merely administrative. On the contrary, a dynasty that had seemed ancient and everlasting had been deposed and replaced by the cult of the nation, which had equally eternal pretensions. In such a national age, cosmopolitanism lost most of its attraction, and there was obviously no more cosmopolitan Habsburg Emperor/King

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<sup>263</sup> Dr. A.D., "Gotzendaemmerung der Renegaten I," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 11 1920.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Nikolaus Kahles, "Das Bevoelkerungsproblem unseres heimischen Schwabentums II," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 16 1920.

behind which to hide. (Though the Karadjordjević dynasty now ruled all of the Yugoslav Kingdom, the House of Karadjordjević was, of course, the Serbian royal family.) As Novi Sad's *Deutsches Volksblatt* observed in December 1920, cosmopolitanism had been dragged to its grave by the First World War.<sup>266</sup> As such, a vacuum emerged where before there had before been a well defined identity for literally centuries. The new appeal of German nationalism to the Swabians was one result of this sudden vacuum.

One unsurprising reason why the Swabians became national in the interwar period, of course, was that they suddenly *could*. Once the repressive framework of Magyarization had been removed, their leaders were free (or freer) to develop national institutions of the sort that had been so successful in shaping and mobilizing groups based on nationalism elsewhere. Thus the Swabian activists were not reinventing the wheel in their program to “awaken” to Germandom the “dormant” Swabians. On the contrary, they merely applied the same lessons and methods that had been so evidently successful among other ethnicities in the Monarchy. The (initially) relatively liberal Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes provided an environment where the seeds of their efforts might grow and bear fruit. Indeed, the Swabians had observed the development of South Slav nationalisms in their midst during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Serbs and Croats, had participated in the same general movement of European nationalism that had mobilized peoples across central and eastern Europe during the nineteenth century. In the heightened nationalism that followed the war, the Swabian leadership took lessons from its South Slav neighbors. The Swabian activists and their supporters engaged in classic

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

awakening activities, establishing such institutions as *Deutsches Volksblatt*, the Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund, and as we shall see in Chapter Four, the Partei der Deutschen. Their speeches often invoked a vocabulary of struggle and they regularly spoke of the labor and sacrifice necessary for the national construction and cultivation ahead. They evangelized for Germandom and created a nationally based social and organizational environment which was open to all German ethnics.

### *German Reactions in the New Kingdom*

Though many Swabians long retained a lingering nostalgia for the prewar Hungarian Kingdom, they soon came to accept the Yugoslav Kingdom and began to negotiate their new circumstances. For the German activists, one immediate but enduring task was simply forming a basic group coherence upon which to base their national movement. A common identity and consciousness remained elusive, however. Recalling the situation two decades later, Swabian media man Oskar Plautz observed, there were no close relations between these German groups in Vojvodina, Croatia-Slavonia, Bosnia and Slovenia before the First World War. Moreover, national consciousness was itself differently developed among the various groups, with the Germans in Slovenia typically having the most sophisticated sense of national identity.<sup>267</sup> One of the primary tasks of the Swabian activists, thus, was to forge not only a sense of national identity but also one of common group consciousness. Even within the Swabian main area of settlement, German communities from Banat, Baranja, and Batschka often felt little in common and could

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<sup>267</sup> Oskar Plautz, *Das Werden der Deutschen Volksgemeinschaft in Suedslawien* (Novi Sad: Deutsches Volksblatt (Sonderabdruck), 1940). 3.

be furthermore divided by confession and class as well as by urban or rural residence. The Paris peace treaties had drawn new borders around the German population. Now the Swabian activists had to forge a sense of shared community within them.

Future Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund chairman Johann Keks revealed the scope of the challenge of forging community out of such a disparate collection of burghers and peasants in a 1921 popular article elementarily entitled “Germandom in Yugoslavia.” Keks confidently predicted that the disparate German communities across the country would ultimately come together in the nascent Kulturbund but basically acknowledged that the country’s Germans, far from comprising an organic community, actually had little knowledge of one another. The inclusion of the Slovene Germans meant that the overall German minority could not be characterized as properly Swabian, he noted. And even the Swabians themselves had had distinct historical experiences, for some had spent the past under the Croats while the rest lived directly under the Magyars.<sup>268</sup>

In order to promote a group consciousness among the disparate Germans, it would be necessary to provide the German minority with some basic information about itself. As such, Keks briefly introduced the “three more or less coherent settlement groups” within the Yugoslav borders in Vojvodina, Srijem and Slovenia. His article optimistically estimated the German minority at over 700,000 and was followed by a series of essays on the Germans of Vojvodina, Croatia-Slavonia, Slovenia, and north Bosnia, their declared goal being simply to acquaint the disparate German communities in Yugoslavia with one another.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Keks. 24.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. 24.



The Swabian leadership responded to their inclusion in the Yugoslav Kingdom by establishing political institutions to work within the new system and founding cultural organizations to nurture their own national community. In this, they sought to continue the traditions of the UDVP and *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, two prewar institutions whose activities would be adapted and expanded to suit the interwar era. In the immediate term, however, uncertainty reigned in the aftermath of the war. Both the boundaries of the new state and the methods that would be used to determine them were also unclear. As we have noted, many had initially held out hope for the practical extension of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination to Germans as well. Failing this, the Yugoslav Swabians hoped that a sizable piece of Banat would be assigned to their kingdom.<sup>270</sup> Ultimately, the final borders of the new state would not become clear for the Germans until late 1923, when they learned to their dismay that the important west Banat Swabian town of Jimbolia, then known as Hatzfeld and 74.2 percent German, would be ceded to Romania. This border concession, of course, reduced the Yugoslav Kingdom's Swabian population and share of Banat even further.<sup>271</sup> It was only one in a series of disappointments.

The evaporation of Magyar hegemony provoked confusion about many fundamental aspects of daily life, not least of which were the proper language and spelling of place names. The masthead of the biweekly *Gruß Gott: Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt fuer die Bácska* serves as a good example of just how disorienting these initial postwar years were. Though written in German, *Gruß Gott* had regularly

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<sup>270</sup> "Wir sollen Werschetz und Weisskirchen verlieren?," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 16 1921.

<sup>271</sup> Partei der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen, *Warum darf der deutsche Waehler am 8. Feber nur fuer die deutsche List stimmen?: Ein Kapitel zur politischen Aufklaerung der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen* (Novi Sad: Deutsche Druckerei- und Verlags A.G., 1925). 39.

used Hungarian spellings for place names before 1918 and continued to do so after the Habsburg Monarchy's collapse. As such, the newspaper described itself until 1921 as being produced in cooperation with the Lutheran clergy of the "Bácsér" *Seniorat* (district) and directed by managing editor J. Jahn, Pastor of "Kiskér." Most indicative of the disorientation of these early post-Hungarian years was how the newspaper dealt with the mere place of its publication. Whereas in 1920 the masthead still listed this as the Hungarian "Ujverbász," in 1921 that town's name morphed into a combination of the Hungarian and German as "Neuverbasz," which was still located in "Bácska." Later that year the masthead switched to calling the town "Neuwerbass" before settling on "Neu-Werbaß" in 1926. Finally, *Gruß Gott* conceded its place of publication as the Serbo-Croatian "Novi Vrbas" in January 1930, by which time it had expanded its horizons beyond Batschka to become an "Evangelical community newspaper for Yugoslavia." This uncertainty regarding the language and spelling of place names is especially indicative of the Swabians' postwar disorientation, since Novi Vrbas with 40,000 Protestants was the strongest of the Protestant *Senioraten* in Yugoslavia and evolved into a principal Protestant spiritual and publishing center between the wars.<sup>272</sup> With their *Kaiserreich*-trained clergy, the German Evangelicals had always been more nationally oriented than their Catholic counterparts in the Swabian region, as we shall see. Yet in the wake of the Monarchy's collapse, even the Evangelicals found themselves unsure in a world marked by great uncertainty.

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<sup>272</sup> Branko Bešlin, *Vesnik Tragedije: Nemačka štampa u vojvodini 1933-1941. godine* (Novi Sad: Izdavačka Agencija Platoneum, 2001). 169.

Signs of the Changing Times



IV. Jahrgang. Ujverbász, 20. Oktober 1920. Nummer 11.

Poštarina plaćena u gotovom.



IV. Jahrgang. Neuverbász, 20. September 1921. Nummer 9.



IV. Jahrgang. Neuerbass, 20. Oktober 1921. Nummer 10.

Poštarina plaćena u gotovom



X. Jahrgang. Neu-Verbass, 15. Juni 1926. Nr. 6.

Poštarina plaćena u gotovom.

Postgebühr bar erlegt.



Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Jugoslawien.

XIV. Jahrgang. : Novi Verbass, Januar 1930. : Nr. 1.

Erscheint monatlich. — Herausgegeben vom Pfarrverein des Batscher evang. Seniorates u. B. — Verantwortlicher Schriftleiter: Senior Jakob Jahn in Priboritzcevo. — Hauptmitarbeiter: Konstantin Franz Morgenthaler und Pfarrer Franz Klein. — Verwaltung: Novi Verbass, Kralja Petra ulica 328.

Although the principle institutions of Volkstumarbeit in Yugoslavia would by and large feature different leaders than those who had led the nascent German national movement in prewar Hungary, in fact there was also much continuity from the previous era. The three main institutions of the Germans in interwar Yugoslavia, *Deutsches Volksblatt*, the Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund and the Partei der Deutschen (PdD) had their roots in Srijem, Batschka and Banat. Moreover, some important personalities who were active in the German movement before the war remained so in the postwar era. Nevertheless, the drivers behind the German national activism in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes largely came from a small group of German intellectuals, many of whom belonged to a younger generation.<sup>273</sup>

One of the prewar organizations that had served as a school for the young German nationalists of Hungary was the Association of German University Students from the lands of the Hungarian Crown (*Vereinigung Deutscher Hochschueler aus den Laendern der ungarischen Krone* or VDH), which we briefly discussed in Chapters One and Two. The VDH was established in Vienna in 1900 and advocated on behalf of Hungary's Germans both inside the kingdom and beyond its borders. The VDH organized lectures and *voelkisch* celebrations in Vienna and enjoyed a close relationship with the nationalist Banat Swabian author Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn, who was regarded as a national inspiration and named an honorary member.<sup>274</sup> The VDH also made Edmund Steinacker an honorary member in 1909 and was in close contact with Karl Stuerm, editor of *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, which

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<sup>273</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 30E.

<sup>274</sup> Stephan Kraft, "Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn, der Erwecker und voelkischer Erzieher der Ostschwaben," *Der Auslanddeutsche* 5, no. 20 (1922). 587.

reprinted the texts of its lectures and covered its activities. The association's goal was the *voelkisch* education of its members, such that they could return to their homes in Hungary and spread national ideas, impart enthusiasm for German education and raise awareness about the importance of resistance to denationalization measures, especially among students studying in Croatia and Hungary. In prewar Hungary itself, the VDH promoted German libraries, distributed nationalist leaflets, and participated in a number of the annual conventions of the Karpathendeutsche. It was a small but significant association which gathered many important, young Germans who would assume leadership in their communities after 1918. The leadership of the VDH included a high proportion of Germans from the future Yugoslavia, including Stefan Kraft, who led the organization from 1909-1910.<sup>275</sup> Kraft, as we saw in Chapter Two, was a featured speaker for the VDH on the occasion of the 1913 Convention of the Karpathendeutsche in Vienna.

Although such key figures as former UDVP Chairman Ludwig Kremling would continue to play key roles in the Yugoslav Kingdom, in many cases the prewar nationalists were quite old and ceded practical leadership to their younger colleagues. Ferdinand Riester had died even before the war, Reinhold Heegn would not live much longer, and Karl Stuermer died in 1927 at the age of 52. Ludwig Kremling remained active into the interwar period but died in 1930, only one year after Hungarian-German *eminence grise* Edmund Steinacker had passed away in Austria. Well before that time, however, the younger cadre of Swabian activists, which had emerged with the *denouement* of 1918, had confirmed its leadership of the German national movement in Yugoslavia.

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<sup>275</sup> Plautz. 14-15.

The early Swabian activists sought not only to establish institutions but also variously impart a new way of thought for a shaken community, which remained poorly defined and uncertain of itself. Thus the Swabian activists had not only to shape the community, but also to define its identity as German and determine the content of its national identity. To meet this goal, they founded a daily newspaper and publishing house, a state-wide cultural union, and a political party, all within a few hectic years. As we shall see below, they had help from abroad in their endeavors in the form of Volkstumarbeit organizations. Thereafter, we turn to the two formally non-political of these institutions, *Deutsches Volksblatt* and the Kulturbund, reserving discussion of the Partei der Deutschen (PdD) for the next chapter.

### *German Homeland Nationalism and the Volkstumarbeit Organizations*

As we have seen, two powerful forces that contributed to the crystallization of German national consciousness in interwar Yugoslavia were the experience of the First World War and the replacement of the dynastic order of the Habsburg Monarchy with the national order of the aspiring Yugoslav nation-state. The Yugoslav Kingdom was in fact a nationalizing state of the sort Rogers Brubaker identifies in *Nationalism Reframed* and sought to extend the hegemony of its titular people through discriminatory land reform, education, taxation, politics, and preferential hiring in the state sector.<sup>276</sup> Another key contributor was Germany's homeland nationalism, manifested as foreign policy in the state sphere. Parallel with this official sphere, homeland nationalism manifested itself unofficially through the many private and

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<sup>276</sup> In other words, the Yugoslav authorities basically did not hire Swabians for government positions.

non-governmental Volkstumarbeit organizations that worked on behalf of ethnic Germans beyond Germany and Austria's borders. These Volkstumarbeit organizations conducted cultural and sociological studies of German communities abroad and raised public awareness of their circumstances in Germany. Additionally, they provided key moral support, a psychological lifeline to Germany, and materials and funds with which to reinforce German communities abroad. Simultaneously, German governmental bodies provided covert financial support and resources to Germans in eastern Europe. Ultimately, Volkstumarbeit was an important expression of German homeland nationalism and an important part of the nationalism triad in which the Danube Swabians' national identity crystallized.

As we noted in Chapter One, some Volkstumarbeit organizations had been active before the First World War in nationally contested Cisleithania and, to a lesser degree, Hungary. The defeat in 1918 lent their work a new urgency, however, since the lands lost by the *Kaisserreich* to Poland contained many *Reichsdeutsche*, whose welfare and culture would need support to endure, they believed. Similarly, the Habsburg collapse gave added impetus to Volkstumarbeit in central and southeastern Europe, since the Germans there had now been definitively reduced to national minorities in foreign nation-states. Henceforth, Volkstumarbeit organizations would proliferate inside Germany itself while the new German minorities sought to organize themselves and negotiate life in the successor states.

As we have seen, Volkstumarbeit was not an invention of the German state or the Nazi Party. It had a long history dating back to the nineteenth century. This "Germandom work" had its origins in a multitude of private foundations, interest

groups and institutions devoted to promoting, nurturing, and reinforcing Germandom in areas where it was neglected or culturally “under siege.” In his impressive study, *The Sudeten Problem*, Ronald Smelser succinctly describes Volkstumarbeit as “an intense concern for the welfare of ethnic [German] groups and an attempt to foster closer ties between these groups and the Reich German population through social, economic, and cultural assistance.”<sup>277</sup> The plight of the Germans’ core settlement area was seen as a resource for the Auslandsdeutsche before the First World War. At that time, Volkstumarbeit reflected the troubled political, cultural, and economic position of the Habsburg Monarchy’s Germans viz. the politically mobilizing Slavs (especially the Czechs and Slovenes). Moreover, it was then the exclusive purview of non-state organizations, for the *Kaiserreich* pointedly took no official interest in the ethnic Germans beyond its borders. This changed during the interwar period, however, when Volkstumarbeit increasingly became the purview of the German state, which regarded it as a tool of foreign policy.

Bitterness over the defeat in the First World War and outrage at the perceived injustices of the Versailles treaty stimulated an upsurge in popular interest in Weimar Germany for the Germans abroad, many of whom had only recently been German citizens.<sup>278</sup> This new interest increasingly manifested itself in calls for the Weimar government to take action on behalf of the Germans abroad. Weimar Germany being mostly interested in reintegrating itself into the European state system, however, any such action necessarily had to be limited to avoid charges of violating others’ state

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<sup>277</sup> Ronald Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formation of Nazi Foreign Policy* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1975). 4-5.

<sup>278</sup> This situation was made more intense by the immigration of over 700,000 ethnic Germans by the mid-1920s from the formerly German lands occupied by Poland. Brubaker. 90.



sovereignty. As such, Weimar Germany, especially under Gustav Stresemann, pursued a role that was active on behalf of the Germans abroad particularly in the League of Nations, where Europe's Auslandsdeutsche were represented by the League of German *Volksgruppen* in Europe (*Verband Deutscher Volksgruppen in Europa*) after 1922. Meanwhile, the government was covertly providing financial aid to Germans abroad, especially those in lands lost through the Versailles treaty. The German government anxiously wanted to reinforce German communities in those lands as part of a long-term strategy of treaty revision and territorial recovery.

The stuff of Volkstumarbeit at first seems benign. Typical activities included the funding and supplying schools and libraries, promoting cultural festivals and local German publishing, facilitating educational exchange, and generally nurturing ties between Germany (and to a lesser degree Austria) and the ethnic German communities in the east.<sup>279</sup> During the interwar period, Volkstumarbeit organizations were so numerous that the field was sometimes characterized by competition, redundancy and even intrigue. Nevertheless, several organizations such as *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* and the *Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland* eventually emerged as the non-state leaders in the field. Following the shocking defeat of 1918, *voelkisch* thought made increasing inroads into Volkstumarbeit, rendering the field potentially explosive.<sup>280</sup> Ultimately, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, the Nazi Party would reorganize the entire field during the 1930s with the intent of harnessing Volkstumarbeit for its own purposes.

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<sup>279</sup> Smelser. 4-5

<sup>280</sup> We shall elaborate on *voelkisch* thought shortly.

Generally, the myriad Volkstumarbeit organizations may be broken down into rough categories according to the nature of their work. Some were essentially think tanks or research institutes devoted to exploring and celebrating the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Germandom abroad. Probably most prominent of these was the German Foreign Institute (*Deutsches Ausland-Institut* or DAI). Based in Stuttgart, DAI maintained relations with the various German minorities around the world and collected their many publications in its extensive archive and library. Additionally, it provided German cultural materials to the minorities and published the monthly *Der Auslandsdeutsche*, a kind of *National Geographic* of Germandom abroad.<sup>281</sup> DAI achieved real prominence in the crowded field of Volkstumarbeit and received regular funding from the German government. Munich's *Deutsche Akademie* was another prominent research institute. Though their work was not necessarily political, the academics at these institutes produced scholarly pieces which were sometimes aimed at swaying policy makers to endorse a certain view of ethnic politics in foreign relations.

Another type of more activist Volkstumarbeit organization focused on reinforcing the Germanness of the beleaguered German minorities abroad, usually through educational and cultural support. During most of the interwar period, the most important of these Volkstumarbeit organizations was the aforementioned *Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland* or VDA. This organization pursued the traditional path of Volkstumarbeit and was especially active in providing money, books and teachers to insufficiently funded or staffed German schools abroad. Receiving annual subsidies from the German foreign ministry and having its own sophisticated

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<sup>281</sup> At the time, "*Auslandsdeutsche*" was written "*Auslanddeutsche*."

fundraising apparatus, the VDA emerged as a powerful Volkstumarbeit organization with a very broad and sizable membership. Like many Volkstumarbeit organizations, it channeled monies to the ethnic German communities abroad. As the urgency of its task and the weight of its resources grew, so did the VDA expand the scope of its activities in politics and culture.<sup>282</sup>

Importantly, these Volkstumarbeit organizations were not the exclusive purview of the esoteric or academic. On the contrary, they were public and influential institutions which commanded respect in policy circles. Moreover, they had powerful connections at home and clients abroad. Indeed, during the interwar period the field of Volkstumarbeit became rather crowded and featured many rival organizations competing with one another for access, favor and funding. Some Volkstumarbeit organizations specialized in a certain geographical region, while others might have specialized in a particular social area of concern, such as libraries or schools. Ultimately, however, all were affected by the shifting priorities of Volkstumarbeit after 1933, when the political triumph of National Socialism and its consequent *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) of society's institutions infiltrated the boardrooms of the important Volkstumarbeit organizations and drove them in new directions. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, many remained nominally independent but their work was increasingly coordinated and subordinated to Nazi principles and objectives. Indeed, the very nature and priorities of Volkstumarbeit changed after 1933, when prevailing Nazi winds sought to celebrate not the rich diversity of Germandom but rather impose a biological and/or foster a cultural monolithicism. In the 1920s, however,

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<sup>282</sup> Smelser. 16.

Volkstumarbeit played a generally beneficent role among the Danube Swabians and helped them consolidate their moderate institutions.

### *The Establishment of Deutsches Volksblatt*

As they demonstrated with *Der Deutschungarische Volksfreund*, *Das Deutsche Tageblatt fuer Ungarn*, and *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, the German national activists of southern Hungary well understood the importance of the press for forging a national movement. The German press had a long tradition in the region and was arguably more sophisticated than its Serbian or Hungarian rivals. Indeed, the area's first German newspaper was published in 1771 in Timișoara, which later evolved to become the region's main publishing center. Additionally, many towns in Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina had their own German language newspapers, as we have seen. These were intended for consumption by the educated South Slav or Magyar, as well as ethnic Germans. In their distribution, moreover, the local German newspapers reflected the general situation of the Swabians at the end of the First World War in that they had only a local or perhaps regional reach and outlook. When it appeared in 1919 that Timișoara would be awarded to Romania, a number of German entrepreneurs and activists gathered in Novi Sad to found a German publishing enterprise and daily to serve those lands that would fall to Yugoslavia. The resulting newspaper, Novi Sad's *Deutsches Volksblatt*, was in large part based on *Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*, which as we have seen was the flagship of the

German national movement in Croatia-Slavonia before the First World War.<sup>283</sup> It would distinguish itself not only in its aspiration to distribution throughout all German inhabited parts of Yugoslavia, but through its overtly German-national perspective. Indeed, *Deutsches Volksblatt* would rapidly become the chief transmitter of German national identity in the country.

Several months of deliberation and preparation culminated in the founding meeting of the *Deutsche Druckerei- und Verlags-A.G.* on September 29, 1919 in Novi Sad. The first board of directors of DVAG, as the publishing house was commonly known, was led by Chairman Josef Bolz and included future German parliamentarians Stefan Kraft and Samuel Schumacher, among others. According to its statutes, DVAG would raise capital with the intention of founding *Deutsches Volksblatt* and opening a German bookstore. It moved quickly on both fronts and published the newspaper's premier issue on October 25, 1919. Its promised bookstore opened a couple of months later in Novi Sad. In addition to its own staff of reporters, DVAG was also able to rely on content from Germany. Stuttgart's *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* in particular looked after the *auslandsdeutsche* press and later also worked closely with the *Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund*, of which *Deutsches Volksblatt* soon became a virtual department.<sup>284</sup> Within a matter of years, *Deutsches Volksblatt* commanded an average circulation of 10,000-12,000, making it the principle organ of the nascent German national movement in Yugoslavia and one of

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<sup>283</sup> "Technical conditions for the publication of the newspaper were secured such that the weekly (*Deutsches Volksblatt fuer Syrmien*), which came out in Ruma, relocated to Novi Sad." Bešlin. 22.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. 251-252.

the largest circulation dailies in Vojvodina.<sup>285</sup> The Swabian Georg Grassl served as the newspaper's first editor-in-chief until May 1921, when that position was assumed by the Franz Perz. Perz, a German from the long-standing German enclave of Kočevje in Slovenia, remained at the helm until 1941. During his tenure, DVAG grew to be the most powerful newspaper- and publishing-house in Vojvodina.<sup>286</sup>

Invoking the disruption of government, business and communications unleashed by the chaotic collapse of Austria-Hungary, *Deutsches Volksblatt* observed in its premier issue how public life had been shaken to its core. Yet *Deutsches Volksblatt* optimistically looked to the prospect of a future based on equality, civil rights, and cultural and economic freedom. The newspaper declared its intention to serve as the Germans' compass toward this bright future, deliver them from their current situation, and liberate them to take part in public life. Moreover, it asserted its determination to oppose excesses and trespasses against citizens' rights and declared fealty to the principles of freedom and the equality, the peaceful coexistence of peoples, national and cultural equality, and national self-determination. "These," the newspaper concluded, "are our guiding stars."<sup>287</sup>

Although DVAG produced other publications geared more specifically toward the interests, economics and concerns of the overwhelmingly rural Swabians, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was intended for the masses and was the country's most widely circulated German newspaper. It claimed to stand above class and confession and confidently advanced an identity that was above all nation-based. *Deutsches*

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid. 30. Valentin Oberkersch asserts that the daily circulation of the newspaper was 25,000. Oberkersch. 199.

<sup>286</sup> Bešlin. 25.

<sup>287</sup> Plautz. 22-23.

*Volksblatt* promised objectivity, concern for public welfare and freedom from partisan strife. It would stand sentinel against German oppression, but it proved especially adept in its other principle task, the forging of a German community from disparate parts and imparting an identity to that community which honored it as both Swabian and as part of the greater German cultural community or *Kulturgemeinschaft*.

One year later in October 1920, *Deutsches Volksblatt* reviewed its own accomplishments and considered the road ahead in its anniversary issue. Having survived the year was an achievement in itself, of course. Despite the still dawning state of the Swabians' national consciousness in the Yugoslav Kingdom, there clearly was a market for a nationally-oriented German daily there. Moreover, the promising start of the Kulturbund earlier that year (to be discussed in the next section) augured well for the national movement the newspaper hoped to foster.<sup>288</sup> That movement remained controversial among sections of the Swabian population, however, as *Deutsches Volksblatt* itself acknowledged. Indeed, it had been "greeted with boisterous jubilation by some and with hesitation or even open hostility by others." Many Swabians had evidently considered the nationally oriented newspaper's appearance recklessly premature and its tone likely to upset the Swabians' precarious position in the new country. Yet on its first anniversary, the newspaper claimed vindication in its achievements. Though the daily's publication had provoked objections by some so-called *Auchdeutsche* (people of German descent for whom ethnicity and nationality were not paramount and who were therefore only "also

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<sup>288</sup> As discussed elsewhere, der Schwaebisch-Deutsche Kulturbund was founded on June 20, 1920 in Novi Sad.

German” – usually a term of derision), *Deutsches Volksblatt* reiterated its commitment to educate and enlighten cadres of future, nationally oriented collaborators.<sup>289</sup> Indeed, throughout its existence, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was never shy about the fact that it was executing a classic agenda of national “awakening” among the Swabians.<sup>290</sup>

*Deutsches Volksblatt* was a genuinely impressive daily that strove to be the only newspaper a German would need in Yugoslavia. In addition to its German identity- and community-building functions, the newspaper also devoted considerable attention to Yugoslav politics, especially in so far as they affected the German population or the Partei der Deutschen (PdD), of which we will learn more in the following chapter. It printed more international news than many twenty-first century American dailies and also had sections devoted to business and community developments. The newspaper contained cultural features, serialized novels and offered reviews and recommendations of German books. Special sections were aimed at women and youth. Meanwhile advertisers pushed products ranging from Nivea cream and Horniman’s tea to sophisticated farm machinery and transatlantic passage from Hamburg. During its earliest years, the newspaper featured some Magyar and Serbian ads in addition to German ones. The language of advertisements quickly became exclusively German, however, and the products, such as automobiles, increasingly expensive.

In its politics, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was simultaneously resolute and relatively cautious. It insisted upon its loyal attitude towards the state and regularly observed

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<sup>289</sup> "Ein Jahr," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 24 1920.

<sup>290</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Five, this was the term the Swabians themselves preferred.



that there was no contradiction between that loyalty and opposition to certain government policies. The newspaper did not shy away from engaging in the many political issues of the day but it did consciously avoid the dispute between Serbs and Croats during the heated constitutional debate and afterward. Especially during the 1920s, *Deutsches Volksblatt* stood at the vanguard of the German national movement in Yugoslavia and it remained the main journal of record for the country's German population throughout the interwar period. Although it clearly obtained a portion of its content from Weimar German sources, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was fundamentally a newspaper by and for Yugoslavia's Germans. So thorough was it in its coverage and so numerous were the other German publications in Yugoslavia that the most comprehensive study of the interwar German press has concluded that one can dismiss entirely the possibility of any influence by the Serbian press on the country's Germans in Vojvodina.<sup>291</sup>

Although many of the newspaper's articles were unsigned, *Deutsches Volksblatt* must be understood as truly being the mouthpiece of the German national movement in Yugoslavia, especially during the 1920s. True, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was a nominally independent newspaper, preceding the founding of both the Kulturbund and the Partei der Deutschen. Nevertheless, the notion of true "independence" was tricky in such a small German community, especially given the limited size of the Swabian intelligentsia. If the newspaper, Kulturbund and Partei der Deutschen were formally independent of each other, to believe in such separation in practice would be folly.

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<sup>291</sup> Bešlin. 31.

The men behind *Deutsches Volksblatt*, the Kulturbund and the Partei der Deutschen all knew one another and served the same movement. They had common goals and worked very closely with one another in multiple institutions. Georg Grassl, for example, was the first editor of *Deutsches Volksblatt*, a founder of the Kulturbund, and the Kulturbund's first leader (General Secretary). From 1925-1929 Grassl served as a member of parliament for the Partei der Deutschen and he was appointed a senator in 1931. In recognition of his service to the Swabian cause during Yugoslavia's first decade, he was elected Honorary Chair of the Kulturbund in 1928. Throughout this period, he was a regular contributor to *Deutsches Volksblatt*, as were later Kulturbund Chairman Johann Keks, Partei der Deutschen leader Stefan Kraft and many others. From April 1922 until March 1924, the ubiquitous Kraft was even Chairman of DVAG itself. Grassl's successor at *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Franz Perz, was a member of the board of the Kulturbund and also spoke at numerous rallies of the Partei der Deutschen. In fact, *Deutsches Volksblatt* even briefly acknowledged that it was an organ of the Partei der Deutschen on its masthead in 1922.<sup>292</sup> Other such examples abound. *Deutsches Volksblatt*, after occasionally attempting to blur the obvious connection between itself and the Kulturbund, acknowledged the intimate relationship in 1928 when it commented that the Druckerei- und Verlags- A.G. could be viewed as the nucleus or germ cell (*Keimzelle*) of the Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund, whose very founding was arranged at the publishing house's own

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<sup>292</sup> During most of 1921, *Deutsches Volksblatt's* subtitle merely read "Tageszeitung". In March 1922, however, its masthead described it as the "Tageszeitung der Partei der Deutschen im Koenigreiche der Serben, Kroaten, u. Slowenen." However, perhaps suspecting the potential for trouble with the authorities due to such a close association with a political party, the newspaper again changed its subtitle to "Tageszeitung der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen" in April of that year.

meetings. Moreover, DVAG readily put *Deutsches Volksblatt* at the disposal of the German organizations in the Yugoslav Kingdom. In summary, there was a close, organic connection between the newspaper, the Kulturbund, and Partei der Deutschen from their earliest days.<sup>293</sup>

During the 1920s, the above three principle institutions of the Swabians mutually reinforced each other, informing the public of their various activities and advancing a common agenda in society and politics. Moreover, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was the single most important platform for communication in a society where there no was comparable German media with a national reach.<sup>294</sup> The newspaper published letters and essays by all of the important German national activists in Yugoslavia during its first decade and a half and therefore can be legitimately regarded as the authentic expression of their movement. Even during most of the contentious 1930s, *Deutsches Volksblatt* remained representative of the views of the original Swabian activists.<sup>295</sup> True, the 1930s, when a cadre of young radical nationalists sought to wrest control of the German community from the original leadership and reorient it toward National Socialism, were characterized by acrimonious debate, as we shall see. Yet even when such divergent currents emerged within the German population, so tight was the original leadership's grip on *Deutsches Volksblatt* that the young challengers had to establish their own periodicals in order to air their views.

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<sup>293</sup> Franz Perz, "Festbeilage aus Anlass der feierlichen Eroeffnung des neuen Druckereigebaeudes des 'Deutschen Volksblattes'," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 29 1928.

<sup>294</sup> The number of radios was low in Yugoslavia throughout the period of this study. Though Germans would increasingly recognize the value of this new media, they were not able to broadcast themselves. Over the course of the interwar period, however, Germans in Yugoslavia would increasingly come to listen to German- and Austrian-based radio stations.

<sup>295</sup> As already noted, *Deutsches Volksblatt* operated very much like a department of the Kulturbund.

*Deutsches Volksblatt*, therefore, represented the authentic and consistent expression of the German national vision of the Swabians' original leadership.<sup>296</sup>

### *The Establishment of the Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund*

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, Germans in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were prohibited from participation in political affairs until January 1922. Nevertheless, such restrictions did not prevent them from organizing culturally, even though the line between culture and politics is easily blurred in the national age. In this spirit, the Swabians founded their first statewide institution, the *Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund*, in 1920. Frequently referred to simply as the "Kulturbund" or the "SDKB," the organization went through several stages of development during the interwar period. It was twice banned (in 1924 and 1929) and was always an object of suspicion for South Slav nationalists, who regarded its "cultural" activities as frequently straying into the political realm. Indeed, such is the political nature of culture in the national age that in some cases these suspicions were arguably correct, although the Kulturbund usually avoided any overt involvement in politics. (An exception to this was perhaps its direct advocacy for German language education.) In actual fact, the Kulturbund's greatest political act was forging a national community and group consciousness among the Germans of Yugoslavia. Though not a mass movement for most of its history, the Kulturbund nevertheless did seek the broadest possible membership and was the first all-German

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<sup>296</sup> After 1938, however, *Deutsches Volksblatt* got rather "*gleichgeschaltet*" in the process of various reforms launched by Nazi sympathizers in the Kulturbund. From that point onwards, it adopted a new tone and increasingly became a vessel for German propaganda.

organization in Yugoslavia. As such, it was the Germans' voice in public affairs during the years of their political exclusion. In its nation-building project, the Kulturbund was another essential instrument of the Swabian activists.

In a less national age, the activities of the Kulturbund would appear rather innocuous. It held historical and cultural lectures, offered German language classes (for Swabians), and organized youth groups. It praised German song and encouraged the founding of German choral groups. Likewise, it promoted nationally oriented gymnastics clubs like the prewar *Turnvereine* in Srijem. Moreover, it gathered preexisting German clubs and organizations under its own wings, such that the important areas of German associational and civic life became part of national life, which in turn was synonymous with the Kulturbund. It promoted education in the German language and spirit and advocated strongly on behalf of German schooling. It opened German reading rooms and libraries and celebrated the beloved German language. Having ties with Germany-based Volkstumarbeit organizations, it served as a bridge between the Yugoslav *Vaterland* and the German *Mutterland*. As its name indicated, it celebrated the ethnic community in Yugoslavia as both German but also Swabian, and promoted appreciation for the colorful local German traditions and customs peculiar to the region. It organized its own festivals and balls to showcase German folk dress, known as *Tracht* or *Volkstracht*, and sent representatives to local balls and folk festivals, called *Trachtenbaelle* or *Trachtenfeste*, wherever they were held across the country. Similarly, the Kulturbund organized many other festivals of various types (choral, historical, youth, sporting, etc.) and ensured that its annual congresses were very celebratory and public affairs. Additionally, the Kulturbund

made itself central to the many settlement anniversary celebrations of the 1920s and 1930s. In all these activities, it promoted a national identity that was simultaneously German and Swabian, defining local and national myths, icons, heroes, and values.

The fathers of the Kulturbund announced their intention to establish a cultural organization in a February 1920 appeal in *Deutsches Volksblatt*, well before the organization's actual founding. The German community, they claimed, required an all-embracing, German organization. To this end, a "Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund" would soon be founded to promote the material, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral culture of the German population in all its areas of settlement. Headquartered in "Novi Sad-Neusatz", the Kulturbund would have local chapters and representatives in all places with appreciable German populations. It would aspire to activity across the Germans' settlement area and in many spheres of public life. From the very beginning, however, the Kulturbund was careful to assert that it would eschew all political activity.<sup>297</sup>

The Kulturbund's founding committee continued its preparatory work throughout the spring, drafting and submitting the organization's statutes for government approval. Finally, the founding meeting of the Kulturbund took place in Novi Sad on June 20, 1920. A public invitation to the meeting in the days preceding it had indicated the Kulturbund's comprehensive ambition by stressing that *all* Germans with Yugoslav citizenship were invited to attend. It was to be a public affair at which the organization's statutes would be promulgated and the Kulturbund leadership

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<sup>297</sup> One suspects that such an assertion was especially intended for government consumption. "Aufruf!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 24 1920.

determined.<sup>298</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt* was at no loss for grandiloquent words or lofty statements to commemorate the event. Weeks before the meeting, the newspaper breathlessly established the momentousness of the Kulturbund's impending founding and exclaimed that the hour of German liberation in southeastern Europe had finally struck!<sup>299</sup> The founding meeting would be nothing less than a "patriotic and national religious service"<sup>300</sup> to be celebrated as a historic day in the history of the *Volk*. Indeed, the day meant the "rebirth of our nation, which after 200 years of hard labor in the service of our land could finally reflect upon itself, kissed awake by the sun of freedom and the winds of a new era."<sup>301</sup>

Like its later annual congresses, the Kulturbund's founding meeting was intended to be more than a simple administrative gathering. It was conceived of as a major, open event that exuded a festival atmosphere. Numerous choral groups and several gymnastics clubs performed from across the Germans' settlement area, including a significant number from Srijem. In addition to the main meeting of the Kulturbund, a banquet was held followed by a festival attended by approximately 2000 guests. Speakers at the meeting itself were numerous and reflected the Kulturbund's intention to be inclusive of all Yugoslavia's Germans, irrespective of class or confession.

*Deutsches Volksblatt* emphasized three key moments at the founding meeting in its coverage of the event. First was the deep avowal of absolute loyalty to the

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<sup>298</sup> "Einladung zur gruendenen Hauptversammlung des Schwaebisch-deutschen Kulturbunden," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 26 1920.

<sup>299</sup> "Die Gruendung des Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 27 1920.

<sup>300</sup> The original German is "ein patriotischer und nationaler Gottesdienst" and "ein Gedenktag in der Geschichte unseres Volkes." "Die Gruendungsfeier des Detuschen Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 20 1920.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

Yugoslav state and loyalty to the German *Volk*. The Kulturbund sought to allay Slav and government fears about its intentions by emphasizing the Swabians' loyalty to the state and even their appreciation of Yugoslavia's relatively liberal atmosphere, which had enabled them to pursue their national aspirations in the first place. Secondly, the newspaper observed the Germans' readiness to make sacrifices in the service of nationhood. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, was the meeting's insistence on the exclusion of any confessional conflicts. Like *Deutsches Volksblatt*, the Kulturbund faced early opposition from some Swabian Catholic circles which either disapproved of a German national movement or suspected the organization of undue Protestant influences. Also like the newspaper, the Kulturbund sought to straddle such confessional challenges by emphasizing the primacy of German nationhood over religious differences. The organization regularly sought to include both Catholic and Protestant clergy in its activities and its founding meeting conspicuously featured speeches by both Catholic and Protestant priests calling for unity on the basis of German nationhood.<sup>302</sup>

*Deutsches Volksblatt's* then-editor Georg Grassl was a central participant in the Kulturbund's founding meeting and as its General Secretary would be a dominant force in the organization for years to come. Born in Pančevo in 1863, he was more than twenty years older than Stefan Kraft, Johann Keks and many of the other leading Swabian activists, but his energy and activity belied his age. At the Kulturbund's founding meeting he gave a major speech in which he elaborated on the purpose and tasks of the new organization. Grassl's words reveal the degree to which he believed the postwar years to be revolutionary times. The horrible carnage of the world war

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<sup>302</sup> "Die gruendende Hauptversammlung des Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 22 1920.



and the tumult of its aftermath, he observed, had meant disruption, but the postwar situation also offered the possibility of human transformation. Grassl was a religious man and invoked God as he celebrated the liberal circumstances (without calling them that) of the new age. “Freedom, right, and justice, self-determination, protection of the weak,” he exclaimed, “after unspeakable suffering and aberrance, afflicted humanity has come to recognize these ideals as a gift from Heaven, and in reverence and thankfulness we bow before divine providence, which has turned all suffering into good.” The Lord had delivered the Swabians, he said, who could finally stand proudly as free men on the soil of their homeland in Yugoslavia.<sup>303</sup>

As one of the guiding figures at *Deutsches Volksblatt*, in the Kulturbund, and later in the Partei der Deutschen, Grassl exerted a major influence on the shaping of German identity and community in Yugoslavia. His views on culture, state and nation regularly filled the pages of the Swabian daily and manifested themselves in the Kulturbund’s goals and methods. Having assured the Yugoslavs of the Kulturbund’s harmless intent, Grassl turned to its fundamental mission, which he understood to be one of nation-based community development and the cultivation of German identity. In practice, the Kulturbund would pursue these goals through a combination of educational work (*Volksaufklaerungsarbeit*), advocacy, and economic programs. The Kulturbund would work for the general promotion of the entire German community and lead Swabians to realize their potential as “complete persons” (*vollkommene Menschen*) through the embrace of national identity.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Georg. Grassl, "Das Ziel des Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 22 1920.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

In the above, Grassl laid out much of the organizing philosophy behind the Kulturbund. The nation was fundamental to the goals of the Kulturbund because of nationhood's inherent, transformational power. Thus, only through the embrace and development of national culture could a people approach its true potential. Grassl took a broad view of national culture, regarding it not merely as an intellectual or bookish affair of the sort imparted through formal education (although that was certainly important) but also recognizing material and especially moral dimensions of culture to which he pledged the Kulturbund's energies. In practice, this meant the Kulturbund would engage in a wide spectrum of activities ranging from education to economics and social welfare.

The protection and cultivation of the German language was a chief goal of the Kulturbund and Grassl announced that its promotion in the school and the home would form the starting point for the Kulturbund's cultural activities. One of the Kulturbund's principle aims throughout its history was the establishment and development of a German system of education in Yugoslavia. To this end it advocated on the Germans' behalf with the government and even drafted a comprehensive school program, which it submitted to the Ministry of Education in July 1920.<sup>305</sup> Additionally the Kulturbund would establish German libraries, hold lectures and presentations, and run winter courses in the cold months following the harvest. Finally, the Kulturbund would pay particular attention to the needs of the German peasantry, to whom it would attend through the establishment of agricultural cooperatives. Such cooperatives would form only one level of the organization's

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<sup>305</sup> The school program was coolly received. "Das Schulprogramm des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes" is reprinted in Senz, *Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben im Koenigreich Jugoslawien*.

promotion of the German peasantry, however. To promote a more prosperous economy, Grassl promised, the Kulturbund would hold trade exhibitions and run specialized courses to enhance skills in agriculture, trade and industry. And indeed, the collective and self-help organizations or *Genossenschaften* at which Grassl hinted would become characteristic of the German community during the interwar period, the most prominent among them being the agricultural cooperative Agraria. These German-oriented cooperatives, whose network grew quite extensive, were also important in developing a sense of community among the disparate German settlements in the new country and maintaining German prosperity.

Ultimately, the Kulturbund aspired not only to be an organization above class and confession, but also to embrace the country's *entire* German population, including the Germans in distant Slovenia. "Every German in our country must join the Kulturbund," Grassl bluntly stated at the organization's founding meeting. Moreover, the Kulturbund must be everywhere present in German life. "Gatherings must accompany baptisms, weddings, church consecrations (*Kirchweihen*), and social occasions. In short, the Kulturbund must be moved to the forefront of our interests, it must become our national sanctuary, in which every German of our [Yugoslav] fatherland, whether rich or poor, has a share."<sup>306</sup> Feeling empowered to pursue a (moderate) German national agenda in the Yugoslav Kingdom, the Swabian activists were thinking big and had high hopes for the Kulturbund.

Ultimately, then, the Kulturbund aspired to serve as the center and champion of the German community in matters of education, culture, association, entertainment and even social welfare. It aimed not merely to care for the German language or even

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<sup>306</sup> Grassl.

promote a sense of German nationhood. Rather the Kulturbund sought to put the nation and itself at the center of life's most important personal and community events. In short, it sought to make daily life *national* life for the country's Germans. But not all Germans in the community welcomed the organization's insistence on a national presence in all aspects of German life. As will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, there were some among the Catholic clergy who were suspicious of the attempt to found life on a national basis, seeing in it a threat to the primacy of religion. Likewise, some ethnic Germans expressed skepticism or opposition to the new national movement for their own, personal reasons.

Central to the Kulturbund as it would develop under Grassl was its promise of dual or simultaneous loyalty, summarized by its ubiquitous slogan "Loyal to the [Yugoslav] state and loyal to the [German] nation" ("*staatstreu und volkstreu*"). In this slogan the Swabian activists sought to emphasize that loyalty to Yugoslavia was in no way contradictory to devotion to the German *Volk*. Such a delicate balance might have dissatisfied the most ardent nationalist but it was based on the reality of the Swabians' numerical inferiority and the obvious distance which prohibited annexation by Germany or Austria. Nevertheless, the Swabians' insistence that they were both *staatstreu* and *volkstreu* was never fully persuasive to the kingdom's population or government, which typically suspected the Germans of harboring irredentist dreams and frequently regarded them with intolerance. Only years later, after its 1939 takeover by the *Erneuerer*, the local Nazi imitators for whom the

Erneuerungsbewegung was named, would the Kulturbund veer significantly from this principle of dual loyalty.<sup>307</sup>

Some respectable scholars (and more less respectable ones) have questioned whether the Germans ever felt true loyalty to the Yugoslav state.<sup>308</sup> Certainly many (especially in Slovenia) did not and the shallowness of their Yugoslav patriotism became increasingly apparent following Hitler's accession to power and his subsequent accomplishments in economics, diplomacy and war. During the 1920s and especially 1930s, one could certainly question whether the regular contacts between the Swabian activists and Volkstumarbeit in Germany bodies were fully consistent with proper loyalty to Yugoslavia. After all, the Kulturbund received assistance from such organization as the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* (DAI), the *Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland* (VDA), the *Deutsche Akademie*, and the *Suedostdeutsches Insitut* in Graz, as well as attention from the German Foreign Ministry and later the Nazis' own *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, a sort of clearinghouse for auslandsdeutsche matters which was also a branch of the SS.<sup>309</sup> Nevertheless, for the vast majority of its history the Kulturbund *did* remain within the bounds of its statutes and Yugoslav law. Indeed, especially at the dawn of the 1920s, there were powerful arguments for at least passive Swabian loyalty to the Yugoslavia, which ironically had made their national movement possible in the first place. The men behind the Kulturbund recalled the oppressive atmosphere of old Hungary and well understood that their

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<sup>307</sup> As a reminder, "Erneuerer" is the plural of "Erneuer."

<sup>308</sup> Zoran Janjetović writes that most Germans in Yugoslavia never developed a real loyalty to the country. In fact, they needed time just to reconcile themselves to the new state. Janjetović. 34.

<sup>309</sup> Bešlin. 17.

institution was only possible in the comparatively liberal political atmosphere of the Yugoslav Kingdom.

On the occasion of the establishment of a Kulturbund chapter in Zemun in August 1920, Grassl elaborated on the development of the organization and its meaning for the Germans of Yugoslavia. At that time, the Kulturbund was slowly but surely growing both in membership and the number of local chapters. Invoking the triumph of democracy as well as the other Wilsonian ideals of freedom, self-determination, law and justice that had replaced the fallen idols of the past. Grassl reflected on the reality of the Swabian position in the new kingdom.

We are nationally conscious Germans, proud of our belonging to the great German cultural community, that has given so much to civilized humanity, but we are no pan-Germans and no irredentists. Without historical and geographic connection with a mighty German hinterland, we are not only a national minority but moreover a national diaspora, a scattered Germandom that, through utopian dreaming, could only jeopardize everything: its very cultural and economic existence.<sup>310</sup>

Thus, the Swabian position in Yugoslavia during the national age was one that offered both possibilities and peril. The relative liberalism of the Yugoslav Kingdom contrasted positively with the oppressive conditions that had existed in old Hungary (at first at least). Such liberalism made the interwar German national movement possible. However, the national age also posed difficulties for the Swabians, who were outnumbered and isolated from the German heartland in the nation-state of a different national group.

The history of the Kulturbund was marked with meaningful accomplishments occasionally tempered by official harassment or outright prohibition. The first life of

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<sup>310</sup> Georg. Grassl, "Die Ziele des Kulturbundes I," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 29 1920.

the Kulturbund before its banning in 1924 was marked by many successes and some controversies within the German community. The Kulturbund's leadership encouraged German communities to set up their own local chapters, which many promptly did. Such local chapters were founded across Vojvodina but local authorities prevented the Kulturbund from operating on the territories of Slovenia and Slavonia. Thus, the Kulturbund was effectively restricted to Batschka and Banat during its early years. The Kulturbund also faced opposition from certain ethnic Germans, not unlike *Deutsches Volksblatt*.

Many ethnic Germans who had either Croatized or Magyarized resented the German movement, which judged them harshly. Similarly, many ethnic Germans merely wanted to exist quietly in the Yugoslav Kingdom and worried that the Kulturbund would only draw undesired attention to them. Those who opposed the German national movement in the abstract naturally had no love for its principle association, and they occasionally made their displeasure known. The Kulturbund's progress was frequently rocky and it was by no means always clear that the German movement in Yugoslavia would be successful. Did the Germans in Yugoslavia have the organizational capacity to run the Kulturbund successfully? Would local Germans take a standing interest in the national movement or would "the 'dimwitted' Swabians burn out like a straw fire" and allow their enemies to lead them by the nose in the future as willingly they had as in the past? In early 1921, *Deutsches Volksblatt* editorialized against the German movement's opponents as "ethnic traitors" who, lacking the courage to openly oppose the movement, "make trouble in secret and shoot their poison arrows in ambushes." "Come clean you busy bodies," the

newspaper provocatively concluded. “What have you against an honest, industrious *Volk?*”<sup>311</sup> Ultimately, dissent of this sort from within the German community was only sporadic, but it plainly irritated the Swabian activists, who in turn derided their detractors as “ethnic traitors” and “renegades.”

Though frequently hampered in its activities by government interference or local intransigence, the Kulturbund quickly proved popular and scored successes in many of its fields of endeavor. True, the state of German education in the country remained highly dissatisfying, but the organization achieved much in its efforts to impart and cultivate German national consciousness and form group identity from the many disparate German settlements. Thus, by April 1924, when it was first dissolved by the government, the Kulturbund could boast 125 local chapters with 50,000 members and many more supporters.<sup>312</sup>

#### *Political Turbulence and a New Beginning for the Kulturbund*

In 1924, then-Education Minister Svetozar Pribićević pushed for the Kulturbund’s dissolution, essentially because the German politicians of the Partei der Deutschen had regularly dared to express criticism of the country’s nationalities policies.<sup>313</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Four, however, the heart of the matter was that the German political party, the Partei der Deutschen, had ceased its support of the government.<sup>314</sup> Thus the ban was an act of naked political revenge as well as an

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<sup>311</sup> "Vom Kulturbund und seinen Gegnern," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 26 1921.

<sup>312</sup> "Der Eindruck der Aufloesung des Kulturbundes in der Deutsche Bevoelkerung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 30 1924.

<sup>313</sup> Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Kroatien-Slawonien und Jugoslawien." 331.

<sup>314</sup> The Kulturbund members were accused of having exceeded the bounds of the organization’s statutes and engaged in political activity. Interior Minister Srškić announced that the dissolution was based on an 1879 law according to which national minorities were denied the rights to form



expression of Pribičević's conviction that the Germans had revealed their hostility to the state first by forming their own political party and then by not supporting the Pašić- Pribičević coalition at a key moment. The ban was also intended as a disciplining measure, demonstrating that the government could squeeze or smother the Kulturbund as a means of exerting pressure on the Partei der Deutschen.<sup>315</sup>

The reasons for the ban of the Kulturbund being rather specious and transparently political, the succeeding government of Ljubomir Davidović approved the resumption of Kulturbund activities shortly before it itself fell in November 1924. In fact, some Kulturbund local chapters had never completely ceased their activities. Nevertheless, the organization could not immediately recover from the temporary setback of its dissolution and for years problems persisted in recovering property which had been confiscated by state and local authorities. Local officials sabotaged the efforts of Kulturbund chapters to resume activities in most cases, and it would not be until the government of Nikola Uzunović issued a directive on January 12, 1927 conferring full freedom of development upon the Kulturbund that the organization could renew its activities in earnest.<sup>316</sup> In the interim, Grassl had resigned, Ludwig Bauer had become General Secretary, and the Partei der Deutschen had vigorously lobbied Belgrade to remove obstacles to Kulturbund activity. During these years, the Kulturbund consisted of little more than its board and a few still active local chapters. It had been dealt a heavy blow.<sup>317</sup>

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associations with political goals. Oberkersch. 207. The government additionally cited Austria's allegedly repressive treatment of the Slovene minority as a basis for the Kulturbund ban.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. 283

<sup>316</sup> "Kultur und Fortschritt," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 18 1927.

<sup>317</sup> According to Valentin Oberkersh, the Kulturbund had been self-financed until the ban. Afterward, however, it was necessary to appeal to the German Foreign Ministry for financial support. Oberkersch. 284-5. This may be technically true, but in fact, the Kulturbund was certainly receiving resources – and

At the Kulturbund's annual congress in June 1927 (the first such meeting since August 1923), Johann Keks was elected chairman, replacing Bauer as the man in charge.<sup>318</sup> He would remain at the helm of the Kulturbund during most of its subsequent years of legal activity, resigning only after years of conflict with the young Nazi-oriented *Erneuerer* in 1939 as will see in Chapters Six and Seven. Owing to the difficulties that the Kulturbund had had in operating even after its nominal relegalization in 1924, its members regarded this 1927 return to form as a second phase of organization building. During this phase, the conservative Kulturbund leadership would be more careful to restrict its activities to the unambiguously cultural.<sup>319</sup> Nevertheless, it continued its mission of organizing the German minority under its auspices. The consolidation of German national associations inside the Kulturbund was once again underway.

The Kulturbund's legal reprieve proved short lived, however, and in 1929 the organization would again be banned, along with the Partei der Deutschen and all other nationally based organizations and parties in the Yugoslav Kingdom. Though it was tentatively allowed to resume activity in August 1930, its statutes were not reapproved until 1931.<sup>320</sup> This was another big setback for the German national movement but it had anyway been difficult after 1927 to reignite enthusiasm among the conservative, largely rural Swabians for an organization that had been banned by the authorities. At the time of its second suspension, the Kulturbund consisted of only

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possibly outright funding – from various Germany-based Volkstumarbeit organizations long before this. Since such organizations themselves often obtained funding from the German government, Germany may be said to have been at least indirectly helping the Kulturbund for some time.

<sup>318</sup> Plautz. 36.

<sup>319</sup> Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Kroatien-Slawonien und Jugoslawien." 331.

<sup>320</sup> The Kulturbund was allowed to resume operations again on August 10, 1930. Bešlin. 16.

64 local chapters and far fewer members than its earlier incarnation. However, the Kulturbund was by then active on a wider territory, including Bosnia, Slavonia and Slovenia.<sup>321</sup>

Although it had faced serious obstacles at both the local and national level, the (again relegalized) Kulturbund could look back upon its work with some pride and yet also easily identify areas of concern. On the one hand, it had successfully established a cultural organization that, at least theoretically, embraced Germans across the entire country. Moreover, it had been successful in making this a popular organization with a broad reach. True, nowhere near the entire German community could be counted among its ranks. However, its membership rolls were still impressive and it served to mobilize many individuals in a German-oriented way for the first time. It had been instrumental in starting the German economic cooperative movement in Yugoslavia and thus had contributed to German organization and prosperity. Perhaps most importantly, it had served as a framework within which to build a broad German cultural community, a nation-based group consciousness that transcended parish, confession, village, and region. Yugoslavia's Germans might have been less nationally mobilized than their coethnics in some other successor states, but in the Kulturbund a "central organization of national mobilization" had definitely been forged by 1924.<sup>322</sup> The Kulturbund had served a key role in mobilizing the community and establishing a sense of national as well as regional identity. As we shall see in Chapter Six, however, its moderate course would soon be challenged from within, when a more radical generation sought to seize control of the

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<sup>321</sup> Josip Mirnić, *Nemci u Backoj u Drugom Svetskom Ratu*. . (Novi Sad: Institut za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine, 1974). 30.

<sup>322</sup> Sundhausen, 331.

organization and “renew” it in the spirit of the “new German worldview” emanating from the Third Reich.

### Ordinary Swabians and the German National Movement

Although the Kulturbund and *Deutsches Volksblatt* trumpeted the new spirit of German nationhood, not all Swabians were attracted by their message, as we have seen. Nationhood was just one possible basis for identity and a rather abstract one at that, especially for a largely rural people. Moreover, national identity plainly was not so innate in everyone as the nationalists claimed. While the Swabian activists may have found liberation in the destruction of the old order, many others Swabians were horrified by the turn of events and instinctively clung to things Hungarian. Still others remained simply uninspired by the national idea and thus deaf to the Kulturbund’s appeals to organize as Germans. For such “Magyarones,” “renegades,” and *Auchdeutsche*, the architects of the new German movement reserved sharp words. The Swabian activists had consciously sought to imbue their movement with a sense of the inevitable and had little patience for those who would seek to reverse it or sap its momentum. Their impatience did not mean inattention to their opponents, however. As such, the remarks and publications of the Swabian activists also reveal a German populace that was often confused or offended by the activities carried out in its name. The German activists targeted several categories of such unenthusiastic Swabians as retrograde or problematic. In addition to the merely indifferent, these included Swabians skeptical of the German movement’s prospects, those who had

either abandoned German publicly or privately, and those who were outright opponents of the movement.

There was also religious skepticism toward the German national movement in the Yugoslav Kingdom. We will deal with the Swabian Catholic clergy's position on the Kulturbund and national identity in greater detail in Chapter Eight. However, it is useful at this point to observe that the Catholic Church restricted its Swabian clergy from actively supporting the German national movement after a short period in the 1920s. Although some Swabian priests showed early enthusiasm for the German national movement in Yugoslavia, the Catholic Church remained broadly suspicious of the movement and was especially conflicted about the Kulturbund. In part this reflected the Croatian (or lingering Magyar) biases of the Catholic Church in the new Yugoslav Kingdom. As we shall see, the Church in the Swabians' settlement area was largely dominated in the 1920s by a priesthood which had been trained in Hungarian or Croatian seminaries and was nationally biased accordingly. Thus the Church was only unevenly supportive of the Swabian activists during the 1920s and sometimes Swabian clergymen proved actively hostile toward the Kulturbund. Even when speaking positively of German national identity, the Swabian clergy usually lacked the unconflicted zeal of the Swabian activists. Indeed, some Swabian priests were quite vocal in their opposition to German national identity and considered it a positively blasphemous basis for social organization. Finally, even when Swabian clergymen endorsed national identity, a lingering nostalgia for the prewar era was sometimes detectable in their words.

In contrast to the cool Catholic Church, the German Protestants, with their *Kaiserreich*-trained clergy, were more familiar and comfortable with the concept of German national identity and were more open to the German national movement. The German Protestants' sense of national identity was additionally reinforced by their distinct settlement history and the fact that, unlike Catholics, Protestants were usually separated by confession from their Magyar and Croatian neighbors.<sup>323</sup> As we shall see in Chapters Five and Eight, the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia grew ever more comfortable with German national identity and developed close connections to Germany and Austria during the interwar years.

The Swabian activists sought to confer a sense of inevitability upon their movement. They asserted the nation to be a natural category of humanity, sometimes even calling it part of the natural order established by God Himself. In spite of the Swabian activists' bluster, however, it is clear that years after the First World War a sizable portion of the Swabian population remained either indifferent or hostile to political Germanism. German national identity did not hold particular meaning for them, at least not as a principle upon which to politically organize. While in their "everyday ethnicity" the Swabians remained attached to their German traditions and may have considered themselves a cut above their South Slav neighbors, after nearly two centuries of cohabitation with South Slavs and Magyars in southern Hungary (where Catholic masses were often not held in their language), cultural lines had begun to blur, as we have seen. Many Swabians had embraced the styles and

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<sup>323</sup> In fact, some Magyars were also Protestants, forming the bulk of the Reformed Church of the Helvetic Confession (H.B.). This Magyar dominated church also contained a minority of Swabians. The bulk of the Swabian Protestants, however, belonged to the *Deutsch evangelisch-christliche Kirche Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses im Koenigreiche Jugoslawien* which, as its name suggests, was self consciously German and had close ties to Germany proper.

traditions of the hegemonic Magyars or Croats in their aspiration to a higher social standing. For such people, the gravitational pull of political *Schwabentum* must have been weak indeed. Oftentimes, the Swabian doubters were not necessarily hostile to the German movement, but they regarded its success as unlikely. Alternatively, many worried that the German movement could draw negative attention to Swabians in general. Thus, while the ardent German activists believed the hour of national rebirth to have struck, other Swabians did not care or remained uninspired, having grown despondent by the tumultuous state of world affairs and the insecure place of the Germans in Yugoslavia. Such doubters irritated the German activists, but it was believed they could be won “back” to Germandom, and the activists made regular appeals to them at rallies and in print.<sup>324</sup> Other points of resistance among the Swabians, however, would prove a greater challenge to the self-styled awakeners and, as *Deutsches Volksblatt* noted in 1921, there were those who persisted in preferring to identify themselves as *Banater* or *anything* except German, lest they be resented for it and suffer economic harm.<sup>325</sup>

Even worse than the politically indifferent and the *Auchdeutsche* in the eyes of the German activists were those Swabians who actively resisted the German national movement and its leadership. In the vocabulary of the Swabian activists, they were regularly derided as “*Renegaten*”, renegades from their own people. Though many had opted to emigrate to Trianon Hungary after the war, many remained and served as obstacles to the German national movement.<sup>326</sup> By renegades, the Swabian activists meant those Germans who had been deeply Magyarized or Croatized

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<sup>324</sup> "Weinachtsgedanken ueber unser heimisches Deutschtum," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 5 1921.

<sup>325</sup> "Organisation," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 13 1921.

<sup>326</sup> Dr. A.D., "Gotzendaemmerung der Renegaten II," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 12 1920.

through education and life. They might have outwardly appeared German and remained capable of speaking the language, but in terms of national consciousness it was understood that they had exchanged their German identity for a Magyar or Croat one. Able to exist in two cultural worlds, they had nevertheless decided upon a “foreign” cultural allegiance, speaking Magyar or Croatian with their children and otherwise endeavoring to present themselves in language, thought, and feeling as *urmagyarisch* as possible, according to *Deutsches Volksblatt*.<sup>327</sup> The Swabian activists were not amused.

*Deutsches Volksblatt* lamented that the degrees and types of Swabian renegades were too numerous to discuss in detail, but nevertheless devoted special concern to the Magyarones who, together with Croatized Swabians, formed the vast bulk of the German apostates. Magyarones, the newspaper warned, actually represented a pernicious violation of natural order for their German national identity for a Magyar national consciousness. They were nothing less than “the Janissaries of our time.” Indeed, “just as those stolen Christian children had no idea for what monstrous purpose they were being misused as bloodthirsty Janissaries, so are our renegades also not in the least bit aware of the ignoble role they are playing.” Furthermore, even after the destruction of old Hungary, they persisted in their obdurate indifference to Germandom and worked to smother the nascent “Swabian Volk” as it stirred from its passivity.<sup>328</sup>

Such histrionics in *Deutsches Volksblatt* aside, it is clear that the embrace of German national identity was neither swift, nor total, nor uncontested among

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.



Yugoslavia's Swabians. For the Swabian activists, the lingering indifference of some of their co-ethnics to politics and assimilates' outright hostility to their agenda was particularly intolerable. In a highly religious society where such words were not used lightly, *Deutsches Volksblatt* sneered that Swabians cool or hostile to the German national movement "deny their Germandom like Judas denied the Lord."<sup>329</sup>

As we have seen, Novi Sad soon emerged as the unofficial center of the country's German movement and host to several of its main interwar institutions. Yet even there, a half decade after the proclamation of the Yugoslav Kingdom, attitudes toward Germandom varied among Swabians. On the occasion of a 1924 election rally in the city, *Deutsches Volksblatt* recalled that the Swabians who held back from participation in the German movement could be roughly divided into four groups, reflecting their state of national consciousness and the Magyarizing or Croatizing circumstances under which they began the interwar era:

- Closet Germans (*die geheimen Deutschen*) - those who considered themselves to be good Germans and doubtless truly were, but only in the privacy of the home.
- Nervous, fearful Germans (*die aengstlichen Deutschen*) – Germans who maintained their national identity and nurtured German customs in their family but nevertheless shied from joining with nationally conscious Germans, who were still derided as pan-Germans in certain quarters. Such Swabians publicly avoided participation in society, associations, elections, etc. as Germans because they did not want to expose themselves and endanger their business, profession or income.
- Aggrieved Germans (*die gekraenkten Deutschen*) - people who affirmed their Germanness but nevertheless remained on the sidelines of the German movement, because they were offended by the rhetoric of *Deutsches Volksblatt* or the attitude of the Kulturbund.
- Ashamed Germans (*die geschaemigen Deutschen*) - People who were of German origins but who described themselves as Magyars because they considered Magyars to be something better, more noble, and cleverer than a mere Swabian.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> "Unsere schaefersten Gegner," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 28 1921.

<sup>330</sup> "Zur Waehlerversammlung in der Schiessstaette," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 14 1924.

In summary, one may say that the crystallization and institutionalization of German nationhood in the Yugoslav Kingdom of the 1920s was remarkable but also incomplete. Moreover, that crystallization was the result of several interacting forces. The interplaying nationalisms that Rogers Brubaker describes were in evidence, as the nationalizing nationalism of the increasingly restrictive Yugoslav state met German homeland nationalism and its many Volkstumarbeit organizations. In between there developed Swabian minority nationalism, which had been recently crystallized by war and the new political situation in the Yugoslav state. Thus, German nationhood crystallized among the Swabians in response to interacting domestic and international forces and was shaped according to the designs of the Swabian activists. These ethnic engineers labored to foist a national identity upon the rural Swabian population based on its own everyday ethnicity and colonist ancestry. Their timing was propitious owing to the radical transformations following the First World War and its calamitous aftermath. Thus, warfare and political mobilization were also important contributors to the crystallization of national identity and minority nationalism among the Swabians. We will discuss the specific content of that minority nationalism in greater detail in Chapter Five.

In such an environment, a small cadre of German activists chose to become national “awakeners,” German activists, and professional ethnics. They established institutions and organizations to mobilize the Germans in a national way. They also used history, ceremony, and the press to shape German/Swabian identity and impart it among the everyday ethnic population as the foundation for political mobilization. Yugoslav government insensitivity and actively minority-hostile, nationalizing

policies provoked a backlash in the hitherto merely “everyday ethnic” Germans. Finally, *Volkstumarbeit* organizations and even German foreign policy encouraged the Swabians’ “revival” and provided activists with financial, material, and ideological assistance. It was a heady brew.

Ultimately, the Swabian activists were highly successful in their ability to establish cultural and media institutions, which appealed to nascent national sentiment among the population. The existence of such institutions was by no means a guarantee of success, however. Instead, the Swabians had to refine and tailor their message so as to appeal to the broad spectrum of Germans in the country with their distinct histories, regions, and dialects. As we shall see in Chapter Five, they promoted not only German national consciousness but also a profoundly local one based on the common history of colonization in the region. In this the activists used German national sentiment and a regional consciousness to reinforce both identities. However, as we shall also see in the following chapter, the Swabian activists were not content to restrain their activities to the cultural or intellectual realms. On the contrary, they recognized that it would be necessary to organize politically in order to defend or expand the cultural rights and privileges which had been guaranteed them at the Paris peace conference but whose implementation Belgrade seemed only too happy to overlook. Their desire to participate in politics led to the founding of the Germans’ first and only interwar political party in Yugoslavia, the Partei der Deutschen.

**Deutsche Führer in Südslawien**  
(zu den südslawischen Parlamentswahlen am 8. Februar)



**Dr. Stefan Kraft**

Dr. Kraft und Dr. Graßl wurden am 25. Januar in Novo-Siwatz (Novi Sad) von serbischen Terroristen überfallen und schwer verletzt; beide wurden am 8. Februar ins Parlament gewählt. Dr. Kraft zweimal im Wahlkreis Sombor und im unteren Banat, Dr. Graßl im Somborer Wahlkreis.



**Dr. Georg Graßl**



**Josif Kannel Schumacher**  
tritt an die Stelle von Dr. Kraft, wenn dieser auf das Somborer Mandat verzichtet.



**Dr. Wilhelm Neuner,**  
Gerichtsrat in Polanka, im oberen Banat wieder gewählt.

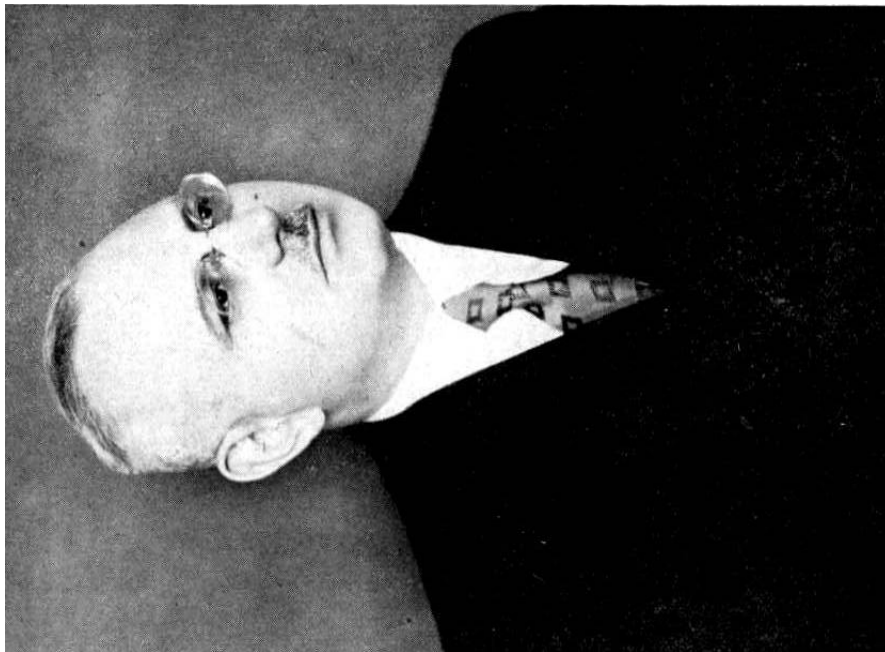


**Dr. Hans Moser,**  
Rechtsanwalt in Serridin, im Wahlkreis Neusatz wieder gewählt.



**Dr. Simon Bartmann**  
tritt an die Stelle von Dr. Kraft, wenn dieser auf das Mandat im unteren Banat verzichtet.

The Parliamentarians of the Partei der Deutschen in 1925.<sup>332</sup>



Kulturbund Chairman Johann Keks in 1937.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>331</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes vom 1. November 1933 bis 31. Oktober 1934, Taetigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung zur 10. ordentlichen Hauptversammlung in Novisad-Neusatz, 3. Dezember 1934* (Novi Sad: Druckerei- und Verlags-A.G., 1934). 2.

## Chapter 4: Swabians in Yugoslav Politics: Restrictions and Unintended Consequences, 1918-1929

As noted in the previous chapter, the Yugoslav government initially offered favorable cultural privileges to the German minority in the wake of Austria-Hungary's defeat. Generous allowances were made especially in education (with suggestions of more to come) in a bid to win local Swabian support in the new state's contested northern regions. However, when local plebiscites looked unlikely and the borders and terms of the peace treaties became clear, such generosity in politics faded. The Swabians increasingly discovered themselves to be a distrusted and unwanted minority in somebody else's nation-state (or worse, nationalizing state, as we have discussed). Although the Germans had little history of political mobilization and were sometimes quite integrated with the South Slavs in their communities, the new Yugoslav government regarded them with suspicion. One of its first acts towards the German population was to deny it and certain other minorities basic political rights.

### *Citizenship, Emigration, and Swabian Political Exclusion*

The Yugoslav authorities characterized their decision to deny the minorities political rights as a temporary measure, allegedly based on concerns about national security. In their view, it would have been ridiculous to award political rights to

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<sup>332</sup> "Deutsche Fuehrer in Suedslawien," *Der Auslanddeutsche* 8, no. 3 (1925). 11.

former enemies who as yet had no clear obligation to remain in the state.<sup>333</sup> Ironically, the authorities based their denial of the Swabians' political rights on precisely those aspects of the Treaties of St. Germain and Trianon that were designed to protect individual and minority rights. The Trianon peace treaty's Section VII, "Clauses Relating to Nationality", was expressly intended to protect the rights and property of the individual. Article 61 stated that no one could be denied citizenship in their home territory after the fall of the monarchy, though Article 62 excluded the automatic awarding of citizenship to minorities in Yugoslavia, who had to obtain official permission from the successor state to secure such citizenship. It was Article 64, however, which formed the foundation of Belgrade's decision to exclude its minorities from the political process. "Persons possessing rights of citizenship in territory forming part of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and differing in race and language from the majority of the population of such territory, shall within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty severally be entitled to opt for Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Roumania, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, or the Czecho-Slovak State, if the majority of the population of the State selected is of the same race and language as the person exercising the right to opt."<sup>334</sup> Meanwhile, Article 63 established that those who opted to relocate were free to move both their families and property but stipulated that they must formally relocate within one year of the Trianon treaty's coming into effect in their current state of residence.

January 22, 1922 marked the last date upon which persons could opt for the citizenship of another state and thus the last date the Yugoslav government could

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<sup>333</sup> Geiger, *Nijemci u Đakovu i Đakovštini*. 93.

<sup>334</sup> *Treaty of peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary, and protocol and declaration signed at Trianon, June 4, 1920*, (London: H.M. Stationary Off., 1920).

justify the denial of political rights to minority groups. By that time, however, much of the new state's fundamental political framework had been established. The Germans (and other minorities) had been excluded from elections to the Constitutional Assembly and thus had been denied a voice in preparing Yugoslavia's constitution. Even after the Constitutional Assembly adopted the centralizing (and thus offensive to Croats) "Vidovdan Constitution" on June 28, 1921, Germans remained barred from political participation or organization until January of the following year. By that time, however, they had carried out much of the preparatory work for what would become their principle political voice in the country, the *Partei der Deutschen* (PdD). Immediately after the expiration of the option for citizenship and emigration (known as the *Optionsrecht* in Swabian circles), the party was born.

In fact, the exclusion of the minorities from political life led to massive complications and revealed the absurdity of attempting to legislate identity. To exclude minorities on the basis of their ethnicity might have seemed like a simple legislative act but in practice it raised the unwieldy prospect of categorizing people according to identities that may have been vague, mixed, or even incomprehensible to the person in question. In his study of Djakovo and its surroundings, for example, Vladimir Geiger discusses how the determination of voter rolls based on the denial of political rights to the minorities led to much confusion in Djakovo and demonstrated the difficulty of defining just what constituted a German or Magyar.<sup>335</sup> While assigning citizenship based on the location of a person's birth may be simple enough, precisely determining the objective and subjective criteria of the ethnic identity of an individual or preexisting population is perhaps an impossible task. This was

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<sup>335</sup> Geiger, *Nijemci u Dakovu i Dakovštini*. 93-98.

especially the case in the lands that constituted the new Yugoslav Kingdom. What criteria to use? Surnames? "Heritage?" Should all those with German or Hungarian surnames be denied the right to vote? By such logic, of course, even Croatian patriot and Yugoslav enthusiast Bishop Josip Strossmayer would have been ineligible for political rights. What to do in cases where people who identified as Slovene, Croatian or Serbian had foreign heritage or names? What to do about language? In many cases, bilingualism was common in the Yugoslav Kingdom. Some marriages were mixed between ethnicities. Many Germans had been forced to attend Magyar or Croatian schools and had thus become highly assimilated to those cultures. As we have seen, in nineteenth century Croatia, the German population of the cities had been particularly inclined toward assimilation after the 1850s or at least became highly acculturated. How should they be treated?

As Holm Sundhausen has observed, there was never a generally applicable answer to the question of who or what constituted a German in interwar Yugoslavia, and one spoke often of an undetermined nationhood or even national opportunism and apostasy. Ethnic heritage, language, identity and religion did not always neatly coincide.<sup>336</sup> In many cases, self-identified "Germans" had only the shakiest grasp of the language, especially in its written form. Years later, after the Third Reich's invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, many more people suddenly identified themselves as German than had hitherto been the case, prompting grumblings about opportunistic "*Aprildeutschen*" who sought to benefit by association with the new

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<sup>336</sup> Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Kroatien-Slawonien und Jugoslawien." 329.



order. Clearly, isolating and defining the protean concept of identity was more complicated than the bureaucrats might have liked.<sup>337</sup>

The Swabian activists were extremely dissatisfied with their denial of political rights in the first interwar years and the lingering taint of suspicion cast upon them for their allegedly divided loyalty.<sup>338</sup> This imperative of legally determining ethnicity contributed to the congealing of a German national identity and the German national movement. The treatment of the Germans as aliens or foreigners seemed especially offensive and provoked a heightened awareness among the Swabians of their own distinctiveness as well as a defiant pride in their colonist ancestors, who had settled the land centuries before. By interpreting the Trianon and St. Germain treaties' right to emigrate in such an exclusive way, the Yugoslav government formally isolated the Germans from the nation of state and led them to wonder, in national terms, exactly why.

#### *The Establishment of the Partei der Deutschen*

On the second anniversary of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, *Deutsches Volksblatt* took stock of the German community's political position in the country and reviewed its own accomplishments. The newspaper observed that December 1 should be a day of celebration for Germans as well as South Slavs because of the many opportunities the new order had brought

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<sup>337</sup> As Doris L. Bergen observes, even the Nazi's racial "experts" were later confounded by the colorful mosaic of partly assimilated ethnic Germans they encountered after the Third Reich invaded eastern Europe. In the face of such unexpected diversity and the quandary of identifying valuable racial stock (in the context of a heated war), the Nazi's "specialists" were forced to constantly adjust their racial paradigms.

<sup>338</sup> "Option," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 28 1920.

them. "December 1 is a day of unification for us Germans as well, a day of the joining together of all *Volksgenossen*, who before belonged to different lands of the state. All that is German in heritage and orientation in Vojvodina, Croatia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Slovenia was forged into a single German national community, into a common fate by an act of state by the new [Karadjordjević] ruler." Life was far from perfect for this German *Volksgemeinschaft*, however.<sup>339</sup> Local governments had prohibited Kulturbund activity in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, and the government in Belgrade, *Deutsches Volksblatt* charged, either lacked the will or the power to overrule them. And as we have seen, Belgrade had also hindered German political action through the denial of political rights until the expiration of the option to emigrate. Well, that option was about to expire and a new German political force would soon come to the fore, the newspaper promised.<sup>340</sup>

Actually, the wisdom of establishing a German political party had been debated in *Deutsches Volksblatt* during the early months of 1921. Contributors opined for and against such an organization while the newspaper officially claimed to withhold its own stated position. Opponents of a German party argued that the establishment of a political organization would be premature. The Kulturbund still needed to be consolidated and the Germans would continue to lack political rights until January 1922. Anyway, various local German political organizations predating the First World War already existed in various parts of their settlement area and could be tasked with representing the German community in Yugoslavia. Surely this would

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<sup>339</sup> "*Volksgemeinschaft*" appears in the original quotation, which I have translated as "national community." "Zum 1. Dezember 1921," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 1 1921.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

be enough?<sup>341</sup> The conspicuously more numerous advocates for a new party organization, on the other hand, asserted that a German party was necessary for the Germans' needs to be taken seriously by the government. The German population was sizable enough that a German party would not even be the smallest in parliament, so long as it embraced all Germans, irrespective of class and confession.<sup>342</sup> Meanwhile, the entire German population was being shut out of the most important matters of state and, crucially, agrarian reform.

By the autumn of 1921, the main Swabian activists had taken the decision to establish a German political party and preparations were underway that would culminate in the party's formal founding in time for the next elections.<sup>343</sup> The depth of support in the Swabian electorate was of some concern to them, however, since "it is unfortunately a sad fact that perhaps no people has been raised so politically apathetic as precisely our Swabians." Thus, the entry of Germans into the political arena meant a new area of endeavor for the newspaper, which would hence have to prepare the Swabians for political life. "In a word, we must educate our people politically," *Deutsches Volksblatt* resolved.<sup>344</sup> In February of the following year, the newspaper went further, announcing its intention to move beyond being effectively just an organ of the Kulturbund and enter more boldly into and matters of politics on behalf of the nascent German political party.<sup>345</sup> True to its word, throughout the

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<sup>341</sup> Franz Rottler, "Zur Frage der politischen Organisation unserer deutschen Volksgenossen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 7 1921.

<sup>342</sup> "Partei," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 10 1920. The division of the German electorate along electoral lines would be disastrous and could only help the Slavic parties, *Deutsches Volksblatt* later warned. "Ein slawischer Fuehrer fuer die deutsche Partei," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 4 1922.

<sup>343</sup> "Wie werden die Deutschen waehlen?," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 11 1921.

<sup>344</sup> "Das Wahlrecht," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 14 1921.

<sup>345</sup> "Die Aufgabe des 'Deutschen Volksblattes'," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 12 1922.

1920s, *Deutsches Volksblatt* brimmed with articles explaining not only the importance of voting but also whom to vote for.

The formal announcement of the new Party of the Germans in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes followed immediately upon the expiration of the *Optionsrecht*. On January 29, 1922 an appeal to join the new political party, frequently known by its German acronym “PdD”, streamed across the front page of *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Wrapping itself in the flag of Yugoslav patriotism and dynastic loyalty, the appeal recounted a long list of German grievances in the Yugoslav state and called upon Germans to join the new party. Charging that their constitutionally guaranteed rights were being violated, the appeal’s authors especially inveighed against their denial of political rights on the basis of the *Optionsrecht*. Likewise, they complained that agrarian reform had been legally improper, proceeded in a discriminatory manner, and was generally reprehensible. Furthermore, they protested the displacement of the German language from official or public communication as both unjust for Germans, as well as unwise for South Slavs, since such a precedent could imperil the linguistic rights of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes beyond the borders of their kingdom. German needs in education and culture required respect, as did German economic rights, especially in the area of trade and taxes. Furthermore, it was imperative to struggle against corruption and obtain German officials for German areas in the country. But despite this long list of grievances, the Germans’ appeal was hardly revolutionary and promised a party informed by the conviction that the political cooperation of all the country’s citizens was a prerequisite for national prosperity. To this end, the appeal asserted the German desire to participate in

political life and called upon the German population to establish local party chapters. Among the appeal's authors were Franz Moser (Ferdinand Riestler's 1911 successor in the Croatian Sabor) as well as future members of the Yugoslav parliament, Samuel Schumacher and Hans Moser.<sup>346</sup>

The generic name of the Partei der Deutschen was indicative, demonstrating the party leadership's desire to equate nationhood and politics. That is, the party construed itself as a nation-based party, for whom it was the *duty* of all the country's Germans to vote. Throughout its electoral history, PdD officials and candidates (as well as the rest of the Swabian activists in the Kulturbund, at *Deutsches Volksblatt* and elsewhere) stressed that it was nothing short of a moral obligation of the ethnic Germans to vote for the party. For example, in 1925 the PdD exhorted in the pages of *Deutsches Volksblatt* that "no German voter may remain at home. Everyone without exception must vote for the German party list."<sup>347</sup> To do otherwise, would be betrayal of the *Volk* and denial of one's nationhood. The party leadership expected the Germans to demonstrate loyalty to the Yugoslav Kingdom but never forgot its obligation to defend the interests of the kingdom's German minority.

Many Germans greeted the Partei der Deutschen's January 29 appeal with enthusiasm and promptly joined the party. A party board tasked with setting up a local party chapter was immediately formed in Ruma on January 29 and was followed by many others from Slovenia to Banat. In fact, the party already boasted 46 local

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<sup>346</sup> Karl Erling, Franz Moser, Hans Moser, Wendelin Mueller, Samuel Schumacher, Ludwig Wittmann, "An die deutsche Bevoelkerung des Koenigreichs der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 29, 1929 1922.

<sup>347</sup> "Vor der Entscheidung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 7 1925.

chapters in Batschka, Banat, and Syrmien by August 1922.<sup>348</sup> From its inception, the PdD cast itself as an all-German party that straddled differences of class, occupation, origin and confession. The organizers even declared their hope to attract Germans who had been hostile to the Kulturbund. In this, the party revealed its aspiration to embrace all Germans and immediately began to speak in their name, casting those who resisted the party as renegades or strays to be won back to the fold.

The PdD used the February 15, 1922 founding of its local party board in Novi Sad as an occasion to publicly elaborate on its tactics and explain the urgent necessity for a German party. The German activists had long complained that the South Slav parties effectively ignored them, thus excluding them from the new state's Constitutional Assembly and denying them the chance to participate in the crucial business of agrarian reform.<sup>349</sup> Speaking at the Novi Sad party board founding, Georg Mueller reminded listeners of both the surplus of political parties in Yugoslavia and the shortsightedness of their programs. Moreover, the many parties possessed a regrettable tendency to represent the interests of only a single South Slav ethnic group and, thus, contained no place for the Germans. While the Slavs and Germans definitely had interests in common, he asserted, there were many areas in which their priorities differed. These differences, such as the use of German language in school,

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<sup>348</sup> "Uebersicht ueber die bisher gegruendeten Orsverbaende der Partei der Deutschen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 28 1922.

<sup>349</sup> Germans believed that their lands were disproportionately affected by Yugoslavia's agrarian reform. While some wealthier Swabians lost land, the many poorer and landless Swabians did not benefit at all from the process, which furthermore settled numerous Serbian (and Montenegrin) "*Dobrovoljci*" among the Swabian settlements of Vojvodina. These "*Dobrovoljci*" or "volunteers" were mostly from poor, upland areas of Croatia or Bosnia. They had been promised land in 1917 by the Serbian government in exile if they would take up arms against the Monarchy. By awarding such lands in Vojvodina and Croatia-Slavonia, the government hoped to strengthen the Slavic population there and dilute the region's sizable and compact German and Magyar minorities. To such "*Dobrovoljci*", local traditions of ethnic coexistence were often strange and tensions arose between the settled volunteers and the Germans in their midst. For more, see Tomasevich, 346-349.

church, official correspondence, banks, post, telephones, etc. revealed the need for a specifically German political party. Germans must agitate for their linguistic priorities just as they must fulfill their obligations as loyal citizens, rejecting irredentism but also demanding their rights.<sup>350</sup>

That same day in Novi Sad, *Deutsches Volksblatt* editor Franz Perz made his newspaper's sympathy for the PdD abundantly clear when he acknowledged that the Novi Sad daily regarded the communication of the party's program and its instructions to party supporters as among the newspaper's principle tasks.<sup>351</sup> During March and April of that year, *Deutsches Volksblatt's* masthead even briefly proclaimed it to be the "Daily newspaper of the Party of the Germans in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" before prudently reverting to being merely the "Daily newspaper of the Germans in Yugoslavia (SHS)". Regardless of the claims of its masthead, however, *Deutsches Volksblatt* should clearly be regarded as an unofficial organ of the Partei der Deutschen.

By fall 1922, many more local chapters of the PdD had been founded but the party still had only its provisional, founding committee to direct it. With an increasing number of chapters in place, the party founders turned to the formation of a proper board of directors and the drafting of a comprehensive political program. These moves forward were given additional impetus by the looming possibility of an election in 1923, in which the party founders were determined the PdD should take part. By the time of its first party congress on December 17 in the Banat town of

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<sup>350</sup> Georg Mueller, "Die Gruendung des Ortsausschusses in Neusatz," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 17 1922.

<sup>351</sup> Franz Perz, "Die Gruendung des Ortsausschuss in Neusatz," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 18 1922.

Hatzfeld (Romanian - Jimbolia), the PdD counted 50 local chapters, of which more than 34 sent representatives.<sup>352</sup>

In Hatzfeld,<sup>353</sup> the PdD would work out the program that would guide it until the party's dissolution in 1929 under the strictures of the new royal dictatorship. The Hatzfeld conference, therefore, served as the formal founding of a new party, but it also was a demonstration of continuity between the interwar German movement and its prewar antecedents. Ludwig Kremling, who had been the prewar chairman of the Ungarlaendische Deutsche Volkspartei, was elected chairman of the PdD, while the position of managing chairman went to former VDH student leader Stefan Kraft, who hailed from Indjija in Srijem. Hans Moser of Zemun (also in Srijem) and Michael Theiss (of Hatzfeld) were elected deputy chairmen. All in all, men from Srijem composed no less than 20 percent of the party's steering committee. Thus, the pre-1914 cradle of German activism in Croatia-Slavonia continued to be well represented in the broader German national movement during the interwar period.<sup>354</sup>

The Hatzfeld party congress held to several guiding principles, including the belief that the Partei der Deutschen could not remain on the outside of the country's politics but rather must enter into alliances with the government and other parties. As such, in Hatzfeld the party resolved to take no stand on questions of constitutional law and instead asserted that it was for the "Slavic nation of state" to decide whether

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<sup>352</sup> Plautz. 48.

<sup>353</sup> Ceded by the Yugoslav Kingdom to Romania in the mid-1920s, Hatzfeld is today known as Jimbolia. Although I have taken care to use twenty first century place names whenever sensible, in the case of Hatzfeld, I shall eschew the current Romanian appellation in favor of its historic German one. The PdD's "Hatzfeld Program" which was worked out there was named for the town in German, obviously. Since referring to this nationalist German program by a Romanian place name would be confusing and non-sensical, I shall likewise discuss the PdD's program as the Hatzfeld Program.

<sup>354</sup> Oberkersch. 204.



the country would be centrally or federally administered.<sup>355</sup> Delegates to the party congress passed two resolutions, which were then read aloud by Franz Perz and Johann Keks. The first of these made the perfunctory declaration of allegiance to the Yugoslav state and Karadjordjević dynasty. The second resolution awarded the PdDs' leadership the freedom to negotiate alliances or agreements with the government and other political parties in Yugoslavia. Any deviation from loyalty to the state was declared intolerable and effectively meant expulsion from the party.<sup>356</sup> Like the Kulturbund, the PdD meant to be simultaneously *volkstreu* and *staatstreu*. Unfortunately, it proved even more difficult to persuade South Slavs of the sincerity of this position in politics than in social and cultural affairs.

Ultimately, the Hatzfeld party congress would be most remembered for the political program it adopted. The "Hatzfeld Program," as the party platform came to be known, was extensive and remained the PdD's guiding document until 1929. The document consisted of two sections of demands, the first listing the Germans' "general" objectives and a second one outlining objectives more specific to the German population in Yugoslavia. The first, general section emphasized, among other things, the need for the state to observe certain fundamental liberal freedoms, including "personal freedom, inviolability of residential rights, religious freedom and freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, freedom to teach and freedom to learn, the inviolability of the mail, telegraph and telephone, and the right of petition and grievance." The Hatzfeld Program additionally called for the implementation of constitutionally guaranteed

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<sup>355</sup> "Zielweisende Leitsätze," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 21 1922.

<sup>356</sup> "Verschollene Telegramme: Zwei wichtige Entschliessungen vom Hatzfelder Parteitag," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 21 1922.

areas of equality, including for the country's various churches. Furthermore, the program demanded the streamlining and rationalization of state administration; the expansion of certain welfare provisions and institutes; healthy finance policies and a just system of taxation; the reduction of certain trade barriers; improved transport and communications; the favorable stabilization of currency; welfare and just treatment for demobilized soldiers; the holding of a fair and accurate census; the forging of friendly international relations and trade agreements; and the harmonization and unification of laws across the kingdom.<sup>357</sup>

In its second section, the Hatzfeld Program turned to the Germans' more specific concerns. In large part, these specific concerns derived from the Germans' treatment in the years since the collapse of Austro-Hungarian rule, during which they complained of South Slav chauvinism and insensitivity; denial of various rights; political exclusion; lawless or senseless administration by non-German and even non-local officials appointed to run their areas; obstacles to German schooling and efforts at outright denationalization through education; linguistic discrimination; and the displacement of the German language from certain areas of public and civil life.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> The "Hatzfeld Program" in Partei der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten, und Slowenen, "Programm der Partei der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen, welches am ersten Parteitage in Hatzfeld am 17. Dezember 1922 angenommen wurde," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 21 1922. These demands reflected not only perceived anti-German discrimination but also the general disruption resulting from the process of cobbling together the Yugoslav Kingdom from pieces of several, variously developed, preexisting countries with correspondingly developed economies and legal systems. More germane to the Germans in the new state was the fact that they were frequently perceived as defeated adversaries from the First World War. Thus, the Hatzfeld Program revealed their concern with this precarious position, especially viz. the treatment of demobilized soldiers of German descent.

<sup>358</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Yugoslav authorities sought to Slavicize German children using a policy of "name analysis", by which they determined the language of child's schooling according to their surname. Thus a child with a Slavic (or Slavic sounding) surname would attend a Slavic school, irrespective of parental preference. The Germans recognized the name analysis policy as a transparent measure to Slavicize their children but were long powerless to do much about it. The method of name analysis was not used to send Slav children with German surnames to German schools.

Several areas of the “specific part” of the Hatzfeld Program are worth particular consideration. Article 1 emphasized the Germans’ aspiration to see the forging of a constitutional order that permanently and genuinely guaranteed them the right to freely organize their particular cultural, national and economic areas of activity as a unified people. Additionally, each citizen should be free to determine his or her own nationality. In Article 2, the Germans asserted their right (on a group, confessional, communal or private basis) to establish and maintain educational institutes and schools of all levels and types, with particular concern for the training of teachers. Article 3 also dealt with education. It revisited the Germans’ need for such German language teachers’ training institutes (especially invoking the relatively wealthy German tax base) and demanded the legal recognition of parents’ right to choose the school (and, thus, language) of their children’s education. Additionally, the Germans called for the right to attend schools abroad and have their diplomas recognized in Yugoslavia. Finally, Article 3 concluded with the demand for the material assistance for the Germans’ legally recognized churches in correspondence with their number of believers, as well as the provision of religious education in German by priests of German ethnicity. Article 4 expressed concern for the usage of the German language both in interaction with various state officials as well as in communications and signage. Similarly, Article 13 pled for the maintenance of German place and street names and the free use of German symbols. Further articles in the specific section of the Hatzfeld Program addressed important economic matters, including the perennial concern for the way agrarian reform was being

handled, as well as the need for increased German representation in local administration.<sup>359</sup>

Ultimately, it is clear from the Hatzfeld Program that the original German leadership in Yugoslavia retained high hopes for the liberal prospects of the state in 1922 yet recognized that those liberal prospects should not be considered secure, no matter what the constitution said. The Partei der Deutschen was particularly anxious in the program's "specific" section to iterate the Germans' need for rights and respect in education, administration, elections, agrarian reform, language, and economics.<sup>360</sup> Despite this clear iteration, these would be areas that frustrated the Swabians throughout the interwar period.

The Hatzfeld party congress was an event of real significance in the history of the Swabians. The party leadership, never one to overlook an opportunity for identity building and self-promotion, began celebrating the event's significance almost immediately. Stefan Kraft, who would lead the party during the 1920s, called it "a turning point in the development of our [German] political life" and emphasized the importance of constructing a common German consciousness from the disparate German regions in Yugoslavia. Johann Keks, future chairman of the Kulturbund and an energetic German activist observed that, "The world war brought new ideas for the coexistence of mankind to the surface." The Wilsonian principles promising self-

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<sup>359</sup> Partei der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, "Programm der Partei der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen, welches am ersten Parteitage in Hatzfeld am 17. Dezember 1922 angenommen wurde."

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

determination and protection of smaller peoples had been inspiring and “we Swabians have also succumbed to the magic of these words as well,” he intoned.<sup>361</sup>

As had become evident, German national consciousness remained an emerging and complex phenomenon, which sometimes eluded or defied its protagonists. The Swabian activists, however, were assisted mightily in their work by the nationalizing policies of the Yugoslav government, which rendered German national identity newly salient and gradually drove many otherwise disinterested Swabians into the German national camp.

#### *Germans in Yugoslav Politics, 1922-1929*

The German experience in Yugoslavia during the 1920s was characterized by the insistent construction of national institutions and activities designed to forge group consciousness, impart national identity and define that identity as both Swabian and German. In the cultural realm, as we have seen, this meant the development of the Kulturbund and its various local chapters. In politics, the German experience was characterized by the Partei der Deutschen’s campaign for German votes and German national priorities, a constant balancing act between the principal Serbian and Croatian parties, and a struggle against the efforts of those parties to attract German voters. The PdD participated in three national elections and likewise worked to elect Germans in the regional elections after these were finally permitted in 1927. At the decade’s end, Germans could look with some pride upon their nascent political party,

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<sup>361</sup> Johann Keks, "Taetigkeitsbericht der Leitung der Partei der Deutschen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 22 1922.

but the actual accomplishments of the PdD were few and not immediately apparent. Meanwhile, in politics and daily life, the country's Swabians were subject to constant discrimination and even nationalist violence at the hands of their South Slav neighbors. To be sure, daily relations between Germans and their Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian neighbors were often quite good. Nevertheless, the Yugoslav state, itself a locus of heated Serbian and Croatian national contention, pursued a nationalizing agenda that discriminated against the Germans, ironically contributing to the consolidation of German national identity in Yugoslavia.

Much of what follows is a discussion of ethnic differentiation, which occurred across the 1920s as circumstances and national activists pushed ethnicity to assume a more salient, political meaning. In many cases, especially those which are recorded by journalists, police, diarists and historians, it is the exceptional clash in local politics, not the friendly exchange in the local marketplace that becomes an object of nationalism studies. Perversely perhaps, acts of violence leave a more indelible mark than acts of kindness, and the sensational eclipses the mundane in recorded memory. As such, the reader should bear in mind when reading the following that many contemporary authors and later historians have observed that relations between South Slavs and Germans during the interwar period were sometimes tense but were also often good and neighborly. Germans and South Slavs may have spoken different languages in the home but bilingualism was also common. Orthodox Serbs and Protestant Germans may have attended different churches than their Catholic neighbors, but in many cases they nevertheless lived in the same communities and thus had shared concerns and friendships. Meanwhile, Catholic Germans and Croats

often worshiped together, a fact that elicited concern among some nationalist Germans, who recognized the blurring of cultural lines between the two communities and warned against Croatization. Serbian and Croatian words penetrated local German dialects just as German words were adopted by Serbo-Croatian.

In many cases, Germans did lead separate associational lives from Serbs and Croats during the prewar years. Nonetheless, as we have seen in Osijek, Germans also often participated in various associations (fire brigades, gymnastics associations, choral groups, etc.) with their Croatian or Serbian neighbors. This began to change in the 1920s, a decade which was marked by a concerted and conscious effort by the Swabian activists to expand the national basis of German life and establish distinct German choral groups, gymnastics clubs, and the like. In this process of cultivating German national consciousness, the Swabian activists consistently pursued an agenda of ethnic differentiation. (Croatian and Serbian nationalisms were also strident during these years.) The Yugoslav state, on the other hand, sought to either assimilate or marginalize the Germans, hoping additionally that many would simply leave the country.

### *Tensions in the Streets, Germans in the Skupština*

For the Swabians, the 1920s was a period of national construction and the building up of German national institutions. As we have seen, for the Kulturbund this meant the opening of new local chapters, the arranging of lectures, rallies, courses on German custom and identity; and the holding of ethnically and historically based celebrations. The many folk costume balls and the Kulturbund's annual congresses

sought to highlight German consciousness and belonging as well as Swabian tradition, history and custom. The Partei der Deutschen arguably was instrumental to all of the national goals of the Kulturbund. However, it also had the task of competing in elections and functioning in a parliament where German aspirations were not always looked upon kindly or as innocent. The Kulturbund and PdD thus had different spheres of activity but common concerns.<sup>362</sup>

Before the imposition of royal dictatorship, as noted above, the PdD competed in three parliamentary elections, the first of which was actually announced during the party's first congress at Hatzfeld. The PdD was a small party operating in a country where South Slav parties and parliamentarians often regarded it with suspicion or outright hostility. Yet in interwar Yugoslavia, the importance of the few German parliamentarians could be disproportionate to their number, since every vote was precious in a parliament where decisions were often made by very narrow majorities.<sup>363</sup> The PdD's strategy varied according to circumstances, but generally the party sought to advance its own agenda by supporting or aligning itself with whatever powerful force would help it achieve its goals. In practice, this often meant support for the government, but the PdD did sometimes vote with opposition. (Neither strategy was particularly successful.) Its members could be vocal, and on numerous occasions, Kraft, Grassl, Moser and others loudly asserted German priorities and concerns in parliament. Throughout the 1920s, however, South Slav support for the PdD's priorities and initiatives proved elusive. This frustrated the German activists

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<sup>362</sup> One area in which the Kulturbund and Partei der Deutschen would both be particularly active during the 1920s was the attempt to secure a stable and fair system of German language education and the right of Germans to determine the language of their children's schooling.

<sup>363</sup> Janjetović. 37.



tremendously, especially since the Serb Radicals and Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) regularly made generous overtures to gullible German voters in the hopes of obtaining their votes for their own parties.<sup>364</sup> The PdD also had the unenviable task of seeking not to offend Serbs or Croats in a parliamentary system that was very much nationally fragmented and where joining the government or opposition broadly meant defection from the camp of one ethnic party to that of its rival. As such, the story of the PdD in parliament is one of consistent advocacy for German priorities but only rare accomplishments of lasting significance.

Scarcely had the Partei der Deutschen unveiled its Hatzfeld Program that the party had to launch its first political campaign. While the Germans gathered at the PdD congress in Hatzfeld, Nikola Pašić had King Alexander dissolve the Constituent Assembly and schedule elections for early in 1923. This was not unexpected, and the PdD quickly resolved to mount party lists in those districts where they saw possibility of electoral success. In their campaign, the German activists urged the Swabian population to “be strong and unified!” and resist the tempting promises of the “Slavic parties.”<sup>365</sup> Meanwhile, the party’s South Slav competitors hoped to poach German voters from Slovenia to Banat. The PdD held many electoral rallies across Yugoslavia’s German regions. However, the party lacked the time and resources to campaign in all areas with German inhabitants and therefore had to concede some places to its opponents until future elections. This was especially true in Slavonia,

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<sup>364</sup> The Croatian Peasant Party during the 1920s was briefly known as the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS). For simplicity’s sake, I shall refer to it only as the HSS.

<sup>365</sup> “Seid einig und stark!,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 6 1923.

where the PdD remained unorganized and the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) hoped for many Swabian votes.<sup>366</sup>

Joseph Rothschild has characterized the 1923 balloting itself as “free and peaceful”, but observes that the rhetoric on the campaign trail was spiked with vitriol.<sup>367</sup> Throughout the campaign, *Deutsches Volksblatt* loudly complained of what it considered disenfranchisement and harassment, as well as misinformation and slander in the Slav press. In the German press, the PdD charged the South Slav parties with alternately intimidating German voters or making false promises to score votes. The Radical campaigners, it claimed, threatened that German votes for any party but their own would be viewed as an expression of disloyalty to the Yugoslav Kingdom.<sup>368</sup> PdD campaign events were sometimes interrupted by nationalist violence, and several small bombs were allegedly even detonated at the offices of DVAG.<sup>369</sup> Meanwhile, *Deutsches Volksblatt* steadily beat the drum of campaign support for the PdD, regularly appealing to the German electorate to vote, instructing them exactly whom to vote for, explaining the value of having German members of parliament, and warning that any splintering of the German vote would be disastrous.

Despite its complaints about the campaign, the Partei der Deutschen did respectably well in the 1923 parliamentary election, securing a total of eight mandates across a number of electoral districts. (There were 313 mandates at stake overall.) Although they were disappointed by the unfortunate split of the German electorate in Ruma between the PdD and the active and well funded Croatian Peasant Party, the

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<sup>366</sup> "Die Wahlbewegung in Slawonien," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 9 1923.

<sup>367</sup> Rothschild. 218.

<sup>368</sup> "Loyalitaet im Wahlkampf," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 6 1923.

<sup>369</sup> "Bombenanschlag auf die deutsche Druckerei," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 13 1923.

men of the PdD generally viewed the election as a success. 43,415 votes were cast for the PdD which secured mandates in Slovenia, Batschka and Banat.<sup>370</sup> This number was sufficient for the German deputies to form a parliamentary *Klub*, which they promptly did. Its members were Stefan Kraft, Samuel Schumacher, Simon Barthmann, Josef Taeubl, Hans Moser, Wilhelm Neuner, Franz Schauer, and Peter Heinrich.

In accordance with its program, the PdD sought to avoid the Serb-Croat conflict and constitutional questions as much as possible. It worked according to the principle that it would offer its support to whatever party could deliver on the issues of importance to the German population. In practice, this usually meant siding with the strongest political parties and the government, though there were occasions when the party broke from this practice. The Radical Party of Nikola Pašić had won 108 of the 313 seats in parliament but fell short of having enough to form a majority government. Nevertheless, Pašić was entrusted with forming an all-Radical government, which would count on the support of the 14 Džemijet Albanians and the 8 deputies of the PdD. The PdD, thus, found itself in a position of almost surprising importance and agreed to conditionally support the Pašić government, while always pushing for its own goals.

The PdD's strategy would soon be put to the test by the turbulent nature of Yugoslav politics during the 1920s. The parliament elected in 1923 endured for less than two years and struggled with constantly shifting coalitions, divisions in the South Slav parties, nationalist frustration, and a temporary boycott by parliamentary deputies of the Croatian Peasant Party. Serb-Croat tension continued unabated

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<sup>370</sup> Rothschild. Table 36. 219.

throughout this parliament. Meanwhile, tensions among the Serbs themselves led to the secession of a bloc of Serbs from the Democratic Party. These secessionist Serb MPs promptly formed the Independent Democratic Party and accepted four ministries in the government of Nikola Pašić. The intransigent Stjepan Radić campaigned for the Croatian cause from London to Moscow, while his HSS deputies edged closer to assuming the parliamentary seats they left vacant for some time after the election. Several governments were formed from several constellations of parties and featured either Nikola Pašić or Democratic Party leader Ljubomir Davidović as prime minister. It was the alliance between Pašić and Pribićević that spelled particular trouble for the Germans, however, for the latter made no secret of his hostility toward the Germans and their political party. As Rothschild points out, “the 1923 elections thus sharpened the differences among the ethnic communities on the one hand and accelerated the internal political consolidation of each of them on the other. Within each ethnic community, the strongest, most cohesive and reputedly most nativist party gained at the expense of smaller, looser and more ecumenical ones.”<sup>371</sup> This did not necessarily bode well for the Germans.

According to Valentin Oberkersch, PdD representatives had reached an agreement with Pašić on matters of great concern to them (including lifting the “temporary” system of appointed administration in Vojvodina by which they were frequently governed by-local Serbs already) by September 1923. In exchange for their support after the upcoming elections, the Swabians believed they could count on Radical support for their own educational, linguistic priorities, economic and especially administrative priorities. The Germans would retain the right to express

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid. 219.

criticism of prevailing circumstances but agreed to not serve as opposition to the government. It quickly became apparent, however, that Pašić was unwilling or unable to honor his promises to the Germans and the German deputies would be forced to defend their interests on such crucial matters as taxation, education, and agrarian reform.<sup>372</sup>

In early 1924, when the HSS sought to assume many of the mandates the party had won but not yet filled in the boycotted Belgrade parliament, the PdD gave a sharp indication of its frustration with its Radical partners. By this time, the Bosnian Muslims, the Slovenian Popular Party and the HSS had formed an opposition bloc, but this strategy required the parliamentary certification of the vacant HSS mandates in order to become effective. The parliamentary accreditation committee had originally consisted of 11 Radicals and 10 members of the opposition. After the departure of one Radical from the committee, however, PdD MP Hans Moser found himself on the committee as the Radical's substitute. Moser, thus, was suddenly in the position of casting the deciding vote on whether or not to certify to the HSS mandates. Exasperated by the behavior of the Radicals, Moser voted in support of the HSS.

Shortly after Moser voted to certify the mandates in mid-March 1924, the Radical government resigned, no longer possessing a coalition majority. However, Pašić and the Radicals quickly returned to power, this time with the support of Svetozar Pribićević and his Independent Democrats. The dissolution of the Kulturbund quickly followed, as we saw in the previous chapter, prompting the PdD leadership to hold an emergency meeting in Novi Vrbas on April 27. The

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<sup>372</sup> Oberkersch. 206.

contemporary press noted that the PdD event was not without incident, being interrupted by nationalist youths allegedly screaming “Long live great Serbia!” and brandishing sticks, daggers and revolvers.<sup>373</sup> Two Germans were allegedly stabbed at the event, which was then dispersed by Serbian authorities before its conclusion.<sup>374</sup> The police allegedly beat German attendees as well while protecting the disruptors,<sup>375</sup> which prompted MPs Ludwig Kremling and Stefan Kraft to dispatch a letter of complaint to the Interior Minister.<sup>376</sup> Before the authorities dissolved the Novi Vrbas meeting, however, delegates passed several resolutions, the most important of which were a Declaration to the German Electorate, and a formal protest against the dissolution of the Kulturbund.<sup>377</sup> No longer, the PdD declared, was it possible for the Germans to support a regime that neglected the cultural, national and economic necessities of its minorities and practically disowned the principles of parliamentarism and rule of law.<sup>378</sup> The Partei der Deutschen, therefore, would henceforth pursue its politics in the opposition. Its hopes were briefly awakened in 1924 by the Davidović government, which nominally relegalized the Kulturbund, but the party would soon have to face elections (after yet another brief Pašić government) on February 8 of the following year.

The parliamentary campaign in 1925 was anything but uneventful. The opposition parties faced greater intimidation than in 1923, and the pages of *Deutsches Volksblatt* were filled with outraged articles and quotations by PdD officials about

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<sup>373</sup> "Der deutsche Parteitag in Werbass ", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 29 1924.

<sup>374</sup> "Die Opfer der Werbasser Tagung: Zwei Verwundete, zwei Verhaftete ", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 29 1924.

<sup>375</sup> "Protest der Parteileitung gegen die Verletzung der Versammlungsfreiheit," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 29 1924.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> "Kundgebungen der deutschen Parteitagung in Werbass," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 29 1924.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

interrupted campaign rallies, intimidation, and several violent incidents. Ultimately, the PdD emerged from the election having earned more votes but with fewer MPs to show for its efforts. Also during this election, the PdD first ran a list of candidates in upper Slavonia in the Virovitica electoral district with Hans Moser heading the party list. Though the PdD did not prevail in Virovitica, its electoral efforts there were significant for they represented the organization's expansion deeper into the Slavonian territory of the Croatian Peasant Party. The parliament elected in 1925 was still divided and dominated by the Radicals. However, the parliament also briefly featured a coalition of the Radicals and their erstwhile Croatian opponent, the HSS, which on March 27 announced its acceptance of the Vidovdan Constitution. Also under this parliament, long-promised regional elections were finally held on November 16<sup>th</sup> and future local elections were announced on September 7, 1927.

Despite earning slightly more votes (45,172) overall than in 1923, the PdD secured only five parliamentary mandates in the 1925, three fewer than they had won in the previous election.<sup>379</sup> The party attributed this to widespread voter intimidation, official manipulation of voter rolls and other such official chicanery. In fact, intimidation of the Germans was hardly new in 1925, though the German experience of official or "private" acts of violence and intimidation never approached the severity of similar acts in Kosovo or Macedonia, for example. Mostly the Swabians were frustrated by official foot dragging, selective implementation of measures connected with their supposedly equal rights, and especially the issues of language and schooling. Their hoped for solution to all of this was the long promised holding of regional and local elections and the obtainment of such cultural autonomy as Serbs

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<sup>379</sup> For full election results, see Rothschild. 224.

and their Orthodox Church had enjoyed in prewar Austria-Hungary. Through local elections, the Swabians hoped to finally replace the “temporary” Serbian administrators imposed after the world war with local Swabians, who would not block whatever minority-friendly measures came out of Belgrade. Through cultural autonomy, the Swabians hoped to finally be able to develop an established system of German education. It is worthwhile here to recall Anthony Smith’s definition of nationalism, by which the Swabian activists can legitimately be called “nationalists” in interwar Yugoslavia. Smith neutrally identifies nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation.” The Swabian activists in the PdD and other institutions were clearly pursuing precisely such goals. In their efforts, however, the Swabians suffered obstructionism, unsympathetic local officials who were often outsiders appointed by Belgrade, denial of treaty-guaranteed minority rights, and occasional incidents of intimidation and violence on the campaign trail. These aspiring minority nationalists consistently confronted a Yugoslav nationalizing nationalism that frequently regarded their efforts with impatience or even treated them as insurrectionary.

The open violence and intimidation (other than Pribičević’s banning of the Kulturbund) came most often from local Serb youths, officials or police. Such acts were usually tolerated by the Belgrade government, which plainly regarded the Germans as an irritant and rarely prosecuted wrongdoers.<sup>380</sup> Most often, the incidents

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<sup>380</sup> It must be remembered that there was no shortage of nationalist tension between the South Slavs themselves, and Germans inhabited many of the areas where Serbian and Croatian communities overlapped. The Germans sought to stay out of the Serb-Croat conflict. However, no such isolation from the generally corrosive, nationalist environment of the Yugoslav Kingdom was possible.



were scuffles or tension between individuals. However, on several occasions during the 1920s, individual Swabian leaders were actually assaulted and they all had to suffer hecklers on the campaign trail. In February 1922, Johann Keks, then-editor in chief of *Deutsches Volksblatt*'s sister publication *Neue Zeit*, and several others were arrested on insubstantial charges and held for several weeks in Pančevo.<sup>381</sup> This was nothing less than a test of the constitution, *Deutsches Volksblatt* charged, which would show whether constitutional protections, as far as they concerned Germans, represented the law in practice or merely existed on paper.<sup>382</sup> Was the Yugoslav Kingdom a state governed by laws, as was promised, or a police state, as the political opposition often charged? Shortly after Keks' release, Georg Grassl, the former editor-in-chief of *Deutsches Volksblatt* and current Kulturbund head, was himself arrested and held in Topola for three days by local authorities, who he claimed had sought to prove a "non-existent" connection between the Kulturbund and Partei der Deutschen. Grassl was likewise released unbowed and unharmed, but hardly optimistic about the fate of constitutional law in the country.<sup>383</sup>

The Swabians also faced intimidation by nationalist thugs and more organized nationalist youth groups in the 1920s. Such groups as ORJUNA, the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (*Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista*), and SRNAO, Serbian National Youth (*Srpska nacionalna omladina*), frequently interrupted campaign rallies, scuffled with Swabians at PdD or Kulturbund functions, and even

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<sup>381</sup> The publishing activities of DVAG were actually quite extensive and included other titles than *Deutsches Volksblatt*. One such newspaper was the weekly *Neue Zeit*, which followed the editorial line of *Deutsches Volksblatt* but was aimed more squarely at the peasant/farmer/rural population. For more, see Bešlin.

<sup>382</sup> "Verhaftungen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 24 1922.

<sup>383</sup> Georg Grassl, "Einzelheiten von Dr. Georg Grassls drei taetiger Verhaftung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 15 1922.

attacked the offices of the German publishing house in Novi Sad.<sup>384</sup> On several occasions, these scuffles became quite serious and leading PdD politicians were seriously wounded. In August 1922, *Deutsches Volksblatt* reported that its offices were raided by several young men from ORJUNA, who also threatened the staff working there.<sup>385</sup> According to the newspaper, the intruders seized books, documents, and letters before heading to the neighboring offices of the Kulturbund and similarly seizing documents and correspondence.<sup>386</sup> The following year, *Deutsches Volksblatt* complained of a bomb attack on the offices of the Germans's publishing house, which fortunately did little damage. By far the most serious scuffle with South Slav nationalist youths in 1923, however, occurred in the Slovenian town of Ptuj. There, German MP Franz Schauer was wounded, having been hit in the head by a large stone hurled from an ORJUNA mob after a German concert, which ORJUNA suspected of being a political rally.<sup>387</sup> Schauer recovered, but the relative insecurity of the German politicians was self-evident.

Virtually every year seemed to yield new clashes between South Slavs and Germans. In May 1924, for example, Swabians and some recent South Slav immigrants to Vojvodina clashed over land in the village of Lazarfeld.<sup>388</sup> In the aforementioned repressive atmosphere of the 1925 elections, PdD campaigners were on several occasions prevented from holding campaign rallies or even entering towns.

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<sup>384</sup> ORJUNA's main goal was the maintenance of the unitarist Yugoslav state. As such, it also clashed with Croatian nationalists and Communists.

<sup>385</sup> At that time, ORJUNA was known as the Yugoslav Progressive Nationalist Youth ("Jugoslavenska napredna nacionalistička omladina".)

<sup>386</sup> "Einbruch in die Verwaltung und die Schrifteleitung unseres Blattes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 11 1922.

<sup>387</sup> "Abgeordneter Franz Schauer schwer verwundet," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 23 1923.

<sup>388</sup> These recent immigrants were the aforementioned "Dobrovoljci", mostly Serbs and Montenegrins who volunteered to fight against Austria-Hungary in the First World War.

The most notable incident of violence during the entire 1920s, however, occurred in the village of Novi Sivac, where a Serb nationalist gang attacked Stefan Kraft and Georg Grassl, wounding both and hospitalizing the former. After his recovery, Kraft took the state to task in the *Skupština* for the failings that made possible harassment and attacks such as had happened at Novi Sivac and elsewhere. Kraft charged that the German minority lived under circumstances that “contradicted the demands of the constitution and international law.” Germans were not in fact citizens of equal rights in Yugoslavia, he claimed. Indeed, the minority did not enjoy the protection of the law, especially in matters connected with the Partei der Deutschen, that is, political matters. Such a situation, Kraft explained, was intolerable.<sup>389</sup> The Yugoslavs, it seemed, were not going to show the Germans the protections they had themselves demanded under the vanquished Habsburg Monarchy.

The position of the PdD throughout the 1925 parliament remained precarious. The conflict between Serb parties, the defiant attitude of the Croats, and the general fracturing of political life along ethnic lines dominated by charismatic leadership produced a parliament that was riven by division and never truly stable. Under such conditions, the PdD cautiously entered talks for cooperation with the governments led by Velimir Vukićević, to whom Kraft submitted a memorandum outlining the concerns of the PdD in August 1927. It included the following demands:

1. The return of the confiscated property of German associations, especially in Slovenia;
2. the return of certain confiscated church lands;
3. a fundamental understanding about the return of nationalized private schools and the granting of cultural autonomy;
4. compensation for damages caused by Yugoslavia’s agrarian reform;
5. the holding of

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<sup>389</sup> "Die Verbrechen am deutschen Volke in Suedslawien vor der Skupština: Die Faelle von Lazarfeld, Martinsfeld, Henfeld, und Siwatz - Vernichtende Kritik der Rechtszustaende im Staate - Schwere Anklage des deutschen Klubobmanns Dr. Stephan Kraft," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 2 1926.

municipal elections in Vojvodina; 6. complete equal rights and actual equality in economic and social life; 7. political representation corresponding to the number of the German population in the country, that is, ten to eleven members of parliament; 8. the gradual hiring of aspiring German civil servants into state employment.<sup>390</sup>

As before, the issues that continued to preoccupy the Germans were not only cultural ones, such as education, but also reached deep into the economic, legal, and material realms. After years of parliamentarism, Germans' needs and aspirations remained unfilled.

The parliament produced by the elections on September 11, 1927 was even more turbulent than its two predecessors, culminating in the shooting of Stjepan Radić on the floor of the *Skupština* on June 20, 1928 and the King's introduction of royal dictatorship on January 6 of the following year. The 1927 parliament was also defined by the remarkable and unusual reconciliation of Stjepan Radić and Svetozar Pribičević, who after years of personal enmity and political denunciation, allied against the principal Serbian Radicals and thereby managed to obstruct much of the business of the Yugoslav parliament. In the chaos following the shooting of Radić, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes also received its first and only prime minister who was not a Serb, Msgr. Anton Korošec of the clerical Slovene People's Party. In 1927, the PdD again received more votes than ever but won only six mandates. That is, two less than in 1923. As usual, the German parliamentary club was led by the ubiquitous Stefan Kraft. Kraft also headed the party list in upper Slavonia, where the party had again failed to win but nevertheless earned more votes than in the previous election.

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<sup>390</sup> Plautz. 63-64. For the exact and complete text of the *Denkschrift*, see "Die politischen Forderungen der Partei der Detuschen: Der Inhalt der an Ministerpraesident Vukicevic gerichteten Denkschrift. Wofuer jeder Deutsche kaempft," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 21 1927.

As the situation deteriorated in the second half of 1928, the PdD held a major meeting of its leadership in Novi Sad on November 18, which was attended by all six German MPs and 1000 representatives from 110 communities, some as far away as Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The tone of the meeting and the resolution it produced was one of bitterness and disappointment, reflecting deep disillusionment with the state and parliament. "Experience has shown us," the party's mouthpiece declared, "that we can expect nothing or not much in this respect from the state, whose loyal citizens we are and wish to remain. The time of hopes and illusions is over for us." The only hope on the road ahead lay in "self-help" and the sort of cultural autonomy enjoyed by the Transylvanian Saxons, *Deutsches Volksblatt* declared.<sup>391</sup> This Novi Sad meeting yielded a resolution which gave formal form to the Germans' sense of bitter disappointment. Stefan Kraft expressed his own great frustration at the meeting, observing that the Germans were in their tenth year of denial of rights and emphasizing that all their complaints, strategies and tactics had been in vain.<sup>392</sup>

#### *Croatian and Serbian Parties Court the Swabians*

The South Slav parties did not regard the German voters as an automatic constituency for the PdD and actively courted them. Swabians in ethnically mixed areas endured a particularly difficult situation. On the one hand Yugoslav (Serbian) authorities regarded the cultural and political aspirations of the Germans with great suspicion, since the Germans in these regions mostly voted for the HSS. On the other

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<sup>391</sup> "Freie Bahn fuer kulturelle Selbsthilfe!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, November 20 1928.

<sup>392</sup> Stephan Kraft, "Die Rede des Abgeordneten Dr. Kraft " *Deutsches Volksblatt*, November 20 1928.

hand, the Croats suspected the PdD of “sailing in Great Serbian waters,” that is being inclined out of opportunism to support the Serbian agenda.<sup>393</sup> Thus, the Swabians were simultaneously desired and distrusted from all sides.

The matter of South Slav political parties was also of concern to the PdD and the German activists. As we have seen, some Germans had long believed that a German political party could only be superfluous or so small and powerless that it made more sense to participate in the South Slav political parties. Naturally, the South Slav parties agreed and courted this potential electorate, often making generous promises, which usually went unfulfilled. In Vojvodina, the Swabian leaders were particularly concerned about the attraction of the Radicals and Independent Democrats. In Croatia and Slavonia, where the PdD long lacked much party infrastructure, Radić’s HSS was the greater concern. As we have seen, many Swabians in Croatia-Slavonia had largely assimilated or were only vaguely nationally conscious. (It did not help that Croatian authorities long denied the Kulturbund the right to operate on its territory, thus permitting German national consciousness to further erode.) Naturally, such people were inclined to vote as their Croatian neighbors did, especially in lieu of a realistic German alternative.<sup>394</sup>

As for the Swabian leadership and the PdD, on one hand they welcomed the occasional kind utterance about Yugoslavia’s Germans by Stjepan Radić. On the other hand, they clearly recognized the HSS as a natural and able competitor. The HSS hoped to lure Swabians into its groups and associations so as to cultivate them as voters. For several years, the HSS even produced a German language newspaper

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<sup>393</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 34E.

<sup>394</sup> As late as the mid-1930s, Branimir Altgayer and his colleagues would bemoan the Slavonian Germans’ susceptibility to Croatization and their inclination to vote for the HSS.

called *Freies Heim*, which was widely circulated and aimed at the Swabian peasantry and self-described as the “German Organ of the Croatian Republican Peasant Party.” Suzana Leček cites Slovenian historian Dušan Biber’s study to assert that *Freies Heim* was among the most widely distributed newspapers among Germans in Croatia.<sup>395</sup> The newspaper’s formal publisher was Vladko Maček, a leading HSS politician, and the managing editor was Rudolf Herceg, then-editor of the party’s principle organ *Slobodan Dom*. The newspaper boasted a long list of contributors, but the majority of articles were penned by the indefatigable Stjepan (later “Stefan”) Radić and included such titles as “The German People in the Battle for its Existence” (“Das deutsche Volk im Kampf ums Dasein”), “Why is Stefan Radić Considered Teacher and Leader of the Croatian People?” (“Wonach gilt Stefan Radić als Lehrer und Fuehrer des kroatischen Volkes?”), “The Peasant Party and the Non-Slavic Nationalities” (“Die Bauern Partei und die nichtslawischen Nationalitaeten”), and “Peasant State and Peasant Government as the Savior of the Balkans and the Danube Region” (“Bauernstaat u. Bauernregierung als Rettung des Balkans und des Donaugebietes”). A great deal of content was additionally devoted to explaining the ideology of the HSS. In many ways, *Freies Heim* resembled its sister publication *Slobodan Dom*, but it did find German collaborators (usually anonymous), whose contributions tended to highlight issues of importance to the Germans. Gradually *Freies Heim* took on its own identity. That is, it was not merely a German translation

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<sup>395</sup> For more, see Suzana Leček, "'Freies Heim' – Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka i Folksdojčeri," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch* 8, no. 1 (2002).

of *Slobodan Dom*, but rather was consciously adapted to appeal to Germans.<sup>396</sup> In any event, by stressing the marginalization of non-Serbs under the chauvinistic, unitary Serbian regime, the HSS could appeal to the Swabians as a fellow beleaguered people. As a peasant party, the HSS could additionally appeal to the mostly rural Swabians on the basis of class.



When the PdD sought to become active in Croatia, it faced many difficult obstacles. As we have seen, the first local chapter of the PdD was actually founded on January 29, 1922 in Ruma. The party struggled in Srijem, however, facing not only competition from local Serbs but also from the HSS, which cleverly included a handful of Germans on its own party lists. Lacking resources, the PdD did not run a list of candidates in Croatia-Slavonia until 1925, as we have seen, and it was not until 1927 that the party finally would establish a local chapter in Slavonia's principal city, Osijek.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid. 206. For more on Swabians and the HSS, see Suzana Leček, "Folksdojčeri i Hrvatska (republikanska) seljačka stranka," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VGD Jahrbuch* 9, no. 1 (2003).



As previously discussed, the national identity of Osijek had long been a bone of contention between the nascent German movement and the Croatian national movement, with the latter plainly ascendant in Osijek. Although much of the population of Osijek was of German origin, the Croatian national movement dominated political life there and many Germans had shown themselves inclined toward assimilation. The region's German national activists declared their intention to reverse this trend before the First World War and their hopes were no different in 1927 when the party competed in that year's municipal elections.

Despite facing extreme competition from the HSS, the PdD founded its local chapter in Osijek in 1927 with high hopes. The challenges ahead for the organization were evident, however. At its first PdD meeting, the local chapter chairman lamented that he had nearly lost hope for future of Germandom in the city when he read in the newspaper of the plans for the PdD. The PdD held an early rally in Osijek in September 1927 which drew approximately 400 attendees. Speakers bemoaned the decline of Germandom in Croatia and Vojvodina and emphasized the need for a German party to defend German interests. Grassl expressed his shock to have recently received a German letter written partly in *Cyrillic*<sup>397</sup> and Stefan Kraft expressed his feelings on assimilation in the highly Croatized city by invoking the Serbo-Croatian saying "Gori je poturica od Turcina" ("The [Turkified] apostate is worse than the Turk") and "Spolje ljubi I dudje postuj" ("Love one's own and beware things

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<sup>397</sup> "Die erste deutsche Waehlerversammlung in Osijek," *Der Volksbote*, September 4 1927.

foreign”).<sup>398</sup> The irony that the Croatian language sayings were the most suitable vehicle to stress the importance of German identity apparently went unnoticed.

Osijek lay in the Virovitica electoral district, so the Osijek visit was very much a campaign rally for Stefan Kraft, who headed the party list there in 1927. The PdD's local voice in Osijek, *Der Volksbote*, instructed readers specifically how to vote.<sup>399</sup> *Der Volksbote* urgently explained that it was the eleventh hour for Germans in Slavonia qua Germans and that the end was drawing near. Did the Germans not want to halt their calamitous decline once and for all? Did they not want to live on as Germans who, despite insufficient regard for their mother tongue in the past centuries, nevertheless retained a connection to the great currents of German cultural life and progress? “Do we want to disappear without a trace into the *Volksgemische* of our country due only to our own dilatoriness?” Imagine the disappointment of the colonist ancestors to discover that their grandchildren had so neglected their language and customs that they no could longer understand them! To avoid such a future, the newspaper urged, it was time for Germans to get off their hands, stand up and take part in the German movement themselves.<sup>400</sup>

The PdD did earn considerably more votes in the September 11, 1927 election than it had in the previous parliamentary round in the Virovitica electoral district, but its 1601 votes were nevertheless insufficient to carry the day.<sup>401</sup> The party also ran a candidate list headed by Ferdinand Gasteiger in the November 6, 1927 municipal

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<sup>398</sup> “Der Renegat ist aegerer als der Tuerke” and “Liebe das deine und achte das Fremde”. “Die Waehlerversammlung in Esseke,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 2 1927.

<sup>399</sup> “Die deutsche Urne ist auf allen Wahlplaetzen im ganzen Wahlkreis Virovitica-Osijek die 9,” *Der Volksbote*, September 8 1927.

<sup>400</sup> “Wofuer jeder Deutscher kaempft: ein Mahnwort in der zwoelften Stunde,” *Der Volksbote*, August 28 1927.

<sup>401</sup> In 1925, the PdD obtained 880 votes in the Virovitica Wahlkreis. “Sechs deutsche Mandate,” *Der Volksbote*, September 18 1927.

elections but this similarly did poorly.<sup>402</sup> Thus, although the activists had planted an institutional seed, the German movement in Osijek remained in its infancy relative to other parts of the Germans' settlement area at the end of the Yugoslav Kingdom's first decade. As we shall see in the following chapters, however, other figures would emerge in the 1930s and give new impetus to the German movement in Croatia-Slavonia.

*The Unintended Consequences of Nationalizing Nationalism in the Yugoslav Kingdom*

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Kulturbund was effectively banned from meaningful activity from 1924 until 1927. Although the PdD scored many successes during the 1920s, it was banned with all other nationally based political parties in 1929. Throughout the decade, German politicians and activists were menaced by bands of nationalist Serbs, whose transgressions were broadcast throughout the Swabian community in the German press. From a variety of local identities in Srijem, Batschka, Baranja, and Banat, the men behind DVAG endeavored to forge an imagined community of Yugoslav Germans based upon the German ethnicity, language, and culture as well as the historic memories of Swabian colonization. The PdD sought to mobilize that community and represent it in the *Skupština* but were frequently ignored and even attacked on occasion for their efforts. All in all, these incidents of nationalizing nationalism contributed mightily to the construction of a common German consciousness, assisted by the soft oppression and

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<sup>402</sup> "Nach der Osijeker Gemeindewahlen ", *Der Volksbote*, November 13 1927.

hard discrimination to which Germans were all too often subjected in Yugoslavia. In short, the pressures of the South Slav state were crystallizing a Swabian variety of minority nationalism.

Following yet another disappointing setback in the PdD's campaign for German schooling in Slovenia and the main area of German settlement, Grassl remarked that "the gravity of the anti-German schooling decision brought the German leadership together and revealed a deep solidarity among Yugoslavia's Germans from Slovenia to Banat."<sup>403</sup> Grassl's estimation of the degree to which a common German identity or consciousness across the entire German settlement area had indeed crystallized was surely an exaggeration. Many ethnic Germans remained nationally unconscious or were simply uninterested in 1928. Nevertheless, his general thesis that the political restriction and exclusion of the German community in the 1920s at the hands of Yugoslav authorities had heightened national consciousness and increased German susceptibility to a nation-based viewpoint is surely correct. Ironically, the very Yugoslav attempts to smother German national identity and assimilate German children in the schools had had the opposite effect, offending German sensibilities. Such an atmosphere created an open market for the Swabian activists' appealing political message.

One might liken the above process to a vicious circle whose every contradictory turn only served to undermine the intent of the Yugoslav authorities. Elites in the interwar successor states did all they could to homogenize their populations, that is, to nationalize and assimilate ethnic minorities. As elsewhere in postwar eastern Europe, the authorities, invoking the right of self-determination for

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<sup>403</sup> Georg Grassl, "Deutsche Gemeinbuergerschaft," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, November 18 1928.

the majority peoples, regarded the isolated minorities in their nation-states as a potential threat to their new sovereignty. This led to a vicious circle whereby the majority peoples sought to assimilate or marginalize the minorities, often through denial of cultural or political rights. Their efforts achieved only the opposite of their intent, however, for the provoked minorities consolidated themselves and sought, wherever possible, support from the Germans in Germany and Austria.<sup>404</sup> This consolidation and search for assistance from Germany proper in turn confirmed the worst fears of the majority peoples and “‘justified’ not only their mistrust but also further sanctions against ‘disloyal’ minorities.”<sup>405</sup> Moreover, the emergence of the national principle had transformed the nature of conflicts between larger and smaller peoples or even between entire civilizations. Such conflicts now took on a new quality, with ethnic origin and native tongue assuming a novel and ideological significance. Commenting on this process, German historian Holm Sundhausen observes that the result, was a “*Sprachen- und Kulturkampf*”, a new battle of language and culture.<sup>406</sup>

The Swabians’ embrace of Germandom was a gradual process that proceeded in fits and starts, often hindered by apathy and meeting hostility from among South Slavs, Magyars, and even the Swabian populace itself. The German movement would suffer many setbacks, but ultimately the determination of the Swabian activists, the inspiration of other nationalisms, and the shock of the First World War set the Swabians on a historically unprecedented course toward embracing modern German

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<sup>404</sup> Rogers Brubaker frames this problem in theoretical terms with his analysis of a triadic nexus consisting of three interlocking fields of homeland, minority, and nationalizing nationalisms.

<sup>405</sup> Sundhausen, "Die Deutschen in Jugoslawien." 54.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

national identity. The government's provocative challenges to Swabian efforts, the hostility of Yugoslav nationalists, and increasing assistance from Volkstumarbeit organizations in Germany also contributed to the forging of a self-sustaining German national movement, which was both cooperative with the state yet also unapologetically assertive.

Easter was a particularly potent symbol for all nationally conscious Swabians throughout the interwar period. As a symbol of rebirth, renewal, and new life, it was frequently employed both by the early Swabian activists and their later challengers in the *Erneuerungsbewegung* after 1933.<sup>407</sup> Easter, and the often used associated concept of “resurrection” seemed a tailor-made symbol for a Swabian leadership that cast itself as reviving a national community, which had allegedly lapsed into a deep slumber. Easter celebrations added a conveniently festive dimension to this happy symbiosis of the nation's revival and Jesus' resurrection, which also offered the symbolism of purity, hope and the celebration of youth.<sup>408</sup> Naturally, the Swabian activists were quick to draw attention to the special connection between Easter and their national movement in their mouthpiece *Deutsches Volksblatt* already in 1921.

The Easter celebration has a very special meaning for us Swabians. For the third time since the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy it is Easter and we may, indeed we must, lay certain questions of conscience before us: whether we have proven worthy of the hopes of resurrection, which filled the hearts of our best men in the fateful hours of the [Habsburg] collapse. We were granted the chance to awaken ourselves to [national] consciousness after a two hundred year sleep. Such a historical hour as would not reoccur for hundreds of years [the First World War and its denouement], called a powerful warning to us and we can gladly say that our Swabian Volk did not fail

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<sup>407</sup> Indeed, the very name of the “Renewal Movement” seemed to evoke the resurrection of Christ.

<sup>408</sup> This fact would also not be lost on the *Erneuerungsbewegung*.

to hear the voice of fate . . . . We have risen, we have rubbed the deep sleep out of our eyes.<sup>409</sup>

By the late 1920s, the Swabian activists had truly achieved a great deal and their claims of a “national resurrection” grew increasingly credible. Based upon the lessons learned and experience gained learned in Austria-Hungary, the nascent Swabian leadership had established a nationalist press in DVAG, an active German cultural association in the Kulturbund, and finally a political party the Partei der Deutschen. Yet much of the boasting about the “reawakened” Volk reflected wishful thinking, and a sizable proportion of Swabians (especially in Croatia-Slavonia) would remain indifferent to Germandom into the 1930s and beyond. Still, by capitalizing on the revolutionary events of the First World War and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, the small group of tireless Swabian activists had established the institutions that would contribute mightily to crystallizing German nationhood and forging a broad national movement where there had been virtually none before. In the next chapter, we turn to the content of that nationhood, noting that the identity that crystallized in the Yugoslav Kingdom was both nationally German and locally Swabian.

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<sup>409</sup> "Auferstehung!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 27 1921.

## Chapter 5: Minority Nationalism and Swabian Cultural and Protestant Identity

As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, the ethnic German leadership that emerged in the Yugoslav Kingdom faced not only the task of building institutions and providing political leadership, they also had to forge and shape the very German community that those institutions were meant to represent. That is, the Swabian activists faced the formidable challenge of forging group identity where there was none before and doing so on the basis of German national consciousness, which many Swabians still found remote or even bewildering. This chapter will examine in greater detail the content of that Swabian identity and the various vehicles that the German activists used to highlight or impart it to the Swabian milieu, which frequently consisted of peasants in isolated settlements. In the process, we will explore how the Swabian activists located their enterprise in the nineteenth century tradition of “national awakening” and directed their principle cultural institutions toward its ends. We will furthermore examine the role of history, language, song, dress, and public commemoration in the overall enterprise of shaping and imparting a common identity as national. Such public commemorations were particularly important, for they served as intersections between the German national movement’s institutions and the individual lives and regions whose history and future they claimed to represent. Ultimately, it was this nationally German and locally Swabian identity that formed the foundation upon which the Swabians’ interwar minority nationalism, their minority nationalist stance viz. the Yugoslav nationalizing state, would be based. Finally we conclude with a discussion of the emergence of the German Evangelical



Church as the sort of national incubator which Anthony Smith discusses in his treatment of the importance of organized religion for ethnic group coalescence and endurance.

*German Activists as “National Awakeners”*

For purposes of clarity, this work has referred to the Yugoslav Germans’ postwar leadership as “activists”, but this is not the term that they applied to themselves. Rather, these men called themselves “awakeners” and viewed themselves as engaged in the classic nineteenth century European project of “national awakening.” In fact, theirs was a kind of missionary work that understood itself as rousing the vast body of Swabians from a deep slumber. In certain cases (such as Slavonia) the Swabian activists saw themselves as working to “win back” wayward Germans who had partly or mostly defected to the ways of Magyardom or Croatdom. Theirs was also an educational mission and the Swabian activists devoted hours of labor and pages of print to constructing and imparting a comprehensive identity that was German national but also proudly Swabian.

The activists’ methods in the struggle to impart German consciousness to their co-ethnics in Yugoslavia would appear remarkably innocuous in a non-national age. Through the new institutions discussed in the previous chapters, they sought to craft and impart a new national and cultural identity based on history and tradition. Having asserted the basis of collective identity and action to be the nation, not confession, the activists then proceeded not to somehow nationally “revive” the Swabian populace but rather “teach Germany to the Germans” and construct for them an identity based on their own colonist past. It was the intention of the activists that their co-ethnics

would be proudly Swabian and nationally German. To do this, they would use a plethora of German publications, rallies and festivals, cultural, youth, and gymnastics organizations, and Swabian literature and history. They additionally cooperated with such Germany-based Volkstumarbeit organizations as the Deutsches Ausland-Institut and the Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland. In their work, new and deeper connections were forged with Weimar Germany and its Volkstumarbeit organizations than had ever existed before.

The Swabian activists were hardly reticent about the nature of their work, nor did they shy from openly lamenting the weak national consciousness of Germandom in the Yugoslav Kingdom. Despite the fact that their rhetoric throughout the 1920s was marked by confidence, the German activists regularly commented on the deplorable condition of the country's Swabians, as we have seen. This manifested itself in attention to the Croatian and Magyar assimilation that had occurred under the old regime, but also in frustration with German indifference in the country. As usual, the principle forum for their outrage was *Deutsches Volksblatt*, which regularly observed that German consciousness in some quarters was very weak indeed but also took solace in "the root of our Germandom, our upright, industrious, and stalwart peasantry," which had "remained German at its core, as German as only a German could ever be."<sup>410</sup> Here *Deutsches Volksblatt* revealed a central aspect of the the German/Swabian identity the activists sought to cultivate: the idea of a pure, industrious, virtuous and simple German peasantry, which despite two turbulent centuries of cultural oppression and corruption through assimilation, nevertheless remained the healthy seed from which the unblemished German *Volk* might again

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<sup>410</sup> "Ein offenes Wort," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 20 1920.

blossom in the Yugoslav Kingdom. The peasantry, being by far the most numerous element among the Swabians, was also the basis upon which the Swabian activists would build their fabled *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The vocabulary the Swabian activists used reflected the revolutionary transformations being experienced by the German populace. It was a time of “national rebirth,”<sup>411</sup> or “the national rebirth of our Swabian *Volk*.”<sup>412</sup> The Germans were experiencing a reawakening that was nothing less than a kind of “resurrection” and, as we have seen, was frequently linked with Easter in the activists’ public discourse and publications.<sup>413</sup> The awakening - actually the “becoming a people of Swabiandom” or “*Volkswerdung des Schwabentums*” - would not be easy, however, and was an ongoing process.<sup>414</sup>

Just as the Swabian activists viewed themselves as “awakeners” so did their institutions understand their own missions. *Deutsches Volksblatt* proudly acknowledged that it engaged in nationally-oriented educational work (“*Aufklaerungs- und Erziehungsarbeit*.”) The newspaper considered itself “the first attempt [in two centuries] to bring together all the living strengths of our [Swabian/German] nationhood and put them strictly at the service of the good of the community.”<sup>415</sup> Indeed, it called itself “one of the most important factors in our national movement [which had] worked and struggled since its founding as the awakener of German self-awareness and as proclaimer of the [German] feeling of

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<sup>411</sup> "Ein Wort an unsere Jugend," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 6 1921.

<sup>412</sup> "500," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 9 1921.

<sup>413</sup> "Auferstehung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 1 1923.

<sup>414</sup> "Materielle und geistige Kultur," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 29 1927.

<sup>415</sup> "Ein Jahr."

national belonging” in Yugoslavia.<sup>416</sup> Likewise, the Kulturbund regarded its mission as not merely preserving German culture but positively developing and spreading it. In their common national endeavor, these and other Swabian institutions purposely reinforced one another. On the occasion of the 1928 opening of a new, purpose-built building to house *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Franz Perz claimed bluntly that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the founders of the German publishing house D.V.A.G. and the newspaper were the inspirers and awakers of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* in the country.<sup>417</sup>

#### “National Awakening” in Action

The Swabians’ national activism consisted of several parallel currents. Most fundamentally, the Swabian activists were creating a cultural archetype based upon idealized notions of Germandom spiked with history and traditions peculiar to the Swabian settlements in the Danube region. This meant, as will be discussed, the celebration of the virtues, accomplishments, and memory of the settler ancestors, and would reach its apogee in the 1930s, when many Swabian towns celebrated important settlement anniversaries. The Swabian activists additionally sought to create their “imagined community,” to invoke Benedict Anderson’s famous phrase, by spreading the printed German word. As we have seen, DVAG promptly opened a bookstore and published *Deutsches Volksblatt*, which regularly offered book reviews and

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<sup>416</sup> "Die Aufgabe des 'Deutschen Volksblattes'."

<sup>417</sup> "Die feierliche Eroeffnung des neuen Heimes des 'Deutschen Volksblattes'," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 30 1928. In its coverage of the event, not only was *Deutsches Volksblatt* quite assertive of the activist role played by its founders but it also highlighted the “organic connection” between DVAG and the Kulturbund, which derived in no small part from the fact that *Deutsches Volksblatt* editor-in-chief Georg Grassl was also the man who had carried out the founding and organizational work of the Kulturbund. Franz Perz, "Die Druckerei und Verlags A.G.," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 29 1928.

recommended particular books to its readers. The Kulturbund opened German libraries and reading rooms through its many local chapters and also encouraged the expansion of nationally-based, German associational life.<sup>418</sup>

The Swabians activists feared their people had grown distant from their national roots. To correct this, the activists, promoted works of history, literature, painting and even sculpture. In addition to the widely circulated works of the revered Banat author Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn, the Swabian activists also promoted historical works such as Leo Hoffmann's *Schwaebische Heimatbildermappe*, which depicted key scenes in Swabian history, from the liberation of the Danubian *Heimat* from the Ottomans to the early national activism of Swabian *Vorkaempfer* Reinhold Heegn in Banat.<sup>419</sup> Similarly, Swabians were encouraged to read Raimund Friedrich Kaindl's history of the *Karpathendeutsche*, and the Kulturbund promoted *Die Donauschwaben in Suedslawien und Rumaenien*, a history of Swabian settlement by Stuttgart professor Herman Ruediger.<sup>420</sup> There were calls to build a Swabian museum, which was simultaneously intended to be educational and also serve as a *Volksdenkmal*, a monument to the settler ancestors and their descendants.<sup>421</sup> Many local museums were established in towns and villages to celebrate local or regional history. Additionally, trade and art exhibitions were organized, showcasing Swabian industry as well as the artwork of local Swabian painters such as Oskar Sommerfeld, Stefan Jaeger and others. Despite their relatively limited resources, the handful of

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<sup>418</sup> The Kulturbund also recommended its local chapters purchase certain identity-building volumes for their collections. For an example of historical texts on the Swabians the Kulturbund recommended, see "Banater Bucherei," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 1 1922.

<sup>419</sup> "Schwaebische Heimatbildermappe," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 11 1929.

<sup>420</sup> "Die Donauschwaben," *Kalender des Schwabisch-deutschen Kulturbundes 1924* 4, no. 1 (1923).

<sup>421</sup> Hans Fischbeck, "Baut ein schwaebisches Museum!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 7 1928.

Swabian activists was able to find collaborators and produce a comprehensive program of historical commemoration, linguistic celebration, and cultural inspiration.<sup>422</sup> In the campaign to shape and impart identity, however, no organization was so central as the Kulturbund.

*The Kulturbund as an Agent of “National Awakening”*

“The national reawakening of our local German population began in a meaningful and promising manner with the establishment of the Kultubund,” intoned *Deutsches Volksblatt* in 1921.<sup>423</sup> As we saw in Chapter Three, the Kulturbund regarded itself as far more than a mere cultural organization. On the contrary, the organization consciously viewed itself as having a mission to “awaken” the Swabians from their “national slumber” and create a nation-based group consciousness that transcended the bounds of village, region, and confession. The Kulturbund was Yugoslavia’s first statewide German organization and, in spite of its name, aspired to include the Germans of Slovenia as well as the Swabians in Slavonia and Vojvodina. As such, the very existence of the Kulturbund was significant for German community-building in the Yugoslav kingdom and the organization worked hard over the course of the interwar period to expand both its network of local chapters and its membership rolls to the maximum extent. As the sponsor of festivals, concerts,

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<sup>422</sup> As we have seen, the German activists of Yugoslavia regularly obtained cultural and even financial assistance from Reich-based Volkstumarbeit organizations. Additionally, they were able to draw upon well established practices of “national awakening” –mythology invention, literary cultivation, social outreach, popular vernacular mobilization, etc.- from the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the amount of local cultural output they themselves produced or encouraged was truly impressive, given their isolation, history, and resources.

<sup>423</sup> "Kulturbund und Lehrerschaft," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 8 1921.

exhibitions, and much more, the Kulturbund would be the driving force behind the Swabians' national "awakening" as well as its principle arena.

The Kulturbund produced an annual *Kulturbund Kalender*. Thoughtful, colorful and widely distributed, the *Kulturbund Kalender* combined the functions of a farmer's almanac with the organization's mission of identity building and group coalescence.. Similar almanacs from Germany and Austria had previously been available in the region, but the *Kulturbund Kalender* would be the first such publication specifically by and for the Germans of the Yugoslav Kingdom. It spoke directly to the Swabians and thus represented an important milestone by itself. Its pages contained lists of religious and state holidays, information on the royal family, Swabian poetry and literature, and articles on Swabian history. It also sought to keep readers up to date on the state of the Kulturbund, including the number of local chapters and where to find them. Johann Keks, who would be the Kulturbund's chairman after 1927, edited the *Kulturbund Kalender* for many years. Other leading Swabians contributed articles to the almanac. Judging by its annual circulation of 40,000, this Swabian almanac was a smashing success.<sup>424</sup>

The *Kulturbund Kalender* promptly addressed the daunting task of forging group consciousness in its first issue in 1920.<sup>425</sup> In its introductory article, the almanac acknowledged the great changes at the end of the First World War and addressed the new German community the *denouement* had abruptly created. The almanac stressed the common fate of the Germans in the new country and asserted the importance of national unity. Invoking the motto of the Kulturbund, it observed that

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<sup>424</sup> "Der 'Volkskalender' versandbereit!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 9 1924.

<sup>425</sup> This first Kulturbund Kalender was actually for the year 1921, but it was written and published during 1920.

“We must be faithful to our nation, if we want to do justice to our historical mission, if we want to claim our mother tongue and the inheritance of our ancestors. We want to be loyal to the state, without coercion and of our own accord, because the flourishing and advancement of the state also means the prospering and advancement of our German nationality (*Volkstum*).”

First, however, there was much group identity construction to be done. As the *Kulturbund Kalender* observed, “the almost 750,000 Germans of Yugoslavia<sup>426</sup> were not only distributed in different regions in the [Habsburg] Monarchy, they were not only of different German regional and cultural strains (*Stammeszugehoerigkeit*), they had also experienced different cultural development and had not taken the same path of historical development.” Before the hard work of securing German rights in Yugoslav Kingdom could begin, the almanac continued, the Germans of the kingdom’s disparate parts had to form a proper community.<sup>427</sup>

The *Kulturbund Kalender*’s covers were powerful and symbolic, being intended to communicate the Kulturbund’s message of national identity even to the illiterate. Their artwork from 1922 to 1924 was particularly evocative, depicting an idyllic scene whose message was unmistakable. Framed by arching oak trees from whose branches dangle acorns, a grandfatherly figure sits in a field with a young boy. Clad in Swabian national costume (*Volkstracht*) and holding the child in his left arm, the man points skyward with his right. The boy’s gaze follows the man’s outstretched hand upward to where the sun shines brilliantly, its illuminating rays emanating from

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<sup>426</sup> This (highly optimistic) Kulturbund estimate of 750,000 Germans in Yugoslavia predated the 1921 Yugoslav census.

<sup>427</sup> “Before we can hope for the breakthrough success of our tremendous labor, we must first get to know one another, we must ourselves acquire an image of our settlement area and of our diverse cultural, economic and social situation.” “Zum Geleite.”



the words “*Muttersprache, Heimat, Vaeterglaube.*” This simple Kulturbund slogan embodied the organization’s hopes and values: love of the German language, devotion to Heimat (in Yugoslavia but also broadly understood to include Germany, the *Urheimat*), and faith in the settler ancestors, whose virtues and struggle were to serve as guiding inspiration for their German descendents in the interwar Yugoslav Kingdom.

Following the 1924 dissolution of the Kulturbund, the *Kulturbund Kalender* was repackaged as the *Deutscher Volkskalender*, which hardly sought to hide the connection.<sup>428</sup> In essence, the “new” almanac remained largely unchanged, devoting attention to German cultural icons such as Schiller and Goethe, encouraging Swabians to treasure their Swabian dialect, and reminding them to preserve their German folk costume. In one 1926 article, then-Kulturbund leader Ludwig Bauer even urged Swabians to prefer Gothic script to Latin letters, both for traditional purposes and because, in his estimation, the German script was more easily readable than Latin script and was therefore “easier on the eyes.”<sup>429</sup> *Deutscher Volkskalender* also devoted many pages to local historical themes as well as German national ones, such as “the Old German City”, which educated readers about architecture and the urban landscape in Germany.<sup>430</sup> The almanac was also not shy about its close association with the Partei der Deutschen and the Kulturbund, even including an article in 1928 announcing the Kulturbund’s relaunch and authored by its new leader Johann Keks.

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<sup>428</sup> "Der 'Volkskalender' versandbereit!."

<sup>429</sup> Ludwig Bauer, "Deutsche, verwendet unter Euch deutsche Schrift!," *Deutscher Volkskalender fuer das Jahr 1926* 3 (1925).

<sup>430</sup> Bruno Kremling, "Die alte deutsche Staat," *Deutscher Volkskalender fuer das Jahr 1925* 1 (1924).

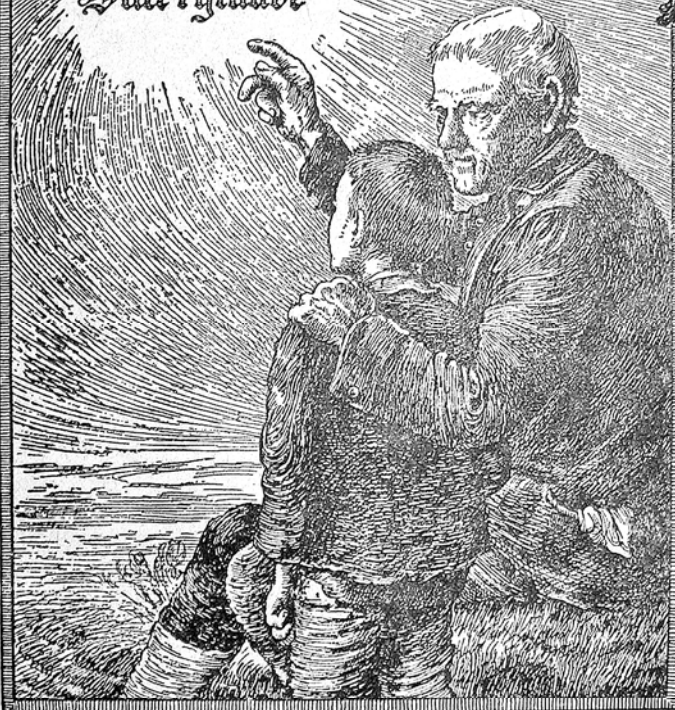
Also like the *Kulturbund Kalender*, *Deutscher Volkskalender* left little room as to its purpose in its evocative cover art. The 1925 almanac's cover depicts a scene dominated by a massive oak tree, whose roots are firmly anchored around the name of the almanac's publisher, the Deutsche Druckerei- und Verlags-A.G. In the landscape behind this, a Swabian farmer ploughs the fertile earth and the church tower of a German village peeks over a gentle hill. Later almanacs would continue this theme of history, labor, and cultivation. Their cover art frequently depicted a German peasant dressed in Swabian folk costume and sowing seeds in a field, again with a German village in the background. *Deutscher Volkskalender*, thus, iconified the noble Swabian peasantry, which it depicted as sowing the seeds of the nation and prosperity in the new *Heimat*. The message was unmistakable: pious and industrious, the colonist ancestors had forged the blooming *Heimat* from the pestilent swamps and pitch forests they had found. Now this same peasantry would form the basis of the revived German nation in Yugoslavia. For the Swabian peasantry, such imagery must have been powerful indeed.

# Kulturbund-Kalender

auf das Jahr

1924

Muttersprache,  
Heimat,  
Väterglaube

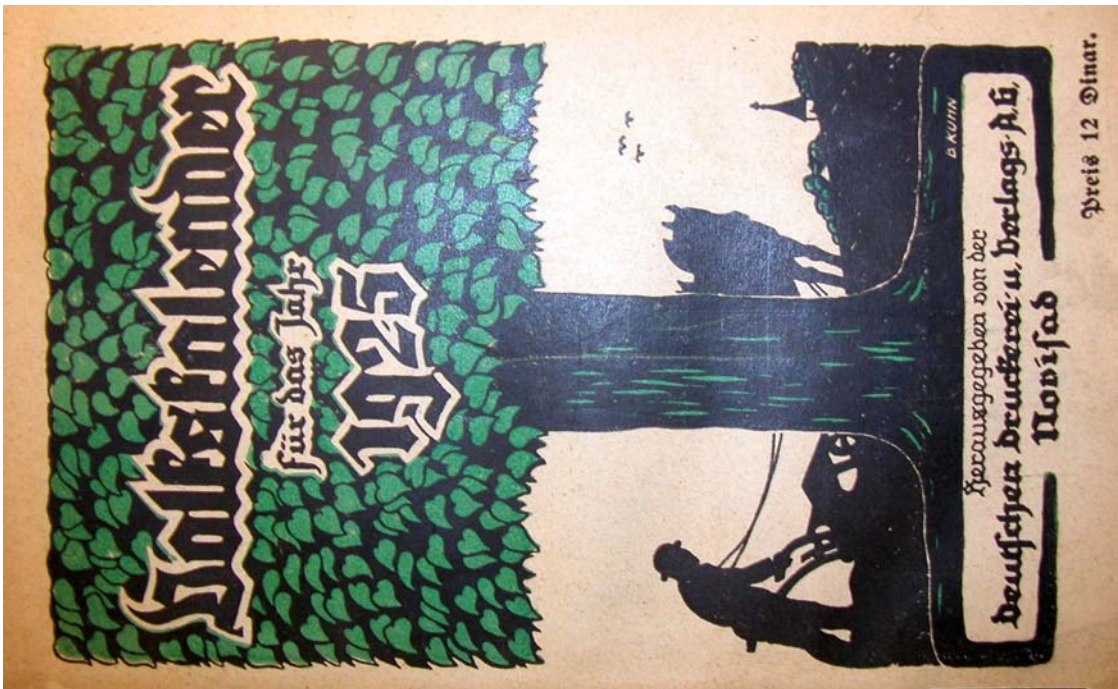


Vierter Jahrgang.

Das Reinerträgnis wird Bundeszwecken  
zugeführt.

Herausgegeben und verlegt vom  
Schwäbisch-deutschen Kulturbund.

Preis 12 Dinar



One cornerstone of the Kulturbund's program to form an imagined community of German speakers in Yugoslavia was its effort to create a local, German intelligentsia of the sort that had been impossible under the conditions of prewar Hungary. To this end, the Kulturbund worked to increase Swabian appreciation of the uncorrupted German language as well as access to the printed German word. Kulturbund General Secretary Grassl proudly announced in the Kulturbund's 1923 almanac that the organization had already set up 42 German libraries containing approximately 7000 volumes and had distributed over 12,000 copies of national literature, particularly targeting youth.<sup>431</sup>

Increased access to German literature was accompanied by the regular celebration of German literary luminaries in the press and daily life. Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn, the Swabian author from Banat, was the object of particular attention throughout the interwar period. His birthday was celebrated and he was mourned on the date of his death. The Kulturbund even made an honorary member of the author of the Swabian colonization saga, *Der Grosse Schwabenzug*, and promoted his work heavily. Later, when a version of that book was produced especially for children, *Deutsches Volksblatt* urged Swabian parents to purchase a copy for their family, observing that Mueller-Guttenbrunn had been called "the Homer of the Suedostschwaben" on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, and that his work contained valuable lessons for German youth.<sup>432</sup>

Promoting German education formed another key element in the Kulturbund's strategy of nation-building. The promotion of education also meant encouraging

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<sup>431</sup> Georg. Grassl, "Unser Kulturbund: Ruckblick und Ausblick," *Kalender des Schwabisch-deutschen Kulturbundes 1923* 3, no. 1 (1922). 45.

<sup>432</sup> "Der grosse Schwabenzug," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 1 1928.



current teachers to embrace the German national consciousness and training future educators to do the same. Most Swabian teachers had of course been trained in prewar Hungary, where they had developed an affinity for Magyar culture which was frequently reflected in their methodology. In the pages of *Deutsches Volksblatt*, the activists complained that most Swabian teachers in Yugoslavia viewed the cultural and educational efforts of the Kulturbund uncomprehendingly or even hostilely owing to their own training in Magyar teacher training institutes.<sup>433</sup> “German teachers,” the newspaper pleaded in 1920, “raise our children to be Germans!” and “awake from your slumber!”<sup>434</sup> Indeed, it was a perennial concern of the Swabian activists that the country lacked sufficient German teachers. Another Swabian worry was that the “German” instructors appointed by the state to teach in German schools and classes later in the decade often were actually Serbs and Croats whose desire and ability to use the German language was frequently limited. Likewise, the Swabian activists were anxious to see a German *Priesterseminar* founded, so as to secure Catholic priests who were both German speaking and nationally German-oriented.<sup>435</sup>

Even during the initial, relatively liberal postwar years, German educators faced the problem of the Swabian students’ frequently poor command of written German. Most such students had hitherto studied in Magyar or Croatian schools, of course. In fact, Georg Grassl observed in 1921 that the majority of the Swabians struggled to even to write a letter in proper German.<sup>436</sup> To remedy this, the Kulturbund hoped to run remedial winter courses and continuing education courses

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<sup>433</sup> "Kulturbund und Lehrerschaft."

<sup>434</sup> "Deutsche Lehrer, erzieht unsere Kinder deutsch!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 20 1920.

<sup>435</sup> "Priesterseminar und Lehrbildungsanstalt," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 22 1921.

<sup>436</sup> "Gruendung der Ortsgruppe Neusatz," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 22 1921.

through its various local chapters, but the organization was forbidden to do so by Yugoslav authorities. Similarly, the government forbade the Kulturbund to open private kindergartens, as envisioned in the organization's statutes.<sup>437</sup> As previously noted, the Kulturbund quickly produced a comprehensive German education program and submitted it to the Yugoslav Ministry of Education with the ultimate goal of achieving German autonomy in education.<sup>438</sup> The government took little notice of this, however, leaving Germans forever anxious about the precarious state of German education in the country. After a brief renaissance in 1919-1920, German schools had been nationalized, stripped of their administrative autonomy, and made "parallel departments" of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian state schools. Even then, German education remained subject to the arbitrary decisions of local authorities until proper educational guidelines were established by the state years later.

Finally, after many years of pleading with the government to fund proper German education, the Swabian activists turned to other solutions in the spirit of self-help. In 1929, the Kulturbund was a principle cofounder of the School Foundation of the Germans of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Schulstiftung der Deutschen des Koenigreiches Jugoslawien*),<sup>439</sup> whose goal was the advancement of German education in the country and which had the right to run private German schools and

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<sup>437</sup> Plautz. 70

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. 70. For the text of the Schulprogramm des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, see Josef Volkmar Senz, *Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben im Koenigreich Jugoslawien* (Munich: Verlag des Südostdeutsches Kulturwerkes, 1969).

<sup>439</sup> The other cofounding organizations were the awkwardly named "League of the Germans of the Yugoslav Kingdom for the League of Nations and International Understanding" (Liga der Deutschen des Koenigreiches Jugoslawien fuer Voelkerbund und Volkerverstaendigung) and the Agricultural Central Loan Office (Landwirtschaftliche Zentraldarlehenskasse reg. Genossenschaft m.b.H.), a Swabian financial institution based in Novi Sad.

other educational institutes in the kingdom.<sup>440</sup> Additionally, the Swabians directed considerable energy and resources toward the establishment of a private German teacher training institute. This *Private Deutsche Lehrbildungsanstalt* was finally approved by authorities in 1930 and opened in October 1931 in Zrenjanin.<sup>441</sup>

### *Tearing Down History, Constructing Identity*

As previously noted, the German population largely consisted of peasants living in isolated settlements, some of which were quite small. Though national consciousness was wanting, Swabians' lives were characterized by what Rogers Brubaker has called "everyday ethnicity," German patterns which shaped, dress, language, ritual, dance, marriage patterns, and even architecture. Moreover, the disparate Swabian settlements shared collective memories of their ancestors' colonization experience. Thus, though they faced a challenge in creating and imparting national identity to their co-ethnics, the Swabian activists had considerable linguistic, cultural and historic reserves upon which to draw.

Ultimately, history and language lay at the root of the identity forged by the Swabian activists. Perhaps surprisingly, however, the history they promoted was only selectively and often negatively the story of the seemingly eternal Habsburg Monarchy. The experience of Hungarian oppression was a regular theme in this version of history and there was little room in the narrative for the glory of the supranational House of Habsburg. The reconquest and cultivation of the lands of

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<sup>440</sup> Die Stiftungsurkunde der Schulstiftung der Deutschen des Koenigreiches Jugoslawien. Plautz. 103. According to G.C. Paikert, the Schulstiftung received regular subsidies from Germany. Paikert. 267.

<sup>441</sup> Plautz. 78-79. The *Lehrbildungsanstalt* moved to Novi Vrbas in September 1933 due to inadequate space in Zrenjanin.



southern Hungary, on the other hand, were sources of deep Swabian pride. The Swabian activists celebrated their colonist ancestors, German folk traditions, songs, national costume, dance and above all language and literature. As such, they sought to cultivate a local identity as well as an awareness of belonging to the great German *Volk* and its *Kulturgemeinschaft*. All Swabians, they stressed, shared common experiences and historical memories irrespective of their region or origins and had similar priorities in education, politics, and culture (language). Moreover, all Swabians similarly felt the heavy hand of South Slavs' suspicion, hostility or indifference in the Yugoslav Kingdom. Finally, the Swabian activists (including Georg Grassl and Johann Keks, the two principle Kulturbund leaders) also emphasized the fundamentally Christian nature of Germandom.<sup>442</sup> In this, however, they carefully avoided the confessional divide between Protestant and Catholic, insisting instead that nationhood should unite the community.

For a group that ordinarily so tailored its message to suit its audience, the Swabian activists displayed little nostalgia for the old order. In a sense, this was surprising, since there had been a general preference among much of the Swabian population to remain part of Hungary.<sup>443</sup> Hungary had seemed eternal and enduring, a sentiment which had long been encouraged by the Magyars themselves. The original Swabian colonists had embraced Hungary as their home and most of their descendants regarded Hungary as their fatherland. To be sure, many Germans did

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<sup>442</sup> This emphasis on the link between Christianity and Germandom was not meant in an exclusionary way. In other words, they made these links in the speeches and newspaper articles to which I refer not so as to openly exclude non-Christians, such as Jews, but rather to head off religious (especially Catholic) objections to or suspicions of the national identity and consciousness they were advocating.

<sup>443</sup> The Germans from Slovenia naturally also had no desire to be separated from the German heartland of Cisleithania.

remain largely *ungarnfreundlich*, or open to Hungary,<sup>444</sup> but the German activists' public stance toward Hungary and the Habsburgs was hostile. They chose to remember the Hungarian past in grim terms, publicly opposing Habsburg restoration, and urging Germany's swift annexation of truncated Austria, which they dismissed as unviable.<sup>445</sup>

The Swabian activists recalled the Hungarian past in their speeches and writing as a time of oppression and denationalization. Absent in their rhetoric was any nostalgia for Habsburg or Hungarian glory. On the contrary, the Swabian activists focused on the Magyarization measures of that state, which had been so burdensome as to make a German national movement there nearly impossible. "The admittedly rather few *volkstreu* men in the Magyar times had infinitely much to endure and suffer," *Deutsches Volksblatt* lamented in 1920. "They were tormented and brutalized, locked up or expelled for the sole reason that they openly asserted themselves as Germans as their natural self-awareness commanded, and dared to warn their coethnics about Magyarization."<sup>446</sup> Far from something to be missed, Hungary was recalled by the Swabian activists as a place of persecution. As for Hungarian glory, the Swabian activists made their position toward the Kingdom of Saint Stephen clear on the occasion of its 925<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when their flagship newspaper printed an article questioning the actual age of Stephen's crown and asked provocatively, "Is Hungarian national sainthood a sham?"<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Wehler. 26.

<sup>445</sup> For such sentiments, *Deutsches Volksblatt* was actually banned at one point in Austria.

<sup>446</sup> A.D., "Gotzendaemmerung der Renegaten I."

<sup>447</sup> "Der Krone des heiligen Stephan," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 20 1926. Such overt hostility to Hungary was no doubt additionally intended to reassure Yugoslav suspicions of potential Swabian irredentism.

*Deutsches Volksblatt* recalled Austria-Hungary very poorly indeed. Austria-Hungary was the “last leftover” of the state model of the middle ages, held together only through its “dynasty and the power of the bayonette.”<sup>448</sup> It was an archaic and outmoded state form, they sneered. Similarly, the activists expressed no love in their mouthpiece for the House of Habsburg, whose cosmopolitanism had been offensive to many nationalists. The activists clearly opposed a Habsburg restoration and described Karl von Habsburg’s efforts to this end in Hungary as a “comedy” provocative to all the successor states.<sup>449</sup> Upon Karl’s death, the newspaper wrote,

It was disastrous folly to believe that the Habsburg Monarchy could ever be resurrected, since that state, composed as it was out of so many different national elements, no longer suited our age. Austria-Hungary remained alive until its collapse through external methods of force but internally it was sick, even deathly ill, and had to dissolve into its national components sooner or later. The revolution of 1918 merely brought an end to the existence of a dying man. The Monarchy had fulfilled its historical and cultural mission and had to make room for new state forms, which rose from its collapsing body.<sup>450</sup>

The Swabian activists thus rejected the Habsburgs’ multinational dynastic state as an anachronism, which had become outmoded in the national age. So deep was *Deutsches Volksblatt*’s conviction that the old order had become unsuitably archaic that the newspaper even found positive implications in the 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. On the tenth anniversary in 1924, Ferdinand’s death was recalled as leading to the longed for ideal of the “nation-state, in which every nation has the right to develop its national, cultural and economic life, as best correspond its customs and needs.”<sup>451</sup> The fall of Austria-Hungary had been

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<sup>448</sup> "Vertrauen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 22 1921.

<sup>449</sup> "Das Abenteuer Karls von Habsburg ", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 15 1921.

<sup>450</sup> "Zum Ableben des Erzkoenigs Karl," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 5 1922.

<sup>451</sup> "Vor zehn Jahren ", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 28 1924.

inevitable and was not to be regretted for it had liberated even the Swabians to pursue their own national development. The Swabians also noted, however, that the prohibition of Austrian unification with Germany was an outrage and flagrant violation of self-determination, which urgently needed to be corrected.<sup>452</sup>

Despite the above, the Swabian activists' attitude toward the past was hardly negative. On the contrary, they viewed the past as hugely important and filled the interwar years with numerous anniversaries and public commemorations. Ultimately, as we have argued, the Swabian activists were trying to create an identity that was both local and national. As discussed, two concepts lay at the center of the identity and national/group consciousness the Swabian activists sought to create: the sacrifices of the colonist ancestors and the virtues of the German peasantry. *Deutsches Volksblatt* acknowledged the central role of the German farming peasantry in its first anniversary issue:

[The strengths of our nationhood] lie primarily in our peasantry, and the peasantry must therefore become filled with the warming and invigorating glow of the German idea, if the national and also the economic and social rebirth of our local Germandom is to be achieved. Self-aware Germandom can be born unto us only from below, for in the peasantry slumber not only our unbroken physical and economic strengths but also our best moral ones, upon which ultimately all future questions depend.<sup>453</sup>

The peasantry constituted not only the majority of the Swabian population in the interwar period, but it also formed the lion's share of the Germans who had floated down the Danube in previous centuries as colonists. In this romantic view, they were honest and hardworking, diligent and pure. They were men and women of the earth, virtuous and uncorrupted. They were the essence of Germandom.

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<sup>452</sup> "Der Fluch der boesen Tat," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 5 1921.

<sup>453</sup> "Ein Jahr."

The Swabians understood themselves as pioneers and colonists. As such, their defining group myths were steeped in the memories of men and women who had come to a distant and empty land which they tamed and made fruitful. To American ears, such myths are highly reminiscent of tales of “how the West was won.” Just as American lore is rife with stories and images of iconic pioneers, so did the Swabians revere their colonist ancestors, whom they thanked for literally building their thriving *Heimat* from the depopulated and uncultivated lands abandoned by the Ottomans. Where Americans recall U.S. westward expansion with mental images of wagon trains, Swabians’ recollection of their eastward colonization inspired similar images of boats on the Danube and carts on dusty Pannonian roads. The Swabians understood their history to begin with the conquering Habsburg armies under Prince Eugen of Savoy, who assumed a central position in their self-image and mythology.

In one of its many historical pieces, *Deutsches Volksblatt* reminded readers that it was Austria which originally liberated what would become northern Yugoslavia. Even Belgrade had been “an Austrian province” from 1717 until 1739, when it was ceded back to the Ottomans.<sup>454</sup> Such memories of conquest were important for the Swabian activists and formed one of their primary arguments against the sentiment among Slavs that the Germans had come to Vojvodina empty-handed and had stolen their land. Swabians countered that, far from being beggars or exploiters, the Germans had come as liberators who had vanquished the Turks, and liberated Croatia-Slavonia, Vojvodina, and even Belgrade. This history of conquest and liberation, then, formed a major piece of their argument that their presence in the

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<sup>454</sup> “Eine oesterreichische Provinz.” “Die 'Deutsche-Donaustadt' Belgrade, 1717-1939,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 22 1928.

region was justified. The Swabians argued that Slavs, far from being resentful, should gratefully recall that it was Germans who had liberated *them* from the Turkish yoke in the first place. Another aspect of the Swabians' argument for the legitimacy of their presence concerned culture. The Swabian activists noted that the Germans did not come merely as liberators but also as bearers of culture. Culture, thus, was another area in which the German had directly benefited the Slavs, whose own primitive cultural level, they claimed, had been very much elevated by the German presence.<sup>455</sup> Likewise, the German movement regarded those "lost" Swabians who had Magyarized or Croatized as having raised the cultural level of those nations through their innate talents and contributions in politics, science, economics and the arts.

Finally, the Swabians argued that their ancestors' labor to render the Danube region suitable for farming legitimized their presence. The Swabian colonist experience was recalled as one of toil and struggle. Though they had been promised assistance and prosperity in the original imperial appeals for colonists, the pioneers discovered life in the new *Heimat* to be difficult indeed and many returned to their homelands. Many others died from starvation and disease and the rest faced a daily struggle to survive. The Swabians felled forests, drained swamps, and built homes and villages. They introduced new crops, agricultural techniques, and even architecture to their adopted regions, transforming the landscape.<sup>456</sup> Thus, the Germans asserted that they were not aliens or foreigners, as proved by their two

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<sup>455</sup> "Deutsche Einwanderer in Serbien vor hundert Jahren: ein Beitrag zu den deutsch-serbischen Beziehungen II," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 3 1928.

<sup>456</sup> Across its pages, Vladimir Geiger's *Nijemci u Đakovu i Đakovštini* reveals a German community that was in many ways distinct but nevertheless highly integrated in Slavonia. Far from being aliens, he essentially argues the Swabians were essential elements of the landscape there. Geiger, *Nijemci u Đakovu i Đakovštini*.

centuries of hard work in the region.<sup>457</sup> In a 1921 paean to King Alexander, *Deutsches Volksblatt* succinctly summarized the important place of history both in the Swabians' understanding of themselves and their place in their Danubian *Heimat*.

We Swabians are a people of colonists and settled among neighbors of other tongues and of different bloods. Nevertheless, we feel ourselves not as foreigners in this land . . . since the ground upon which we stand, the landscape through which we pull our ploughs, was wrung from swamps and bogs by our forefathers. And this little spot of land . . . is everything to us, it is our German fatherland. . . . We seek to remain loyal to this tiny piece of earth, upon which the sweat clings to our brow, so long as we breathe, and likewise to the ruler, who holds his hand protectively over our *Heimat*.<sup>458</sup>

In addition to promoting the regional German histories discussed earlier in this chapter, the Swabians produced many local histories detailing the German founding or settlement of many regions and towns to further support the legitimacy of their tenure in the country. The activists also promoted artwork, such as that of Hatzfeld painter Stefan Jaeger. Reproductions of Jaeger's "Immigration of the Germans into Banat" (*Einwanderung der Deutschen ins Banat*) could even be purchased through the German bookstore in Novi Sad, according to an advertisement which called the work "the indispensable, favorite painting of German families in our region."<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> "Fremdsprachig," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 4 1922.

<sup>458</sup> "Des Koenigs Heimkehr," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, November 3 1921.

<sup>459</sup> "Die Einwanderung der Deutschen ins Banat," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 29 1926.



*Die Einwanderung der Schwaben in das Banat* [The Immigration of the Swabians into Banat] by Stephan Jaeger, 1906-1910.<sup>460</sup>

Jaeger's painting depicts the culmination of the arduous trek by weary but determined colonist families, who arrive with their few possessions in the new *Heimat* and find preceding colonists already working to construct a new village in an empty landscape. It was artwork with a very clear historical message that spoke even to the illiterate: our German colonist ancestors built a prosperous region from nothing.

In summary, though long dead, the colonist ancestors were not to be consigned to the past in the Swabian activists' project of national "revival." On the contrary, the Swabian activists looked to the ancestors and their supposedly German virtues of piety, industry and determination to guide their descendents in the Yugoslav state. In their colonization history, they provided a myth of common origins which is so essential to forging a common national identity (in this case as Swabians). As Jaeger's prewar painting shows, the Swabian activists did not invent the colonist ancestry or Swabian pride in their ancestors. However, they did successfully deploy that history and pride in new and innovative ways that sought to craft a common

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<sup>460</sup> Jaeger, Stephan. *Die Einwanderung der Schwaben in das Banat*, 1906-1910. For more examples of Jaeger's artwork, see "Stephan-Jaeger Webseite", <http://www.stefan-jaeger.net/index.htm> (accessed November 24).



group consciousness upon the population as Swabians and Germans. It was the success of their enterprise that was perhaps most notable.

### *Kulturgemeinschaft and Ties to the German Motherland*

Swabians' history of colonization served well to build group cohesion and a local identity, but two centuries in Hungary had made establishing connections to the distant German heartland more complicated. Separated as they were from not only Germany but even Austria proper, the national identity that the Swabian activists were promoting had to be linguistic and cultural. In this, the Swabian identity project was perhaps not unlike others across Europe, where national movements had seized upon language as a common denominator of identity. (No German national identity was possible on the basis of German statehood, of course.) As such, the Swabian activists endeavored to educate the Swabians about the German *Kulturgemeinschaft* and convince them of their place in it. They did this by educating the Swabians about the greatness of German literature and music and by celebrating German folk songs, which were given prominent place at official commemorations, folk costume balls, and the annual congresses of the Kulturbund. The centrality of the German language was constantly stressed, as was the high level of German culture to which it served as a bridge. The Swabian activists produced informational articles and held lectures on the various luminaries of German culture. Additionally, they produced information about Germany, which they referred to as their *Mutterland*, in distinction to the Yugoslav *Vaterland*. Finally, the Swabians devoted considerable attention to the domestic politics and foreign affairs of Germany itself.

It may seem interesting or surprising at first that Germany, not Austria emerged as the country to which Swabians looked as their national homeland. After all, no living Swabian could personally recall life in Germany while all had recollections of living under the Habsburgs who were, after all, ethnic Germans. As such, ethnically German Austria might seem like a more suitable candidate to be the Swabians' national homeland. Austria had the additional virtue of bordering the Yugoslav Kingdom. Yet Austria was poorly suited for this task for several reasons. First, many in Austria itself basically looked to Germany as the German homeland.<sup>461</sup> Austrian German deputies had voted for unification with Germany in 1918, but this *Anschluss* was forbidden by the victorious western powers. Moreover, before the First World War, most Swabians had had little to do with Austria, which was then broken, weak, and divided during the interwar era. By contrast, Germany retained a certain wealth and dynamism as well as the potential to return to Great Power status. Austria most plainly could not. Germany was, moreover, a nation-state in an age defined by nationalism.

Germany's organizations involved in Volkstumarbeit also formed part of the bonds that made the country so suitable and accessible as a national homeland for the Swabians. After the war, these Volkstumarbeit organizations expanded and multiplied, being especially concerned with those *Reichdeutsche* who found themselves living in Poland after Versailles. If as a cultural phenomenon Weimar homeland nationalism meant the articulation of identification with and concern for transborder Germans, as Rogers Brubaker asserts, then as an organizational phenomenon it meant the development of a network of individuals and formally

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<sup>461</sup> Of course, many Austrians were not interested in unification with Germany.

private but often state-controlled or state-influenced Volkstumarbeit organizations working in Germany and across its borders. As a social-relational phenomenon, it meant the organized cultivation of a dense network of cross border relations and the organized provision of a steady cross-border flow of resources.” Moreover, “these relations and resource flows [were] funded for the most part, by a few state agencies but organized in a decentralized fashion through the network of organizations and associations” such as the *Deutsche Ausland-Institut* and the *Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland*. They “not only linked Auslandsdeutsche to Weimar Germany but, perhaps more importantly, contributed to detaching them from the states in which they lived,” Brubaker observes. In the case of the Yugoslav Kingdom, this meant that social networks and relations were restructured in a new way toward Germany and not the Habsburg lands for the first time.<sup>462</sup>

One way of linking the Swabians to Germany was through the emphasis of a common language and culture. German language education having been so limited in Habsburg Hungary for so many years, the Swabians in Hungary’s successor states were frequently not proficient in high German. The effort to restore the place and quality of the German language among Swabians would be conducted on many fronts. Chief among these would be schooling, as we have noted. However, German had also suffered locally in terms of status. The Swabian activists, therefore, had to restore pride in their local dialect as well as highlight its connection with the German *Kulturgemeinschaft*. It was necessary to treasure local Swabian dialects as a

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<sup>462</sup> For more, see Brubaker. 131-133.

*nationales Gut* to be passed on to the next generation while simultaneously recognizing the importance of written German as a unifying agent for the *Volk*.<sup>463</sup>

As noted above, the Swabian activists constantly celebrated the work and memory of the Swabian nationalist Banat author Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn in articles and commemorations too numerous to list here. As time went on, they promoted the work of other Swabian writers, even excerpting or serializing their stories and novels. They additionally strove to inform their coethnics about German cultural luminaries such as Albrecht Durer, Friedrich Schiller, Franz Schubert, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose work and lives were extolled in the press.<sup>464</sup> They considered the return of German-language theater an urgent matter and heavily promoted performances by traveling theater companies from Austria and Germany. They promoted knowledge of modern Germany, and produced materials replete with statistics on the country's geography, demographics and politics. Similarly, Germanic history and customs were frequently discussed and linked with the modern era.

Perhaps no area of German culture received greater attention from the Swabian activists than German song. German music was recognized as having an important community-building function on a number of levels. We have seen already how Ruma, cradle of the German movement in Croatia-Slavonia, had a German choral society even before the First World War. As noted, such choral societies were places for Swabians to meet as Germans and discuss the issues of the day in an ethnic-cum-national framework. However, there was a certain mystical significance attached to German music. Swabian music might serve as a common touchstone or

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<sup>463</sup> "Mundart," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, November 18 1920.

<sup>464</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, Ruma's Germans had organized *Schillerfeier* to coincide with similar celebrations being held in Germany and Austria.

an anthem, such as the *Song of the Swabians* (*Schwabenlied*) or the *Song of Prinz Eugen* (*Prinz Eugen-Lied*), the latter of which told the tale of Prince Eugen's forces in battle against the Turks. These pieces and other favorites assumed particular symbolic importance in the interwar period and were sung before Swabian meetings and public events. But German song also long had an important place in the churches of southern Hungary, whose Swabians were not always nationally conscious but were usually religious.

It is useful here to recall Anthony Smith's observation about the importance of organized religion in the maintenance of ethnic identity. Smith argues that organized religion can play both a spiritual and social role. "The liturgy and rites of the Church or community of the faithful supply the texts, prayers, chants, feasts, ceremonies and customs, sometimes even the scripts, of distinctive ethnic communities, setting them apart from their neighbors."<sup>465</sup> Many of these prayers, chants and especially hymns would have been in German and particularly beloved. The activists asserted that German song formed a living bridge between contemporary Swabians and their colonist ancestors and thus represented a valuable cultural bequest. German song additionally was understood to form a connection between the German nation and God in the churches, where German songs were often sung (though not often enough for the Swabian activists). "German songs awaken in us German thinking, German industriousness, German love and German loyalty, German joy and German pain – in a word, German spirit," *Deutsches Volksblatt* intoned, additionally pleading that Swabians, "Save German song!"<sup>466</sup> German songs also formed a living bridge to

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<sup>465</sup> Smith, *National Identity*. 27-28.

<sup>466</sup> "Pflegt das deutsche Lied!" *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 20 1927.

Germany itself. To ensure that German song was indeed preserved and promoted, Johann Keks even announced in 1928 that the Kulturbund was in the process of producing a *Volksliederbuch* or songbook.<sup>467</sup> Additionally, the German activists encouraged the formation of German choral groups across the land and held singing competitions at their events and gatherings. Such German choral groups occupied a prominent and honored place in the various settlement anniversary celebrations and particularly at the annual congresses of the Kulturbund.

### Public Celebrations

The Swabian activists' fascination with language, history, *Kultur*, and the colonist ancestors all came together in the many public celebrations and gatherings they held during the interwar period. Of these, the most common but hardly least remarkable were surely the many Swabian folk costume balls. The annual congresses of the Kulturbund were also grand occasions designed as much for nation- and identity-building as for handling Kulturbund administrative tasks. Similarly, the many settlement anniversary festivals held during the interwar period were occasions for celebration, venues of historical commemoration, and stages for national education. For such events, the activists produced folkloric programs rich with national symbolism and which were designed to shape the future by commemorating the past.

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<sup>467</sup> "Der erste Festtag: Die Gruendung des "Deutschen Saengerbundes im Koenigreiche SHS" ", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 11 1928.

## Trachtenfeste, National Festivals in Swabian Folk Costume

We begin with *Trachtenfeste* or *Trachtenbaelle*. *Tracht* is simply “national costume” or “folk costume” of the sort that was venerated by many national movements across Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Swabians’ folk costume was colorful and varied, being peculiar to individual German settlements in Yugoslavia and frequently reflecting the communities from which the Swabian colonists had originated in the German “*Urheimat*.” As we shall see, a standardized version of the Swabians’ *Tracht* would later emerge as a kind of Kulturbund “uniform” at the initiative of the Nazi-oriented *Erneuerungsbewegung* during the 1930s. In the 1920s, however, *Tracht* merely symbolized a celebration of Swabian heritage and German culture. It was a visible, celebrational bond with the colonist ancestors. At *Trachtenbaelle*, German songs were sung, folk dances were danced, and competitions were held for the most elaborate folk costumes.

The *Trachtenbaelle* were also political affairs, drawing attendees which included PdD parliamentarians, Kulturbund leaders, and even delegations from Germany itself. They not infrequently included speeches venerating the colonist ancestors and extolling the German *Volk*. They also provoked the ire of the German movement’s opponents. The events sought to integrate the past and the present as well as the urban Swabians and their rural coethnics on the basis of their common colonist ancestry. Additionally, *Trachtenbaelle* had the function of binding urban and rural Germans on the basis of the traditional peasant garb, which in the nationalist concept was elevated to a common, national good.<sup>468</sup> Finally, they were explicitly

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<sup>468</sup> "Deutsches Erwachen in Slawonien," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 12 1935.

national affairs, being organized on the basis of a common ethnic identity and national consciousness that superceded confessional differences.

Usually held during the winter months, *Trachtenbaelle* were a welcome break from the monotony of village life during the year's darkest coldest months. Typically, they lasted only one night but they might draw attendees from neighboring villages or even across the region or country. By contrast, the Kulturbund annual congresses were much larger celebrations and were usually held during the summer months so as to coincide with a historical anniversary of some sort. There, Kulturbund business was attended to and integrated into a festive, Swabian national commemoration. Two such dual-festivals in Bela Crkva and Indjija merit closer attention for the manner in which they mobilized the Swabian past in the service of the national consciousness for which the German activists strove.

#### The 1923 Kulturbund Annual Congress in Bela Crkva

In late August 1923, the Kulturbund held its annual congress in the Banat town of Bela Crkva, timed so as to coincide with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of German settlement in the Danube region of then-southern Hungary. The timing demonstrated the Kulturbund's custom of seeking to link its annual congresses with local events of cultural or historical significance, which were then represented as celebrations of universal importance for *all* Swabians and highlighted the idea of the Kulturbund as being synonymous with Germandom in the country. More than mere revelry, the celebration would be defined by nation-building choreography that was plainly designed to forge a contemporary Swabian identity which was anchored firmly in the



traditions of the past. It would also have the effect of cementing the recently established Kulturbund in two centuries of Swabian settlement.

In the weeks before the Bela Crkva dual-festival, Kulturbund General Secretary Georg Grassl published a series of articles promoting the event and urging Swabians to find self-confidence and national identity in their rich history. The festival marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the immigration of Swabians to Banat and the impetus behind it came from the “self-aware, indigenous, Germandom” of Bela Crkva itself, he insisted. “We Danube Swabians have our own history as well,” he observed, “the impressive history of a people struggling in hard work for its daily-bread.” The Swabians were a loyal people but there had historically been little appreciation of that loyalty, he noted in frustration. Indeed, the nations around the Swabians had long sought to assimilate them, a task made easier by the Swabians’ ignorance of their own history. But history would come alive at the bicentennial celebration, Grassl promised. The colonist ancestors would speak and urge their descendents to remain true to their German spirit.<sup>469</sup>

Much of the first day of the Bela Crkva dual-festival was devoted to Kulturbund business. Highlights included the presentation of the general secretary’s and treasurer’s annual reports as well as new elections for the Kulturbund’s board. An exhibition of Banat viticulture also opened that day, followed by a presentation by the Bela Crkva volunteer fire department. The evening was then given over to culture, including performances by German choral groups, dancing, and even an operetta at the town’s *Theatersaale*. The second day of the dual-festival opened with services by both the Catholic and Evangelical Protestant churches. Simultaneously, the Catholic

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<sup>469</sup> Georg Grassl, "Die Hauptversammlung des Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 3 1923.

Church also held its own commemoration to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the town's Catholic parish. The rest of the day was dominated by an impressive parade to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of German immigration to Banat,<sup>470</sup> a singing competition by choral societies from across Banat, and presentations by various gymnastics groups from Srijem. The day's activities again culminated in music and theater. Finally, on August 27, the third day of festivities, the Kulturbund held its important meetings and the exhibitions closed. As usual, the Kulturbund leaders emphasized that this was a transparent event open to members, German non-members, and all other friends of the Kulturbund.<sup>471</sup>

Much of the Bela Crkva dual-festival was devoted to German song, whose nation-forming power Grassl pronounced "one of the firmest guarantees of our national life,"<sup>472</sup> However, the organizers' nation-building agenda was perhaps best displayed in the festival's impressive parade. Steeped in symbolism, the parade itself consisted of three parts, the first being historical and featuring the colorful folk costumes of the colonist ancestors; the second consisting of German delegations from across Banat; and the third showcasing contemporary Swabian life in and around Bela Crkva.<sup>473</sup> Its route included a three minute pause in front of the town's Catholic Church to honor the Swabians' colonist ancestors.

The parade's historical section was headed by horsemen in Swabian folk costume and accompanied by a local choral group and another group wearing

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<sup>470</sup> Shortly afterward, a similar but larger 200<sup>th</sup> settlement anniversary celebration was held in Romania in Temeswar. Several members of the Yugoslav German leadership attended that event as well.

<sup>471</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, "Hauptversammlung in Weisskirchen: Aenderungen im Festprogramm," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 5 1923.

<sup>472</sup> Georg Grassl, "Die Hauptversammlung des Kulturbundes: der Saengerwettkampf," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 14 1923.

<sup>473</sup> "Das Doppelfest in Weisskirchen."

*Volkstracht* typical of Germany's Black Forest. Close behind followed several "floats" made to resemble the wagons upon which the original colonists had made the arduous trek into Banat. These featured examples of old-fashioned household effects and the primitive agricultural tools that the settlers had brought with them from the German *Urheimat*. Finally, one of the parade's concluding floats featured the town's coat of arms and the years of its settlement, 1723-1923.<sup>474</sup>

Lest anyone miss the deep cultural connection the event hoped to forge between the original colonists and their descendants, *Deutsches Volksblatt* very clearly drew the linkage for readers:

Two hundred years lie between then and now, seven generations. These are indeed not so many generations, but goodness! What an enormous difference separates the way of life and cultural circumstances of the past from the present! There poverty, simplicity, and clinging to the past; here wealth, luxury and striving for the future. But these poles are bound together though a natural, progressive, industrious, progressive development; they are bound together through the same *Volk* which itself managed this upswing based on its own strength; they are bound together through German nature and being, which despite all external changes, have not transformed their essence.  
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Besides simple commemoration and identity-building, the dual-festival at Bela Crkva also had the clear intention of refuting Slavs' accusations that the Swabians were somehow exploiters or "foreigners". (This was, as we have seen, a source of perennial Swabian anxiety and resentment.) Far from being aliens in the Danubian landscape, the Swabians again emphasized how their ancestors had actually

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

made its soil productive with their own blood and sweat.<sup>476</sup> In the words of one observer,

It has been two hundred years since our ancestors came here and from a desert forged a breadbasket, a paradise; it has been two hundred years since the ground cleared and cultivated by the fathers was given over to the sons, who in tenacious work continued what their ancestors had begun; for two hundred years we Swabians have invested our blood and treasure into this land where we found a second home; and we are still supposed to be “foreigners?” No, never, and nevermore!<sup>477</sup>

The message was clear: nobody had earned the right to be in the Danube region more than the Germans, who had made it fruitful through their own hard work. The task of modern Swabians, then, was to pass on the ways of the colonist ancestors to the next German generation.<sup>478</sup>

The 1927 Kulturbund Annual Congress in Indjija

In 1927, the Kulturbund held its annual congress in Indjija in Srijem. In the meantime, the Swabians’ nation-building project had been dealt a heavy blow by the ban on the Kulturbund in 1924. The Kulturbund was nominally relegalized later that year, of course, but the organization proved unable to renew its activities in earnest until 1926 and even then faced lingering obstruction from local authorities. Thus, more than three years would pass between the Bela Crkva and Indjija meetings. These intervening years were difficult ones for the organization, as the reader will recall from Chapter Three.<sup>479</sup> In 1927, however, activist Johann Keks formally assumed the

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<sup>476</sup> Excerpt from General Secretary Georg Grassl’s annual report in “Die Hauptversammlung des Schwabisch-deutschen Kulturbundes in Weisskirchen,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 28 1923.

<sup>477</sup> “Die Festtagen von Weisskirchen,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 26 1923.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> As we have seen, the Kulturbund had been led in its hobbled form since May 1925 by Ludwig Bauer.

helm of the Kulturbund, a change which truly launched a new era for the organization. Having secured renewed government sanction for the Kulturbund's activity, Keks would henceforth drive the organization to surpass its former achievements, backed as usual by *Deutsches Volksblatt*. In one of the more colorful metaphors of the interwar era, the newspaper rejoiced at the relaunch of the Kulturbund, which would finally be awoken from its long and forced "sleeping beauty sleep" or *Dornroeschenschlummer*.<sup>480</sup>

The Kulturbund's 1927 annual congress was again timed to coincide with a historical anniversary, in this case the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of German settlement in the town of Indjija in Srijem. This multi-ethnic community was actually considerably older than 100 years, but like many German settlements in Srijem, its German population had been later immigrants, who had altered the town's physical, economic and demographic structure by their presence. Now with a vastly German majority, Indjija nevertheless contained a considerable number of Serbs.<sup>481</sup> The event was meant to simultaneously pay homage to the ancestral settlers of one of the younger parts of the settlement area as well as confirm the Kulturbund's relaunch. The deliberate choice of Indjija in Srijem was also meant to draw Swabian attention from Batscka and Banat and acquaint Swabians there with this less familiar region. In Bela Crkva in 1923, Stefan Kraft had declared that that event was a celebration of all Germandom in Yugoslavia and that virtually nothing separated the Swabians in its

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<sup>480</sup> "This year's Kulturbund annual congress is an event whose realization reaches deep into our national life, *Deutsches Volksblatt* wrote. It is the resurrection of the fairy tale Princess Sleeping Beauty (*Dornroeschen*) from her long, deathlike sleep." "Indjija zum Gruss," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 5 1927.

<sup>481</sup> According to *Deutsches Volksblatt*, by the 1927 "Doppelfest", the city's population was 5:1 Germans to Serbs. "100 Jahre deutscher Besiedlung Indjijas: die juengste deutsche Grossgemeinde in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 5 1927.

disparate regions.<sup>482</sup> Likewise, the Indjija meeting was meant to show that, “no matter how far from one another we may live, we are all sons of the same German brothers and must leave to our heirs the German heritage and language which we inherited from them.”<sup>483</sup> The message was universal and clear: Indjija’s history was Swabian history, and Swabian history was German history.

As in Bela Crkva, the Indjija dual-festival included both areas of historical-cultural concern as well as purely Kulturbund matters. The first day was given to the reception for guests, including the representative of Croatian Catholic Bishop Aksamović, Msg. Andreas Spiletka. This was followed by the opening of an exhibition of the work of Swabian painter Oskar Sommerfeld and an exhibition of crafts by students from Indjija’s elementary and vocational schools. A torchlight parade in the early evening was followed by a welcome reception for guests and participants.

Whitsun (*Pfingstsonntag*), the festival’s second day, was a celebration of German settlement. PdD leader Stefan Kraft (himself from Indjija) gave the centennial celebration’s keynote speech, which was followed by a high mass, consecration of the flag, a sermon by Msg. Spiletka, and several other speeches before the midday banquet. Musical performances dominated the afternoon and evening.

The actual annual congress of the Kulturbund was held the next day and featured a report on the Kulturbund’s activities by its new leader Johann Keks. *Deutsches Volksblatt* estimated the number of participants, who came from all

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<sup>482</sup> "Das Doppelfest in Weisskirchen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 4 1923.

<sup>483</sup> "Das Doppelfest in Indjija," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 22 1927.

German parts of Yugoslavia, at over 6000.<sup>484</sup> Guests of honor included many of the leaders of the PdD and numerous South Slav politicians and authorities. Indicative of the growing connections between the Swabians and Germany proper, the German and Austrian ambassadors sent representatives, as did two Berlin newspapers. Even representatives from the *Deutsche Buchhandlung* in Novi Sad came to promote a selection of German books and magazines at this celebration of German life in Yugoslavia and its links to Germandom abroad.

The Indjija dual-festival had three principle tasks: to further establish the link between the past and the present; to announce the relaunch of the Kulturbund under Keks and to talk up the German community as an evolving *Volksgemeinschaft*. Speaking at the event, Stefan Kraft observed the relationship not only between the modern Swabians and their colonist ancestors but also of the Yugoslav Germans and the *Urheimat* their forefathers had left two centuries before.

Let us also think in the deepest piety and gratitude of the the old German *Heimat* of the German motherland from which derive our origins and plea for God's protection and blessing upon it. What is good and noble, what enables us to be useful members of every state community and to contribute to order, growth and progress in every country, has its roots in the German mother earth, with which we feel bound both in unbreakable adhesion to the German community of language and culture and in faithful care of German customs and traditions.<sup>485</sup>

Johann Keks, the new Kulturbund general secretary and longtime Swabian activist, gave two speeches at the dual-festival and presented the Kulturbund's annual report. Keks decried the continuing opposition to the German national movement in some Swabian quarters and appealed to the "deaf, dumb, and blind" to end their

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<sup>484</sup> "Die Indjijaer Festtage," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 8 1927.

<sup>485</sup> Stephan Kraft, "Die Festrede des Abg. Dr. Stephan Kraft gehalten anlaesslich der Jahrhundertfeier der Gemeinde Indjija am 5. Juni 1927," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 8 1927.

resistance or indifference. The blind must see, he proclaimed, they must recognize that the world had moved forward in the interwar era, and that the general Swabian body had as well. Likewise, the deaf must hear the call of the Swabians' moderate and tolerant nationhood, rich as it was in its history and culture. Swabians must hear the call of the Kulturbund and ignore the appeal of socialism, whose internationalism clearly troubled the Swabian leadership. Finally, Keks called on the "dumb" to end their silence and spread the good news of Swabian national identity in cooperation with the Kulturbund. "Eyes, open! Ears open! Mouths open!" he cried. "On your feet! Friends, to work!"<sup>486</sup>

#### *The Evolution and Role of the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia*

Also attending the 1927 dual festival at Indjija was the President of the Germans' Evangelical Church, Dr. Philip Popp, who conducted a Protestant service there, having come for the occasion from his home in Zagreb. Formally known as the *Deutsche evangelische-christliche Kirche Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses im Koenigreiche Jugoslawien* (after 1930), the (Lutheran) German Evangelical Church was not an intital focal point for our familiar Swabian activists but nevertheless came to play a major part in the Swabians' emerging national identiy under the leadership of Popp.<sup>487</sup> As we have seen, the German population in Yugoslavia was already divided by confession in 1918. The country's Protestant component would further

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<sup>486</sup> Johann Keks, "Festrede des Bundessekretaers Johann Keks gehalten anlaesslich der Hauptversammlung des Schwaebisch-deutschen Kulturbundes in Indjija am 6. Juni 1927," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 8 1927.

<sup>487</sup> As a reminder, the reader should understand "Evangelical" (*evangelisch*) to mean "Lutheran." The Swabian Evangelicals were not the Evangelicals with which the modern reader might be familiar in the 21<sup>st</sup> century United States.



subdivide during the interwar years as its Evangelicals organized separate churches along national and denominational lines. More than 75 percent of the German population in Yugoslavia was Catholic, of course, but the number of Protestants in the country was not inconsiderable. In fact, the influence of the Protestants in the story of the Swabians' embrace of nationhood was disproportionate to their numbers, since the German Protestants typically had stronger ties to Germany itself and were thus more disposed to a nationally-oriented worldview.

In many respects, German Protestants in Yugoslavia confronted even more profound challenges than their Catholic neighbors in the wake of the Habsburg defeat. True, the Catholics faced the demotion of their Church's position in the new Yugoslav state, with its Orthodox monarch and majority. Additionally, the Church's dioceses were divided by the borders of the Habsburg successor states, resulting in necessary administrative changes. Yet the Papal center of the Catholic faith remained undisturbed and its institutions endured, as seemingly eternal and universal as they ever had been. The Protestants' situation, by contrast, was more complicated. Where the Catholics merely had to adjust the local administration of their single, existing Church, and could furthermore count on the support of the Vatican, Yugoslavia's Protestants had to forge a new church (or churches, as it turned out) from the scattered Protestant inheritance that fell to Yugoslavia after Trianon and St. Germain. Thus, Yugoslavia's German, Slovak, Magyar, and Wend Protestants literally had to construct a new church life from the remnants of several others, and the construction of this church life would not go uncontested. Moreover, their work required the

acquiescence of the Yugoslav authorities, who were sometimes well-disposed toward the Protestants but could also be inattentive to their priorities.

The Protestant churches in prewar Hungary had been multiethnic, not formally the property of a certain national group. As such, nationally conscious or not, the German Protestants were naturally unsettled by the Hungarian collapse as well. The future of Protestantism in Yugoslavia was very uncertain after the First World War. That a Lutheran church would emerge which was almost wholly German and oriented toward Germany was anything but clear for some years after 1918. Even the basic institutions of the Lutheran German Evangelical Church would not assume their final form until the 1930s. Thus, in the development of the Germans' Protestant church in Yugoslavia we can also trace the consolidation of German national identity and its emergence as a salient, organizing agent, at least by the 1930s. In the immediate term, however, the Protestant leadership had to take stock of its reduced resources, construct a new church, negotiate its place with the Yugoslav authorities, and establish new and nurturing bonds with the Evangelical community abroad and especially in Germany. As we shall later see in Chapter Eight, this process would be complicated but not interrupted by the rise of National Socialism and the ascension of the Third Reich.

### *Constructing a New Evangelical Church after the Habsburg Collapse*

The 1931 Yugoslav census found slightly more than 100,000 German Protestants in the country, of whom 85,369 belonged to the German-dominated (Lutheran) Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (A.B.) and a further

15,437 belonged to the Magyar-dominated (Calvinist) Reformed Church of the Helvetic Confession (H.B.).<sup>488</sup> Lutherans, thus, comprised 17.1 percent of Yugoslavia's German population and Calvinists 3.1 percent, according to the official statistics. Hitherto, these Protestants had been scattered across the different halves of the Monarchy in different churches and church districts, all of which (except the Bosnian *Synode*) were divided at Trianon and St. Germain.<sup>489</sup> Like the Germans themselves, the Protestant population was scattered across the northern part of the country. The greatest concentration was to be found in Batschka and Banat, but important communities also existed in Slovenia and even Zagreb. The Protestants in Slovenia had had little contact with those of distant Batschka and Banat and thus had had different histories and experiences.

Institutionally, the Lutheran Church consisted of its many local communities or *Gemeinden*, which were gathered into larger administrative units called *Seniorate*. These *Seniorate* then formed the whole church or *Landeskirche*. Although its final form was not immediately clear after the First World War, the German Lutheran Church in Yugoslavia would ultimately consist of eight *Seniorate*. Six were to be found in Batschka, Banat, Belgrade, Bosnia, Syrmien, and the "Savabanat," with a separate *Seniorat* for Yugoslavia's Wends and another for the Germans in Slovenia. Each *Seniorat* was headed by a *Senior*, who handled spiritual and many administrative affairs, as well as a *Senioratsinspektor*. The highest representative and administrative body of the church was the *Landeskirchentag* or national assembly, which was only irregularly summoned during the interwar years. At the highest level,

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<sup>488</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 19E.

<sup>489</sup> Georg Wild, *Die Deutsche Evangelische Kirche in Jugoslawien, 1918-1941* (Munich: Verlag des Suedostdeutschen Kulturwerkes, 1980). 70.

church affairs were governed by a church constitution, written by a special constitutional synod. A Bishop (elected for life) and an Earthly Church President (with a limited term) were the church's highest officers. The German Lutheran Church, thus, reflected many strong democratic as well as juridical traditions. It was a spiritual organization, but the spirit of equality between layman and priest was firmly embedded in the church and penetrated its very institutions.<sup>490</sup>

For years after the Habsburg *denouement*, the future of Protestantism in Yugoslavia remained highly uncertain. The most pressing questions the country's Protestants confronted were whether to form one church or several, who should lead, and how to proceed until matters fully resolved themselves. By 1921, the 50,000 Slovak Lutherans had decided to form their own church. Therefore, Batschka *Senior* Gustav Adolf Wagner, whose *Seniorat* counted the largest number of German Protestants, called representatives from the German *Seniorate* to a meeting in Novi Sad on July 2, 1923 in order to form an independent Lutheran district in Yugoslavia.<sup>491</sup> (Non-Germans were also invited.) There Wagner, who quickly emerged as the German Lutherans' prevailing force, announced that the Slovaks' secession now compelled the German *Seniorate* to form their own church organization. Chairing the meeting, Wagner announced that the German *Seniorate* (and any others who wished to join them) were compelled to form their own Lutheran Church District or *Evangelische Kirchendistrikt A.B.* in Yugoslavia.

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<sup>490</sup> For a detailed discussion of the offices and institutions of the German Evangelical Church, see Ibid. 107-114.

<sup>491</sup> Original declaration reprinted in Gustav Adolf Wagner, "Zur Organisationsfrage," *Neues Leben*, June 1923.

This congress in Novi Sad is generally considered the founding meeting of the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia, for it was here that the basics of the Germans' provisional church district were determined and its officers elected (including Jakob Jahn and Samuel Schumacher, the latter of whom would served as a PdD parliamentarian from 1923 to 1928). In this provisional state, the emerging church would be known as the "*Evangelischer Kirchendistrikt A.B. in S.H.S.*" Until a synod could convene to write a church constitution and thus the basis for a proper church, this provisional Evangelical Church District would be run by a dual presidency consisting of an elected priest and a layman.<sup>492</sup> All in all, the church district included 117,384 members in 1925.<sup>493</sup> Of its 66 pastors, 51 were ethnic Germans and 6 Wends, with 5 Magyars, 3 Slovaks and a Croat forming the rest.<sup>494</sup>

The nascent Evangelical Church District could not formally emerge as a church until a Lutheran synod had drafted a church constitution and the Yugoslav state had approved it. Until such a time, the various Lutheran church constitutions, rules and laws inherited from the Habsburg era would remain in effect. The synod, which convened five times between 1926 and 1930, first met on April 15 in Novi Vrbas with the task of adapting the old church laws to the currently prevailing circumstances. There, the synod presidium was elected, including Gustav Adolf Wagner and Wilhelm Roth as presidents, and L. Schaefer, Philipp Popp, J Steinmetz and M. Wolf as vice presidents. Philipp Popp, the young *Senior* of the Croatian

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<sup>492</sup> Gustav Adolf Wagner was promptly elected Spiritual President, and Karl Weiss became the church district's Earthly President. Later, Wilhelm Roth was elected to succeed Weiss as Earthly President at the first district convention in 1925 (where much of the Evangelical Church District's organization was determined), as Weiss had meanwhile moved to Hungary.

<sup>493</sup> Wild. 87.

<sup>494</sup> In 1925. Ibid. 91.

*Seniorat*, also played a prominent role at this first synod, where he gave the event's opening sermon. This first synod meeting was especially concerned with constitutional matters and determined, among other things, that the Lutheran Church would ultimately be headed by a single bishop, elected by the *Seniorate*.

Batschka *Senior* Gustav Adolf Wagner remained dominant in the German Evangelical Church District until 1926. As we have seen, he effectively founded the church district and was promptly elected to its highest spiritual office with the expectation that he would later become the church's first bishop. His unexpected death on May 28, 1926 thus came as a major shock to the Yugoslav Kingdom's German Protestants. Born in 1868, Wagner had been educated in southern Hungary, Pressburg and finally Germany itself, whereupon he returned to southern Hungary and was ordained in 1894. In 1911, Wagner was elected *Senior* of the Batschka *Seniorat*, the position he held until 1923 when he was elected spiritual President of the nascent Evangelical Church District.<sup>495</sup> As the spiritual president of the synod, he had been the guiding force in crafting the church's draft constitution and regulations, and his death was regarded as devastating. "He made the preparations and indeed made them well," Pastor Franz Klein observed in the Novi Vrbas Evangelical weekly *Gruess Gott*. "How will we complete the work [without him]?"<sup>496</sup>

Shortly after Wagner's burial, the Synod's Spiritual Vice President Philipp Popp was entrusted with leading Synod matters in the future by its Earthly President,

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<sup>495</sup> "Gustav Adolf Wagner, evang. Kirchenpraesident," *Werbasser Zeitung*, May 29 1926.

<sup>496</sup> Franz Klein, "Gustav Adolf Wagner, der Mensch und Kirchenmann," *Gruess Gott*, June 15 1926.

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Wilhelm Roth.<sup>497</sup> Popp's ascension was important for many reasons. On one hand, it meant the literal shift of the institutional center of the German Lutherans from Novi Vrbas in eastern Batschka to Zagreb in western Croatia. Furthermore, Popp had been born in 1893, 25 years after Gustav Adolf Wagner's birth and only one year before Wagner's ordination. Thus Popp's ascension in the German Evangelical Church also represented a generational shift which had its own profound implications. Being younger than his predecessor, the agile Popp was better suited to adapt to the collapse of the Dual Monarchy and felt more at home in the Yugoslav Kingdom. Moreover, his German national consciousness was of a more modern variety than Wagner's had been.<sup>498</sup> Lastly, he had recently studied abroad, including a time in Berlin, and thus was familiar with modern Germany itself.

In 1917, Popp became vicar of the Lutheran community in Zagreb before quickly being elected pastor the following year. Immediately, following the Habsburg Monarchy's collapse, he organized the Lutheran *Gemeinden* in upper Croatia into a *Seniorat*, which elected him *Senior* in 1921. Popp also quickly assumed a position of importance in the broader German Lutheran community in Yugoslavia, being first elected Synod Vice President and then Spiritual Synod President in 1926 in the wake

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<sup>497</sup> "Die feierliche Beisetzung des evangelischen Kirchendistriktspraesidenten Gustav Adolf Wagner in Neuwerbass," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 1 1926.

<sup>498</sup> Ethnically, Gustav Adolf Wagner had been comfortably German, to be sure. Nevertheless, his was the German consciousness of a loyal Hungarian patriot who was deeply shocked by the destruction of his original fatherland. As late as the 1923 founding meeting of the German Evangelical Church in Novi Vrbas he voiced the desire for Slovaks to join the Germans in establishing a common church. For Wagner, 1918 had been an unmitigated disaster and the Yugoslav Kingdom a political evil, with which circumstances compelled him to work and to which he felt only a difficult personal connection at best. Wild. 131. He had been born, raised and largely trained in the Kingdom of Saint Stephen, which collapsed just as he turned 50. Although he had led the German Church District, his funeral was conducted in Magyar as well as German. "Die feierliche Beisetzung des evangelischen Kirchendistriktspraesidenten Gustav Adolf Wagner in Neuwerbass." Perhaps tellingly, Wagner's obituary in *Gruess Gott* celebrated his deep patriotism for the former Hungarian fatherland but neglected to call him a great German. Klein.

of Gustav Adolf Wagner's unexpected death.<sup>499</sup> In 1927, at the tender age of 34, he was formally elected Spiritual District President,<sup>500</sup> a title which changed to Bishop Administrator at the German Lutherans' June 1928 District Convention.<sup>501</sup> Popp would lead the church Synod over the next several years, completing work on the church constitution, determining church rules and procedures, and working with officials in Belgrade to establish the German Lutheran Church's legal position in Yugoslavia.

Once King Alexander signed the Protestant Law in April 1930 and it was published in the kingdom's official gazette, *Službene novine*, the road ahead for the Evangelical Church District at last became clear and the church was free to take its final form. As such, the Synod promptly reconvened and approved a church constitution in Novi Vrbas on Martin Luther's birthday in November 1930. Following royal approval in November and the constitution's official publication in *Službene novine* that December, the Constitution of the German Evangelical-Christian Church A.B. in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia formally entered into effect. The first *Landeskirchentag*, convened in 1931, unanimously electing Popp Bishop and also electing Wilhelm Roth Earthly Church President.<sup>502</sup> That September, both men formally assumed their posts at a ceremony in Zagreb. Despite Wagner's untimely death, things seemed to be going well for the German church. Indeed, the Wends had even decided to form a common church with the Germans.

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<sup>499</sup> "Dr. Philipp Popp: Praesident der ev. Kirche A.B. in S.H.S.," *Protestantenkalender* (1928). See also "Wahl des deutsch-evangelischen Bischofs," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 8 1931.

<sup>500</sup> Wild. 120.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid. 130.

<sup>502</sup> "Festtage in Zagreb," *Gruess Gott* 15, no. 10 (1931). 7.



With the adoption of the church constitution and the election of its bishop, the *Deutsche evangelische-christliche Kirche Augburgischen Bekenntnisses im Koenigreiche Jugoslawien* had properly come into being. The Yugoslav state also had an important role in shaping this German Lutheran Church and even determining its very name. Initially, Yugoslav authorities had recognized many other matters as more pressing than the internal affairs of the fractured Protestant community (or communities) after the Habsburg defeat. With so much of its own state construction to do, Belgrade could not devote much attention to the Protestants and, when it did, it often viewed them in terms of the national question. The Protestant Law stated clearly that “the Evangelicals of the Augsburg Confession [Lutherans] in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia form two Evangelical-Christian Churches A.C. which would be independent of one another: the German and the Slovak.” The law further stipulated that “the members of the reformed confession [Calvinists] in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia form a separate, Reformed-Christian Church.” Thus, the government made permanent the division of the respectively German- and Slovak-dominated Lutheran churches and recognized a third, Reformed church of Calvinists.<sup>503</sup> The ethnic separation of the Germans and Slovaks, therefore, was permanent.<sup>504</sup>

The Protestant Law was also fundamental to the future of the German Evangelical Church for it enabled the Church District to finally proceed with

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<sup>503</sup> "Das neue Protestantengesetz," *Neues Leben* 10, no. 6 (1930). 42.

<sup>504</sup> The Protestant Law also had major implications for Yugoslavia's 15,437 Calvinist Germans. The Calvinists' decision to reject a common Protestant church in 1920 meant that these Germans would hence be considerably outnumbered in their own church by their 37,909 Magyar coreligionists. Indeed, Germans comprised only 27.6 percent of the Calvinist Reformed Church in Yugoslavia, while Magyars formed 67.8 percent of the congregation. Wild. 70. The Calvinist Church's traditional Magyar domination persisted in the interwar era, but the Magyar influence on the German Calvinists was limited somewhat by the fusion of German communities into their own *Seniorat* in the early 1930s. Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 19E.

confidence on its constitutional draft. Knowing now that there would be distinct German and Slovak churches, Lutherans of both nationalities could finally plan for the future with certainty. As one German Evangelical organ observed, “We are, thank God, finally emerging from our provisional state.”<sup>505</sup>

The awkward appellation assigned by the Protestant Law, “the German Evangelical-Christian Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia” actually reflected several government priorities. The inclusion of the descriptive “*christlich*” reflected the government’s concern that the Evangelicals’ church would not otherwise be recognizable as Christian to many Yugoslavs unfamiliar with Protestantism. Likewise, the idea to specifically label the church as “German” originated from government quarters and not among the Germans themselves, who actually resisted it. In this, Belgrade again revealed its desire that the Slavic Lutherans form their own church. The government plainly hoped to alienate the Wends from the now “German” Evangelical Church and drive them into association with the Slovaks. The Wends chose to remain with their German co-religionists, however, even as the church assumed a decidedly German orientation under Philipp Popp.

Following the establishment of legal status in 1930, a second major turning point in the Church’s brief history occurred in 1931. That year, Popp became the German Evangelical Church’s first bishop, as we have seen. His personal and national orientation differed markedly from that of his predecessor, Wagner, and would have important implications for the future of the emerging German *Kirchendistrikt*. The place of Popp’s birth, Bežanija, was perhaps fortuitous. Located near Zemun, it lay in

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<sup>505</sup> "Rueckblick," *Neues Leben* 11, no. 1 (1931). 2.

Srijem on the border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Serbian Kingdom, whose capital would become the capital of Yugoslavia, of course. Popp was thus not a product of Hungary proper, having lived most of his young life in Croatia-Slavonia and Germany. On the contrary, having attended Gymnasium in Zemun, he had life-long contacts with Serbs. Far from feeling deep connection to *Ungarntum*, he felt sympathy for the Serbs who had struggled under Budapest. Having done his doctorate in Zagreb, Popp was additionally well acquainted with Croatian national identity and the intellectual tradition of Yugoslavism.<sup>506</sup> When the Habsburg Monarchy fell, he was only 25.

In short, Popp's ascension had promising but also revolutionary implications for the still emerging *Kirchendistrikt*. Unlike Gustav Adolf Wagner, Popp was genuinely comfortable with the Yugoslav state, and demonstrated enough loyalty that he was decorated by King Alexander himself.<sup>507</sup> Under Popp's leadership, the church would distance itself from nostalgia for Hungary and move toward embracing Germany. In his history of the Lutheran Church, Georg Wild observes, that "unburdened by Magyarophilia and consequently loyal to Yugoslavia, Popp possessed the internal freedom and power to now seize upon the idea of national determination" in addition to purely church matters. Thus, in his simultaneous

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<sup>506</sup> Wild. 131.

<sup>507</sup> In 1927, King Alexander awarded Popp the Order of St. Sava Third Class in recognition for his extensive work with the Evangelical soldiers of the Zagreb army garrison. "Auszeichnung unseres Kirchenpraesidenten Dr. Popp," *Neues Leben* 7, no. 10-11 (1927). 84. According to the University of Glasgow's Archive Services, "The Serbian Order of St Sava was instituted on 23rd January 1883. It was awarded to Serbian citizens and foreign nationals, for merit in the field of culture, public instruction, science, civil service and divinity, as well as for service to the King, State and Nation, by civilians or the military. There are five classes of the order." "University of Glasgow Archive Services: Roll of Honor", <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/honour/awards.php#25> (accessed November 18 2008).

embrace of both confession and nation, Popp introduced a new vocabulary to discussions on the nature and tasks of the church.<sup>508</sup>

Popp's comfort with matters of both the Lutheran church and German nationhood became manifest on several occasions in 1928. Popp set the new tone at an important June meeting of leading German Lutherans when he explicitly linked care for the Lutheran Church with that for the Germandom of the entire German minority and expressed criticism of the conditions under which Germans lived in Yugoslavia. Such comments were markedly different from the words of his predecessor.<sup>509</sup> Of course, the conception of the German Evangelical Church as "German" was facilitated by the Yugoslav government's insistence on including that national identifier in the church's full, formal name in its effort to alienate the Wends into a fusion with the Slovaks in a church of all Slavic Lutherans. In May 1928, Popp brought the church's national identity to center stage in Novi Vrbas at its "First Great German Evangelical Festival of Song", which Popp promised would be a "mighty rally of Protestantism and Germandom." He continued, "the purpose of this festival of song and this impressive Lutheran rally is to foster and nurture understanding and love of the songs of the Evangelical Church and the German *Volk*, and to advance, deepen, and strengthen the feeling and spirit of evangelical and German solidarity in our communities and in our whole people."<sup>510</sup>

At year's end Popp and Wilhelm Roth again signaled the Lutherans' new direction when they called upon the German Evangelical Church *Gemeinden* to

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<sup>508</sup> Wild. 150.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid. 130-131.

<sup>510</sup> Philipp Popp, "Evangelisches Kirchenvolk - auf zum Saengerfest in Werbass!," *Gruess Gott* 11, no. 5 (1928). 3.

protest the government's draft school law, which they considered offensive and even threatening to their the German Lutherans' "church-religious and even national life." Popp and Roth demanded that state authorities show more understanding for the German mother tongue and distinct culture in the schools, something that would only be possible through the return of the Lutheran and German schools, which had been taken by the state. They demanded that Lutheran clergy be permitted to conduct religious education, not only elementary school teachers as the draft school law envisioned, and they expressed concern about how the lack of suitable German Lutheran religious teachers was apparently to be handled. Ultimately, however, their protest called for the government to respect and nurture Germans' "religious-moral life as national-cultural life."<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Philipp and Roth Popp, Wilhelm, "An alle Gemeinden des Evangelischen Kirchen-Distrikts A.B. im Koenigreiche SHS," *Neues Leben* 9, no. 12 (1928). This is actually a proclamation from the Office of the Bishop of the Evangelical Church District A.C. in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. It was issued in Zagreb and V. Kikinda on November 22, 1928.



Bishop Philipp Popp

The Evangelical District Presidium formalized their outrage in a memorandum to the education minister on December 15, 1928. Religious education, it stressed, needed always be in parent's mother tongue. Meanwhile, Popp's and Roth's outrage apparently found resonance in the German Lutheran communities, with one speaker in the western part of the Germans' settlement area declaring that "We do not hesitate to solemnly declare before God's countenance, that we would rather that our children die than they lose their faith and their nationhood! But we also have the right to live as Evangelicals and Germans before God and Man." Though the then-Bishop Administrator might radiate genuine and convincing loyalty to

Yugoslavia, he also evinced his determination to defend his church and *Volk*. And the Lutheran communities were plainly ready to follow his example.

Popp was hardly alone in his inclination toward specifically German national consciousness and he had many Lutheran collaborators in Yugoslavia and abroad. The rise to prominence of Pastor Gerhard May of Celje in Slovenia should also be seen as indicative of the national and even institutional shift in the German Evangelical Church away from old Hungarian Batschka and toward the German heartland. As the formal spiritual head of the church, Popp was nominally its lead authority on spiritual matters. Nevertheless, May emerged as the Church's actual lead theologian and likewise discussed national matters and the relationship of the church and the *Volk*. In 1934, May published *Die volksdeutsche Sendung der Kirche* ("The Volksdeutsche Mission of the Church") in Germany, an influential book which brought new attention to the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia. That year he explained the nature of the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia and the function of the church among *Auslanddeutschtum* generally in the premier issue of the church's new monthly journal *Kirche und Volk*. "What forges a people," he explained, "is a common faith. A people are those who are overcome by belief in a common calling, which exceeds the life of the individual and the individual's lifetime achievements." Recalling the colonist history of the Yugoslav Germans, he observed that their settlers only first became a community (*Gemeinschaft*) when they had a church. The church had an essential role in the formation of the nation, May continued, for it was through its faith and services that the settlers became a village, a "strain" (*Stamm*), and finally the *Volk*. And just as the church had forged Germans

abroad, so would it continue to nurture them, for such was God's will. "Our church is not only popular (*volkstuemlich*), it is also nationally conscious. It serves the *Volk* in its German manner and is its strongest spiritual defense. It avows that God has made us as Germans. He wants what is German to remain German." May even recognized a suitable role for the Lutheran church far beyond the confines of traditional pastoral care and extending into even economics. "Our church stands consciously in the *Volk*", he explained, "and that's why our *Volk* stands in the church."<sup>512</sup>

Part of the reason for the German Evangelical Church's new German orientation was simply practical and predated the death of Gustav Adolf Wagner. Following the Habsburg defeat in 1918, the Lutherans in Yugoslavia were adrift, cut off from their mother churches and uncertain of the road ahead. Just as the German Lutherans were forced to contend with the national strivings of their Slovak coreligionists, so were they compelled to recognize certain practical needs as they established their own church. That church quickly looked abroad for both financial assistance and moral support. Recognition by other Lutheran churches and organizations would help their position with the Yugoslav authorities, they reasoned. The German Lutherans in Yugoslavia therefore quickly forged good relations with other Protestant churches and associations in Europe and even the Americas. They worked closely with the Gustav Adolf Association (*Gustav Adolf Verein*), an association of German Lutherans devoted to charitable work among co-confessionals abroad and which also provided extra support for "threatened" Lutheran communities. Indeed, as Rogers Brubaker himself suggests, the intense concern of the Gustav Adolf Association for their German co-confessionals may be seen as part of

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<sup>512</sup> Gerhard May, "Kirche und Volk im Auslanndeutschum," *Kirche und Volk*, January 15 1934.



the broad pattern of homeland nationalism and is illustrative of the new or deepened ties with Germany by which it was that the Swabians came to view that country, not prostrate Austria or Hungary, as their national homeland.<sup>513</sup>

There was considerable exchange of German Evangelical visitors from Yugoslavia and abroad. Popp and Gerhard May often traveled abroad, meeting foreign dignitaries and important church notables. Guests from Germany were common at important Lutheran celebrations in Yugoslavia. In fact, so many Yugoslav Germans studied at the Viennese Theological Faculty that in 1928 Popp even called it “our faculty” for the number of students it trained and its close relationship to the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia.<sup>514</sup> The fact of a young Lutheran priesthood being trained in Germany and Austria was especially significant for the church’s national orientation, since it meant that future Lutheran clergy would no longer be raised “in the ‘academies’ of Hungary in the Magyar spirit” as they formerly had been.<sup>515</sup> Reich and Austrian visitors were common at the Theological and Pedagogical Weeks, which Popp initiated in 1928 in order to better train his clergy and forge Lutheran bonds across borders. As the German Evangelicals built up their church, so did they deepen their relations German with Lutheran organizations abroad. Thus, at the January 31, 1928 meeting of the District Convention, Popp could boast that his church district was working with not only the Gustav Adolf Society, but also the Lutheran World Convention (*Lutherischen Weltkonvent*), the European

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<sup>513</sup> The Reich Association of Catholic Germans Abroad may be seen as a kind of Catholic counterpart to the Gustav Adolf Verein and may be similarly regarded as a religious articulation of homeland nationalism. Brubaker. 121.

<sup>514</sup> Philipp Popp, "Die Evangelische Theologische Fakultät der Universität Wien und die Evangelische Kirche Südslawiens," *Gruess Gott*, May 15 1928.

<sup>515</sup> Gerhard May, "Die deutsche evangelische Kirche A.C. in Jugoslawien," *Der Auslandsdeutsche* 13, no. 18 (1930).637-638.

Central Office for Church Assistance (*Europaeischen Zentralstelle fuer kirchliche Hilfsaktionen*), the Evangelical League (*Evangelischen Bund*), the International Federation for the Defense of Protestantism (*Internationalen Vereinigung zur Verteidigung des Protestantismus* ) and others.<sup>516</sup> Such international connections would only grow more extensive over time.

In conclusion, by the early 1930s the German Evangelical Church may be described as a largely consolidated organization that was nationally oriented with many contacts abroad, but whose leadership was loyal to the Yugoslav state. The church had spent years in a state of confusion followed by one characterized by uncertainty and provisional arrangements before finally winning formal sanction by the Yugoslav government. Gustav Adolf Wagner had reluctantly led the Germans to form their own separate Lutheran Church and his successor Philipp Popp had completed Wagner's work. German Lutherans had supported the original Swabian activists in the German movement after the Habsburg defeat and remained active in the affairs of the German community in Yugoslavia. *Deutsches Volksblatt* paid regular and positive attention to Lutheran affairs. As we have seen, Samuel Schumacher, a Lutheran pastor in Bosnia, had even served as a member of parliament for the Partei der Deutschen from 1923-1928. The German Lutherans had also done much to promote the urgent matter of German language education. As head of the German Evangelical Church, Popp was particularly active, advocating for German language education, promoting the German School Foundation, and working with the Kulturbund. So significant was Popp's own involvement that the VDA, the *Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland*, that the organization awarded him its

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<sup>516</sup> Philipp Popp, "Die Kirchenarbeit und das Kirchenleben," *Neues Leben*, March 1 1928.

badge of honor (*Ehrenplakette*) during the summer of 1933.<sup>517</sup> Additionally, the German Lutherans in Yugoslavia had much contact with their coreligionists in Germany. Such contacts would continue but also become altered following the Nazis' seizure of power and the subsequent transformation of German Protestant life there.

We conclude with the observation that Swabian minority nationalism and identity had many sources in local history, regional culture, language, and even confession. As an institution, the German Evangelical Church became a center for German self-identification and the cultivation of a German national identity under the young Philip Popp. The other leading Swabian activists at this time were older but had studied abroad like Popp. However, they had been active in the German national movement as students in Vienna during the prewar era and eagerly engaged in the project of national "awakening" following the 1918 *denouement*. They were conscious of their role as activists and, though they spoke of "national awakening," they were actually well aware that their work was a process of identity building, national instruction, and the popular mobilization of a sometimes resistant or uncomprehending German peasantry. This peasantry may have been aware of its "everyday ethnicity" but frequently had little understanding of how that ethnicity connected with a national project or even surmounted the bounds of parish, village or region. The German activists devoted themselves to overcoming this disconnect, and sought to infuse their coethnics with a sense of national consciousness and common purpose. In this they relied not only upon German culture but also drew from the Swabian experience of colonization and celebrated the virtues of the noble peasantry

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<sup>517</sup> The German Consul in Zagreb, Dr. Freund, presented the award to Popp on behalf of the VDA. "Bischoff Dr. Popp mit der Ehrenplakette des Volksbundes fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland ausgezeichnet," *Gruess Gott* 17 (1933).

as an iron repository of German power and spirit. As we have seen, however, they were neither immediately nor completely successful in their endeavor, and many of their coethnics remained indifferent or hostile to their project. The activists pleaded for these *Auchdeutsche* and assimilates to embrace their movement but frequently met resistance or disinterest. As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, the Kulturbund operated under the constant threat of dissolution (when it was allowed to operate at all) and the Swabians were also frequently stymied in parliament. On one hand, this official Yugoslav coolness toward the Swabians actually helped expand and consolidate the movement. However, it also led to the appearance of new fractures in the German minority, particularly among those youths who had no memory of life under pre-Trianon Hungary.

As the Swabians moved from the 1920s into the 1930s, there were rumblings among the young and dissatisfied intelligentsia about the need for radical new tactics and a comprehensive “renewal” of the German community. Such rumblings were initially slow to crystallize. Thereafter, they developed into an insurrection which would threaten the original Swabian leadership and drive the German community toward the tenets of National Socialism. Ironically, it was original activists’ very success which made possible the impending conflict between themselves and the next generation of radical young nationalists, who had rather different ideas about how the German national movement should proceed in Yugoslavia.

### **Das Schwabenlied by Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn**<sup>518</sup>

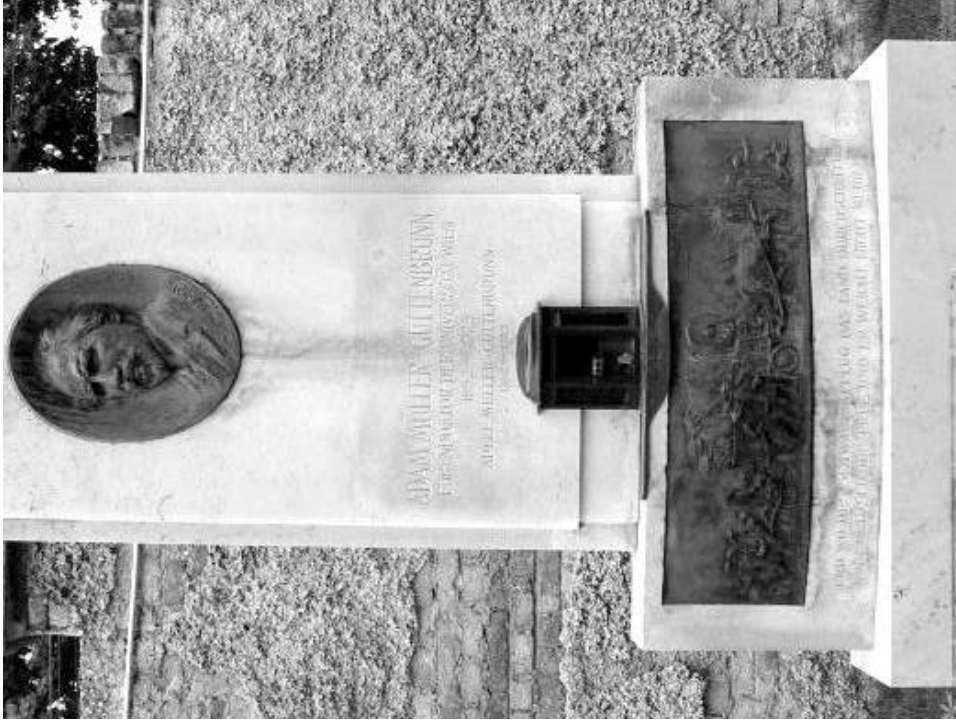
1. Es brennt ein Weh, wie Kindertränen brennen,  
wenn Elternherzen hart und stiefgesinnt.  
O, daß vom Mutterland uns Welten trennen  
und wir dem Vaterland nur Fremde sind.  
  
Noch läuten uns der Heimat Glocken  
die Glocken unsrer Väter treu und schlicht.  
Doch frißt der Sturm ihr seliges Frohlocken  
und Blitz auf Blitz zerstört das Friedenslicht.
2. Von deutscher Erde sind wir abgeglitten  
auf diese Insel weit im Völkermeer.  
doch wo des Schwaben Pflug das Land durchschnitten,  
wird deutsch die Erde, und er weicht nicht mehr.

Wer mag den Schwaben fremd im Lande schelten?  
Hier saß vor ihm der Türke, der Tatar.  
Er will als Herr auf seiner Scholle gelten,  
ist Bürger hier und nicht ein Gast, fürwahr.

3. Er Hat geblutet in Prinz Eugens Heeren,  
vertrieb den Feind, der hier im Land gehaust.  
Sein eigner König rief ihn einst in Eheren:  
>>Pflüg' mir den Boden, wackre Schwabenfaust!<<

O Heimat, deutschen Schweißes stolze Blüte,  
du Zeugin mancher herben Väter-Not,  
wir segnen dich, auf daß dich Gott behüte,  
wir stehn getreu zu dir in Not und Tod!

Above right: The Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn tomb in the Vienna Central Cemetery. The metal relief depicts the Swabian colonists' trek to Banat above the inscription "Wherever the plough of the Swabian cut the land, the soil becomes German and never again wearies," a quotation from the *Schwabenlied*. A large Swabian delegation from Yugoslavia attended its unveiling in 1927.<sup>519</sup>



<sup>518</sup> Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn, "Das Schwabenlied" [http://members.aon.at/franztal/page\\_7\\_4.html](http://members.aon.at/franztal/page_7_4.html) (accessed September 25 2008).

## Chapter 6: The Erneuerungsbewegung Insurgency, 1933-1935

As we have seen, the 1920s was a productive decade of *Aufbauarbeit* during which the Swabian activists had gained valuable experience and organizational skills. However, the prohibition of nationally- or confessionally-based political parties under the royal dictatorship in 1929 was a huge blow for the Swabians. Unlike the Serbs, Croats or even Slovenes, who might expect articulation of their ethnic priorities even without their flagship national parties, the Swabians lost their only political voice with the dissolution of the Partei der Deutschen. Moreover, the concurrent banning of the Kulturbund meant the elimination of the single organization which served both as the secular conveyor of German culture and the glue of the Swabian community. To continue to advance its views, the German movement would henceforth have to rely upon persistence, compromise, and thoughtful innovation. The Swabians also benefited from homeland nationalism in Germany, which manifested itself through the moral and financial support of official state bodies and unofficial Volkstumarbeit organizations. As we shall later see, such support increasingly came with strings attached.

In addition to the challenges arising from the imposition of royal dictatorship, the German leadership would also face a new threat during the 1930s from within the minority itself. As we have seen, one success of the German movement had been its raising the next generation to be increasingly nationally conscious. Although

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<sup>519</sup> "www.euxus.de Zentralfriedhof Wien - Ehrengalerie", <http://www.euxus.de/wien-ehrengalerie.html> (accessed November 24).

Swabians' endeavors to obtain German schools met with only partial success, Swabian youth were nevertheless more connected to Germany proper than ever. An increasingly number of Swabian students studied abroad in Austria or the Weimar Republic, where they became familiar with new political ideas and social trends. The German youth movement proved particularly infectious and spawned Swabian imitators in Yugoslavia. Increasingly, Swabian youths were drawn to a movement among their German peers which embraced the *voelkisch* "*neue deutsche Weltanschauung*," especially as promoted by the Nazi Party. In Yugoslavia during the 1930s, these young men (and some women) challenged the Swabian leadership in a bid to capture the Kulturbund and "renew" Yugoslavia's German community along lines which were very much inspired by Hitler's National Socialism. This was nothing less than a split in the minority nationalism of the Swabians. Their *Erneuerungsbewegung* was also a local manifestation of the broader German youth movement and therefore was deeply *voelkisch* and rebellious at heart. Thus it was that the original Swabian activists, who were moderate in their methods and measured in their demands, soon came under siege by their disciples and children, who spoke a language of radicalism. That aspects of the movement to "renew" German life in Yugoslavia, the *Erneuerungsbewegung*, may have been familiar to the original leadership made the insurrection no less threatening.

The churches were also affected by the *Erneuerungsbewegung* insurgency. This relationship between the churches and the Erneuerer is dealt with separately in Chapter Eight, but it is worthwhile to note here that the Kulturbund was not the only target of the Erneuerer's ire. The Erneuerer frequently attacked the Catholic Church

as a bastion of Magyarones and ethnic traitors. This in turn prompted leading Swabian Catholics to launch a fiery counterinsurgency in 1934. Their counterinsurgency articulated a third vision of German nationhood for the Swabians that rejected the “new heathenism” being exported by Berlin but also sometimes displayed skepticism toward the Kulturbund.

In sum, the German community in Yugoslavia was characterized by a complex dynamic of two separate but related conflicts in the 1930s. On one hand, the Erneuerungsbewegung challenged the original leadership for control of the Kulturbund, which became the premier German organization after its relegalization in the 1931. On the other hand, as we shall see in Chapter Eight, the Swabian Catholic clergy led a simultaneous campaign against the Erneuerer, who retaliated with venom. The Erneuerungsbewegung’s complex clash with the original leadership was fundamentally a power struggle, but the Erneuerers’ ultimate goal was the ideologically driven transformation of the Kulturbund, its methods, and even the German *Volksgruppe* itself. The claim to Swabian leadership resting on nationalist legitimacy, their challenge to the original leadership was centered largely on issues of German “authenticity” and even the definition of Germandom.

The clash between the Erneuerer and the Catholics was somewhat different, though no less heated. The Catholics sought to expose the Erneuerer as anti-Christians, who propagated a heretical world view which offered only strife in this world and damnation in the afterlife. But the idiom of national identity had become sufficiently hegemonic by the 1930s, such that even this Catholic German resistance was compelled to phrase its opposition to the Erneuerungsbewegung in national



terms. Naturally, the Church asserted a German identity which fundamentally rejected National Socialism. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia's German community, which all antagonists agreed must stand united, was developing significant fractures.

This chapter examines the new conflicts and fractures in the Swabian minority. We begin with a survey of the Yugoslav political context during the 1930s, which continued to be turbulent, despite the promises of King Alexander's dictatorship. We then consider some of the institutional responses of the Swabian leadership to the dissolution of their political party, the rise of new political parties, and increasing international attention to the circumstances of Europe's *Auslandsdeutsche*. We continue with a discussion of the expanded activities of the relegalized Kulturbund before stepping beyond the realm of Yugoslavia and organizational life to examine the German youth movement and the key intellectual tradition of *voelkisch* thought. This intellectual tradition underlay the ideology of National Socialism, guided the beliefs of the Erneuerer and shaped their criticisms of the Kulturbund's leadership. Thus, we consider the Erneuerer not only as a political phenomenon but also seek to understand the nature of their insurgency. Finally, we review some major events in that insurgency as well as the original leadership's countermeasures. Throughout the chapter, we remain attuned to the various manifestations and interaction of Rogers Brubaker's triad of homeland, nationalizing and minority nationalisms.

*German Minority Nationalism in a New Political Context*

The Yugoslav political environment in which the Germans lived in the 1930s differed drastically from that of the 1920s. In the wake of Sjepan Radić's murder, King Alexander determined that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in its current, parliamentary form was unworkable and boldly took matters into his own hands. On January 6, 1929 the King announced the suspension of the Vidovdan Constitution, the dissolution of all political parties and political organizations, and the introduction of royal dictatorship. General Petar Živković was appointed Prime Minister by the King, whose directives were to be enforced as law. Though the dissolution of parliament and the suspension of the constitution originally enjoyed some popular support (especially among Croats), it soon emerged that the dictatorship was based on intolerance of any opposition and the arrests and trials of important opposition leaders commenced in April of that year. During the dictatorship, Vladko Maček, Anton Korošec, and Svetozar Pribićević (respectively key Croatian, Slovenian and Serbian politicians) were all arrested. The regime consistently failed to reach an accord with the Croats. To consolidate his kingdom, which he formally renamed "Yugoslavia" in 1929, King Alexander enacted many centralizing reforms while simultaneously introducing radical new territorial and administrative divisions. On October 3, 1929, the country was divided into nine *banovinas*, each named after a river, in the hope of undermining the conflicting national claims and visions of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The banovina system also affected the Germans, effectively dividing them into the Drava, Sava and Danube banovinas. The Danube

banovina contained the lion's share of Swabians, who comprised 15% of its population and were the most active Swabians in the country.<sup>520</sup> Nevertheless, the German population in the Sava banovina was not insignificant and would become more nationally conscious over the course of the 1930s.

Despite such heavy-handed measures as political arrests and severe media censorship, it soon emerged that a pure dictatorship would be unworkable, and certain concessions would have to be made to Yugoslavia's peoples and parties. In September 1931, King Alexander issued a new constitution and permitted the November election of a national assembly. Neither institution brought calm to political affairs, however, which remained contentious and infused with national tensions. Despite their formal banning, many of Yugoslavia's political parties continued to operate in an illegal or semi-legal status under the royal dictatorship.<sup>521</sup> Nevertheless, every party but the government's slate boycotted the election to protest Yugoslavia's new political circumstances.

Many of the liberal sounding aspects of the constitution were revealed to have no substance in practice and the National Assembly likewise proved to be of limited potency. To execute its political program, the regime created the Yugoslav Radical Peasant Democracy, precursor to the later Yugoslav National Party (JNS – *Jugoslovenska narodna stranka*). On March 24, 1933 voting laws were somewhat relaxed, enabling the formal participation of opposition parties in the parliamentary elections of May 5, 1935. Meanwhile, a series of prime ministers and cabinets ensued after 1931 among the national turmoil.

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<sup>520</sup> Oberkersch. 216.

<sup>521</sup> Djokić. 76.

As Sabrina Ramet has observed, the next election in 1935 was a watershed event.<sup>522</sup> The SDK coalition consisting of the (Croatian) HSS, and the (Serbian) Independent Democrat Party united with other Serbian opposition parties behind a common list headed by Vladko Maček. This Opposition Bloc opposed the regime's list which was headed by Bogoljub Jevtić and featured Radical support. Jevtić narrowly won the election in what was a statistical victory but a moral defeat.<sup>523</sup> When the election proved to be characterized by widespread fraud and abuse, the Croatian and Serbian opposition parties resolved to boycott the resulting assembly. Such a boycott made plain the illegitimacy of any government under Jevtić, whom the Royal Regent Prince Paul asked to resign. (King Alexander had meanwhile been assassinated in 1934 while on a state visit to France.) Jevtić's replacement was the finance minister and former Serbian Radical Milan Stojadinović. He would remain in office until early 1939.

The Stojadinović years were important for Yugoslavia. As finance minister and later premier, Stojadinović had orchestrated a shift away from France as Yugoslavia's main trading partner and toward Germany. Under him, relations between Yugoslavia and Germany improved, as the "political opportunist" Stojadinović wagered that the Third Reich and Hitler were a the best bet for securing economic stability and territorial integrity.<sup>524</sup> Meanwhile, however, Yugoslav domestic rivalries were heating up and manifesting themselves in potentially alarming ways. In December 1934 three Serbian imitators of Fascism merged to form *Zbor* under Dimitrije Ljotić. *Zbor* was a vocal but minor political force, however, failing to

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<sup>522</sup> Ramet. 93.

<sup>523</sup> Rothschild. 249.

<sup>524</sup> Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country*. 185.

attract even 1% of voters in the 1935 election. Meanwhile, the HSS was forming paramilitary units, known as Croatian Peasant Defense (HSZ) to defend members against Četnik harassment. (Critics suspected darker, secessionist intentions.) Another marginal group which would exercise influence greater than its formal membership was Ante Pavelić's Croatian-ultranationalist Ustaša. The Ustaša would leave its greatest mark in the 1934 assassination of King Alexander, which it co-authored with the Macedonian rebel group IMRO. Meanwhile, the Ustaša was also increasingly becoming a source of concern to the HSS, from which it sought to poach young and old adherents.<sup>525</sup>

Stojadinović formed a coalition with Korošec and Bosnian Muslim leader Mehmed Spaho on June 25, 1935. More importantly, perhaps, he also founded a political party, Yugoslav Radical Union (JRZ – *Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica*), in August of that year. The next election was held on December 11, 1938. Following Stojadinović's withdrawal of Yugoslavia's controversial concordat with the Vatican, Maček's HSS and the Independent Democrats again joined forces with several Serb opposition parties in a Bloc of National Agreement to oppose the JRZ in the 1938 election. Again, they did not prevail in this 1938 election, but the JRZ had only been able to win approximately 54.1 percent of the vote against the Bloc of National Agreement's 44.9 percent. Dmitrije Ljotić's *Zbor* showed the breadth of its support by winning 1 percent of the vote and earning exactly no seats in the Skupština. Ultimately, the Bloc of National Agreement's electoral success revealed a significant decline in the Stojadinović government's popularity since the previous election. In the Croatian areas in Vojvodina, the Maček list won more than twice the number of votes

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<sup>525</sup> Ramet. 101-102.

as the JRZ.<sup>526</sup> Following Korošec's withdrawal and the resignation of five cabinet ministers, Stojadinović was himself compelled to resign in February 1939, thus ending his tenure as interwar Yugoslavia's longest serving prime minister.

After Stojadinović's resignation, Prince Paul entrusted Dragiša Cvetković with forming a government. Cvetković brought urgent attention and new flexibility to resolving the lingering dispute between Belgrade and the Croats over their place in the Yugoslav state. In less than eight months, Cvetković and Maček worked out the *Sporazum*, an arrangement by which a large, Croatian banovina was formed with far reaching competencies and prerogatives in August 1939. Croat Ivan Šubašić would be the first ban. Shortly thereafter, Cvetković formed a new government, which included Maček as deputy prime minister and featured five HSS ministers in prominent cabinet posts. The *Sporazum* revived the Croatian Sabor and created a single ban for the united Croatian territory. Yet in the end, the *Sporazum* left many dissatisfied in Yugoslavia. Many Croats, felt that the new arrangements did not go far enough to address their demands of autonomy and respect. Meanwhile, many Serbs believed that too much autonomy had been conceded to the Croats or that Serbia should be granted similar prerogatives at the very least. Thus on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, Yugoslavia's internal conflicts remained largely unresolved.

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<sup>526</sup> Rothschild. 257.

*The Danube Swabians Under Royal Dictatorship, 1929-1934*

The Swabian leadership received the announcement of dictatorship in 1929 with definite apprehension but also cautious hope. In the wake of the King's proclamation, their immediate concern was the Partei der Deutschen, which they hoped would escape any ban or disciplining action. Such was not an unreasonable hope, for the main conflict in the state existed between the major Slav parties, not the minorities' political organizations.<sup>527</sup> The PdD was banned, however, as was the Kulturbund, compelling the Germans to embrace alternative strategies. On the one hand, they sought repeal of the ban on the Kulturbund, which they achieved in late August 1930. Simultaneously, they participated in the authoritarian parliament established by the dictatorship. Additionally, they established an organization to advocate for them on the international stage at the League of Nations. Finally, they took educational matters into their own hands and established institutions to deal with teacher training, school and student funding, and the like. In sum, the established German leadership did not deviate from the moderate tactics and goals it had embraced in the 1920s. True, the new circumstances of the 1930s required some strategic innovation. In essence, however, the original leadership's program remained the same. Wherever possible, the original leadership remained at its posts or created new ones. It was always persistent but never revolutionary in its demands.

The banning of the Partei der Deutschen had been a heavy blow to the Germans, who thereby lost their only political voice in Yugoslavia. Although the Kulturbund continued to operate on a very limited and semi-illegal basis, it would

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<sup>527</sup> "Unerwartete Wendung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 9 1929.

never carry the weight that the Germans' parliamentary *Klub* did during the 1920s and was anyway supposed to be a non-political organization. Nevertheless, the German leadership considered it necessary to have an organization through which to represent the *Volksgruppe* and therefore in May 1929 established the League of the Germans in Yugoslavia for the League of Nations and International Understanding. Known in German as the *Liga der Deutschen in Jugoslawien fuer Voelkerbund und Voelkrverstaendigung* (henceforth as the "Liga," for simplicity's sake), the Liga formally eschewed politics in its statutes.<sup>528</sup> In fact, however, the organization was quite active in minority matters and sent delegations to Geneva to inform the international community about the status of Germans' minority rights in Yugoslavia.<sup>529</sup> The Liga should be understood as yet another manifestation of the Swabians' minority nationalism as it effectively existed to air Swabian grievances about Yugoslavia on the international stage and thereby obtain concessions at home. It was particularly concerned with highlighting the discrepancies between the Swabian's existing cultural prerogatives and Yugoslavia's obligations to its minorities under the aforementioned minorities treaties, which it concluded with the League of Nations at the outset of the interwar era. Moreover, Swabian minority nationalism and German homeland nationalism interacted most visibly through the Liga. In September 1929, Stefan Kraft traveled to Geneva, where he even met with German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann and discussed the Germans' situation in

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<sup>528</sup> The Liga's statutes were printed in full in *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Obviously, after King Alexander renamed his kingdom Yugoslavia, the organization changed its name to reflect that change. "Satzungen der Liga der Deutschen des Koenigreiches der Serben, Kroaten und Slovenen fuer Voelkerbund und Voelkrverstaendigung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 28 1929.

<sup>529</sup> The ubiquitous Kraft served as President of the Liga, whose leadership also included such familiar notables as Georg Grassl, Evangelical Bishop Philipp Popp, PdD parliamentarian Hans Moser, and Oskar Plautz of the Swabians' publishing house, DVAG. Plautz. 89.



Yugoslavia. A pioneer of German homeland nationalism, Stresemann advocated for the German minorities in Geneva and increased (frequently covert) state financial support for German organizations in Germany and abroad.<sup>530</sup> This support was most welcome at the time, but it also created avenues and connections to the *Auslandsdeutsche* which would later be exploited by the Third Reich.

The Liga actually had actually held its founding meeting in Belgrade in January 1928. Thus, the idea of an organization to involve Swabians in the League of Nations actually predated the dictatorship. Kraft had himself been active in international circles for years and had forged connections with *Auslandsdeutsche* from many important countries. Kraft had long believed that Swabian interests in Yugoslavia would best be served by sticking to domestic politics. However, by the late 1920s, he had concluded that this original strategy was misguided and Kraft resolved to get involved with the League of Nations in Geneva. He was still an advocate of German involvement in Yugoslav politics, but Geneva offered a new way to squeeze cultural concessions out of the Yugoslavs and confront them with the undeniable international dimension of their minority problem. After all, the League of Nations, was supposedly the guarantor of the minority treaties. Moreover, the international visibility would provide the Swabians greater freedom of action even under the dictatorship. As the significance of the League of Nations waned over the 1930s, so did the Liga curtail its activities. However, for a time the Liga was quite active and served as a useful platform from which to work on behalf of domestic

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<sup>530</sup> Carol Fink, "Stresemann's Minority Policies, 1924-1929," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 3 (1979). 406.

German interests and advocate on behalf of *Auslanddeutshtum* generally on an international stage.

Stresemann died shortly after meeting Kraft in 1929. Nevertheless, the Swabians persisted in their work with the League of Nations, motivated by their concerns over education legislation and the excesses of King Alexander's dictatorship. Faced with the prospect of international criticism, the Yugoslav government could be moved to hint at or vaguely promise great concessions to the Germans, but real resolution of the Germans' key complaints (especially in education) proved elusive. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia's desire to improve its reputation in Geneva contributed to the government's granting permission for the Kulturbund to resume activities as well as permission to establish a Private German Teacher Training Institute or *Private deutsche Lehrbildungsanstalt* in November 1930.<sup>531</sup>

The Germans did gradually obtain state concessions in education policy during the 1930s and were furthermore permitted to found their own organizations to promote private German schooling and training. (The fact that they felt compelled to form such private educational institutions, however, is indicative of the degree to which they had given up on adequate state support of German education.) Winning government approval of a Private German Teacher Training Institute in November 1930 was a milestone for the Germans, who would henceforth be able to address one of their most pressing concerns: the shortage of suitable German teachers. Likewise, the Germans were pleased with the government's 1931 decree which expanded

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<sup>531</sup> Oberkersch. 224.

German education and seemed to provide for more parental decision-making in choosing children's language of instruction than had hitherto been the case.<sup>532</sup>

The 1931 educational decree truly was a welcome development, but there was still room for improvement, Georg Grassl and other Swabian notables observed.<sup>533</sup> Despite the new decree, the controversial method of name analysis sometimes continued to be used to determine school language choice.<sup>534</sup> Moreover, simple official sanction was not enough to guarantee the future of German education. Even the most liberal school plan, Kraft observed, was only of practical value to minorities in so far as school authorities were inclined and the teachers were able to implement it. Adequate resources were also an issue, so to ensure that the Germans' Private Teacher Training Institute would be adequately funded the Swabians established the German School Foundation, or *Deutsche Schulstiftung* in 1931.

Kraft chaired the German School Foundation's founding meeting in June 1931 in which Grassl, Keks, and both Evangelical Bishop Popp and Catholic Abbott Jakob Eggerth also participated. As part of the broad trend of *Volkstumarbeit* and an aspect of homeland nationalism, the School Foundation regularly received funding from the German government.<sup>535</sup> The teacher training institute opened that October in Zrenjanin and moved to Novi Vrbas two years later. Over the course of the 1930s, the Swabians would receive permission to open yet more schools, ranging from kindergartens to *Gymnasien*. The process was slow, however, and the Germans' were

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<sup>532</sup> "Eine Verordnung ueber die deutschen Volksschulen," *Unsere Schule*, February 1 1931.

<sup>533</sup> Georg Grassl, "Neue deutsche Volksschulen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 1 1931. See also "Um unsere deutschen Volksschulen", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 23 1931.

<sup>534</sup> "Noch immer Namensanalyse!," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 11 1931.

<sup>535</sup> Paikert. 267. Such funding was yet another expression of homeland nationalism emanating from Germany, of course.

always eager for greater cultural autonomy and educational capacity. State concessions did not come easily and the Germans were never satisfied with their situation. Nevertheless, they achieved important educational reforms in the authoritarian kingdom of the 1930s which they had been unable to in the democracy of the 1920s.<sup>536</sup> This process was in no small way helped by the fact of an increasingly powerful and assertive Germany, with whom Yugoslavia was eager to do business.

The Germans' most important achievement in the early years of the dictatorship was obtaining permission for the Kulturbund to renew its activities. Though it served as a German voice in public affairs, the Belgrade government specifically forbade the Liga from establishing local chapters as the Kulturbund had. The Liga, thus, could not approximate the Kulturbund's functions of group formation and cultural transmittal. Nor could it institutionally involve a large number of Germans as the Kulturbund had. The Swabian leadership realized, therefore, that renewing government approval of the Kulturbund's statutes was both urgent and essential. After January 6, 1929, the Kulturbund and other organizations which wished to operate under the dictatorship were compelled to submit their statutes to the Interior Ministry for reapproval. The Kulturbund's 1931 statutes confirmed its mission as "the care and honoring of the spiritual, aesthetic, customary, and social culture of the German national minority of the Yugoslav Kingdom and the raising of its material and social welfare."<sup>537</sup> They furthermore specified that "all political

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<sup>536</sup> For more on German education in Yugoslavia, see Senz, *Das Schulwesen der Donauschwaben im Koenigreich Jugoslawien*.

<sup>537</sup> Der Schwaebisch-Deutsche Kulturbund, "Satzungen des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes," (Novi Sad: Druckerei und Verlags A.G., 1931). Article 3.

activity in the context of the Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund remains excluded.”<sup>538</sup>

Ultimately, then, the Kulturbund remained basically unchanged according to the 1931 statutes. As before, Johann Keks was elected Chairman and Grassl Honorary Chairman of the organization. Internal developments in the coming years, however, would transform the Kulturbund.

The prohibition of the Partei der Deutschen had effectively made the Kulturbund the leading all-German organization in the Yugoslav kingdom, and its leaders increasingly comported themselves as if they were in fact formal heads of the German minority. Though the Kulturbund hardly included all of the country’s Germans in its membership rolls at this time, the informal claim to Yugoslav German leadership was not specious or inaccurate, since no other organization existed to unite Germans or speak in their name. And indeed, the Yugoslav government came to implicitly recognize the Kulturbund as the *de facto*, if not *de jure* collective leadership of the German minority.<sup>539</sup>

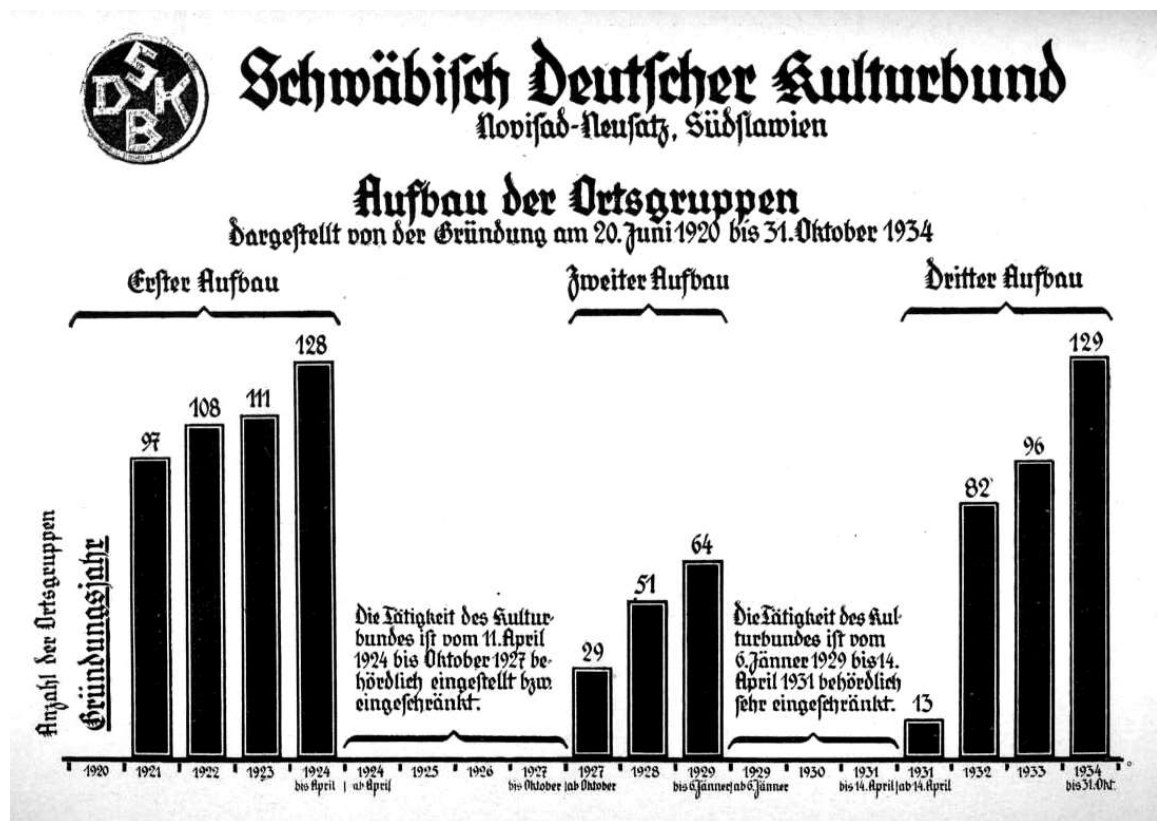
Meanwhile, the ban on the PdD also transformed the nature of the Kulturbund. In the 1920s, the Germans had taken pains to separate politics and culture, and the Kulturbund had truly been a cultural body (though its German national agenda was implicitly political during this age of nationalism and, as we have seen its connections with various Germany-based Volkstumarbeit organizations did make it an agency of minority nationalism). Following the ban on the PdD, this separation became less clear and the Kulturbund gradually became an indirect vehicle for the expression of German political aspirations. Under the circumstances of the 1930s, only an

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid. Article 4.

<sup>539</sup> Bešlin. 16.

established figure had even a remote chance of securing a mandate in parliament or in the senate. As such, after 1929, young Swabians aspiring to leadership naturally turned to the leading posts of the Kulturbund. Work during this third *Aufbau* phase was difficult, but by 1932 the Kulturbund boasted 82 local chapters. Two years later, the organization consisted of 129 local chapters, allowing its leadership to announce at the Kulturbund's 1934 annual congress that it had surpassed its previous record size from 1924, when the authorities had first banned the organization.<sup>540</sup>



Graphic from the 1933/1934 *Arbeit des Kulturbundes* showing the growth in the number of local Kulturbund chapters during the organization's three periods of activity.<sup>541</sup>

<sup>540</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwäbisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes vom 1. November 1933 bis 31. Oktober 1934, Tätigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung zur 10. ordentlichen Hauptversammlung in Novisad-Neusatz, 3. Dezember 1934*, 9.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid. Unpaginated.

The new constitution introduced by the Yugoslav government in September 1931 made no mention of the country's minorities and confronted the Germans with some hard choices as to how to proceed. Ethnic parties such as the Partei der Deutschen remained formally illegal and the new electoral law ultimately left the Germans little choice but to join Prime Minister Živković's list as candidates themselves if they wished to have any influence in parliament. By this point, the cautiously receptive standpoint from which the Germans had received the proclamation of dictatorship had become more pessimistic. Yet German leaders felt they had little alternative but to support the Živković list, since failure to do so might suggest disloyalty and invite scapegoating or otherwise endanger whatever cultural concessions could be wrung from Belgrade. They justified their participation, thus, as neither approval of the current political structure of the country nor as a rejection of its opposition but rather as an expression of loyalty to the state and king. It would be a tricky line to walk.

According to Swabian German Valentin Oberkersch, the government in Belgrade gave the Germans few options but cooperation and well informed them that failing to cooperate would carry unfortunate consequences. To be certain, the regime wanted Swabian support for its policies but electoral circumstances were not favorable for the Germans. They were basically forbidden from fielding candidates in Srijem, Slavonia and Slovenia. Moreover, the new electoral districts' schema was such that no German was elected in the three Banat electoral districts, despite a rise in the already significant number of German voters. Ultimately, only Kraft was elected to parliament in the November 1931 election. In January of the following year, King

Alexander appointed Georg Grassl to the senate. Finally, Kraft was joined in parliament in October 1931 by Hans Moser as the replacement for another MP who had resigned.<sup>542</sup> The Germans thus retained a voice in politics, but it was a weak and marginal one.

As we have seen, the royal dictatorship was unsuccessful in subduing Yugoslavia's various political currents. Consequently, it erected a quasi-party, the Yugoslav Radical Peasant Democracy, which would have only a brief existence but be notable for the differences it revealed among the Germans' leaders. While Grassl and Moser endorsed the call for this party, Kraft's immediate endorsement was conspicuously absent. Meanwhile, since the Liga's advocacy at the League of Nations had clearly moved an embarrassed Belgrade to make concessions on the School Foundation, Teacher Training Institute, Kulturbund and such, Kraft directed *Deutsches Volksblatt* to focus increased attention on Belgrade's poor treatment of its German minority.<sup>543</sup> This and some German opposition to various measures contributed to steadily poorer relations between the Germans and the government. Simultaneously, new problems for the German leadership were arising among the Swabians themselves.

### *New Challenges to the Swabians Original Leadership after 1933*

The 1930s witnessed considerable confrontation and dissent within the German minority. In the German leaders' initially varied reaction to the establishment

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<sup>542</sup> Oberkersch. 224-226.

<sup>543</sup> Valentin Oberkersch, "Stefan Kraft: Person und Werken " in *Die Drei Donauschwaebischen Politiker nach 1918: Tagungsmanuskript der Studientagung in Stuttgart-Hohenheim vom 20 Oktober bis 30. Oktober 1988* (Stuttgart-Hohenheim: 1988). 15.



of the Yugoslav National Party, one sees early evidence of internal German conflicts and dissatisfaction that had been simmering as of late in the minority. During the early 1930s, a quiet dissatisfaction with the German leadership was growing among parts of the German population. Simultaneously, differences within that leadership itself were beginning to fester and would explode later in the decade. In mid-1933, a young doctor named Nikolaus Hasslinger launched a newspaper and a movement in Zrenjanin, which briefly seemed a real challenge to the established German leadership. Ultimately, however, the most enduring crisis in the German minority emerged from the Banat city of Pančevo, where a young doctor named Jakob Awender was planting the seeds of the Kulturbund's original leadership's most serious challenge: the Erneuerungsbewegung.

We begin with Nikolaus Hasslinger. Hasslinger's *Deutsche Volkszeitung* was highly critical of the Swabians' leadership and institutions, and it served as the platform from which he hoped to rally German youth behind him in a Young German Movement or *Jungdeutsche Bewegung*. The Young German Movement was decidedly pro-Yugoslav and even operated under the motto "Everything for the King, nation and fatherland"<sup>544</sup> Hasslinger's movement nevertheless indulged in devotion to Germandom, which its leaders argued could be best served through close cooperation with Belgrade and the Germans' entry into the Yugoslav National Party (JNS). Hasslinger himself was an enthusiastic member of the JNS and complained that the established German leaders futilely practiced methods of confrontation with the government. Furthermore, he and his colleagues expressed heated resentment for the

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<sup>544</sup> Nikolaus Hasslinger, "Jungdeutscher Gruss zum Jahresschluss!," *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, December 31 1933.

leadership of the Kulturbund, which he described as old and out of touch with common Germans, especially young Germans. "We are not against the Kulturbund," he insisted, but rather against its leadership and methods, its inactivity and its fecklessness."<sup>545</sup> As the name of his movement suggests, youth was a powerful motif among Hasslinger and his supporters. They denigrated the Kulturbund's leadership as "old fat cats", whom they blamed for creating artificial confrontations between Germans and unnecessarily dividing the minority.<sup>546</sup> The old men had lost touch with the times, they charged. Moreover, they were excessively inclined toward Berlin and insufficiently patriotic. Hasslinger insisted throughout his speeches and articles that he only proposed his new direction (straight into the arms of Belgrade) in response to mounting dissatisfaction among Yugoslav Germans with their leadership and in answer to popular desire for new leadership.<sup>547</sup>

Naturally Hasslinger's efforts earned him the ire of the Kulturbund leaders and their mouthpiece *Deutsches Volksblatt*, through which they responded to his criticism. The original leadership dismissed Hasslinger as a nobody with no right to speak for the country's Germans. His movement merely repackaged such Kulturbund standbys as "*staatstreu und volkstreu*", they claimed, which it sought to purvey as new.<sup>548</sup> Mocking his extreme pro-Yugoslav stance, one *Deutsches Volksblatt* contributor even suggested that Hasslinger should claim leadership of a new nation, the "*Jugoschwaben*."<sup>549</sup> By 1934 the German leadership plainly decided that it had

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<sup>545</sup> Nikolaus Hasslinger, "Der Kulturbund und Wir," *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, December 7 1933.

<sup>546</sup> Adam Kraemer, "Zu unserem Program," *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, November 20 1933.

<sup>547</sup> Nikolaus Hasslinger, "Neue Wege: zu unserem Programm," *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, November 5 1933.

<sup>548</sup> "Dr. Nikolaus Hasslinger: Ein neuer deutscher "Volksfuehrer"," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 27 1933.

<sup>549</sup> "Die 'Jugoschwaben' - eine neue Nation," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 10 1933.

had enough and permanently expelled Hasslinger from the Kulturbund for allegedly printing falsehoods about a recent Kulturbund annual congress.<sup>550</sup> Later that year, Kraft sued Hasslinger and a colleague for slander, among other things, winning convictions on both counts.<sup>551</sup>

Ultimately, the commotion Hasslinger caused and the support he earned proved ephemeral. This was especially the case when it emerged that he was heavily financially backed by Belgrade, which at the time was aiming to weaken Kraft. Hasslinger's movement, which was anyway limited and always seemed most impressive in the press, gradually dissipated. The "movement", such as it were, had never been big. Nevertheless, for a time *Deutsche Volkszeitung* was one of the country's most widely-read German newspapers,<sup>552</sup> which suggests that the popular German dissatisfaction Hasslinger trumpeted had some actual basis in fact. In the end, Hasslinger's movement was eclipsed by something far more ominous for the original leadership: Jakob Awender's Erneuerungsbewegung. Hasslinger himself was never a member of the Erneuerungsbewegung and faded from importance after 1935. The Erneuerungsbewegung did not.

Hasslinger's Young German Movement and the Erneuerungsbewegung shared an idiom and both capitalized on simmering discontent in the German minority. The Erneuerungsbewegung also emphasized youth, the ineptitude of the "big wigs", and devotion to such methods as the *Fuehrerprinzip*. Hasslinger reprinted several articles from Awender's *Pančevoer Post* and clearly valued the latter's criticism of the

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<sup>550</sup> "Bischoff Dr. Popp mit der Ehrenplakette des Volksbundes fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland ausgezeichnet." See also "Gegen Verleumdung des Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 5 1934.

<sup>551</sup> "Verleumder kneifen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 8 1934. See also "Wegen Verleumdung verurteilt," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 11 1934.

<sup>552</sup> Bešlin. 80.

Kulturbund leadership. However, the two movements were quite different, given the Erneuerer's deep fascination with National Socialism and the Third Reich. In fact, on many points the nascent Erneuerungsbewegung and Hasslinger's Young German Movement were antithetical. If the Kulturbund leaders were guilty of excessive orientation toward Berlin in Hasslinger's eyes, the Erneuerer plainly were doubly so.

In 1932, the relegalized Kulturbund held its annual congress in Pančevo, a largely German town in Banat, just across the Danube from Belgrade. In preparation for this congress, several likeminded Kulturbund members founded the *Pančevoer Post*, a weekly newspaper which surveyed the work of the Kulturbund and other Swabian organizations from a decidedly *voelkisch* perspective. Under managing editor Ludwig Kapri during its first year, the *Pančevoer Post* hinted at dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Kulturbund but was a relatively benign, albeit uncompromisingly German national newspaper. Jakob Awender assumed the post of managing editor in January 1933, however, and transformed the newspaper into a platform from which to first sharply criticize the Swabian leaders and subsequently organize a movement to challenge them. Under Awender, moreover, the newspaper closely observed Third Reich politics and did not seek to hide its enthusiasm for Adolf Hitler or the leadership principle he embodied.<sup>553</sup>

It was in the pages of Awender's *Pančevoer Post* that simmering German discontent with the original Kulturbund leadership first turned into a boil. Thus we may date the German minority's internal divisions from at least 1933. According to the Erneuerer themselves, 1933 was merely the breakthrough year. They looked to the

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<sup>553</sup> *Deutsches Volksblatt* was also an avid follower of German politics and took an early interest in Hitler and the NSDAP.

years between 1927 - 1930/31 as the years of their movement's incubation. From then until 1933, the "hitherto totally neglected" young generation became involved in *voelkisch* matters on their own and cast about for a "guiding, compelling idea." Finally, the Erneuerer claimed, the period since 1933 was defined by the "rise and the renewal of *Gesamtdeutschtum*," all Germans everywhere. Indeed, "the postwar generation was especially gripped by new *voelkisch* thoughts." The youth had brought their energy and enthusiasm to the work of the Kulturbund such that "youth group after youth group is formed and with them local Kulturbund chapters. Already by 1934 the German Youth Association (*Deutsche Jugendverband*) could be founded not as the result of the Kulturbund leadership's efforts, but rather as result of the work of such key Erneuerer as *Kameraden* Fuerst, Halwax, Lichtenberger, Schenk, etc.," the Erneuerer claimed.<sup>554</sup> Since then, the spirit and activity of the youth had made their mark on the Kulturbund, the Erneuerer claimed. Both in the local chapters and in the Kulturbund headquarters, *Jugendarbeit* or "youth work" and the spirited Swabian youth had become an essential part of the Kulturbund. Indeed, "in all things great and small, the young generation is everywhere: in sports- and cultural events, rallies, courses, training events, *Heimabende*, etc." Thus did the Erneuerer present their "breakthrough," which they carefully located in the context of Hitler's coming to power in Germany.<sup>555</sup> In conclusion, the Erneuerer emphasized the local roots of their malaise but also cast themselves as part of a greater, modern German movement that transcended statehood and even space itself. The intellectual roots of their discontent may be located in the German *voelkisch* intellectual tradition.

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<sup>554</sup> We shall learn more about Jakob Lichtenberger and Gustav Halwax shortly.

<sup>555</sup> Fritz Metzger, "Wenn Spiesser wueten...! Der Niedergang des Kulturbundes im letzten Jahr," *Volksruf* 1936.

*The Voelkisch Tradition and the Interwar Swabians*

This dissertation is the history of a national movement and the story of intellectual and political competition among Yugoslavia's German minorities. It is thus a tale of the marketing of an idea and the battle to define that idea. It has no pretensions to be a proper intellectual history, a task anyway made impossible by its broad scope and limited pages. That said, it is useful at this stage to briefly discuss the voelkisch tradition and consider how it informed German political currents during the interwar period. Neither the original Swabian activists nor their rivals in the Erneuerungsbewegung existed in an intellectual or social vacuum, of course. On the contrary, their ideas and the institutions through which they sought to execute them were very much part of a lively German intellectual tradition. This tradition as it manifested itself in southeastern Europe reflected local circumstances. The historical experience under Hungary and the Habsburgs, the paucity of intellectuals, the comparative lack of German education facilities, and the region's remoteness from Germany and Austria all informed the ways in which Germans in southeast Europe experienced intellectual and social currents from Austria and Germany. Those intellectual and social currents unquestionably impacted and shaped the country's educated Germans, who in turn adapted them to local circumstances and sought to diffuse them among their coethnics. Such was the case with the original Swabian activists before and immediately after the First World War, when they sought to instill German national consciousness in the local ethnic German population. Likewise, their literal and intellectual descendants would emulate forms and ideas

popular in the radicalized environment of Weimar Republic, where parliamentary dysfunction, financial collapse and the sting of military defeat were driving Germans toward ever more radical ideas as solutions to German woes.

Most Swabian leaders discussed in these pages had studied beyond their immediate surroundings in Germany or Austria, where they were exposed to the prevailing intellectual currents of the day at a young and impressionable age. One such intellectual current, whose foundations were well established by the turn of the century, was *voelkisch* thought, an intellectual tradition with a firm foundation in irrationalism and hostility toward liberalism. The speeches, articles and other writings of the Erneuerer were permeated with the ideas and vocabulary of this *voelkisch* tradition, which grew even more radical and ascendant during the interwar period.

Nature and the natural occupied a central place in the *voelkisch* ideology, which was mystical and concerned with the essence of man. In many ways it was transcendental and escapist, and sought comfort beyond the banalities of the real world. Subscribers to *voelkisch* ideas felt alienated, deeply dissatisfied with mundane reality and found escape in nostalgia for an imagined German past. They pined for the romantic and pastoral amid industrialized modernity's turbulent grayness. *Voelkisch* thinkers variously rejected parliamentarism, party politics and materialism as false solutions to Germans' malaise or even as part of the problem. Political parties were held to be artificial and the compromises of parliamentarism deficient for plainly defying the principle of bold leadership. Indeed, *voelkisch* thinkers dismissed representative government "in favor of an elitism which derived from their semi-

mystical concepts of nature and man.”<sup>556</sup> *Voelkisch* thought was an ideology of crisis that offered dramatic and radical solutions. Its rejection of materialism and longing for a higher, more spiritual society rooted in the essence of the *Volk* gave it a transcendent power but also left it aggrieved and feeling wounded. *Voelkisch* thinkers sought social transformation and “attempted to heal the rupture in the national fabric by appealing to the organic *Volksstaat*, to the common roots of all Germans.”<sup>557</sup> They aspired to something higher than nineteenth and twentieth century society, an organic, nationally conscious *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The *voelkisch* intellectual tradition provided much of the background and ideological context of the Erneuerungsbewegung. However, the youth movement in Germany was also of key importance in shaping the Erneuerer’s revolt. The organizational roots of the German youth movement date from only 1901, when the first *Wandervoegel* chapter was organized as a boys’ hiking club in the Berlin suburb of Steglitz. Its “intellectual” or perhaps “cultural” tradition extended far backwards into the previous century, however. The *Wandervoegel* quickly spread and inspired a host of imitators and splinter groups.

Although its principal activities consisted of hiking and singing folk songs, the youth movement was radical and viewed itself as such. However, it was also conservative in its attitude and represented an embrace of the right. It shared much with *voelkisch* ideology and represented a further turn to the right for youth. The youth movement, in which youths sought to organize themselves independent of adult supervision, effectively was a movement of *rebellion* against adulthood and the banal

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<sup>556</sup> George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: The Universal Library, 1964). 2.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.* 150.



existence of the staid bourgeoisie. The youth groups' many hikes and excursions out from from the cities and into the countryside certainly seemed benign enough and in many ways they were. Nevertheless, such excursions also represented a rebellious flight from modernity toward nature and a kind of German mysticism. The movement celebrated the cult of heroism and the true Germanic man, who felt an instinctive link between his soul and nature and the *Volk*.<sup>558</sup> Naturally, the German youth movement also worshiped at the altar of the cult of youth, which they saw as vital, potent, innovative, and uncorrupted. Where they viewed their parents as bourgeois and artificial, members of the youth movement insisted upon their own deeper authenticity. Moreover, they insisted upon that authenticity not as individuals but rather as members of the collective *Volk*. There was diversity in the movement, but ultimately all agreed that the movement should seek "the renewal of German life and culture through the spirit of youth."<sup>559</sup> They would oppose the coldness and artificiality of *Zivilisation* through the embrace of the more genuine *Kultur*.

This already radical prewar youth movement in Germany and the potent *voelkisch* ideology of conservative revolution became even more radicalized during interwar period, when young men – especially those who had fought in the First World War – had to confront military defeat, political chaos, financial collapse, economic dislocation, and national dishonor. Rump Austria additionally had to contend with the fact of Habsburg deposition, neighboring Slav triumphalism, and the humiliating prohibition of its desired *Anschluss* with Germany. Jobs were scarce everywhere.

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid. 176

<sup>559</sup> Mario Domandi, "The German Youth Movement" (Columbia University, 1961). i.

Though they grew up far away in southeastern Europe, the older Swabian intellectuals and their younger rivals may be located in the context of this *voelkisch* ideology and the German youth associational life, where many would learn their values, gain leadership experience, and become imbued with an ideology that was highly anti-liberal. The Erneuerer especially were well acquainted with *voelkisch* ideology and the works of Moeller van den Bruck, Oswald Spengler, and Ernst Juenger. Likewise, they were seized by the crisis of German civilization after the war. Many of the leading Erneuerer had studied abroad, fought as young men in the First World War, or both. The Erneuerungsbewegung's leader, Jakob Awender, for example, was born in 1897 and fought in the war as a 17-year-old before studying medicine in Graz. Awender had a long history of involvement with the Kulturbund. He addressed its 1922 annual congress as a representative of the German academic youth and was elected to the Kulturbund's board in the late 1920s. He and other young Swabians were influenced by the political developments in Germany and Austria and became disillusioned with the comparatively anemic posture of the German leaders in Yugoslavia. Their frustration was exacerbated by the exigencies of the Depression and the few career opportunities they encountered in Yugoslavia, where a Swabian's professional options were indeed limited.<sup>560</sup> (In Yugoslavia, both state and local authorities generally hired only Slavs, business opportunities were limited and the original Swabian leaders had no intention of vacating their jobs for the next generation.) In fact, many of the above youth trends and intellectual currents were imported from Germany proper and locally reinterpreted in Yugoslavia so as to suit local dissatisfaction within the German minority there. Thus, the *voelkisch*

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<sup>560</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 229.

intellectual tradition and current German and Austrian political and social context would weigh heavily on the distant Swabian community.

*The Pančevoer Post: The Erneuerungsbewegung Finds its Voice*

Alongside the rebelliousness of the incipient youth movement in Yugoslavia, frustration with Stefan Kraft and others in the original leadership began to develop during the early 1930s and received early expression in the *Pančevoer Post*. The *Pančevoer Post* began publication in 1932 in preparation for the Kulturbund's upcoming annual congress, which would be held that year in Pančevo. As we have seen, only when Jakob Awender took control of the newspaper in January 1933 did *Pančevoer Post* assume its acutely confrontational stance and directly targeted the original leadership and their policies. In 1934, the newspaper would rename and remake itself as *Volksruf*, a call to arms for likeminded Swabian dissidents in the Kulturbund. The newspaper was widely read, soon becoming second in circulation only to *Deutsches Volksblatt*.<sup>561</sup> The *Pančevoer Post* quickly made its revolutionary agenda clear during its first year and a half under Awender, however, never hesitating to challenge the old leadership. Indeed, the *Pančevoer Post* spoke with a *voelkisch* and radical vocabulary that suggested the German minority's problems extended beyond a few tired old men and that comprehensive reform and even a kind of spiritual regeneration were necessary. More than just new leaders, the Germans of Yugoslavia were in need of *Erneuerung*, comprehensive renewal.

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<sup>561</sup> Vladimir Geiger, "Saslušanje Brinimira Altgayera vođe Njemačke narodne skupine u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj u Upravi državne bezbjednost za Narodnu Republiku Hrvatsku 1949. godine," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 31, no. 3 (1999). 587.

In the *Pančevoer Post*, Awender and his collaborators gave voice to their disagreement with the original leadership, introduced a *voelkisch* agenda and ideas, advocated for the country's allegedly frustrated German youth, and assured readers that the Erneuerungsbewegung was the only path toward achieving a proper *Volksgemeinschaft*, a transcendent form of national community. Drawing from the reservoir of *voelkisch* ideology, these Swabian dissidents claimed the German minority was deeply troubled. Its troubles extended beyond the Germans' leadership, they claimed, although that leadership was certainly problematic. Rather, the *Pančevoer Post* complained of a growing malaise among the Germans, a poisonous apathy which was enervating Germans as a society and weakening their local institutions. The original spirit which had driven the German movement in Yugoslavia after the war had expired, they claimed, and had been replaced by something pale and bloodless. The *voelkisch* spirit of the people had atrophied and the Swabians had lost their readiness to struggle and sacrifice for their own institutions.<sup>562</sup> In the original leadership, these Kulturbund dissenters saw not bold national activists but stubborn holdovers from a bygone era.

The Erneuerungsbewegung began as an opposition movement inside the Kulturbund. Its criticisms, as we shall see, concerned individuals, ideology, and methods but also extended to symbolism and even commemorations. An early article in the *Pančevoer Post* seized upon the 1934 Kulturbund *Trachtenfest* in Novi Sad as representative of their grievances. These once boisterous Kulturbund *Trachtenfeste* had withered in recent years, the Erneuerer complained. Attendance at the 1934 event was low and some regions were represented especially poorly. These galas, which

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<sup>562</sup> E. W. A. Redn, "Das Problem unserer Volksgemeinschaft I," *Pančevoer Post* November 19 1933.

had once served as powerful and popular celebrations of German nationhood and traditions, had recently lost their power to inspire and forfeited their capacity to forge community. Indeed, “the Novi Sad *Trachtenfest*, which once inspired hopes that it would become a true *Volksfest*, a festival of the people, has become a purely fancy party at which the country folk are hardly represented and could hardly feel comfortable. If this development proceeds in the same manner, this “greatest festival of the community” will soon become just a ‘costume party’” of Swabian society’s upper class. Such criticism was biting on a number of levels. On the one hand, the author cast the original leadership as city dwellers who were out of touch with the mostly rural Swabians. Such a remark at a time when modernity and especially the modern city were considered broadly suspect to many German thinkers and social critics was plainly not innocent. Here the Erneuerer’s mouthpiece was openly questioning the authenticity of the original leadership’s German national identity and implying that that leadership was alien to the eternal, *voelkisch* virtues of the German peasant and his pastoral environment. *Trachtenfeste*, celebratory vehicles for instilling national consciousness and creating true community, were en route to becoming decadent costume parties for the Swabian urban elite, the dissidents charged. As a remedy, the *Pančevoer Post* suggested returning more of these *Volksfeste* to the *Volk* itself. It would really be a blessing, he concluded, if Swabians would gradually come to the conviction that a proper *Volksfest*, which a *Trachtenfest* was supposed to be after all, could only be held in Swabian villages or small towns, such that the peasants, who comprised the majority of the Swabian population, could really participate.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> A.R., “Das Trachtenfest in Novisad,” *Pančevoer Post* February 11 1934.

In its criticism of the 1934 Kulturbund *Trachtenfest*, the *Pančevoer Post* revealed its *voelkisch* outlook. The modern and corrupt city had stifled expression of the authentic German spirit as represented by the Swabian peasant, village and landscape. The *Trachtenfest* article additionally suggested the newspaper's highly topical concern with the quality, nature, and cult of leadership and the mystical connection between true leaders and the true *Volk*. The peculiar genius that was German nationhood had been allowed to fade under men more concerned with their personal fortunes than the good fortune of the *Volk*. Swabians, the newspaper bemoaned, had an "oligarchic-dictatorial leadership" which had lost contact with the people.<sup>564</sup> Jakob Awender himself wrote of this alienation and even antagonism between the leadership and people in early 1933. The Kulturbund leaders sat in splendid isolation in their offices, never venturing out among ordinary Swabians to hear their concerns, he snorted. Theirs was a "bureaucratic dictatorship", unjustified because of its lacking connection to the people. As mass politics were capturing whole societies in Europe, Awender sneered that the original leadership's isolation and anemic leadership had rendered it incapable of organizing more than 10 percent of the German minority in the Kulturbund.<sup>565</sup>

To be sure, Awender was hardly against dictatorship and was an open admirer of Hitler and the Third Reich. He also stated that dictatorship selflessly executed for the true good of the *Volk* first and individuals second could be justified.<sup>566</sup> Under his editorship, the *Pančevoer Post* avidly followed German and Nazi Party politics and celebrated the qualities of bold leadership. "*Fuehrerprinzip*," one such front page

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<sup>564</sup> E. W. A. Redn, "Das Problem Unserer Volksgemeinschaft II," *Pančevoer Post* November 26 1933.

<sup>565</sup> Jakob Awender, "Wahrheit verbindet Fuehrer und Volk," *Pančevoer Post* 1933.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*

article from early 1934, discussed the essence of leadership (*Fuehrertum*), finding it to be absolute faith in ideals, elimination of private desire, responsibility for the fate of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and indifference toward popularity. “Genius is not comprehensible to the masses,” the newspaper warned, noting that in the end it was men who made history.<sup>567</sup>

One such man, of course, was Adolf Hitler, whose NSDAP assumed power in January 1933 and seemed to fulfill the *voelkisch* yearnings of the most radical elements. In Hitler’s revolution, Awender recognized not the mere assumption of power by a political party but rather ideological triumph in a clash of world views. “A young, committed, corporative unity-idea struggles against a bloodless, self-absorbed, thoughtless system of self-interest,” he wrote. In Germany, the Nazi regime had demonstrated the triumph of *Jungdeutschland* and would soon banish the last traces of impurity, dishonor, and self-interest from the country. Similar struggles were at hand in Austria and Romania, Awender noted, and even Yugoslavia was touched by the movement.<sup>568</sup> Indeed, the Erneuerer observed throughout their speeches and writings that theirs was not just an isolated challenge to a tired old leadership that refused to afford the younger generation influence or responsibility. Rather, they were part of a broad movement among Europe’s (especially young) Germans to banish an outdated system and ideology and usher in a new, purer age of the authentic *Volk*.

The liberalism of Weimar and, the Erneuerer implied, of the original leadership, was anathema to the purer order for which the *voelkisch* worldview yearned. Liberalism fundamentally privileged the individual over the community, and

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<sup>567</sup> Robert Juba, "Fuehrerprinzip," *Pančevoer Post* January 7 1934.

<sup>568</sup> Jakob Awender, "Fruehlingsrauschen," *Pančevoer Post*, February 11 1934.

self-interest over the good of the *Volk*. It promoted a crass materialist worldview, which sprang from a fountain of individualism and egoism. Against such a world view, the Erneuerer offered one driven toward the creation of a *Volksgemeinschaft*, a nationally-based community where community interests triumphed over those of the selfish individual. Meanwhile, they saw liberal poison as spreading throughout Swabian society, blaming it for enervating the *Genossenschaften* and other German associations in Yugoslavia. By encouraging the atomized mentality of the individual, liberalism had originally been responsible for the Swabians' lack of national consciousness and later undermined the German national movement in Yugoslavia. "Precisely because of its individual-egocentric attitude toward all of life's problems and its disjointedness, because of its atomization of the people, liberalism was and remains the greatest danger for our *Volk* and must be eliminated from our ranks," they asserted. "Therefore, the *voelkisch*-awoken Swabian people stands in conscious opposition to liberalism, possessed by its idealistic community spirit."<sup>569</sup> Ultimately, the liberal worldview and the men who held it represented nothing less than betrayal of the *Volk*, the Erneuerer believed.<sup>570</sup> "Common-interest before self-interest" (*Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz*) would become a signature slogan of the Erneuerungsbewegung, with the clear intention of smearing the original leadership as not merely socially irresponsible but positively self-serving and even exploitative. Indeed, there was an element of class conflict in the Erneuerungsbewegung-original leadership split, since the original leadership tended to be materially well off. They were thus vulnerable to criticism before the less wealthy Swabians at a time when

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<sup>569</sup> "Vom Einzelmenschen zur Volksgemeinschaft," *Pančevoer Post* June 9 1934.

<sup>570</sup> Jakob Awender, "Hundertmal," *Pančevoer Post*, January 28 1934.



everybody in Yugoslavia was still feeling the effects of the world economic crisis. The established German leadership, the Erneuerer charged, regularly put themselves and their own material well being ahead of the common Swabian good.

In addition to revealing their contempt for liberalism and the current leadership, which they accused of betraying the German *Gemeinschaft*, the men at the *Pančevoer Post* openly engaged in the cult of youth, both for youth's self-evident energy but also for the same progressive yet conservative-revolutionary qualities ascribed to it by Moeller van den Bruck in *The Third Reich* and elsewhere. Owing to the popularity and influence of the youth movement in Germany, many *voelkisch* thinkers had fixed upon the power and strength of youth, of course. Under the Nazis, virility, youth and the cult of Germanic, young manhood (especially as embodied in the heroic, young, male form) would be celebrated in song, word, and even stone. As for the Erneuerer, the power of their movement rested upon the Swabian youth, whose youth groups were essentially a local manifestation of the overall German youth movement and likewise indulged in its rebelliousness against the world of their elders. It was their idealism that inspired the Swabian youths' belief in the *Fuehrerprinzip* and indeed the purity of their own ideas and capacity to lead. Their rebellious energy lent their message power and perplexed their elders across every section of German society, all of whom noticed there was something different about this younger generation and sought either to contain or harness its energy.

The men at the *Pančevoer Post* identified themselves with the Nazis' successes in Germany and thus the victory of the young over the old. In Hitler's appointment as German chancellor they saw the triumph of Germany's own

“*Erneuerung*”. Hitler’s appointment, they claimed, had been a victory for himself and his party but also for the likeminded men and women of the young generation over their opponents, whom they cast as old.<sup>571</sup> It also meant more than a change in mere administration and herein lay the substance of *Erneuerung*: the Yugoslav Erneuerer were calling not merely for changes in the leadership of Yugoslavia’s Kulturbund and economic cooperatives and other organizations. To be sure, the current leadership would have to go. However, the essence of the issue was not the replacement of the old leadership with new men. Rather, the introduction of a whole new *system* would be unavoidable, they claimed, though they were vague on its details. The rotten must be removed, the impure must disappear. “All new methods in the management corresponding to the contemporary spirit must find entry into our organization [the Kulturbund].” Fortunately, the young were uniquely qualified to lead. “It is already about more than the right to collaboration and consultation by the young and naturally temperamental generation in the decisive issues of our *Volk*,” they claimed. “Today it is about leadership itself.” Indeed, “the young generation has a more impressive national education behind it than can be imagined, to which one should add a decade of consistently driven grass roots efforts, which sharpens their outlook.” Furthermore, the young leadership cadre looks with consternation on the vacuum, on the airless space, which surrounds the old leadership, which appears to have totally lost any living contact with the great mass of our *Volk*.” They continued that “even then, the worst bit lies not so much in the innumerable mistakes of the leading personalities of our *Volk* organizations, nor expressly in the almost morbid unification of different and internally contradictory offices in a single hand, but rather in the spiritual closing

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<sup>571</sup> “Die Alten und wir Jungen,” *Pančvoer Post*, April 30 1933.

off of the old leadership against every new idea, against every renewal, against every revitalization from the outside.”<sup>572</sup>

The leaders of the budding Erneuerungsbewegung were thus calling not merely for new leaders (themselves, preferably) but also for new ideas and new tactics. The sullied men and methods of the past would be replaced by youth and dynamism, both free from liberalism and firmly rooted in *voelkisch* national consciousness. Their struggle was best understood as an intellectually charged generational clash, the *Pančevoer Post* advised, since the conflict derived from differences of opinion between the old and the young. The conflict was quite obviously more than that, however. “The ‘older generation,’ to which the ‘leaders’ with their narrow following belong, have built up organizations that they lead according to their ideas and their system and now close off against renewal – from wherever it may come – even at the risk of the good of the people; they attempt, therefore, to block this eternal cycle of things by every means available to them.” Meanwhile, “the younger generation – by which should be understood not people of a particular age but rather those who are interested with youthful enthusiasm in the good of the nationality/people (*Volkstum*)” had been shut out of German affairs. As outsiders, they saw “many transgressions [by the original leadership] and therefore declared war on this ‘older generation.’” Finally, this struggle would lead to a true, organized *Volksgemeinschaft*, they promised, which must be tirelessly implemented according to the principle that the “common interest goes before personal interest.”<sup>573</sup> The *Pančevoer Post* aimed at nothing less than a revolution within Yugoslavia’s

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<sup>572</sup> "Die Reihen fest geschlossen," *Pančevoer Post* May 19 1934.

<sup>573</sup> A.R., "Kampf der Generationen," *Pančevoer Post*, July 21 1934.

German minority. The clash of generations would continue to divide the German minority for several contentious years.

*The Nature of the Erneuerungsbewegung in Southesastern Europe*

The Erneuerungsbewegung in Yugoslavia did not occur in a vacuum. As we have seen, it was predicated upon the *voelkisch* ideology and German interwar indignation. It was further inspired and energized by Hitler's success in Germany and the ongoing National Socialist struggle in Austria. Awender and his colleagues consciously viewed themselves as local agents of a broader struggle for Germandom, the vanguard of a *voelkisch* insurgency against staid liberalism, and advocates for the future against the past. However, the Erneuerungsbewegung in Yugoslavia also received impetus from events in neighboring Romania, with whose German population the Yugoslav Swabians shared ties of history, culture, religion and kinship.

Romania's German population was even more diverse than Yugoslavia's. In addition to hundreds of thousands of Swabians in Banat, it included the ancient Transylvanian Saxons as well as a smattering of Germans in Sathmar, Dobrudja, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. These Germans in Romania had extensive contacts with Germany during the interwar period, and the cities of Transylvania as well as Timișoara included a relatively large class of intellectuals, businessmen, and the like. Some Romanians such as Richard Csaki, Secretary General of the Stuttgart-based Deutsches Ausland-Institut, played important roles in Reich Volkstumarbeit organizations. Swabians in both the Romanian and Yugoslav portions of Banat had

come as immigrants during the years of Habsburg settlement, of course, and were only recently divided by the political borders reached at Trianon. Even afterward, there was considerable exchange between the Swabians in Romania and Yugoslavia, the latter of whom would long recall proud Timișoara as a major center of *Schwabentum* in southeastern Europe.

Like Hungary and Yugoslavia, Romania had begun the interwar period with a German leadership that was essentially moderate and pragmatist. The Transylvanian Saxon Rudolf Brandsch founded the Association of Germans in Romania (*Verband der Deutschen in Rumaenien*) in 1921 to manage German affairs there, and this organization enjoyed reasonably good relations with the government for some time. Indeed, Romania's Germans probably had the best relationship with their government of all the German minorities in southeastern Europe. However, the interwar period was characterized by extremism in Romania just as it was everywhere else and the success of National Socialism created local admirers and imitators there. A Nazi-inclined body first appeared in the 1920s in the form of Fritz Fabritius' "self-help" movement. As Hitler consolidated power in Germany, Fabritius' self-help movement drifted toward Nazi sympathy and even self-identification, finally renaming itself the National Socialist Renewal Movement of the Germans in Romania (*Nationalsozialistische Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen in Rumaenien*) in 1934. This Romanian German Erneuerungsbewegung then began its own insurgency, seeking control of the Association of Germans in Romania and its highest office for Fabritius. Despite considerable resistance in conservative (mostly Swabian Catholic) circles, Nazi sympathizers had so infiltrated the Association of Germans in Romania

that Fabritus succeeded in taking over its presidency. The German minority in Romania would remain riven by internal divisions and subject to Reich interference in the coming years. Nevertheless, the Romanian Germans' Erneuerungsbewegung provided clear inspiration for their coethnics in Yugoslavia, who took notice of its struggles and successes. Awender and other Erneuerer at the *Pančevoer Post* regarded Fabritius' movement as a model and recognized a dynamic at work in Romania which they plainly believed applicable in Yugoslavia.<sup>574</sup>

Ultimately, the Yugoslav Erneuerer's insurgency was a clash of generations and the Erneuerer consciously framed their insurrection in terms of the young and old, the new and outmoded. It became an external assault on the Kulturbund but the movement began as *internal* opposition within that organization. Awender's harsh criticism of Kraft and his colleagues had additional roots in economic affairs, specifically in the *Genossenschaften*, which many believed were being mismanaged under Kraft's leadership. The insurrection was furthermore about jobs, since many leading Erneuerer felt locked out of leadership and, thus, jobs by their elders. Although Awender and his colleagues at the *Pančevoer Post* and later *Volksruf* claimed to speak for all Erneuerer, and though Awender was commonly recognized as the movement's leader, the Erneuerungsbewegung was not a typical organization with statutes, rules, procedures, etc. like the Kulturbund. The Erneuerungsbewegung, thus, became more than a typical opposition movement but less than a formal (or legal) organization or party. To the degree that it had local chapters, these often began as Kulturbund youth groups which young Erneuerer simply infiltrated and "converted." In fact, it quickly became the Erneuerungsbewegung's goal to convince

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<sup>574</sup> "Die Volksgemeinschaft siegt," *Pančevoer Post* April 22 1934.

Kulturbund youth groups and even whole Kulturbund chapters, to publicly embrace their *Kameradschaft der Erneuerungsbewegung*. In point of fact, the Erneuerer had been responsible for founding some of these Kulturbund youth groups or local chapters to begin with.

Despite its open enthusiasm for Hitler and National Socialism, the Yugoslav Erneuerungsbewegung was not created or installed by the Nazis. Indeed, many in the NSDAP and especially such official Reich bodies as the Foreign Ministry long regarded the Erneuerer as a nuisance whose insurrection in Yugoslavia threatened to complicate relations between that country and Germany. Despite its obvious admiration for German National Socialism, the Erneuerungsbewegung had indigenous roots and reflected local concerns, such as hostility to Magyars. Nevertheless, the movement plainly embraced National Socialism and should be viewed as a local manifestation of deep Nazi sympathy, if not exactly an openly Nazi party. Although its leaders sought to portray the movement as monolithic, differences existed within its ranks and in time a more “moderate” wing emerged alongside the “radicals” behind Awender, as we shall see.<sup>575</sup> The Erneuererungsbewegung, thus, was an extreme expression of *voelkisch* as well as homeland German nationalism, and its adherents became infamous for their preference for confrontational methods and impatience with “decadent” liberalism, democracy, and the like.

The Erneuerungsbewegung was also paradoxical. It was a simple expression of rebellion against authority at the same time that it championed “German” discipline and spoke in a militaristic idiom of struggle and *Kameradschaft*. The latter clearly

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<sup>575</sup> To be clear, all followers of the Erneuerungsbewegung were radical, but some were plainly more extreme and less open to compromise than others.

reflected the influence of the experience of the First World War on the Erneuerungsbewegung's members who had been soldiers during the conflict. Indeed, the Erneuerer proudly referred to one another as "*Kameraden*." Thus, the Erneuerungsbewegung must also be seen in many ways as a local expression or outgrowth of the broader German youth movement, which became popular in Germany before the First World War and somewhat later in southeastern Europe (especially in Romania). Youth groups assumed various forms among Yugoslavia's Germans, including Catholic and Protestant varieties as well as those youth groups within the Kulturbund itself. However, the loose *Kameradschaft der Erneuerungsbewegung* gradually proved to be the most formidable strain of the youth movement in Yugoslavia, attracting defectors from the religious youth groups and so infiltrating the youth groups of many Kulturbund chapters that the original leadership ultimately would have to disband them. In sum, then, these youth movements in Yugoslavia were indigenous affairs, but they also had important connections to German youth abroad, especially in Germany, Austria and Romania.

Finally, the Erneuerer's insurgency and the original leadership's resistance to it. was also a dispute over methods. The original leadership argued for more moderate tactics and cooperation with the Yugoslav authorities. The Erneuerer, however, embraced more disruptive methods, displays of numerical strength, manifestations of defiance, provocative confrontations, and a proud renunciation of parliamentarism, which they believed had achieved nothing for the German minority. The Erneuerungsbewegung was a generational clash but also a clash of world views (though, as will be further discussed later, the original leadership were not strangers to the *voelkisch* ideology



themselves). It was an assault on liberalism and tolerance. It was a revolt by young intellectuals against older intellectuals. It was a bid for power. It was also highly personal.

### *The Expansion of Youth Groups in the 1930s*

As we have seen, many Swabians who studied in Austria and Germany later became influential leaders in the German national movement both before and especially after 1918. Men such as Stefan Kraft had been members of the Association of German University Students from the Lands of the Hungarian Crown in Vienna, in which they had been particularly influenced by that organization's guiding spirit, the Swabian nationalist author Adam Mueller-Gutenbrunn. It was largely through these Swabian students, thus, that German nationalism and *voelkisch* thought made their way to Yugoslavia. During their studies abroad these men naturally would also have become aware of the German youth movement and especially the *Wandervoegel*. Upon their return home, however, they did not seek to recreate that movement which, with a few partial exceptions, did not develop in Yugoslavia until the 1930s. In sum, the Swabian boys who studied before the First World War had imbibed a diet of nationalism and had at least learned the idiom of the *voelkisch* ideology. The generation of students which succeeded them in the radicalized environment of the 1920s and 1930s would return home as bearers of National Socialism's *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and seek out other youths receptive to their message.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 38E.

Despite the existence of a handful of *Wandervoegel*-inspired groups, the German youth movement in Yugoslavia would not really take off until the 1930s.<sup>577</sup> Swabians who had studied abroad were the true drivers of the movement, inspired as they were by the dynamic and radical youth movement they had seen in Germany and Austria. After 1931, the relegalized Kulturbund also turned to the matter of German youth, which it urgently wished to organize under its auspices. As we have seen, the Kulturbund already contained a number of youth groups.<sup>578</sup> Besides some gymnastics and sports clubs, a number of youth groups, (girls' sections, boys' sections, and young sport groups) had formed in or merged into the Kulturbund. At the 1933 annual congress, however, the Kulturbund resolved to address youth matters more intently and adopted the slogan "Youth forward!"<sup>579</sup> In May of the following year, the Kulturbund's various youth organizations were gathered into the Association of German Youth in the Swabian-German Kulturbund (*Verband der Deutschen Jugend im Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbund* or VDJ). The leader of the Kulturbund's Sport Association (*Verband der Sportvereine*), Thomas Menrath, was appointed the VDJ's head or "Youth Leader" (*Jugendleiter*). Altogether, there were 102 youth

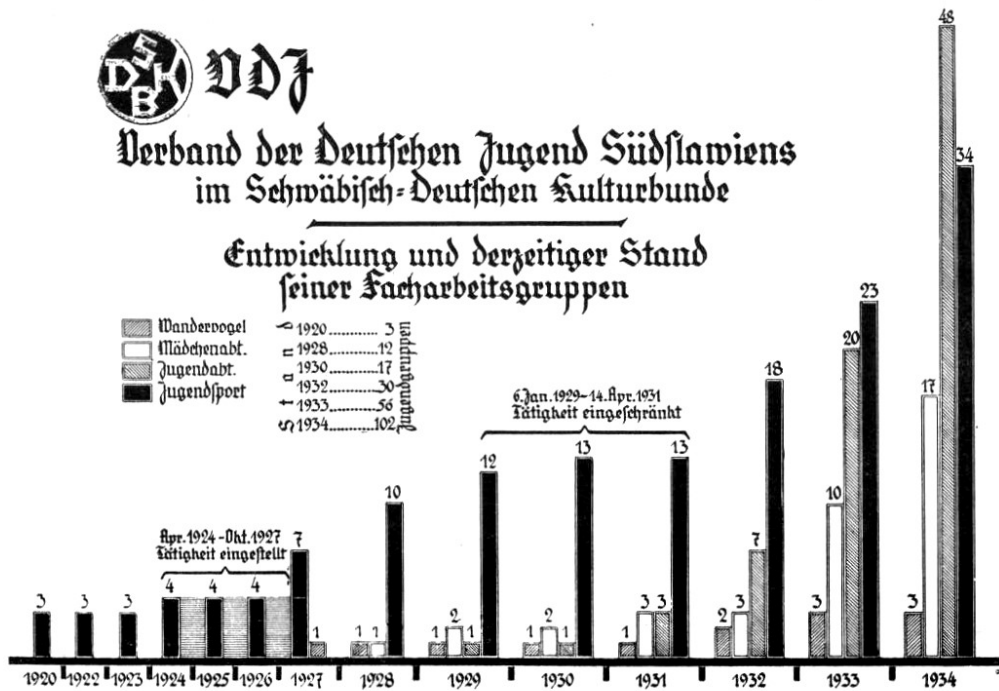
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<sup>577</sup> In the late 1920s, these loosely connected youth groups in Yugoslavia established connections with others in Germany and Austria as well as with Romania, which had a particularly lively German youth scene. Gerhard Albrich, Christ, Hans and Hockl, Hans Wolfram, *Deutsche Jugendbewegung im Suedosten* (Bielefeld, Germany: Verlag Ernst und Werner Giesecking, 1969). 123-127.

<sup>578</sup> At the behest of the Kulturbund, the nine existing German gymnastics clubs (*Turnvereine*) combined in 1928 to form the Association of German Gymnastics Associations (*Verband der Deutschen Turnvereine*). This organization passed the first years of dictatorship first as the National Association of German Gymnastic and Sports Associations (*Landesverband der Deutschen Turn- und Sportvereine*) and later in the Association of the German Sport Clubs in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Verband der Deutschen Sportvereine im Koenigreiche Jugoslawien im Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund*) after the Kulturbund obtained formal permission to renew its activities in 1931. Thomas Menrath, "Verband der Deutschen Jugend," in *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes vom 1. November 1933 bis 31. Oktober 1934, Taetigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung zur 10. ordentlichen Hauptversammlung in Novisad-Neusatz, 3. Dezember 1934* (Novi Sad: Druckerei- und Verlags-A.G., 1934). 40.

<sup>579</sup> "Jugend voran!" Bundesleitung des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes vom 1. November 1933 bis 31. Oktober 1934, Taetigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung zur 10. ordentlichen Hauptversammlung in Novisad-Neusatz, 3. Dezember 1934*. 10.

groups of some type in the Kulturbund by the 1934 annual congress, showing that the Kulturbund well recognized the importance of organizing contemporary youth.



Graphic from the 1933/34 *Arbeit des Kulturbundes* showing the increasing number of Kulturbund youth groups during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>580</sup>

Frauenarbeit: Women in the Kulturbund

Like youth, women became increasingly visible in the Kulturbund during the 1930s. True, women had not featured prominently in either the original leadership of the Kulturbund or that of its subsequent challengers, the Erneuerer. Nevertheless, it is important to note that women and girls were involved in the German national movement from its early years and ultimately came to form a significant portion of the Kulturbund’s membership and the Erneuerererbewegung’s adherents. To be

<sup>580</sup> Ibid. Unpaginated.

sure, the Kulturbund, KWVD and Erneuerungsbewegung were dominated by and primarily oriented to males. Nevertheless, the original Swabian activists and later Erneuerer sought to integrate women into their movements and mobilize them for their causes. During the Kulturbund's first decade, women were especially involved in the Kulturbund's charity work and were essential participants at every *Trachtenfest* and annual congress. Women also participated in other Kulturbund gatherings, albeit usually in a secondary capacity. At all such events, women would have been exposed to the same speeches and relentless appeal for Swabians to embrace their German national identity and recognize the boundaries of their natural community as national. Moreover, since the German community was largely based on the German language and the collective memory of Swabians' colonist ancestry, women were assigned special roles as mothers and the preservers of tradition and language in the home.

Early women's sections in the Kulturbund, known as *Frauenabteilungen*, were founded in Zrenjanin in 1923 and in Bela Crkva and Novi Sad shortly thereafter. In the 1930s, the Kulturbund increased its appeal to women and girls and encouraged the development of yet more sections specifically for them. Such sections were initially few in number, however, and were furthermore slow to develop. Surveying the state of *Frauenarbeit* in 1934, the Kulturbund's annual report observed that the German movement had had only a marginal appeal for the country's German women during the first interwar decade. The German national idea had only started to appeal to the Swabian male population during the war and initial postwar years, the report noted, and was slower to develop among Yugoslavia's Swabian women, who had not shared the wartime *Fronterlebnis* with their husbands, brothers and sons. This

situation was abetted by the general lack of nationally conscious women leaders. Moreover, women did not immediately recognize the exceptional nature of the Kulturbund as a specifically nationally-based organization in the initial interwar years. Women were especially skeptical of the Kulturbund in the cities, where they had long belonged women's voluntary associations involved in charity work.<sup>581</sup> Such preexisting associations had frequently been confessionally-based and therefore contained many non-Germans. Thus, it was necessary to instill in women the idea that, in addition to normal social work, the *auslandsdeutsche Frau* had other, specifically national duties, which could only be successfully carried out within the Kulturbund.<sup>582</sup>

Following the reapproval of the Kulturbund's statutes in 1931, several more women's sections were established across Yugoslavia's German-settled regions, including in Torža, Velimirovac, Sombor, Belgrade, and the Slovene cities of Maribor and Celje. By 1934, the Kulturbund also boasted seventeen *Maedchenabteilungen*, sections specifically devoted to girls and parallel to the far larger number of *Sportabteilungen* and *Jugendgruppen*. As the idea of a special role for women developed in the Kulturbund, the number of both women's and girls' sections grew accordingly, and the organization began training young women to lead them. The Kulturbund's annual report noted in 1934 that Swabian women had increasingly come to recognize "their mission as an *auslandsdeutsche* woman and mother." Indeed, working with the Kulturbund was nothing less than a "national

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<sup>581</sup> Women in the countryside would not become organized within the Kulturbund for sometime. Nevertheless, they were apparently more disposed towards such participation than their urban co-ethnics at the outset of the interwar period. Ibid. 36.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid. 36-37.

duty” for Swabian women.<sup>583</sup> Still, women were always slower than men to become institutionally involved in Kulturbund affairs.

The Kulturbund’s women’s sections were typically involved in charitable work, especially the Kulturbund’s annual *Winterhilfswerk* campaign “*Brueder in not*” (“Brothers in Distress”) during the 1930s. Likewise, they cooperated with the Belgrade “*Kinder aufs Land*” program (“Children to the Countryside”), which was designed to enable Belgrade’s Swabian children to spend summers in the Vojvodinian countryside.<sup>584</sup> They additionally engaged in charitable activities at Christmastime, taking up collections and distributing presents to needy Swabian children. In some cases women’s groups organized folk dance groups and groups in which to sing German *Volkslieder*. They helped organize mothers’ day celebrations and festivals for children, which frequently were major public events. Moreover, they organized informational events, such as lectures on public health and the family.

In doing such charity work, Yugoslavia’s Swabian women continued their labors in a familiar field but did so in a slightly changed way. Where before they might have participated in multi-ethnic but mono-confessional associations, Swabian Catholic and Protestant women in the Kulturbund now mixed based expressly on the basis of their common ethnicity. Moreover, the boundaries of their community and the beneficiaries of their charitable work henceforth also would be specifically defined by German ethnicity. Indeed, the Kulturbund insisted on the German national

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<sup>583</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwabisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes 1937: Taetigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung* (Novi Sad: Schwaebisch-Deutsch Kulturbund, 1937). 36

<sup>584</sup> Besides the obvious health benefits of a summer in the countryside, this program also had the function of removing German children from the Serbian capital city and exposing them to regions of the country where Germans predominated and where they could improve their German language skills and learn German customs.

orientation of women's groups and meetings under its auspices, stipulating that there should "never be a gathering without a short lecture, never a meeting without a serious discussion among all members about the great questions of our German life."<sup>585</sup>

The above notwithstanding, the Kulturbund's new *Frauenarbeit* reflected a very traditional understanding of women's place and role in society, the family, and the German community. All Swabian activists were principally concerned with preserving German traditions and increasing Swabian numbers. Thus, though there was a public, political aspect to their national movement, that movement also had to be carried out in an intimate and intensely personal space as well. During an era when German language schooling or religious services were frequently unavailable, the primary venue for the instillation of the German spirit and language in Swabian children was necessarily the home. Thus, motherhood and the domestic sphere assumed great importance for the German national movement in Yugoslavia. Women, understood as mothers, were of essential importance in the literal reproduction of Swabians and the transmission of German customs, language and values across generations. They were encouraged to have large families, and the mothers of particularly *kinderreich* families, that is families with many children, were extolled in print, in sermons, and at the Kulturbund's annual congresses.

By the mid-1930s, the Kulturbund's leaders had come to consider *Frauenarbeit* essential to their movement's overall success. But as much as the Kulturbund's leadership encouraged women to join its new women's sections, it clearly had traditional ideas about the nature of their work. According to the

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<sup>585</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwabisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes. 36.

Kulturbund's 1937 annual report, *Frauenarbeit* should remain limited to those specific areas "predestined" for women in society and should not seek to compete with men's activities.<sup>586</sup> Women were important for their supposedly innate, nurturing qualities and their unique capacity for charity and support. For all the talk of the vital role of women in the work of the Kulturbund, organized *Frauenarbeit*, it was clear, would remain women's work.

*The Erneuerungsbewegung Bids for Control of the Kulturbund*

Everyone knew there was going to be trouble at the Kulturbund's annual congress in 1934. The Erneuerer had continued their agitation throughout the year and had become even more strident with the transformation of the *Pančevoer Post* into *Volksruf* in August 1934, as we shall see below. Young Swabians were particularly receptive to the Erneuerer's message, and the movement, such as it were, steadily gathered Swabian adherents in schools and youth groups. Although the Kulturbund had no doubt sought to bring the country's German youth groups under its wings partly as a means to control them and harness their energy, the fact is that the youth were very susceptible to the Erneuerer's rebellious message, and the many Kulturbund youth groups frequently served as avenues of infiltration for the Erneuerungsbewegung. As such, 1934 would witness the first year of several showdowns between the Erneuerer and the original leadership. However, where in past years the Erneuerer had limited themselves to loud demands and blistering criticism, in 1934 they would make an organized bid for control of the organization.

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid. 36.



In August, the editors of the *Pančevoer Post* launched *Volksruf*, a more substantial newspaper which would loudly proclaim the Erneuerer's message from Banat to Slovenia and become the second most widely read German newspapers in the country.<sup>587</sup> In one sense, *Volksruf* was merely a renamed and expanded *Pančevoer Post*. However, its launch signaled that the Erneuerer would intensify their message and seek to expand their voice to all parts of the German settlement area. The *Pančevoer Post*'s key staff remained, especially founder and Pančevo Kulturbund chairman Simon Bartman and editor Jakob Awender. Its new masthead now describing *Volksruf* as the "organ for *voelkisch* renewal", the new newspaper proudly declared that it stood above differences of class and confession and asserted it would defend the usual litany of national concerns such as language, *Heimat*, and the like.<sup>588</sup> To this *Volksruf* added intense anti-liberalism, hysterical opposition toward Magyarization, anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, intolerance of *Auchdeutsche*, and several eponymous essays on "Race, *Volk* and Nation." *Volksruf* intensified the editorial line of its titular predecessor and revealed itself as even more *voelkisch*. In 1934 the newspaper also introduced several of the principle Erneuerer, such as Gustav Halwax and Fritz Metzger, who would later so antagonize the original leadership and soon became regular contributors of ideological essays and Kulturbund criticism to its pages. In its premier issue, for example, Hans Thurn championed "Peasant (*Bauerliches*) Thought and Life" and asserted that the two "most elementary goods of every *Volk* [were] blood and soil." Thurn called for an *Erneuerungsfront* and inveighed against liberalism and the "German-blooded"

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<sup>587</sup> Bešlin. 7.

<sup>588</sup> "Die Pančevoer Post ein Volksruf," *Volksruf*, August 25 1934.

(meaning ethnically German but not politically so – a sneer) intelligentsia who had long imparted a sense of inferiority among the Swabians of Yugoslavia and otherwise facilitated Magyarization and German decline.<sup>589</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Eight, *Volksruf* also voiced severe criticism of Catholicism during 1934 and was particularly critical of the Swabian Catholic clergy.

The *Pančevoer Post*'s attention to the affairs of other ethnic Germans abroad persisted in *Volksruf*, which included coverage of Konrad Henlein, leader of the Sudeten Heimatsfront in Czechoslovakia already in 1934. (*Deutsches Volksblatt* also followed the Henlein movement with great interest.) Likewise, *Volksruf* remained attuned to German affairs in neighboring Romania where it breathlessly followed the progress of the Romanian Germans' Erneuerungsbewegung. The newspaper's criticisms of the principal Swabian body there, the *Volksrat*, were clearly intended to suggest parallels to the original leadership in Yugoslavia while also locating the Yugoslav Erneuerungsbewegung in the context of a transborder German revolution. In Romania, *Volksruf* claimed, the old German leadership (of the *Volksrat*) had "gone to sleep." Why? Because the "representatives of the old system" believed themselves more capable of leadership than the younger generation of Erneuerer and had consequently excluded them from decision-making. Here *Volksruf* basically accused the older German leaders in Romania of being ineffective, out of touch, indifferent, and enjoying the creature comforts of power without much thought for defending common German interests. The "old leadership's" defense of the "System" there consisted of slander and denunciation and was nothing short of open treason, which

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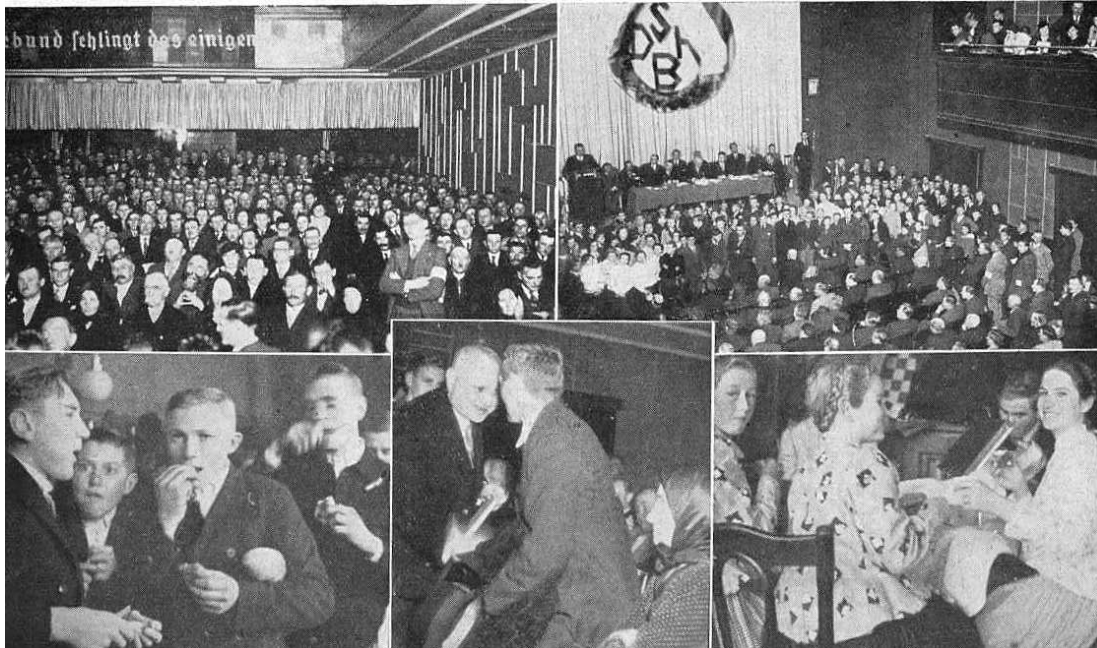
<sup>589</sup> Hans Thurn, "Bauerliches Denken und Leben," *Volksruf*, August 25 1934.

ultimately undermined the *Volk*, *Volksruf* charged. The parallels to Yugoslavia which *Volksruf* hoped to draw were obvious.

In the months leading up to the Kulturbund's 1934 annual congress, there was plenty to suggest that the event would not be the sort of self-congratulatory affair it had been in the past. The Convention of University Students (*Akademikertagung*) in September, for example, revealed the simmering discontent among the young, educated, and ambitious Swabians in the country. This meeting was actually the annual gathering of the Kulturbund's National Association of German University Students in Yugoslavia. (*Landesverbandes der Deutschen Akademiker in Suedslawien*). Looking back on the event, *Deutsches Volksblatt* quietly noted this discontent and provided a remarkable snapshot of the young generation in the eyes of the establishment. "They act as if they are different by disposition and temperament," the newspaper observed. "One group seeks to realize the ambitions of the past and build up what is at hand. Others seek to invigorate what has already been achieved though a new impetus, a new thrust of power. Finally, there is a third group which rejects the old as failed in many ways and is determined to pursue fundamentally new paths."<sup>590</sup> Ultimately, the dissatisfaction the students expressed with the original leadership at the university student convention was all the more important since the National Association of German University Students was actually a Kulturbund body. As such, their discontent represented another expression of dissatisfaction with the organization's leadership from within.

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<sup>590</sup> "Die Akademikertagung - Rechenschaft und Besinnung", *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 9 1934.



Scenes from the 1936 Annual Congress of the Kulturbund in Novi Sad's Habag Haus. Bottom center and right, Keks congratulates particularly large German families.<sup>591</sup>

Although Awender and likeminded men on the Kulturbund's board had expressed criticism of the men and methods of the original leadership at the Kulturbund annual congresses in the past, 1934 marked the year when he and his allies would first make an organized bid to gain control of the organization. They hoped to gain control of the Kulturbund's board and thus the helm of the organization. At the same time, they hoped to install their *Kamerad* Jakob Lichtenberger as Youth Leader (*Jugendleiter*). The current leadership of the organization, on the other hand, naturally sought to prevent their young rivals from achieving either objective. Their victory would be both partial and impermanent.

To read coverage of the 1934 Kulturbund annual congress in *Deutsches Volksblatt*, little out of the ordinary seems to have occurred at this meeting of the Kulturbund and its sub-associations, the Association of German Youth (VDJ), the German Choral Union (*Deutscher Saengerbund*), the Association of German Libraries (*Verband deutscher Volksbuecherein*), the Doctors' Section (*Aerztesektion*), and German Women (*Deutsche Frauen*). The meeting of the VDJ was particularly

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<sup>591</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwabisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes. 10.

well attended, featuring around 250 youths from 50 youth groups. At this meeting, according to *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Thomas Menrath orderly resigned his post as *Jugendleiter*, which he claimed he had always considered a temporary position. (Menrath's residency in Novi Vrbas, the Kulturbund's unofficial mouthpiece explained, made his compliance impossible with the organization's statutory requirement that the *Jugendleiter* have his headquarters in Novi Sad.) The meeting then elected Jakob Lichtenberger as his replacement. Later at several important meetings of the Kulturbund leadership there was much discussion about whom to select as new board members. According to the Kulturbund's statutes, one half of the board members were required to resign and be replaced. A great debate erupted over the list of board candidates proposed by the Kulturbund leadership, when some local chapters requested that some proposed candidates be replaced by others. After much consideration, the leadership settled upon its own, original list, which then won majority approval.

Although *Deutsches Volksblatt* did not report it directly, one of the men to lose his seat on the board at this annual Kulturbund congress was Jakob Awender. Indeed, from the newspaper's coverage it would seem the only thing notable about the annual congress was that it featured heavy attendance and especially heavy participation by German youth. *Deutsches Volksblatt* positively cited the presence of so many young people as proof "that the seed, which the older fighters sowed for our nationality has not fallen on infertile ground." However, not all was well with the youth at this annual congress, *Deutsches Volksblatt* observed. "The brashness and exuberance of the youth indeed led sometimes to opinions colliding more severely

than was absolutely necessary. But one found oneself over and over in the most serious concern and work for our *Volkstum*, which young and old, experienced pioneers and young, enthusiastic fighters, each in his way, shared in the same devoted readiness for duty.”<sup>592</sup>

The Erneuerer, by contrast, covered the 1934 Kulturbund annual congress in *Volksruf* as if two armies had clashed there. As we have seen, the Erneuerer spoke a hyperbolic idiom of confrontation and rebellion. In their speeches and writings, they attached a sense of inevitability to their movement, finding nobility in struggle and asserting that their perseverance made victory unavoidable. In the weeks before the annual congress, they noted much alleged popular distrust of the original leadership and called for a “total turn away from the hitherto liberal, capitalistic-Marxist way of thinking represented by our leaders.”<sup>593</sup> On the eve of the event, Awender intoned that important tasks would be faced at the Kulturbund’s annual meeting, “upon whose resolution depended the *Volkstuemlichkeit* of the Kulturbund and the deepening of the *voelkisch* sentiment inside the *Volksgruppe*.” Proponents of a *voelksiche Erneuerung* would push their agenda and fully expected confrontation with the recalcitrant original leadership.<sup>594</sup>

*Volksruf* described the youth convention, that is the meeting of the VDJ, in very different terms than *Deutsches Volksblatt*. The Erneuerer called it a kind of insurrection where impatient youths demanded an end to hollow procedure and false debate, as well as Lichtenberger’s immediate election as *Jugendleiter*. In this,

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<sup>592</sup> "Volkstumstagung in Novisad, Die Hauptversammlung des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 4 1934.

<sup>593</sup> "Was will die sogenannte Opposition," *Pančvoer Post*, November 3 1934.

<sup>594</sup> Jakob Awender, "Zur volksdeutschen Tagung," *Volksruf*, December 1 1934.

*Volksruf* claimed, Lichtenberger allegedly commanded unanimous support save for a few misguided *Herren*, leading to inevitable conflict. After some shouting, Lichtenberger eventually was elected *Jugendleiter*, of course, but the scene hardly resembled its banal presentation in *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Although that newspaper had promised that Menrath would retain a role in *Jugendarbeit*, Lichtenberger's comments at the event as reproduced in *Volksruf* suggested a dramatically new course. He promised the most far-reaching independence for *Jugendarbeit* in the future, ominously noting that the Kulturbund leadership well knew him and his views.<sup>595</sup>

As well as offering a long-shot at leadership, the 1934 Kulturbund annual congress provided the Erneuerer a platform from which to announce their principles and demands. As such, Erneuer Fritz Metzger rose at the Kulturbund board meeting and called for a new and primary emphasis on "social and biological Volkstumarbeit", provoking heated controversy. Along with accusations of inexperience, board members also reproached Metzger and his *Kameraden* of copying "foreign" ideas and brash methods, which did not correspond to the circumstance of Germans in Yugoslavia. Naturally, the Erneuerer rejected such criticism, but the accusations were nevertheless significant for they revealed the original leadership to retain a local sensibility even as they championed German national identity and even endorsed Adolf Hitler's Germany. (As we shall see, the original Swabian activists may not have been National Socialists, but neither were they immune to admiration for the Third Reich.) The Erneuerer, for their part, announced that the ideas and methods in question were not foreign at all but rather

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<sup>595</sup> "Gewitterschwere Tage, Zum zweiten und dritten Dezember," *Volksruf*, December 8 1934.

were *German*, and that they need not “copy” them since they already held them as Germans themselves. The Erneuerer dismissed Kulturbund leadership’s list of proposed board members as inconsistent with the will of the *Volk*. As for their own list, they acknowledged that it had “stood in a most bitter battle,” which was generously to say that it had had little chance of victory.

Unbowed, Awender rejected accusations that he and his colleagues were causing divisions in the German minority even as they insistently rejected compromise. “For us its about the idea and totality, about our principles and their comprehensiveness,” they screamed. In the end, the Erneuerer had to acknowledge the decisive defeat of their candidate list by that of the Kulturbund leadership, 271 votes to 165.<sup>596</sup> The Erneuerer’s insurgency was thus halted at the Kulturbund’s annual congress in late 1934. Nevertheless, that the Erneuerer secured so many votes plainly demonstrated that their movement was gaining adherents.

The 1934 annual congress would have a lasting impact, the Erneuerer promised, and the event did mark a deepening and hardening of the divisions in the *Volksgruppe*. Indeed, 1934 was a kind of breakout year for the internal crisis that would dominate the German minority for so much of the 1930s. Though defeated at the annual Kulturbund congress, the Erneuerer resolved to continue striving for a “deepening of the *voelkisch* thought according to *volksbiologisch*, nation-specific, social and earthbound views.” Meanwhile, the Erneuerer’s opponents both within and without the Kulturbund were forced to take notice of their growing influence.

Obviously, the original leadership was disappointed (and probably quite perplexed) by the ire being directed their way by the Erneuerer’s leaders and their

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<sup>596</sup> Ibid.



many young sympathizers. During the 1920s they had encountered resistance to their German movement by Magyarones, Serbs, and Croats for being *too* nationalist, but the appearance of the Erneuerer marked the first time that they were challenged for not being nationalist *enough*. It was an unexpected and unwelcome change of affairs to say the least.

The original leadership at first used the courts to repulse Awender's early challenges, which were economic. As we have seen, German life in the 1930s was also characterized by a sophisticated system of economic cooperatives or *Genossenschaften*, the largest of which was the agricultural cooperative Agraria. As one might expect, the original Swabian activists and their associates, above all Stefan Kraft, held leading positions in these cooperatives, which faced difficult times as the world economic crisis lingered on in Yugoslavia. Indeed, the economic depression highlighted the gap between well to do Swabians such as Kraft and their poorer or younger co-ethnics in Yugoslavia. It is in part for this reason that the Erneuerer so often derided the original leadership as "big wigs" or "fat cats" who allegedly put their own self-interest (*Eigennutz*) before the Swabians collective interest (*Gemeinnutz*). The wealthier and more established Swabians tended during these tough times to remain committed to the original leadership. However, the younger and less well to do elements of society, whose circumstances visibly deteriorated with the Depression, became more susceptible to radical solutions to the Swabians' social and economic circumstances.<sup>597</sup> Recognizing this, Awender and his associates did not shy from personal or professional criticism of the original leadership in

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<sup>597</sup> Janjetović. 43. See also Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 229 and 357-8.

*Genossenschaften* matters, prompting Kraft, Grassl Moser and Keks to drag him before a court of honor (*Ehrengericht*) in 1933, where he was convicted of slander and his accusations formally dismissed.<sup>598</sup> As in the case of Nikolas Hasslinger, then, the original leadership was quick to resort to the courts to defend itself against unsubstantiated criticism of their leadership. Not all the criticism was specious, however. Leadership was controlled by few enough men that accusations of oligarchy did not always seem far fetched. And the German cooperatives, like society in general, endured difficult times during these years, prompting some popular resentment and suspicions of mismanagement.

Besides legal remedies, the original leadership fought back against the Erneuerer in the press they controlled. At first they sought to ignore their young challengers in the press, but shortly after the debut of the *Pančevoer Post* they denounced the young “well-poisoners” as imperiling the national unity necessitated by the Germans’ minority status in Yugoslavia.<sup>599</sup> The original leadership’s principle resistance strategy during the Erneuerungsbewegung’s early years consisted of charging its critics with being negative, naïve, inexperienced, and endangering German unity. The veteran national activists juxtaposed their own experience against the mere zeal of youth, warning that the latter would likely bring harm to the minority.<sup>600</sup> Thomas Menrath, the future Kulturbund *Jugendleiter*, recognized the unfortunate irony of the situation when he observed that Swabians had formerly lamented the lack of educated Germans in Yugoslavia and dreamt of what the

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<sup>598</sup> "Schlussprotokoll ueber die Verhandlungen des Ehrengerichtes in Sachen Dr. Kraft, Dr. Grassl, Dr. Moser und Praesident Keks gegen Dr. Awender," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 30 1933.

<sup>599</sup> "Brunnenvergifter," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 15 1933.

<sup>600</sup> "Eifer und Erfahrung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 4 1934.

minority could accomplish if only it had a broader intelligentsia. Now such a generation of university students had indeed emerged, but its energies were being squandered on its own pretensions to leadership as well as the creation of distrust between the Kulturbund leadership and the people. Dismissing calls by these “self-selected leaders of an uncertain future,” Menrath recalled the important innovations and accomplishments of the original leadership, noting that despite some failures, much had been achieved. “Who,” he asked “empowered [the Erneuerer] out of the almost 500 university students of our country to be the torchbearers and sole enlightened leaders to a better future?”<sup>601</sup>

The Kulturbund leaders also reminded Swabians of their many accomplishments and sacrifices for the Swabian *Volk*, which was one reason for the production of such an impressive annual report at the 1934 annual congress. Not insignificantly, this lavishly produced report included a historical overview of the Kulturbund’s costly achievements under the steady hand of Grassl, Keks and others. Meanwhile, *Deutsches Volksblatt* warned that “in its zeal, the Swabian youth looks only forward and is all too easily inclined to undervalue or at best accept the achievements of its forbearers as a given.”<sup>602</sup> Worse, the Erneuerer’s brashness and bellicosity drew unwanted, even hostile attention to the German minority.

Matters came to a head several times during 1935. In the wake of the 1934 annual congress, the Erneuerer claimed that their defeat there, which they considered a temporary setback, would only strengthen their movement. Likewise, the original leadership recognized that the challenge of the Erneuerungsbewegung was far from

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<sup>601</sup> Thomas Menrath, "Akademiker, Fuehrer und Volk," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 17 1933.

<sup>602</sup> Mitkaempfer, "Jugend und voelkische Arbeit," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, September 16 1934.

neutralized and planned measures to exclude its influence from the Kulturbund as much as possible in the future. As we shall see, these efforts crystallized in January, July and October of 1935, revealing both the lasting authority of the original leadership as well as the momentum of the forces arrayed against them. Simultaneously, the original leadership complained to the increasingly complex array of Reich and NSDAP bodies about the Erneuerungsbewegung, whose activities were proving to be quite disruptive. That year, Grassl wrote to the German Foreign Ministry demanding that the Reich recognize the Kulturbund's leading role in Swabian affairs and appealing to Rudolf Hess to restrain further meddling in Swabian affairs by the Reich-based groups and organizations.<sup>603</sup>

As we shall develop in the following chapter, the organizations and nature of Volkstumarbeit altered considerably following the Nazis' accession to power and the general *Gleichschaltung* of German society and organizational life. Although the sympathy of the German Foreign Ministry still was with the Kulturbund's original leadership, their brash challengers in the Erneuerungsbewegung also had admirers and even supporters in various official state or party bodies and nominally unofficial Volkstumarbeit organizations. Indeed, the Erneuerer had had supporters in the Reich from the very beginning, support which gradually increased. The Erneuerer conducted talks with the VDA during the spring of 1935 and found understanding and support there. The VDA had had some Nazi connections even in the years before Hitler's accession in 1933. Nevertheless, the VDA recommended that the Erneuerer handle its disagreements with the original leadership in a restrained fashion.<sup>604</sup> Thus

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<sup>603</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 235.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.* 234.

though they might have found intellectual allies, the Erneuerer were encouraged to tread softly so as to not rock to the boat and disturb relations between Germany and Yugoslavia. Although it is ostensibly a force for co-ethnics abroad, homeland nationalism frequently prioritizes the interests of the homeland itself, as Rogers Brubaker has observed. Under the Nazis, German homeland nationalism served the interests of the Reich itself, which desired placid foreign relations. The wishes of the ideologically related Germans in Yugoslavia were secondary. As such the official and unofficial German organs of Volkstumarbeit would continue to back the original leadership, for the time being at least.

*The First Countermeasures against the Erneuerer, 1935*

The original leadership did not wait long after the December 1934 annual congress to take countermeasures against the Erneuerungsbewegung. Meeting on January 13 of the following year, the Kulturbund leadership resolved to expel the movement's principle leaders from the organization. Although the expulsion was supposedly temporary, the reasons given for it eliminated the likelihood of a prompt return. Jakob Awender, Gustav Halwax, Georg Henlein, and Hans Thurn were to be expelled in accordance with the Kulturbund's statutes for activities damaging to the goals of the organization. In announcing its decision, the Kulturbund leadership explained that Awender's newspaper, *Volksruf*, had long pursued such broad, unfounded and slanderous attacks on the leadership of Yugoslavia's German organizations that it had cast aspersions upon the whole Kulturbund itself. They furthermore charged that, Awender's denial to the contrary, his criticisms were not

innocent and his opposition not loyal, as *Volksruf* had plainly showed as of late. His statements and behavior at the 1934 annual congress had been the final straw. “Dr. Jakob Awender raises the comprehensive claim to the leadership of the Kulturbund without . . . possessing a clear vision of how the work should be directed,” *Deutsches Volksblatt* charged. He knows only “that the development of the Kulturbund and thereby the good of our entire *Volksgruppe* shall not be ensured through peaceful and harmonious cooperation with all *Volksgenossen*, but rather should be aspired to through reckless struggle on an uncompromising path toward totality.” To this end, Awender had even recklessly raised doubts about the Kulturbund’s Yugoslav-loyalty and reputation, the Kulturbund board complained. In order to prevent him from damaging or even destroying the Kulturbund as the kernel of Yugoslavia’s German community, he had to go.<sup>605</sup> Through the expulsions, the Kulturbund leadership hoped that the Erneuerer’s illegitimacy would resound throughout the organization’s many local chapters and the generally conservative Swabian population at large. The move also had the added benefit of making the Erneuerungsbewegung technically illegal.

Shortly after the Kulturbund leadership’s announcement banishing the Erneuerer, Chairman Keks submitted a lengthy essay on *Erneuerung* to *Deutsches Volksblatt*, in which he effectively sought to seize the mantle of national renewal for himself and his colleagues. They were the *original* “Erneuerer” who had led the country’s ethnic Germans back to national consciousness, he argued. “The hour of birth of the *voelkische* renewal of the German minority in Yugoslavia lies in the year

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<sup>605</sup> Die Bundesleitung des 'Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes', "Auschiessungen aus dem Kulturbund," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 17 1935.

1918.” Indeed, “in the horrible experiences of the great global bloodbath, everything unnatural and artificial which had been forced upon [the Swabian *Volk*] fell off. The blinders which had prevented it from clearly perceiving its badly threatened situation also fell from its eyes and [the *Volk*] found its way back to its own nature.” Through its suffering during the war, “the voice of blood spoke and led back to the path already abandoned by many *Volksgenossen*. It gave them back their national honor, which all too many had surrendered with the denial of their blood.” Under the guidance of the original leadership, the Kulturbund had been the vehicle of its national awakening, this national renewal, this “*voelkische Erneuerung*.”<sup>606</sup>

In *Volksruf*, the Erneuerer called their exclusion from the Kulturbund a “base act of revenge” for their challenge at the Kulturbund’s 1934 annual congress.<sup>607</sup> Dismissing the original leadership as “weaklings” who were drowning but spoke confidently, it promised that the Kulturbund’s current leadership would be “washed away” from Habag Haus, the newly constructed building in Novi Sad that housed the Kulturbund’s headquarters and several other German institutions. In a letter to *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Awender denied having ever attacked the Kulturbund itself but admits to having opposed its leadership.<sup>608</sup> Meanwhile, one of the leading Erneuerer intellectuals, Jakob Roedler, called in *Volksruf* for the resignation all the Kulturbund’s board officers for allegedly violating the organization’s statutes. The collapse of the “system” was underway, he claimed, and its replacement by a true *Volksgemeinschaft* was only a matter of time. A week later, Gustav Halwax took

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<sup>606</sup> Johann Keks, "Erneuerung," *Deutsches Volksblatt* (1935).

<sup>607</sup> "Dr. J. Awender, Gustav Halwax, Hans Thurn, Georg Henlein Ausgeschlossen," *Volksruf*, January 19 1935.

<sup>608</sup> Jakob Awender, "Ausschliessungen aus dem Kulturbund: Eine Berichtigung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 26 1935.

Keks to task for his article on *Erneuerung* with the usual charge that this old man just did not “get it”. Where Keks had celebrated language and *Vaeterglaube* in his article as the borders of *Volksgemeinschaft*, Halwax dismissed such words as simultaneously too broad and too narrow. Keks would admit a German-speaking “*Neger*” into the *Volksgemeinschaft* but not heavily assimilated Germans, such as the German *Volksgenossen* in Slavonia, who might say “*mi nijemci*” instead of “*wir Deutschen*.”<sup>609</sup> Where is the consciousness of blood, he demanded? According to Halwax, Keks’ thinking was not really “*erneuert*” at all. It did not reflect the bold new spirit of the Erneuerungsbewegung. Rather, he sneered, the chairman remained intellectually stuck in the last century.<sup>610</sup>

#### *In Exile, a Program for the Erneuererungsbewegung*

During the spring, the Erneuerer continued to hold lectures and meetings across the Germans’ settlement area, even in distant Slovenia. Additionally, the Erneuerungsbewegung published its program in the Easter issue of *Volksruf*, no doubt seeking to benefit from association with “rebirth” just as the Swabian activists had during the 1920s. The Erneuer’s program consisted of a list of guiding principles and a separate set of demands.<sup>611</sup> The principles included the perfunctory declarations of loyalty to Yugoslavia, while at the same time calling for the maintenance of “blood-determined nature,” at least as far as the Germans were concerned. Likewise, the

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<sup>609</sup> Both mean “we Germans.” As we shall see, the Kulturbund had not been very active in Slavonia, where it faced official hostility as well as a Swabian population that was frequently so assimilated to its surroundings as to appear “lost” for Germandom.

<sup>610</sup> Gustav Halwax, “Erneuerung,” *Volksruf*, February 9 1935.

<sup>611</sup> Die Kameradschaft der Erneuerungsbewegung, “Bekanntnis und Wollen der Erneuerungsbewegung,” *Volksruf*, April 20 1935.



principles embraced the German *Volksgemeinschaft* and its “historic mission” to serve as a bridge between the Yugoslav people and the German “motherland.” Trumpeting its *voelkisch* heritage, the Erneuerungsbewegung claimed to embrace “the German community of blood, the faith in its God-willed law of German *Volkstum*, which is rooted in the three elementary powers of honor, blood and soil.” Finally, the movement professed to embrace Christianity, but called for a “separation of its church and national tasks.” As we shall see in Chapter Eight, the Erneuerer’s stance on Christianity would lead to conflict with the Catholic and, to a much lesser extent, the Protestant churches.

The Erneuerer’s formal demands were both broad and specific. Chief among them were vague calls for the establishment of a German people’s court of honor; the development of all institutions devoted to the “public health, blood purity and the forging of more favorable conditions for the facilitation of reproduction;” the development of social welfare institutions according to the principle that the common interest must come before personal interest (“*Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz*”); the shaping and guiding of the Swabians’ independent existence in accordance with the German “voelkisch-socialist worldview”; the overcoming of class differences through the construction of a *Volksgemeinschaft* according to natural, social classifications; political relief through a separation in the leadership of the areas of national work in the interest of maintaining and developing our cultural and economic assets and all institutions; and finally the establishment of a national council or *Volksrat*, “which [would be] an independent leadership, borne by the trust of the people. This *Volksrat*

would have the right and duty to supervise Swabians' national life, the upshot being that the leadership would decide all the internal matters of the *Volk*.

The Erneuerungsbewegung's program concluded by iterating the movement's determination to force the *Volk* from its current indifference and lack of purpose toward "self-reflection, goal setting, and crystallization based on its own strength." Ultimately, the Erneuerer explained, their movement claimed nothing less than "the formation and leadership of our individual national life" The Erneuerungsbewegung's ambitions, thus, were *voelkisch*, absolute, and nearly revolutionary. Moreover, their program asserted, such demands were unalterable.<sup>612</sup>

In publishing its program, the Erneuerungsbewegung announced its coalescence as a loose but increasingly well defined movement. Its final demand, the call to create a *Volksrat* to supervise the minority, was essentially a demand for a wide degree of institutionalized German autonomy in Yugoslavia, though the actual program avoided that word. The Erneuerer turned their energies not outward on the government but rather inward, toward their fellow Swabians. Far from storming the bastions of Belgrade and demanding proper autonomy, the Erneuerer continued to focus their efforts and attention on seizing the Kulturbund by deposing its current leadership, apparently with the intention of executing its reforms from within that body. Indeed, the Erneuerer seem to have played little role as minority advocates in Belgrade, if any. Meanwhile, the original leadership looked upon the Erneuerungsbewegung's program, consolidation, and increasing penetration of the Kulturbund's own *Jugendgruppen* darkly and took further steps to counter it, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid.



## Chapter 7: Tactical Shifts and Reconciliation in the Kulturbund, 1935-1938

The Nazi rise to power meant fundamental changes in Germany and Europe. As we have seen, the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, of which the Nazis were tireless exponents, found receptive ears and willing champions among the Swabian youths in Yugoslavia. Mobilized as the Erneuerungsbewegung, their drive to seize control of the Kulturbund met stubborn resistance by that organization's leadership, which sought to put a definitive end to their challenge in 1935 and thereafter. In this chapter we will examine the New Order the original leadership implemented in the Kulturbund to this end and consider its implications for the obstreperous Erneuerer. Having been effectively cast out of the Kulturbund, the Erneuerer were compelled to seek out new strategies and even legal frameworks in which to conduct their activities. In this chapter, we consider those new strategies with particular attention to Slavonia, where the German national movement gained new traction during the 1930s. There, a former Austro-Hungarian army officer launched an organization which was essentially a legal, institutionalized manifestation of the Erneuerungsbewegung as well as a direct competitor for the Kulturbund. We begin, however, by examining the fundamental transformation which occurred in the field of Volkstumarbeit after 1933. These changes and yet further Swabian divisions would undermine the original leadership, contributing to an uncomfortable reintegration of the Erneuerer into the Kulturbund. Indeed, the Erneuerer would eventually secure the coveted position of Kulturbund chairman itself. Yet their victory, though momentous, would not appear as many of them had expected.

*Volkstumarbeit, a Changed Landscape after 1933*

As we saw in Chapters Three through Five, at first both the Weimar German government and the Germans abroad sought to rely on the League of Nation's minority protection system to see that their rights were respected in the interwar era. Indeed, that system remained the cornerstone of the ethnic Germans' claim to rights in Yugoslavia into the 1930s. However, by the end of the first interwar decade the limitations of the minority protection system were already apparent. Yugoslavia, for one, had long ago given up its strategy of trying to win over the Swabians through generous cultural concessions. Meanwhile, frustration with Weimar policy on ethnic Germans abroad grew both at home in Germany and among the ethnic Germans themselves. As Volkstumarbeit historian Valdis Lumans observes, "from the critics' perspective, the government's efforts alleviated some difficulties and solved some incidental problems but did little to alter the status of the minorities."<sup>613</sup> Meanwhile, "*Volksdeutsche*" (the increasingly preferred term in the 1930s and thereafter) leaders increasingly turned to Germany for resources for support<sup>614</sup> and their plight provoked ever louder public calls in Germany itself for a more activist foreign policy on behalf of co-nationals abroad.<sup>615</sup>

National Socialism had won supporters in the Reich but also admirers outside Germany. After taking power, calls for a more activist foreign policy viz. the

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<sup>613</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*. 27 In my discussion on Volkstumarbeit organizations during the 1930s, I am deeply indebted to Valdis Lumans, whose exposition of the field in *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, remains perhaps the best discussion of Volkstumarbeit available in English.

<sup>614</sup> This was the case even during the 1920s, when Weimar Germany and its various Volkstumarbeit organizations provided extensive overt and covert funding and support for Germans in eastern Europe.

<sup>615</sup> Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*. 27

Germans abroad grew ever louder. “The minority issue,” Lumans observed, “forced itself on Hitler.” Inspired by the methods and tenor of National Socialism, disruptive German communities or groups such as the Erneuerer could represent a liability for Hitler’s foreign policy plans by creating disturbances or making demands that seemed to implicate Germany or which Reich Germans might feel their country obligated to address. In some cases, such communities would be recognized as an opportunity for Germany’s expansive foreign policy. But in the case of Yugoslavia, the uppity Germans were mostly regarded as a nuisance, especially by the Reich Foreign Ministry. In the immediate term, it was necessary to bring the German communities abroad under control. To this end, the Nazis streamlined and coordinated the cacophony of Volkstumarbeit organizations in Germany and regulated their interaction with the German minorities abroad. Thus, in the years before the Second World War “it was political expediency, not *voelkisch* concerns, that guided Hitler’s actions regarding the minorities.”<sup>616</sup>

While some Volkstumarbeit leaders welcomed the arrival of the Nazis in power, the field was largely dominated by non-Nazi traditionalists who were conservative and *voelkisch*-oriented but not necessarily members of the NSDAP. Thus it was necessary for the Nazis to coopt many of the existing Volkstumarbeit institutions before redirecting their efforts toward Nazi objectives. As we have seen, contacts between Reich and non-Reich Germans preceded 1933 and were sometimes even implicitly political. However “with the coming of the Nazi stewardship, a ‘scientific’ frame was given to the handling of the German folk groups outside the

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<sup>616</sup> Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries* 33.

Reich.”<sup>617</sup> Henceforth, Volkstumarbeit would come to increasingly reflect the Nazis’ own peculiar priorities and German foreign policy objectives, not necessarily the good of the various German communities abroad.

Most of the men running the Volkstumarbeit organizations in 1933 were traditionalist, *voelkisch*-inclined conservatives who were not themselves Nazis, though perhaps the most important Volkstumarbeit organization, the *Verein fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland* (DAI), was known to have some Nazi ties even before 1933.<sup>618</sup> When it became clear that the Hitler regime intended to “coordinate” the Volkstumarbeit organizations, the VDA, for its part, sought to reinvent its image and thereby escape deep *Gleichschaltung*. It even adopted a more *voelkisch* name, the “*Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland*,” so as to ingratiate itself with the new regime. Furthermore, it scrapped its democratic procedures and elevated to leadership Hans Steinacher, a conservative non-Nazi, and long time Volkstumarbeit activist.<sup>619</sup> Lumans writes that Steinacher and his supporters saw little difference between their own goals and those of the Nazis. Both groups hoped to promote the German *Volk*, so Steinacher expected that compromise was possible and any disagreements would be more about style than substance. Volkstumarbeit had a long tradition, after all, and the Nazis were but a young regime. In any event, the VDA seemed to have escaped a deep *Gleichschaltung* and maintained meaningful independence for a while. This would change, however.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> Paikert. 134.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>619</sup> No relation to the early Hungarian German activist Edmund Steinacker.

<sup>620</sup> Paikert. 138.

Hitler anointed Rudolf Hess the leading Reich authority in Volksdeutsche matters in 1933, although Heinrich Himmler would work energetically to secure his control and influence over the field. Shortly after his appointment, Hess launched a new Volkstumarbeit coordination effort in the form of the abortive *Volksdeutscher Rat*, or Volksdeutsche Council, which was intended to guide and coordinate the various organizations in the Volkstumarbeit field. This body, which featured delegates from various Volkstumarbeit organizations, again consisted of mostly non-Nazi conservatives who were leaders in the field. However, its authority was ultimately undermined by the intrusion of several bureaucracy-collecting Nazi entrepreneurs. After several years of machinations, hierarchical confusion and intrigue, Hess created a new NSDAP liaison post under SS member Otto von Kursell for matters concerning Volksdeutsche. Established in October 1935, this *Buero Kursell*, so-named after its chief, became known as VoMi or the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (Ethnic German Liaison Office), in 1936.<sup>621</sup>

VoMi was a Nazi Party office and was tasked with the coordination of all matters affecting the Volksdeutsche. Thus the VDA was formally subordinated to it. Though Kursell sought to avoid direct party meddling in VDA affairs, “there could be no doubt that he regarded Nazi interests as supreme and those of the *Volkstum* organizations or even the Volksdeutsche, as incidental.” Moreover, he made Volksdeutsche funding abroad increasingly contingent on enthusiasm for National Socialism. At the same time, however, the VDA and other Volkstumarbeit organizations retained their nominal independence, and VoMi sought to avoid the

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<sup>621</sup> Lumans, 34-8. Another competitor was the Auslands Organisation der NSDAP under Wilhelm Bohle.



appearance of Reich meddling in the sovereign affairs of others states.<sup>622</sup> That said, it was under Kursell's leadership that the Nazification of Germans abroad may be said to have begun.

After this appointment of SS subordinate Kursell to the leading Nazi coordinating body on Volksdeutsche affairs, SS Chief Heinrich Himmler sought to become a player in the field himself and effectively commandeered the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. VoMi officially answered to Hess, but Kursell was an SS man and therefore Himmler expected him to be compliant with Himmler's own directives. When Kursell unexpectedly resisted, Himmler expelled him from the SS and had him removed from his position at VoMi. Shortly thereafter, Himmler persuaded Hess to install another, more cooperative SS man, *Obergruppenfuehrer* Werner Lorenz, as his replacement in January 1937.

More substantive changes followed. Less than a month after the installation of Lorenz at the top of VoMi, delegates from the leading Volkstumarbeit organizations were assembled and told that henceforth VoMi would take the leading role in Volksdeutsche affairs with the task of forging *voelkisch* unity and promoting National Socialism. All Volkstumarbeit organizations would henceforth work with the various *Volksgruppen* abroad only through the primary intermediary of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle.<sup>623</sup> Thus did Himmler and the SS become deeply involved in the business of Volkstumarbeit. Finally, under Lorenz, VoMi would curtail the VDA's independence. The latter would remain a formally separate organization but it was necessary to control this most important Volkstumarbeit organization in order for the

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<sup>622</sup> Lumans, 38.

<sup>623</sup> Lumans 42.

SS to consolidate its grip on the Volkstumarbeit field. As such, VDA President Hans Steinacher, who had sought to retain precisely the autonomy for his organization that VoMi now wanted to restrict, was ousted in October 1937.

Over time, the scope of VoMi's activities and the breadth of its authority expanded. The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle began life as a strictly NSDAP office. However, in July 1938 Hitler formally transformed the nature of VoMi and vastly expanded its authority. In a decree in July of that year, Hitler extended state authority in Volksdeutsche affairs to the organization and charged it with numerous tasks which had hitherto been the purview of the state. Not least among these was the distribution of all monies earmarked for Germans abroad. That is, the decree explicitly awarded control over the financing of Volkstumarbeit to VoMi, a responsibility that made the organization powerful indeed.<sup>624</sup> Its control over finances gave the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle tremendous influence over Europe's German minorities, many of whom had become ever more dependent on Reich subsidies for their expanding activities during the 1930s. Unsurprisingly, those subsidies increasingly came with certain requirements of a political nature. The various German minority leaderships were expected to adopt and expound a pro-Nazi attitude and follow directives from Berlin, including recognition of Hitler as their *Fueherer*.

In addition to financial control, Hitler's 1938 decree also awarded VoMi new power and responsibility. Specifically, Hitler also awarded VoMi authority over all state, NSDAP and private organizations working in the field of Volkstumarbeit. In so

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<sup>624</sup> In practice, VoMi's actual control of the financing of Volkstumarbeit was never absolute, owing to the frequently clandestine nature of most financial transactions concerned with Volkstumarbeit abroad. Proper oversight of many of these transactions was simply not possible. Valdis Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993). 67.

doing, Hitler elevated VoMi to a position equal (though not superior to) Reich ministries.<sup>625</sup> This was both an expansion of authority as well as a blurring of the source of that authority since now the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle could be understood to speak for the state or the Nazi Party. Finally, and of great relevance for Yugoslavia, Hitler's 1938 decree awarded VoMi the right to determine the German minorities' leadership. Thus, VoMi became the ultimate arbiter of power among Europe's German minorities. Indeed, Hitler's decree even conferred upon VoMi the authority to regulate contacts and cooperation between Volkstumarbeit organizations, state institutions, and party offices on the one hand, and the recognized groups among the Volksdeutsche on the other. In other words, VoMi henceforth would determine the individuals, groups, and factions with which a Reich-based Volkstumarbeit body might have dealings and do business.<sup>626</sup> This was hugely important, since by that point in time it was clear to the Swabians that no one could expect to maintain leadership in the minority or achieve the desired concessions from Belgrade (such as in education) without Reich backing.<sup>627</sup> VoMi additionally would serve as an advisory body to the various Volksdeutsche leaders including the Swabians' original leadership. Finally, in 1939, Hess issued a decree stipulating that all Nazi and non-party bodies in Germany align themselves with either the VDA or League of the

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<sup>625</sup> In other words, VoMi could not overrule the state ministries. In fact, VoMi and the German Foreign Ministry often clashed. VoMi was always much more indulgent of the German radicals in Yugoslavialia than the conservative Foreign Ministry, for whom the Erneuerer represented a clear liability. Lumans. 66.

<sup>626</sup> Lumans. 67-68.

<sup>627</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. This effectively meant that the original leadership would have to seek accommodation with the Nazis if they wished to retain their positions and secure their objectives. This they did, continuing to seek out support in the Foreign Ministry and other familiar offices while also establishing contacts with the NSDAP. In 1936 Kraft even secured an audience with Rudolf Hess. But there was also concern in the Reich and especially in VoMi with some of the original leadership, especially Kraft. VoMi believed that Kraft had grown too personally powerful and sought to undermine his authority a bit, according to Valentin Oberkersch. 236-7.

German East (the Bund Deutscher Osten – BDO). Henceforth, “all cultural Volkstumarbeit would come under the aegis of the VDA, whereas political matters, or *Volkstumpolitik*, would be the concern of the BDO.”<sup>628</sup> Circumventing VoMi was henceforth out of the question. Indeed, VoMi’s new authority after July 1938 would allow it to play the decisive role in the dispute between the Kulturbund’s old leadership and their challengers in the Erneuerungsbewegung.

*Clash at Habag Haus, 1935*

The Kulturbund’s own youth groups were clearly becoming centers for the ideas and activities of Erneuerungsbewegung, which was ever more assuming the posture of an insurgency. In fact, a considerable number of these youth groups, if not an actual majority, openly embraced the Erneuerungsbewegung. Others were sympathetic to the movement, even if they did not totally approve of its methods or the Erneuerer’s drive to depose the Kulturbund leadership.<sup>629</sup> The Kulturbund leadership launched a movement to take back these youth groups by circumventing and ultimately deposing Lichtenberger, who had been only recently elected *Jugendleiter* himself at the 1934 Kulturbund annual congress. The original leadership’s move against Lichtenberger came as part of a new effort to purge the Kulturbund of prominent Erneuerer and their sympathizers. It would not go as planned.

Upon his controversial election as *Jugendleiter* at the 1934 Kulturbund annual congress, Lichtenberger had ominously announced that his principles were already well known to the original leadership, and it was plain that under him there would be

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<sup>628</sup> Lumans. 64.

<sup>629</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 234.

changes in future Kulturbund youth work (*Jugendarbeit*). Indeed Lichtenberger was closely associated with the leading Erneuerer and his election marked a major victory for their movement. In his interaction with the Kulturbund leadership, he was so insistent on his principles and methods, that the original leadership finally resolved that it could not work with him. Lichtenberger clashed especially with Chairman Keks, who finally decided to replace him through an extraordinary “youth convention” or *Jugendtagung* at Habag Haus in Novi Sad on July 28, 1935. Officially Lichtenberger was to be deposed for insubordination and intransigence for he had basically refused to work with Chairman Keks, whom he did not believe shared a real commitment to the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. Moreover, Lichtenberger was provocative, permitting the expelled Erneuerer to give officially prohibited lectures to Kulturbund youth groups and even whole Kulturbund chapters.<sup>630</sup> In short, Lichtenberger was openly spurning the Kulturbund board’s directive to shut out the Erneuerer leadership.

Planners of the extraordinary youth convention circumvented Lichtenberger, who nonetheless learned the details of the event. Struggle being one of the Erneuerer’s guiding principles, he resolved to resist his removal and dispatched a “strictly confidential” letter to his *Kameraden* in the Kulturbund youth groups regarding the upcoming “Putsch” against himself and the Erneuerer’s outposts in the Kulturbund. Lichtenberger called upon his followers to descend upon Novi Sad in protest. His plan called for his supporters to march under the Kulturbund’s own youth

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<sup>630</sup> "Weshalb der Jugendleiter Lichtenberger enthoben wurde," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 30 1935.

banner<sup>631</sup> and in coordinated outfits-qua-uniforms.<sup>632</sup> Paramilitary-like formations and matching clothing were sometimes typical at Kulturbund events by this time (especially with youth groups), but it was plain that Lichtenberger intended his march to be more aggressive than celebratory. “Sieg Heil!” he wrote.

Lichtenberger received much support from Slavonia’s regional *Jugendleiter* and Chairman of the Osijek Kulturbund chapter, Branimir Altgayer, about whom we will hear more later in this chapter. Altgayer promised to encourage young supporters and sympathizers from Slavonia to crash the extraordinary youth convention as Lichtenberger had instructed.<sup>633</sup> In his own appeal to Slavonian youth, Altgayer questioned the legality of both Lichtenberger’s suspension as *Jugendleiter* and the upcoming youth convention itself. The meeting’s sole purpose of the youth convention, Altgayer declared, was to depose the *Jugendleiter* in a manner which would be a most “undeutsch” suppression of the people’s will.<sup>634</sup> Meanwhile, Lichtenberger issued a call to arms in his July 25 memo to the *Jugendleitung*, in which he predicted a successful show of youth’s strength and unity at the upcoming extraordinary youth meeting.<sup>635</sup> The scene that unfolded at Habag Haus on July 28, 1935, was nothing less than a showdown and marked an early use of the unruly tactics which would become the Erneuerer’s trademark. The language that all sides used to describe the clash was martial, and included talk of “marching”, “struggle”, and the “storming” of Habag Haus itself.

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<sup>631</sup> This banner featured a Wolfsangel rune against a black field. As we shall see, old, Germanic runes were often adopted as symbols in Nazi Germany and by ethnic Germans abroad inspired by National Socialism.

<sup>632</sup> Jakob Lichtenberger to Kameraden. July 19, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>633</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Jakob Lichtenberger. July 24, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>634</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Volksgenossen und Landesleute. July 26, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>635</sup> Jakob Lichtenberger Kulturbund Jugendleitung Memo. July 25, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

Well before the event the youth sections which had answered Lichtenberger's call gathered outside of Habag Haus. After some time, they forced their way into the hall where the meeting was being held and effectively occupied the place. Keks declared that the meeting could not be opened until the intruders abandoned the chamber, which they were plainly unwilling to do. Finally, amid considerable commotion, the police declared the gathering dissolved and ordered the meeting hall vacated.<sup>636</sup>

In its coverage of the youth convention, *Volksruf* heaped accusations upon Keks. Asserting that they did not recognize the "illegal" attempt to depose Lichtenberger as "*Jugendfueherer*," the Erneuerer declared the meeting had ended up as a protest rally against Keks, whom they accused of reprising his former role as a Austro-Hungarian military officer and practicing "Austro-Hungarian methods" of brutality.<sup>637</sup> They insisted, moreover, that the "*Jugendfuehrer*," as they called *Jugendleiter* Lichtenberger, was responsible to the youth alone, not Keks. "The System," they declared, had unmasked itself and the youth convention, which should therefore be considered a milestone in the development of the minority. Indeed, the Erneuerer charged Keks with ethnic treason in *Volksruf*, adding that even calling the youth convention was a violation of the Kulturbund's statutes.<sup>638</sup> For its own part, the original leadership looked upon the youth with incomprehension and concluded that

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<sup>636</sup> "Gestoerte Jugendtagung," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 30 1935.

<sup>637</sup> This shift in terminology reflected the influence of National Socialism, the cult of leadership and the intrusion of *voelkisch* thought.

<sup>638</sup> "Johann Keks uebt Volksverrat ", *Volksruf*, August 3 1935.

Lichtenberger's leadership had led to demoralization, chaos, dissolution, and revolt.<sup>639</sup>

In the end, the extraordinary youth convention was significant for it demonstrated the determination of the original leadership to oppose the Erneuerer as well as the limits of their ability to do so. Moreover, the disruptive tactics Lichtenberg and his followers employed in Novi Sad were typical of the methods that the original leadership found both so threatening to themselves and perilous for the precarious German minority as a whole. Defiant and evidently popular, Lichtenberger would keep his job as Kulturbund *Jugendleiter* for the time being. Although Keks wished him gone, Lichtenberger's successful disruption of the youth convention meant that no successor had been elected in his place.<sup>640</sup> The setback at the youth convention did not break the original leadership's determination to resist the Erneuerer, however, and at a meeting in late October, the Kulturbund board took its next, dramatic measure against the insurgency. The time for drastic action, they believed, had come.

#### *The Original Leadership's Counterattack in the Kulturbund*

After the July 28 confrontation, the original leadership determined that the Erneuerungsbewegung had gotten out of hand and drastic measures would be necessary to purge the movement entirely from the Kulturbund. By this point, many Kulturbund youth groups operated in indifference or even open hostility to the local chapter to which they formally belonged. Despite their expulsions, the Erneuerer

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<sup>639</sup> "Gestoerte Jugendtagung."

<sup>640</sup> Although reports in *Deutsches Volksblatt* indicated that Lichtenberger had been dismissed, in fact, he continued to act as *Jugendleiter* for several more months.



were welcomed at their meetings and regularly gave lectures on the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. Some youths, including Lichtenberger, even called for Keks to resign as Kulturbund chairman. Clearly such insubordination could not be allowed to continue. The Kulturbund board gathered on October 27 to take action since they plainly felt they were losing control of the situation. In the resolution adopted at that October 27 meeting, the Kulturbund board observed that many Kulturbund departments, especially the youth groups had been characterized by excessive pretensions to extreme independence. These groups not only refused obedience to their local chapter leadership, they ignored or even openly opposed the dictates of the Kulturbund itself. Furthermore, they frequently held “Kulturbund” events without informing the Kulturbund leadership. Worse, individuals outside of the Kulturbund (that is, the expelled Erneuerer) had been organizing activities in some Kulturbund chapters without consulting the Kulturbund leadership. In order to end such unstatutory activities, the Kulturbund leadership took drastic steps implementing what came to be known as the organization’s “New Order” or *Neuordnung*.

The Kulturbund leadership’s response to the Erneuerer’s challenge consisted in formally banning the movement from the Kulturbund, on the one hand, and rooting out individuals and bodies who would not adhere to the Kulturbund leadership’s line on the other. “The so-called Erneuerungsbewegung was never a movement of the Kulturbund,” the Kulturbund leadership avowed. Since the Erneuerer’s activities exceeded the Kulturbund’s statutory limits, the Kulturbund leadership formally declared their movement outside the organization. Moreover, the Kulturbund leadership forbade Erneuerungsbewegung activities of any variety inside the

Kulturbund. Many associations and departments inside the Kulturbund were temporarily suspended or dissolved. Predictably, the bulk of the Kulturbund leadership's measures were directed at youths and the Kulturbund's youth groups, for these had proven most susceptible to the overtures of the Erneuerungsbewegung. Nevertheless, whole local chapters came under intense scrutiny and some were disbanded. The obstreperous Lichtenberger was formally dismissed, of course, as were the officers he had installed and any other associates belonging to his circle. All youth groups were ordered to cease their activities, pending evaluation by the Kulturbund leadership on a case-by-case basis. The Kulturbund leadership announced that only those associations and youth groups would be permitted whose leaders provided guarantees that they were a *Kameradschaft* of constructive work, characterized by self-discipline and self-command, fulfillment of duty and a readiness to be responsible. They should, moreover, be penetrated by the awareness that Swabians were all part of the entire German *Volk* not only in flesh and blood, but also in spirit.<sup>641</sup> The Kulturbund leadership's New Order, then, consisted of a purge of the Erneuerer, dissolution of their groups in the Kulturbund, and the confirmation that surviving Kulturbund bodies would hold true to the line of the original leadership. Honorary Kulturbund Chairman Grassl explained that the Kulturbund leadership had only taken these drastic decisions out of concern that Kulturbund activities remain possible in the future and he appealed for peace.<sup>642</sup>

Naturally, the Erneuerer had little interest in such peace and even less intention to be silenced by their rivals. Nevertheless, the disbanding of the

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<sup>641</sup> "Neuordnung des Kulturbundes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 29 1935.

<sup>642</sup> "Verlauf der Bundesausschusssitzung vom 27. Oktober," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, November 1 1935.

Association of German Youth (VDJ) was a significant blow, for the Kulturbund's youth groups had served as the organizational framework and the institutional cover for the Erneuerungsbewegung's activities. So long as the Erneuerer could claim to be Kulturbund members, their meetings, rallies, and such were legally sanctioned within the context of that organization. Outside the Kulturbund, however, the Erneuerungsbewegung had no legal status as an independent organization. As such, the clear expulsion of the movement technically placed the Erneuerer in legal jeopardy and forced them to search for new tactics.

Comprehensive though it was, the New Order left *Volksruf* unaffected. *Volksruf* was independent of both the Kulturbund and the associated German publishing house, DVAG, after all, and was therefore able to continue its activities unhindered. Now more directly dependent on their mouthpiece than ever, the Erneuerer repeated their claims to the moral high ground in their conflict with the Kulturbund. They charged that the original leadership's brazen dissolution of the Kulturbund's youth organizations had exposed it as lacking the moral authority to lead the organization.<sup>643</sup> Awender decried the behavior of the Kulturbund board's "thirty three men, which call themselves representatives of the German *Volksgruppe* in the Kulturbund." He rejected their accusations against the Erneuerer, whom he described as "the bearers of the idea of national renewal in the spirit of the German worldview." They would not be deterred from shaping the *Volksgruppe* according to

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<sup>643</sup> "Die Gruender und 'Fueherer' des Kulturbundes gefaehrden ernstlich den Bestand desselben," *Volksruf*, November 1 1935.

*voelkisch*-socialist principles, he claimed, and the *Kameradschaft* (of the Erneuerung) would persevere.<sup>644</sup>

“*Volksgemeinschaft* means a community of struggle,” *Volksruf* reminded readers in the wake of the October 27 Kulturbund board meeting where the New Order had been resolved upon.<sup>645</sup> Mindful of this, the original leadership instituted various new security measures at the 1935 annual congress on December 22, including hiring a security team. The Erneuerer announced that they would march on the annual congress, just as they had disrupted the extraordinary youth convention in July. In the end, the new security measures appear to have been sufficient to keep most Erneuerer out of the annual congress, entry to which was strictly controlled. Erneuerungsbewegung sympathizers did cause some disruption, but the meeting was able to carry out its work and the attending representatives of those loyal chapters formally approved the Kulturbund leadership’s October 27 measures instituting the New Order. The Kulturbund members did so, however, not without some misgivings, which suggested both a degree of sympathy for the banished Erneuerer as well as some concern for the new methods at work.

The Kulturbund leadership’s decree effectively suspended all local chapters, which were then required to submit written declarations of fealty to the Kulturbund leadership in order to resume activity. Most did assure the Kulturbund leadership of their loyalty and soon renewed their work. Support for the Erneuerungsbewegung was strong in some parts of the country, however, and several local chapters responded to the Kulturbund leadership’s New Order decree negatively. By mid December 1935,

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<sup>644</sup> Jakob Awender, "Kameraden," *Volksruf*, November 1 1935.

<sup>645</sup> "Vom Geist der Volksgemeinschaft," *Volksruf*, November 1 1935.

eleven such Kulturbund chapters had been dissolved with more to come.<sup>646</sup> Naturally, the Kulturbund chapter in Pančevo, home of the Erneuerungsbewegung, was targeted and not reestablished until years later. Meanwhile, the Erneuerer and the original leadership followed the imposition of the New Order in the Kulturbund with great interest but opposite perspectives. The Kulturbund celebrated the many local chapters who, as requested, clearly expressed their loyalty to the original leadership in writing. By contrast, the Erneuerer highlighted the many local chapters which were suspended or dissolved from Slovenia to Banat and their members thus expelled from the Kulturbund. By late 1937, more than twenty Kulturbund chapters had been dissolved,<sup>647</sup> though 92 percent were not, according to Keks.<sup>648</sup> Thus, the original leadership had struck back against the Erneuerer effectively but the German minority's internal strife was far from over.

*The New Order in Slavonia: Branimir Altgayer's KWVD*

At this point we shift our gaze to Slavonia, a region that had hitherto seen little Kulturbund activity but would soon become a battleground between the original leadership and the Erneuerer. Organized German life in this area, as we shall see, was inseparable from the name of Branimir Altgayer. Altgayer would initially be a voice of moderate caution, though not one of cautious moderation. An active member of the Kulturbund since 1931, Altgayer was elected to the organization's board in 1934. His interest in the Kulturbund was significant because it coincided with Slavonia's

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<sup>646</sup> "Die 'Aufbauarbeit' der Bundesleitung des S.D.K.B. geht weiter," *Volksruf*, December 15 1935.

<sup>647</sup> "Ploetzliche Eile," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, October 3 1937.

<sup>648</sup> Johann Keks, "Grundsatzliche Ausfuehrungen des Bundesobmannes," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, December 14 1936.

emergence as a new field of activity for the organization. Owing to practical and legal limitations, the Kulturbund did not found a local chapter in Slavonia's largest city, Osijek, until March 1934. Hitherto neglected Slavonia, however, whose Germans were often largely assimilated into their Croatian milieu, would become an area of intense German activity and even competition in coming years. There the Kulturbund would be forced to square off against a rival German organization, sharing similar goals but infused with the ideals of the Erneuerungsbewegung. Branimir Altgayer was at the center of this competition.



Branimir Altgayer in Swabian *Tracht*.<sup>649</sup>

Altgayer's activity in German matters predated his formal association with the Kulturbund. Born in Galicia in 1897 but raised in Slavonia, he had studied in Croatian schools before attending Austro-Hungary's mounted cadet school in Moravia. From 1915 until the end of the First World War he served as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian military on the Russian, Romanian, and Italian fronts, where he was twice wounded and decorated. After the Habsburg defeat, Altgayer remained in the now-Yugoslav military as an officer for four years before briefly withdrawing to civilian

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<sup>649</sup> "Unser Vereinigungsleiter," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, November 13 1938.

life. He then returned to the Yugoslav military from 1924 until 1927.<sup>650</sup> Altgayer was deeply involved in Osijek's new German Choral and Musical Association (*Deutscher Gesang- und Musikverein*), of which he served as chairman and which was for a time the only German association in the city. As with so many such groups, this choral society had both a musical and a national purpose, and after 1931 Altgayer formally became involved with the Kulturbund. Until that year, the Kulturbund had been legally unable to operate in Slavonia, an area that was either overlooked by most *Volkstumarbeiter* or whose Germans were regarded as so assimilated as to be "lost." In 1934, Altgayer became founder and chairman of the Kulturbund's local chapter in Osijek. As Osijek Kulturbund chairman, Altgayer worked hard to spread German national consciousness in Slavonia and start new Kulturbund chapters wherever possible. Having joined the Kulturbund's board in 1934, he was soon named Slavonia's regional *Jugendleiter* by then-Kulturbund *Jugendleiter* Jakob Lichtenberger in June 1935.

The Kulturbund leadership's New Order and its deliberate expulsion of the Erneuerungsbewegung provoked a unique response in Slavonia. Kulturbund activity there was of a relatively recent vintage, of course, since the Kulturbund effectively had been prohibited from operating on the territory of Croatia-Slavonia throughout the 1920s. True, neighboring Srijem had hosted several very important Kulturbund chapters during that decade and German national consciousness had been particularly strong in eastern Srijem even during the Habsburg era, as we have seen. Nevertheless, Slavonia proper saw its first Kulturbund chapters founded only after the 1931

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<sup>650</sup> Geiger, "Saslušanje Branimira Altgayera vođe Njemačke narodne skupine u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj u Upravi državne bezbjednost za Narodnu Republiku Hrvatsku 1949. godine." 575

approval of the Kulturbund's statutes, whose fifth article specifically enabled the organization to begin activity in *all* parts of the Germans' settlement area.<sup>651</sup> The Kulturbund promptly directed new attention to Croatia-Slavonia and established local chapters in Zagreb as well as in Velimirovac, Čačinci and elsewhere in 1932. Several more chapters were founded during 1933, including one in Vukovar, and in March 1934 the Kulturbund established a chapter in Osijek under the chairmanship of Branimir Altgayer. This chapter was in large part based on the German Music- and Choral Society, which had attracted a surprising number of young German men in the nine year since its founding in 1925. It is true that many of these were fledgling groups featuring few members and infrequent activities, for German national consciousness was still weak and uneven in Croatia and Slavonia, as we have seen. Nevertheless, by the Kulturbund's 1934 annual congress, Croatia-Slavonia (including Srijem) boasted no less than 40 of the Kulturbund's 129 chapters.<sup>652</sup> As an indicator of the new prominence of Slavonia in Kulturbund affairs, Altgayer was elected to the Kulturbund's board at the 1934 annual congress.

The Kulturbund in Slavonia pursued the same agenda of nurturing German custom, language, and sentiment that it had elsewhere in Batschka, Baranya and Banat. Kulturbund members described this as "awakening" but, as we have seen, their actions were actually aimed at crafting and imparting an identity, which simultaneously was nationally German and locally Swabian. Altgayer and his

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<sup>651</sup> According to Valentin Oberkersch, the Kulturbund's activity was not expressly forbidden during the 1920s but it was also not approved. Rather, it was de facto refused. As such, the Kulturbund effectively limited its activity during its first decade to Batschka, Banat, and Srijem. 282-283.

<sup>652</sup> Bundesleitung des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes vom 1. November 1933 bis 31. Oktober 1934, Taetigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung zur 10. ordentlichen Hauptversammlung in Novisad-Neusatz, 3. Dezember 1934*. Unpaginated chart: "Aufbau der Ortsgruppen, Stand am 31. Oktober 1934."



supporters would later go so far as to cultivate a distinct identity for the region's Germans as *Slavoniendeutschtum*, though they rejected any allegations of separatism. In the short run, however, national consciousness was remarkably weak in Slavonia, where ethnic Germans lived interspersed with their Catholic Croat neighbors and had often become quite assimilated into their Croatian communities. As we saw in Chapter Two, Croatization of Germans especially in Croatia-Slavonia's cities was well under way before the First World War. Naturally, efforts at Croatization only accelerated in the interwar period. Spoken German in the region was colloquial and written German was usually poor. Such regional dialects as Essekerisch typically were dominant where German was still spoken at all. German literacy was often poor. The German consul in Zagreb observed in 1928 that at 60,000 the number of Germans in Slavonia remained considerable. However, they were in constant peril of "de-Germanization," he claimed. Meanwhile, only the German Protestant pastors approached local Swabians in a national way, while the Catholic clergy served as energetic and successful agents of Croatization.<sup>653</sup> Altgayer and his fellow German activists, therefore, had their work cut out for them.

Despite the recentness of his involvement in the high affairs of the Kulturbund, Altgayer quickly found himself swept up in the Erneuerungsbewegung controversy. As we saw from his 1935 correspondence with Jakob Lichtenberger, Altgayer had already taken a position that was at odds with the Kulturbund leadership and especially Keks as regards youth work by mid-1935. His stance demonstrated more than just a personal affinity for the *Jugendleiter* Lichtenberger and was rather indicative of support for the principles and methods of the Erneuerungsbewegung. He

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<sup>653</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 289.

made this support clear in a public letter even before the clash at the extraordinary youth convention, in which he wrote that the Kulturbund leadership merely wished to “halt the ever growing Erneuerungsbewegung in its path to victory.”<sup>654</sup>

In the wake of that youth convention clash in Novi Sad, Altgayer continued to oppose the original leadership’s appeals to Kulturbund youth groups<sup>655</sup> and complained in his correspondence about traveling emissaries from Habag Haus who were stirring up opposition to himself and Lichtenberger.<sup>656</sup> Altgayer’s resistance was not always appreciated, however, least of all by the Kulturbund leadership. At the Kulturbund’s 1935 annual congress, Altgayer was taken to task by a Kulturbund board member from Našička Breznica (Slavonia) who according to *Deutsches Volksblatt*, warned that “the exaggerations, which have been seen recently in *Jugendarbeit*, can only lead to the Germans in Slavonia being scared off rather than won over to the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.” The Kulturbund board member demanded, therefore that the youth and above all the Chairman Altgayer of the Osijek local chapter show more restraint.”<sup>657</sup>

In sum, Altgayer’s support for the Erneuerungsbewegung and his enthusiasm for Lichtenberger’s style of *Jugendarbeit* was well known to the Kulturbund’s leadership by late 1935. Consequently, Slavonia, where Altgayer was effectively the local German leader, would not be spared the Kulturbund’s New Order. As the Osijek local chapter’s chairman, Altgayer had disagreed with the original leadership’s decision to exclude Awender and his compatriots from the Kulturbund in 1935. In

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<sup>654</sup> Branimir Altgayer to “Volksgenossen und Landesleute” July 18, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>655</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Kulturbund local chapter in Slatinik. September 4, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>656</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Bundessekretär Matz Giljum. October 10, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>657</sup> "Verlauf der Bundesausschusssitzung vom 27. Oktober."

the wake of the Kulturbund leadership's formal expulsion of the Erneuerungsbewegung from the Kulturbund in October of that year, the Osijek chapter's board wrote to the Kulturbund leadership, and complained that the expulsion violated the Kulturbund's statutes, ignored the wishes of its membership, and actually endangered the organization.<sup>658</sup> After the 1935 annual congress, when Altgayer proved disinclined as a man and as a Kulturbund leader to disassociate himself from the Erneuerungsbewegung, the Kulturbund leadership resolved to disband his Kulturbund chapter. Accordingly, the Kulturbund chapter in Osijek was formally dissolved on December 12, 1935, a move which would have unexpected consequences for the Kulturbund.

Although Altgayer was more conservative in his methods than Awender and smoother in his interaction with Croatian and Serbian authorities, he was nevertheless a devoted Erneuerer and eagerly subscribed to the principles of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. Had he or any of the leading Erneuerer lived in Germany, they would have been eager Nazis. Unperturbed by the Kulturbund's New Order, he resolved to found his own, rival organization after the dissolution of the Kulturbund's chapter in Osijek. Thus, in March 1936, Altgayer formally established the Culture and Welfare Union of the Germans in Osijek, known in German as the *Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen* or the KWVD.

The KWVD was intended as a direct competitor to the Kulturbund, a rivalry which Yugoslav authorities may have hoped would undermine both organizations.<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>658</sup> Kulturbund Ortsausschuss Esseg (Osijek) to the Kulturbund's Bundesausschuss. October 31, 1935[?]. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>659</sup> Why did the Belgrade authorities approve the KWVD's statutes? Likely because they saw in the organization a means to weaken the Kulturbund. Additionally, they obtained a promise from Altgayer

Its activity was limited by its statutes to the eastern part of the Sava banovina, which effectively made it an organization of the Germans of Slavonia. According to these statutes, the organization's tasks and competencies differed little from the Kulturbund's, though it would pursue its activities in a different key.<sup>660</sup> However, the KWVD promised to place special emphasis on youth, and in the coming years it worked not only to "awaken" Germans in Slavonia but also to craft for them a distinct Slavonian identity within Danube Swabiandom and Germandom. Its leaders were open devotees of the Erneuerungsbewegung, whose activities achieved legal cover in Slavonia through the KWVD.

Despite the anemic state of German national consciousness in Slavonia, Altgayer was able to secure talented collaborators locally and from elsewhere in Yugoslavia. The popular Jakob Lichtenberger accepted Altgayer's invitation to join the KWVD as its *Jugendfueherer* and eagerly went to work organizing youth groups in the spirit of the Erneuerungsbewegung in the Sava banovina.<sup>661</sup> Similarly, the Association of German University Students (*Verein Deutscher Hochschueler* or VDH) in Zagreb became a loyal supporter of the KWVD, having already confirmed its defiant support of the Erneuerungsbewegung in a letter to the Kulturbund board in October 1935.<sup>662</sup> Such support was important, but the creation of a second Yugoslav Germandom organization faced several significant obstacles, not least of which were

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to support the governing JRZ in future elections, according to Josef Beer. Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 291.

<sup>660</sup> Satzungen der Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen in Osijek. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 9.

<sup>661</sup> Again, Lichtenberger's choice of title was indicative of the models to which the Erneuerer looked in the Third Reich.

<sup>662</sup> Vorstand der Vereinigung Deutscher Hochschueler, "An den Bundesausschuss des SDKB Novisad," *Volksruf*, November 2 1935. Although they share an acronym, this is not the *Vereinigung Deutscher Hochschueler aus den Laendern der ungarischen Krone*, which we saw earlier in Hungary before 1918.

the hostility of Croatian organizations and determined competition from the Kulturbund itself. Nevertheless, Altgayer and his collaborators managed to gather large numbers of hitherto passive and nationally indifferent Swabians into the KWVD in a short time.

The KWVD pursued a dual strategy of founding local chapters as quickly as possible while simultaneously persuading existing Kulturbund chapters to effectively break with their mother organization and join the KWVD. Altgayers' group particularly sought to found chapters in areas hitherto unexposed to Volkstumarbeit, places they considered "new country" for the German national movement.<sup>663</sup> After its founding, three of the five extant Kulturbund districts (*Kreisen*) in Slavonia joined the KWVD outright and there was much sympathy for the organization in the remaining two.<sup>664</sup> By its first annual congress in March 1937, the KWVD boasted 74 local chapters which it divided into eleven districts.<sup>665</sup> A year later, the 85<sup>th</sup> local chapter was established, and so many Germans had joined the organization in Osijek that there was talk about forming further chapters there. The KWVD's growth was not smooth or uncontested, however. Organizers had to contend with intense competition from the Kulturbund as well as enduring Swabian indifference in Slavonia. Oftentimes the local chapters were inactive and their membership characterized by significant Croatization. Nevertheless, the KWVD's growth was impressive and earned the new organization respect in Yugoslavia and abroad.

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<sup>663</sup> Josef Beer, "Aufbau der Kultur und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung," in *Jahrbuch des Deutschtums in Slawonien: Bericht über das erste Arbeitsjahr 1936/1937 der Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen in Slawonien* (Osijek: Druck der Ersten Kroatischen Aktiendruckerei, 1937). 18-19.

<sup>664</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 291.

<sup>665</sup> Beer. 21-25.

While there were men such as Altgayer and Osijek City Councilman Ferdinand Gasteiger who were devoted to the German national movement, most of the Swabians in Slavonia, however, were poorly educated and only dimly nationally conscious as Germans. Often, even the most nationally conscious had only a basic command of written German. Letters from local Germans to Altgayer often included gross phonetic or Slavicized misspellings, such that “*Liederbücher*” (songbooks) might be written “*lider bicher*,” or “*Vorstellungen*” (introductions) as “*vorstellungen*.”<sup>666</sup> Phonetic writing of German with Croatian spelling was very common in Slavonia and often produced ironic results, such as discussions of the “*Kameradšaft*” (*Kameradschaft*) of the German nationalist Erneuerungsbewegung.<sup>667</sup> Ambitious Slavonian Germans sometimes concluded their correspondence with Altgayer or Lichtbenberger with “Sig hail!” (*Sieg Heil!*)<sup>668</sup> Other times, Slavonian Germans interested in the KWVD simply avoided German in their correspondence with Altgayer. One such man was Joseph Stumpf, of Velika Pisanica (near Bjelovar). Having heard that Stumpf was a “nationally conscious German man, who has already taken on the gathering and organizing of the *Volksgenossen* in [his] village,” Altgayer invited him to the 1935 founding meeting of the KWVD.<sup>669</sup> Stumpf would soon become a member of the KWVD’s main board and leader of its west district, but his written response and future correspondence must have been something of a disappointment to Altgayer, for Stumpf consistently wrote *in Croatian*. In an early

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<sup>666</sup> Johann Rappeller to Branimir Altgayer. November 2, 1936. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 9.

<sup>667</sup> Grabić KWVD Ortsgruppenleitung (Torhert) to KWVD Headquarters in Osijek. November 2, 1936. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 9.

<sup>668</sup> Nikolaus Wendling to Branimir Altgayer. January 10, 1938. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 16.

<sup>669</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Joseph Stumpf. March 25, 1936. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

letter to Altgayer, he apologetically noted that his inability to write in German was “sad but true” as well as indicative of the decline of German identity in his area.<sup>670</sup>

Although the KWVD would eventually found more local chapters in Slavonia than the Kulturbund, the Kulturbund nevertheless remained a potent and determined rival in the region. Moreover, the Kulturbund possessed considerable resources with which to combat Altgayer’s KWVD. Members of the Kulturbund leadership, such as Keks, traveled to Slavonia, upon which increasing energy and attention was lavished. Roving teachers (the so called-*Wanderlehrer*) canvassed the region’s villages to stimulate German consciousness and Kulturbund allegiance. Often this rivalry was polite but there were also numerous allegations of personal confrontation and even physical violence between the two sides. The KWVD’s mouthpiece, *Slawonischer Volksbote* complained of knife fights, such as one in Čačinci, where a KWVD man was allegedly stabbed three times.<sup>671</sup> Indeed, the Kulturbund’s and KWVD’s mouthpieces were full of mutual reproach. Velimirovac, home of a Kulturbund local chapter as well as an active KWVD chapter, seems to have been a particular flash point. Here, *Deutsches Volksblatt* reported, Lichtenberger and twenty KWVD youths disrupted a Kulturbund meeting. After shouting down the Kulturbund’s speakers, they allegedly launched into violent songs about the Kulturbund leadership, singing “Shoot them dead, the ethnic traitors!” (“*Shiesst sie tot, die Volksverraeter!*”) Elsewhere, the newspaper reported, KWVD youths were known to sing “Beat him to death, that Keks. Throw [Kulturbund Secretary] Giljum up against the wall.” (“*Schlag*

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<sup>670</sup> Joseph Stumpf to Branimir Altgayer. April 5, 1936. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>671</sup> "Ueberflussige Hetze," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, December 12 1936.

*ihn tot den Keks. Stellt Giljum an die Wand!*")<sup>672</sup> Lichtenberger denied this public allegation against him, of course. Nevertheless, later internal KWVD correspondence did complain of clashes between KWVD and the Kulturbund youths, allegedly involving knives, insults and cudgels on one occasion in 1937.<sup>673</sup>

As Lichtenberger himself observed in 1938, in just a few years Slavonia went from being a backwater in the German national movement to a proper battleground between the Kulturbund and the KWVD in their local power struggle. Where before there had never been a single German organization, now *two* groups dispatched representatives to canvass the region's villages, spreading the gospel of German national consciousness and encouraging new local chapters. Meanwhile, the Kulturbund leadership regularly charged the KWVD with separatism and blamed it for the divisions that could only lead to the weakening of the *Volksgruppe*. The Kulturbund men were especially perturbed because in addition to raiding the Kulturbund's membership, the KWVD began to obtain certain Volkstumarbeit funds normally awarded to the Kulturbund.

Croatian organizations also variously exerted significant attraction or coercive pressure upon the many scattered German settlements in Slavonia. Many Croats regarded the nascent German movement there with hostility, seeing it as a kind of betrayal. Since the bulk of Yugoslavia's Germans lived in Serbian-dominated lands and typically supported the (Serbian) governing party at the ballot box or in parliament, Germans in Slavonia often seemed suspect to their Croatian neighbors. Many Swabians blithely voted for the HSS, but many Slavonian Germans were torn

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<sup>672</sup> "Velimirovac," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, March 1 1936.

<sup>673</sup> Philip Neumann to Editorial Staff of *Slawonischer Volksbote*. DAOS fd.. 463 kut. 12.



during the interwar period about whether to join their co-ethnics in Vojvodina and support the “Serbian” government, or vote as their Croatian neighbors, who naturally endorsed the HSS. For some highly assimilated Germans, this was not a dilemma at all and they voted for the HSS out of pragmatism or genuine belief. Others were more conflicted. In any event, assertions of German independence were unwelcome in Croat circles during the tense political climate of the 1930s. Altgayer regularly bemoaned the increasing competition of the HSS and *Seljačka Sloga*, its cultural affiliate. “Here and there,” he wrote, “one can detect a pronounced intolerance, which occasionally degenerates into terror.”<sup>674</sup> In a 1936 letter to the KWVD chapter leadership in Babina Gora, Altgayer again observed that Germans in several communities had been attacked by Croats for their German national consciousness and political engagement. This seemed to baffle Altgayer, who insisted that the KWVD was a non-political organization, as its statutes insisted it must be. On the other hand, he was also surprised that the Croats believed a German could do otherwise than support the government party, which currently allowed Germans considerable freedom of development, while the government’s Croatian opponents actually fought the Germans in Slavonia.<sup>675</sup> In 1937, Altgayer noted other attacks and measures against those professing Germanness in several places, especially the Slavonska Požega district. Such measures, he claimed were intended to pressure Swabians to abandon their German national consciousness and join Croatian cultural

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<sup>674</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Editorial Staff of *Volksruf*. June 5, 1935. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>675</sup> Branimir Altgayer to KWVD Leadership in Babina Gora. October 1, 1936. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 9.

organizations.<sup>676</sup> Frequently, however, they had the opposite effect of heightening German minority nationalism in Slavonia.

In sum, the situation was difficult and contentious in Slavonia in the years after 1935, compounding German division and rivalry. The dimensions of the challenge faced by the KWVD were succinctly summarized by Altgayer himself in a letter to fellow Erneuerer Adam Maurus in July 1936, shortly before the latter's dismissal from the Kulturbund. "The struggle grows sharper daily and our situation ever more difficult. We must decide this two-front-struggle with entirely insufficient means and almost without suitable strength. On the one hand the Croatian peasant movement is developing an admirable activity through its economic organization '*Gospodarska sloga*' and its cultural organization '*Seljačka sloga*', which also has a foot in most Swabian settlements. On the other hand, the Kulturbund leadership has thrown almost its entire administrative staff and cadre of roving teachers [*Wanderlehrer*] into our region. That these people are not particularly considerate in their choice of weapons you can imagine." It appeared to him that "their entire endeavor is directed to do damage to us and undermine us, even if Germandom suffers the greatest losses in the process. They are of the viewpoint that it is better to have absolutely no German organization [in a place] than to have a KWVD local chapter, and they therefore stir up Maček's [HSS] supporters against us." Lacking resources, Altgayer concluded, the KWVD was basically was forced to be on the defensive even as it grew.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>676</sup> Branimir Altgayer to KWVD Leadership in Novo Selo bei Vinkovci. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 12.

<sup>677</sup> Branimir Altgayer to Adam Maurus. July 3, 1936. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

As we earlier observed, the KWVD effectively pursued the same mission as the Kulturbund in Croatia but did so in a new key. The men of the KWVD were unabashed Erneuerer and proponents of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. In practice, the organization's methods differed little from those of the Kulturbund elsewhere. It established local chapters which held lectures, courses, festivals, anniversary celebrations, and *Trachtenfeste*. German national consciousness being weak, Altgayer and his colleagues knew that much work would be necessary to impart and stimulate German identity among the region's Swabians. As such, they publicly reached out to even very small German settlements with enthusiasm, while simultaneously bemoaning the poor state of national consciousness to which Slavonia's Germans had "sunk" in private correspondence. In their campaign, they cast the Kulturbund as having first willfully ignored Slavonia's Germans for many years and then as having falsely boasted about "rescuing" them. Nonsense, replied Altgayer and his colleagues, who rejected such claims of "rescue." Slavonia's Germans had awoken *themselves* from their so-called national slumber, they argued. Indeed, the KWVD (headed by Altgayer, a Slavonian from Osijek, of course) was the organizational vehicle of that self-awakening. The KWVD also advanced the notion of a distinct Slavonian sentiment (if not full fledged identity), though it denied allegations of separatism. The organization chose the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the towns Kula and Poreč to showplace its regional legitimacy and to assert a historical Slavonian presence as proud as those elsewhere in Batschka or Banat.

Just as the Kulturbund had used settlement anniversaries as platforms from which to promote German culture during the 1920s, so did the KWVD promote the

150<sup>th</sup> settlement anniversary of the villages Kula and Poreč as a means by which to forge a sense of national consciousness and belonging among Slavonia's Germans in 1936. The task was especially pressing given the poor state of German national identity and the nature of German settlement in Slavonia, where they were often intermixed and assimilated with their Catholic, Croatian neighbors. On the eve of the event, the KWVD's unofficial mouthpiece *Slawonischer Volksbote* observed the "still in places poorly developed sense of mutual belonging and feeling of community. Without this natural feeling, Slavonian Germandom will never be able to pull itself out of its present insignificance and fragmentation. The occasionally present insecurity, the narrow self-awareness and the lacking faith in the future are only the consequences of the [Germans'] far too loose internal solidarity and of mutual ignorance."<sup>678</sup> Such disunity would be overcome in part precisely through such nationally oriented festivals and settlement anniversaries, whose meaning extended far beyond the settlements in question, organizers promised.

The anniversary celebration for Kula and Poreč was an important event. Attendance was estimated at between 3000 and 3500 people, and included guests from across Slavonia and even from Germany itself.<sup>679</sup> The celebrations began with religious services in both towns and featured significant youth participation, including the performance of many German folk dances and songs. Marching below the banner of the old-Germanic Odal rune and in *Einheitstracht* (effectively a uniform), youths took part in nearly all parts of the festivities. Finally, a monument marking the

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<sup>678</sup> We will learn more about *Slawonischer Volksbote* shortly. "Kula-Poreč," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, September 13 1936.

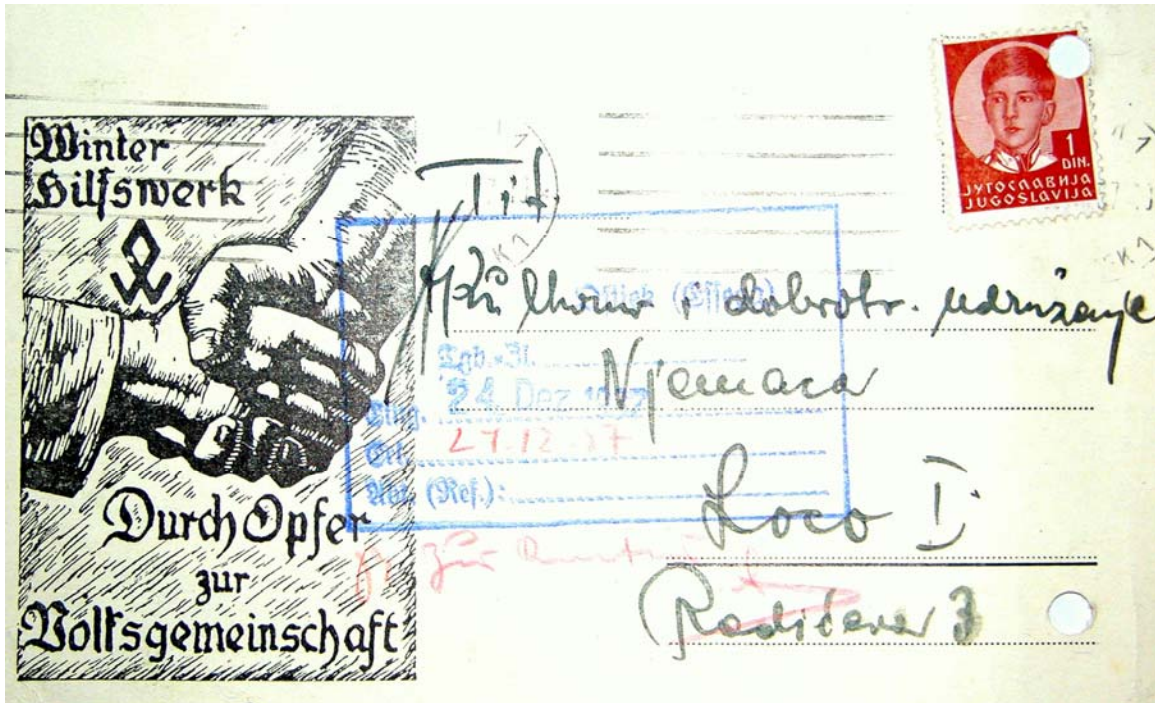
<sup>679</sup> The villages themselves were rather tiny, so this apparently modest number of guests is actually impressive.

occasion and the original settlement of the villages was unveiled in the local cemetery, where youths lay a wreath brought by guests from the Reich. Writing on the occasion in the KWVD annual report, one KWVD leader observed a special purpose for the event. “The task of today’s youth should not be reflecting on the past but rather transforming itself into a new man from which the new generation and the longed for *Volksgemeinschaft* can be forged,” she claimed. “And this new type of man is the decisive fighter for his *Volk!*”<sup>680</sup> Though a celebration of the past, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kula and Poreč was intended as a confident celebration of the future.

Ultimately, Altgayer invented little new with his German movement in Croatia. In effect, he merely called the original leadership’s bluff and established his own organization when they would no longer allow him to run theirs in the manner he saw fit. Just as the original Swabian activists had established the Kulturbund, so would he found the KWVD. Just as the early activists had used language, symbols, song, and history, so would he promote a particular celebration of “Slavonian Germandom.” Like the Kulturbund, the KWVD (as its name implies) was heavily involved in charity work and organized a major winter relief campaign (*Winterhilfswerk*) during the colder months. Likewise, it promoted German culture, language, and mutual national belonging, as we have seen.

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<sup>680</sup> Helli Schenk, "Maedelarbeit," in *Jahrbuch des Deutschtums in Slawonien: Bericht ueber das erste Arbeitsjahr 1936/37 der Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen in Slawonien*, ed. Hauptleitung der KWVD (Osijek: Druck der Ersten Kroatischen Aktiendruckerei, 1937). 50.



Above, a postcard advertising the KWVD's 1937 *Winterhilfswerk* campaign.<sup>681</sup> The caption reads "Through sacrifice to the *Volksgemeinschaft*." The symbol above the shaking hands is the "Odal rune."<sup>682</sup> The stamp bears the image of the young King Petar Karadjordjević." Photo by the author.

<sup>681</sup> Postcard – "Winter Hilfswerk: Durch Opfer zur Volksgemeinschaft" 1937. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 11.

<sup>682</sup> As occurred in Germany, the Swabians in Yugoslavia appropriated old Germanic runes and used them to variously identify regional sections of the Kulturbund as well as the KWVD. In 1937, *Slawonischer Volksbote* explained that Slavonia's Germans saw in the Odal rune "the sign of the German peasantry, the sign of our rootedness to the soil (*Bodenverbundenheit*) and therefore our loyalty to our native soil and to our *Heimat*." "Das Odalszeichen," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, October 17 1937. The Odal rune occupied an important place in the symbolism of the KWVD and ultimately was used to represent all Slavonia's Germans. In the emblem of the KWVD's 1937 annual congress, which coincided with the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German presence in Osijek the Odal rune was combined with the city's traditional heraldry. The Odal rune would remain Slavonia's symbol in the Kulturbund after the reintegration of the Erneuerer in late 1938. Ultimately, each major district of the Kulturbund came to be associated with a rune. In addition to Slavonia, Banat had the *Ehrrune*, Srijem-Bosnia had the *Wolfsangel* rune and Batschka-Baranja had the *Siegrune*. Slavonia's association with the Odal rune would continue even into the Second World War, when it was both prominent in the symbolism of the *Deutsche Volksgruppe in Kroatien* and was the emblem of the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division Prinz Eugen, which operated on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia. Writing on the wartime period, Croatian historian Mario Jareb notes that the Odal rune signified kinship and family, especially bonds to people of the same blood. For more, see Mario Jareb, "Promidžba Njemačke narodne skupine u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* 11 (2005).



Above left, the emblem of the KWVD's 1937 annual congress in Osijek combines that city's seal with the Odal rune. Note how the KWVD sought to anchor itself in Slavonian history by asserting that its first annual congress, which was held in Osijek, coincided with the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's liberation from the Turks and thus the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German presence there.<sup>683</sup> Above center, the Odal rune is integrated into the emblem of the Second Slavonian Trachtenfest in Osijek in 1938.<sup>684</sup> Above right, a Swabian boy in *Einheitstracht* hoists the Slavonia district flag bearing the Odal rune in propaganda material for the Second Slavonian District Youth Festival in 1939.<sup>685</sup>

Just as the early Swabian activists had founded a newspaper with which to transmit German culture and the values of their movement, so in 1936 did Altgayer and his collaborators start *Slawonischer Volksbote*, an Osijek-based weekly which promoted the KWVD, was unabashedly *voelkisch*, embraced the Erneuerungsbewegung and served as a central vehicle for "national awakening" in the region. Written in high German, its very grammatical and orthographical accuracy served as a corrective to the poor linguistic level which characterized Slavonia's Germans. It was hardly the first or only German newspaper in Slavonia, of course, where such titles as *Die Drau*, *Christliche Volkszeitung*, *Slawonische Presse*, and others had enjoyed many years of publication.<sup>686</sup> However, *Slawonischer Volksbote*

<sup>683</sup> "1. Hauptversammlung der K.W.V.D.," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, April 4 1937.

<sup>684</sup> "2. Slawonisches Trachtenfest," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, January 9 1938.

<sup>685</sup> Hans Roch, "Auf zum 2. Slawonischen Gaujugend-Treffen," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, July 29 1939.

<sup>686</sup> Those other newspapers were similarly written in high German, not *Essekerisch*. For more on the history of the press in Osijek, see Marina Vinaj, *Povijest osječkih novina* (Osijek: Muzej Slavonije, 1998).

differed from its predecessors by being unabashedly *voelkisch* and German-national in its orientation. Its mission was to convey a sense of German and Slavonian identity to the disparate German communities and thus forge a shared sense of belonging and common destiny. It warned that “only with the return to the original sources of life and being - to honor, blood and soil as well as a corresponding way of life - will our [Slavonian-German] settlement group be able to fulfill the tasks and duties expected of us as a part of the population of the Yugoslav State but also as a part of the transborder German cultural community and *Volksgemeinschaft*.”<sup>687</sup> And though it asserted from its opening issue that it was not a *Kampfblatt*, it nevertheless did engage in the struggle with the Kulturbund’s original leadership, though perhaps not as viciously as *Volksruf*. Like the KWVD, *Slawonischer Volksbote* also enjoyed connections with the Reich and *Volksruf*, from which it obtained material and exchanged articles for publication. Its principle concerns were promoting German culture and identity, promoting the KWVD, and calling for Swabian reconciliation on the Erneuerer’s terms. Although anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism were not central to *Slawonischer Volksbote*’s reporting, the newspaper was hardly immune to those pathologies and could write spiritedly against communists and Jews.<sup>688</sup> Simultaneously, however, *Slawonischer Volksbote* regularly appealed for Croatian understanding and tolerance of the German national movement in Slavonia.

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<sup>687</sup> Die Schriftleitung, "Warum wir erscheinen," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, September 6 1936.

<sup>688</sup> Indeed, *Slawonischer Volksbote* was by far the most anti-Semitic periodical reviewed for this study, suggesting that German-Jewish relations were perhaps tenser in Osijek than elsewhere.



*Frauenarbeit and Maedearbeit: Women in the KWVD*

*Frauenarbeit* was another area in which the Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen continued the activities of the Kulturbund but with an important shift in emphasis. The early Erneuerer had recognized the importance of females in their insurgency and regularly appealed to Swabian *Kameradinnen* to join their male *Kameraden* in the movement's infiltration of the Kulturbund's *Jugendgruppen* and *Maedchenabteilungen*. The Kulturbund had launched much of its initial *Jugendarbeit* under the guidance of the young Helli Schenk, who was probably the most prominent of the female Erneuerer and later joined the KWVD in 1936. In the KWVD, Schenk served as *Maedelleiterin* before getting married and moving to Berlin in 1938. Her work with the KWVD revealed that organization's *Frauenarbeit* and *Maedelarbeit* to have much in common with the Kulturbund's own. Nevertheless, women's work in the KWVD displayed an extra stress on racial purity typical of the Erneuererungsbewegung and National Socialism.

Like other Erneuerer, Schenk started out as a Kulturbund member and was closely involved with the Kulturbund's initial organizational outreach to girls and young women. However, being a younger woman herself, she became inspired by the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and soon found herself sympathizing with the Erneuerungsbewegung. When Branimir Altgayer established his rival KWVD in Slavonia, she (like Lichtenberger) resolved to join him and continue her work with women and especially girls. As the KWVD's *Maedelleiter*, Schenk sought to organize Slavonia's girls and educate them on matters of public health, German custom, homemaking, *Volkstracht*, and handicrafts with the intention of returning

Swabian culture to its original, uncorrupted essence. “Everything should be again free from foreign intrusions and brought back to its own unique nature, to what was inherited from our ancestors,” Schenk wrote.<sup>689</sup> The girls went on hikes and danced and sang together. *Maedelarbeit* was not limited to cultural or outdoors matters, however, and in the KWVD’s first annual report Schenk explained that her work included education about “fundamental (*weltanschaulich*) questions.” That is, questions “on *Volk, Heimat* and the duties that derive from them.” Girls were instructed in *volkshygenischen* und *volksbiologisch* questions as well, Schenk explained.<sup>690</sup>

Schenk’s views in the KWVD on the duty and role of women echoed those sentiments we have already seen in the Kulturbund, but with a more overt embrace of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. Women were not considered incidental citizens of German extraction but rather had essential if proscribed roles as protectors and transmitters of the Swabians’ most precious German cultural goods to its most precious children. As for a German woman’s duty, Schenk wrote that “the preservation of the nationality for which they themselves are repositories lies in the hands of mothers. The German settler woman has a great task precisely in her capacity as a mother. The raising of children rests in her hands. She alone teaches them the German mother tongue and instructs them in all that which concerns a German child. She raises them to faithfulness, obedience, honesty, industriousness, and the fulfillment of duty.” Indeed, Schenk asserted, the preservation of German ways and customs had been as important for the original colonist women as the

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<sup>689</sup> Schenk. 30.

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid.* 30

struggle for one's daily survival, for one's daily bread.<sup>691</sup> Women, thus had a very special role to play in the German movement and were nothing less than the guardians of the future.

Ultimately, women never played a leading role in Swabian affairs except in their limited capacity as leaders of the various women's groups in the Kulturbund, in the KWVD, and (less formally) in the Erneuerungsbewegung. Nevertheless, they actively participated in Kulturbund events and did so in increasing numbers over the interwar era. One aspect of the heightened activity of contemporary youth we have observed was the increased activity of ever more girls. Meanwhile, women were also called to fill an important role in the German national project. They were venerated as the vessels through which the German nation and its culture were literally reproduced across generations. And women's nationally-based activities especially increased during the 1930s when the Kulturbund, the KWVD (Erneuerer) and, as we shall see in Chapter Eight, the Swabian Catholic clergy established young women's groups designed to inculcate their respective values in Swabian society's females and bind them to their movements.

### *German Homeland Nationalism and the KWVD*

In a 1937 appeal to the Reich-based Archive of German Folksongs (*Archiv deutscher Volkslieder*), Lichtenberger lamented that too little Volkstumarbeit had

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<sup>691</sup> Helli Schenk, "Frauenarbeit," in *Jahrbuch des Deutschtums in Slawonien: Bericht ueber das erste Arbeitsjahr 1936/37 der Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen in Slawonien*, ed. Hauptleitung der KWVD (Osijek: Druck der Ersten Kroatischen Aktiendruckerei, 1937). 32.

been carried out in Slavonia in the past. “The Germans are in many cases already nationally-alienated and have lapsed into Croatdom,” he wrote. But the KWVD was making progress, he insisted, asking that more Volkstumarbeit materials be dispatched to the region from the Reich.<sup>692</sup> Such support was increasingly forthcoming and the increasing backing that the KWVD enjoyed from Reich-based Volkstumarbeit organizations was indicative of the steady erosion of the original leadership’s position in the Kulturbund. In Slavonia, the VDA and German Foreign Ministry had initially been supporters of the Kulturbund in its activities there. However, this withered somewhat after the founding of the KWVD and *Slawonischer Volksbote*. As we have seen, the Erneuerer found ideological sympathizers in the powerful and wealthy VDA, one of the largest and most significant Volkstumarbeit organizations. The VDA had been a central provider of materials for the Kulturbund, but after the Kulturbund’s 1936 dismissal of Adam Maurus, leader of the Association of German Libraries in Yugoslavia (*Verband der Deutschen Volksbuechereien*) and proud Erneuerungsbewegung sympathizer, the VDA sharply cut back the delivery of such materials. Offended by Maurus’ dismissal, the VDA directed new resources and support to the KWVD, with whom Maurus retained close contact.<sup>693</sup> In fact, a survey of the KWVD’s files reveals Altgayer to have had relations with a whole host of Volkstumarbeit organizations, periodicals, and other associations in Germany, Austria, Romania and even Czechoslovakia. Most prominent among these were VDA

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<sup>692</sup> Jakob Lichtenberger to Guido Waldmann of the Arhiv deutscher volkslieder in Berlin. January 23, 1937. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 13.

<sup>693</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 238.

and the DAI, but there were others.<sup>694</sup> Similarly, even after his dismissal from the Kulturbund, the KWVD continued to work closely with Maurus, who had many literary connections in Germany and to whom the organization looked for books by Adolf Hitler, Alfred Rosenberg, Walter Darre, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and the like for its libraries. The KWVD's German cultural mission, therefore, plainly had a political bias that served the *voelkisch* ideals and priorities of National Socialism.<sup>695</sup>



1937 letterhead from the Deutsches Ausland-Institut indicating the extent of the organization's *Gleichschaltung*.

Although they had themselves dissolved the Kulturbund chapter in Osijek, the original leadership regarded Altgayer and his supporters as separatists and regularly warned that the KWVD's existence undermined German strength and unity in Yugoslavia. Their stance was arguably correct, but Altgayer and his colleagues naturally refuted all accusations of "separatism." On the contrary, they argued, they

<sup>694</sup> Outside Slavonia, the Erneuerer would continue to be largely ignored by the official and unofficial Volkstumarbeit bodies in the third Reich, which disapproved of their alliance with the Serbian fascist group Zbor and generally considered the disruptive Erneuerungsbeuwegung a liability.

<sup>695</sup> Jakob Lichtenberger included a "wish list" of books desired by the KWVD's reference library in a letter to Adam Maurus in May 1936. The desired titles included Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Moeller van den Bruck's *The Third Reich*, Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, Walter Darre's *Das Bauerntum als Lebensquell der nordischen Rasse* and *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, among others. Jakob Lichtenberger to Adam Maurus. May 13, 1938. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 2.

<sup>696</sup> Deutsches Ausland-Institut letterhead. 1937. DAOS fd. 463 kut. 13.

were awakeners and unifiers who were ministering to exactly those Germans whom the Kulturbund had so long ignored in Slavonia. In fact, Altgayer was so recognized for his efforts in Reich circles that he was invited to partake in the NSDAP rally at Nuremberg in 1938 and even briefly met Hitler himself. While in Germany, he frequented the offices of the VDA and VoMi, where he held a series of meetings. As a result of this, the KWVD received library resources, books, student stipends, and the like from Germany's official and unofficial Volkstumarbeit bodies. After the Second World War, Altgayer admitted during his interrogation by the victorious Communists that that "in the offices of the VDA and even more at the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, I got instructions and advice on how to direct the work and activities of the Kulturbund, that is, the KWVD, in the political interests of the Third Reich in important questions in such areas as, for example, politics, education, and economics." Altgayer then explained that he carried out these and other directives on the territory of Yugoslavia.<sup>697</sup> In other words, Altgayer worked closely with certain Reich organizations, accepted their resources and even communicated their directives to the Swabians in Slavonia.

### *The German National Movement's New Appeal in Slavonia*

As the 1930s drew to a close in Slavonia, the Kulturbund and KWVD, could legitimately claim much success in stimulating national consciousness and mobilizing them into the two (later one) German organizations. This begs the question of

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<sup>697</sup> Altgayer also traveled to Germany to attend conferences in 1935 and 1940. Geiger, "Saslušanje Branimira Altgayera vođe Njemačke narodne skupine u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj u Upravi državne bezbjednost za Narodnu Republiku Hrvatsku 1949. godine." 583.

why one of Yugoslavia's most apparently assimilated and least nationally conscious German communities (if the scattered Slavonian settlements with their disparate histories, origins, confessions and dialects could be said to constitute a single "community") should suddenly decide to embrace German national identity. The answer derived from Brubaker's triadic interplay of homeland, minority, and nationalizing nationalisms, punctuated by the local activism of Slavonia's two competing Germandom organizations.

Even at the height of German membership in the Second World War's *Deutsche Volksgruppe in Kroatien*, German national identity in Croatia and Slavonia remained complicated. The simple truth is that many Swabians in Slavonia still did *not* embrace German national identity in the 1930s. German national consciousness was often particularly weak in the cities. Especially in Osijek, some ethnic Germans remained positively *hostile* to the German national movement and self-identified as Croats, even if they spoke German at home. Sava banovina authorities reported in 1937 that the KWVD was gaining little traction in most of Osijek and therefore was concentrating its efforts on villages, especially purely German villages, where the peasants were more receptive to German activism. Even in places where Kulturbund or KWVD local chapters were established, however, activity was sometimes lacking, a reality which provoked much frustration among Swabian leadership in Slavonia.

Where there was success in stimulating German national consciousness, that success was in large part due to the talented German activists' energies and skills, which were sharpened by the competition between the Kulturbund and the KWVD. The KWVD in particular reached out to areas previously untouched by German

Volkstumarbeit and often found a willing audience. The Swabian activists in Slavonia skillfully tailored their message to their Slavonian peasant audience, among whom the cult of the peasant as well as notions of blood and soil might be expected to find particular resonance, rooted as they were in the romantic notion of the peasants' supposedly authentic and organic connection to the land. Meanwhile, the Kulturbund expended a great deal of energy and resources in combating the KWVD, sending Kulturbund representatives, resources, and *Wanderlehrer* to all corners of Slavonia. Swabian youths were particularly attracted to the new national idea, especially as embodied by the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and the inspirational example of Hitler's resurgent Reich. Whereas Germanness in previous decades might have been understood as a point of embarrassment or liability in Slavonia, it assumed an aura of glory and strength after 1933. Germany was again one of Europe's great nations and many people wanted to be associated with it. This phenomenon only accelerated with Hitler's steady triumphs in economics, diplomacy and, later, war. National consciousness gave the Slavonian peasants something to which to aspire, an ideal higher than themselves and arguably greater than Croatia, which after all was a place of only regional significance whose leaders seemed locked in perpetual struggle with Belgrade.

National conflict also sharpened Slavonian national consciousness. Once the idea was out there that Germans too might have national rights, as institutionalized in the minority treaties at the end of the First World War, the excesses of Croatization became increasingly conspicuous. Let us not forget that the German national movement in Yugoslavia had important roots in nearby Srijem, where Germans had



railed against Croatization (and the “apostate” Strossmayer) even before the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, as we saw in Chapter Two. In the contentious Yugoslav successor state, where Serbs and Croats struggled against one another even inside Croatia-Slavonia, many Swabians decided they identified with neither group and thus were susceptible to new identities. The overarching Hungarian identity and Habsburg cosmopolitanism were simply no longer available, but ethnicity endured.

The vicious circle of national identification that manifested itself elsewhere in Yugoslavia was at least as evident in Slavonia in the 1930s. Banovina and local authorities exerted nationalizing pressure on their unwanted minorities. Paradoxically, however, their efforts frequently *heightened* the ethnic identity of those minorities who, in the Swabian case, were encouraged from Germany itself by increasingly active, Reich-based Volkstumarbeit organizations. Thus, nationalizing nationalism was in effect in Serbian, Croatian and Yugoslav variants. Meanwhile, German homeland nationalism directed new energies and attention at the Danube Swabians from the Third Reich. Lastly, the Swabians own minority nationalism was skillful, energetic, and articulate. The German activists were well prepared to capitalize on the crystallization of German national consciousness and channel it into a minority stance, that is minority nationalism, both domestically and abroad.

As we have seen, the DAI, VDA and not least VoMi had regular contacts with the Germans in Yugoslavia, funded their organizations, provided them with literature, and encouraged and facilitated personal exchanges with the Reich.<sup>698</sup> Meanwhile,

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<sup>698</sup> By this stage, leading Swabian periodicals were thick with glossy content and articles provided by Reich-based bodies like the Deutsche Ausland-Institut or the Gustav Adolf Association. These explored various aspects of the shared German identity and common German greatness in a very attractive manner.

Croats had long exerted pressure for the Swabians to assimilate through such institutions as the Church and schools, as well as everyday social expectations. In this, the Swabians might demonstrate their loyalty to Croatia and join its proud society. As the Serb-Croat conflict wound on during the 1920s and 1930s, however, the Slavonian Germans grew increasingly suspect to the Croats for the political leanings of their coethnics in Vojvodina, whom we have seen tended to support the (Serbian) governing parties. This highlighted the Swabians' sense of being distinct. German support for parties other than the HSS seemed especially treacherous to Croats and again stimulated tension and confrontation, which in many cases only sharpened German national sensibilities and reinforced this sense of being distinct. This situation only worsened in the tense political climate of the 1930s, when Croatian politicians were routinely arrested and their main party repressed. Also provocative was the fact that German national consciousness was plainly becoming political, and the Kulturbund was increasingly recognized as such by Yugoslav authorities. These authorities were nevertheless constrained by domestic and international considerations to tolerate it, at least to some degree. Finally, the rise of the Third Reich rendered German nationalism positively menacing to many, just when the German national movement in Yugoslavia and its increasingly active youth was becoming ever more strident. Ultimately, the Swabians' ties to the German "motherland" were a concern which their regular assertion of loyalty to the Yugoslav "fatherland" did little to assuage.

In conclusion, then, we may say that the German national movement achieved important inroads in Slavonia during the latter half of the 1930s. However, much of

the ethnic German population remained indifferent to the appeal of German national consciousness. Many ethnic Germans had become highly assimilated to their Croatian environment. Nevertheless, the nascent German movement in Slavonia had begun to reverse this process and stimulate unprecedented national consciousness among Swabians during the 1930s. The Serb-Croat rivalry, Croatian nationalism, the Swabians' own internal divisions, and the Reich's increasingly active Volkstumarbeit organizations only increased Swabian identification with things German. Meanwhile, the Kulturbund's New Order may be said to have plainly backfired in Slavonia, where the Erneuerer were now organized, legal and ascendant.

*The New Order in Vojvodina: The Erneuerungsbewegung Joins Zbor*

Like any movement, the Erneuerungsbewegung contained diverse currents and varying degrees of intensity. At its core, it was youth-obsessed, anti-liberal, anti-Semitic, German national, National Socialist, racist, and as chauvinist as it could be within the confines of a foreign nation-state, which was often divided against itself. The movement was always insistent and impatient but it could also be impetuous and intemperate. As discussed, the Erneuerungsbewegung's formal expulsion from the Kulturbund had had awkward consequences for the movement, which lost its institutional context and whose activities therefore became legally questionable. As we have seen, Branimir Altgayer resolved this situation of legal uncertainty by establishing the KWVD in the Sava banovina. However, the KWVD was constrained territorially by its statutes and was therefore barred from working with the overwhelming majority of the country's Erneuerer, to whom Awender offered

another solution in an alliance with Serbian fascist Dimitrije Ljotić. On February 12, 1937, the cover of *Volksruf* screamed that “The Erneuerungsbewegung has Joined the Ljotić-Movement ‘Zbor’!”<sup>699</sup>

Yugoslav authorities typically regarded Zbor with suspicion. Ljotić himself claimed to object to calling his movement “fascist”, rejecting as too close the implied association with Mussolini’s National Fascist Party in Italy.<sup>700</sup> Such details aside, his movement was plainly a right-wing nationalist group, whose traits, forms, and pretensions allowed contemporaries and permit the modern historian to describe it as a broadly fascist movement. Besides forming its own paramilitary branch, the *Ljotićevci*, Zbor was also racist, anti-liberal, and aggressively anti-Semitic. It openly admired the Third Reich. It disdained parliamentarism, political parties, and the niceties of debate. Unsurprisingly, it was also controversial in Yugoslavia’s establishment circles as well as marginal in political life, where it never won the support of more than the tiniest sliver of the Serbian electorate.

If Branimir Altgayer’s decision to found the KWVD might be described as a determined and well-planned act of defiance, Jakob Awender’s decision to lead his followers into Zbor was a move of brash and ill-considered rebellion. The decision to join forces was not taken without reason, however. Official approval for a KWVD-like organization in Vojvodina was never likely, but the Zbor alliance was immediately available and offered the Erneuerungsbewegung the legal cover to continue its agitation while also extending it the freedom to be overtly political. As we have observed, the Erneuerer had a history of concealing their unsanctioned

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<sup>699</sup> Jakob Awender, "Die Erneuerungsbewegung hat sich der Ljotić-Bewegung “Zbor” angeschlossen," *Volksruf*, February 12 1937.

<sup>700</sup> Dimitrije Ljotić, "Sind wir Faschisten?," *Erwache*, December 1936.

organizations and activities behind other, legitimate German associations such as the economic cooperatives and the Kulturbund, of course. Such concealment had basically been the only option for the Erneuerungsbewegung after its expulsion from the Kulturbund, before which the movement had operated within youth groups and local chapters.<sup>701</sup> After February 1937, however, the Erneuerer would elect to form chapters in and conduct its business as Zbor.

Awender described the fusion with Zbor as a step forward for the Erneuerungsbewegung, a pooling of German strengths toward the development and expression of their political will.<sup>702</sup> Gustav Halwax, another leading Erneuerer, announced that the Erneuerungsbewegung's decision to join Zbor was a political one. That is, it was a move intended to put their movement on a political footing and allow it to pursue its claim to "the total leadership and shaping of our national independent existence." The alliance with Zbor, the self-described "Yugoslav national movement," would allow for the "political deployment of the German worldview," he explained.<sup>703</sup> To be sure, the Erneuerungsbewegung would not be subsumed or disappear, but rather would merely join Ljotić's "front" while maintaining its distinctness. And of course, there was also a peculiar but undeniable ideological affinity between Ljotić's right-wing nationalist movement and the National Socialism-inclined Erneuerer. As Erneuerer ideologue Gustav Halwax explained, the Erneuerer appreciated Zbor because "there is no Yugoslav political

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<sup>701</sup> Kraljevska Banska Uprava Savske Banovine Odjeljak za Državnu Zaštitu, "Memo from Kraljevska Banska Uprava Savske Banovine Odjeljak za Državnu Zaštitu Police in the Savska Banovina Reporting Interior Ministry's Report on the Erneuerungsbewegung and its Relationship with Zbor," (1937).

<sup>702</sup> Awender, "Die Erneuerungsbewegung hat sich der Ljotić-Bewegung "Zbor" angeschlossen."

<sup>703</sup> Gustav Halwax, "Das deutsche Schicksal gebietet!," *Volksruf*, February 12 1937.

movement, which emphasizes the unity, inviolability, greatness and strength of our fatherland more than Zbor. One can heave every possible reproach at Zbor, but one thing remains, it fights for a state, which is the expression of the creative value and strength of the Yugoslav nation.”<sup>704</sup>

In summary, Zbor offered the Erneuerer the opportunity to continue their agitation and do so in a more overtly political way. (A Zbor chapter was promptly founded in Pančevo, the ideological center of the Erneuerungsbewegung.) In their loose alliance with Ljotić, Awender and his supporters believed that they had themselves found a way to engage in Yugoslav politics in a new key, that is, in a way that was dramatically different from the staid, tired methods of the PdD or a “minority” organization such as the Kulturbund. Similarly, it had not been necessary to establish a new organization like the KWVD, the approval of which seemed unlikely in Vojvodina.

Zbor had actually begun its appeal to Yugoslavia’s German radicals much earlier, not long after its 1935 founding. In July 1936, Zbor even launched *Erwache*, a German language weekly which appealed to Swabians to join Dimitrije Ljotić’s movement. A self-described “*national-soziales Kampfblatt*,” *Erwache* argued that no small minority such as the Germans could expect a prosperous future as an independent party or in alliance with either Prime Minister Stojadinović’s party, the Yugoslav Radical Union (JRZ), or Maček’s opposition.<sup>705</sup> Thus, Zbor presented itself to the Swabians as a political organization that was practical and *staatstreu* yet revolutionary. “Yugoslav” nationalism was a Zbor trait, but when the Awender and

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<sup>704</sup> Gustav Halwax, “Unsere Deutschen in unserer Politik”: Antwort an einen “Grossen” der Wojwodinaer Front " *Volksruf*, April 2 1937.

<sup>705</sup> D.K.S., "Die Jugoslawische Volksbewegugn "Zbor" und die Deutschen," *Erwache*, October 1936.

his Erneuerer followers finally joined the movement's ranks, *Erwache* offered them a front page welcome. The Erneuerer, it said, would help the Ljotić movement in its struggle against Jews and the various political parties, cliques, and coteries whose politics went under the name "democracy." "Sieg Heil!," Zbor's German mouthpiece concluded, "Heil Ljotić!"<sup>706</sup>

That the Erneuerer in Vojvodina had joined Zbor as a kind of political cover for its activities was not lost upon the authorities even in the Sava banovina, where Altgayer's KWVD was active but where Awender had fewer direct connections.<sup>707</sup> In order to avoid being tarnished by Awender's decision to join Zbor, Altgayer took steps to formally distance himself and his organization from the *Ljotićevci*. In a front page article in *Slawonischer Volksbote*, he publicly announced that the KWVD had nothing to do with those circles of the Erneuerungsbewegung which had decided to join Zbor. On the contrary, he insisted, the KWVD remained a "totally unpolitical nationality organization" and would continue to operate as such within the limits of its statutes.<sup>708</sup> Likewise, he claimed that none of the KWVD's members belonged to the Ljotić movement.<sup>709</sup> In fact, Altgayer himself was probably not so hostile to Zbor. As a supporter of Awender, one may assume that Altgayer would have likewise recognized commonalities with the Ljotić movement and appreciated the potential benefits of alliance. Though he could be diplomatic and calculating, he was certainly no moderate. Altgayer was just less of a hothead than Awender, and recognized that the Erneuerungsbewegung's fusion with Zbor was politically un-savvy since it put the

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<sup>706</sup> "Ein Willkommen unseren neuen Kameraden," *Erwache*, February 21 1937.

<sup>707</sup> Kraljevska Banska Uprava Savske Banovine ODZ [Odjeljak državne zaštite] to Police Offices in Savska Banovina. May 23, 1937. HDA Grupa XI, Kutija 26 inv. br. 2585, Pov. II 14371/1937.

<sup>708</sup> Branimir Altgayer, "Erlkaerung," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, March 7 1937.

<sup>709</sup> Branimir Altgayer, "Falsche Mathematik," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, March 21 1937.

Erneuerungsbewegung at odds with the Yugoslav government. Indeed, many Erneuerer (including Sepp Janko, who would soon attain great prominence) were unhappy with the Erneuerer's fusion with Zbor.<sup>710</sup> Altgayer, for his part, just seems to have revealed his pragmatic streak, a quality he would again demonstrate after the creation of a separate Croatian banovina in 1939.

Although the fusion with Zbor might have brought the Erneuerer satisfaction in the short term, it would also have important negative consequences. Zbor stood in opposition to the Stojadinović government and many government bodies in Berlin considered the organization reckless. No one in Berlin at this time wished Germany's good and prosperous relations with Yugoslavia to be upset by a bunch of brash German nationalists in Vojvodina, even if they did subscribe to the ideology of the Third Reich. As such, the Zbor alliance is indicative of the paradoxical relationship between homeland and minority nationalism. Although the *gleichgeschaltet* Volksturnarbeit organizations and even government or party bodies of Nazi Germany might have been expected to encourage their German ideological allies in Yugoslavia, the fact was that they looked down upon Awender's fusion with Zbor because it ultimately endangered the interests of the Third Reich. To this, the interests of the Swabian minority were ultimately secondary.

### *Turbulence, Change and Challenge, 1937-1938*

1937 was a turbulent year for the German minority. The divisions in the German minority persisted throughout the year but the price of conflict was becoming ever more apparent to the antagonists. State and local authorities continued the low

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<sup>710</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 240.



level harassment which had characterized the German experience in Yugoslavia in recent years. German youth in particular was targeted and subjected to fines, detention, beatings, and other such illegal measures and annoyances. It was such harassment which prompted an exasperated Kraft to ask parliament in March 1937, “do they not wonder why the German population increasingly loses its composure and hope in the genuineness and goodwill of government policies, and begins to become radicalized and seek new political paths and alliances via a socially insecure youth?”<sup>711</sup> Kraft’s concern was more than just altruistic, of course, for he and the original leadership were not usually the beneficiaries of such “new political paths and alliances.”

As we have seen, one such “new path” for Swabians was the KWVD, which became quite successful quite quickly in Slavonia. Altgayer’s supporters founded many local chapters in short order and the KWVD arguably emerged as the dominant German association in the Sava banovina within its brief lifetime. By contrast, Awender’s fusion with Zbor was less successful but nevertheless discomfited the established German leadership, who feared the Zbor alliance would have negative repercussions for the minority as a whole. In any event, the Erneuerer were plainly surviving their exclusion from the Kulturbund, which increasingly found itself isolated by the spread of the Erneuerer’s ideas. Yet neither the Erneuerer nor the original leadership reveled in the German minority’s division, which plainly made the creation of the fabled *Volksgemeinschaft* impossible. Division, all agreed, only left the already tiny German minority weak.

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<sup>711</sup> Stefan Kraft in Ibid. 239.

There were also important shifts in the dynamics of the German minority during 1937 and 1938. As we have seen, Berlin's backing was essential in order to successfully lead German community, achieve cultural concessions on its behalf, and have the appearance of legitimacy. The German Foreign Ministry and important Volkstumarbeit organizations had traditionally endorsed the original leadership and had even helped finance the Kulturbund for many years under their stewardship. However, the ascension of the Nazis in 1933 and the subsequent *Gleichschaltung* of Reich-based Germandom organization meant important changes in the activities of those associations and their political orientation. (The German Foreign Ministry retained its support for the original leadership until quite late, however.) Increasingly, the VDA began providing resources and materials to the KWVD and *Slawonischer Volksbote*, as did the Deutsches Ausland-Institut and many other such associations. During these years the original leadership defended its right to be the sole representatives of the German minority to the Reich Foreign Ministry, but gradually it was losing its monopoly on representation. The German Foreign Ministry desired placid relations between Germany and Yugoslavia, so it was naturally inclined to support the original leadership over the brash Erneuerer. By contrast, relations between the VDA and the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle on the one hand and the original leadership on the other were steadily deteriorating. As we saw earlier, the VDA was particularly offended by the expulsion of Adam Maurus in 1936 and redirected some resources from the Kulturbund to the KWVD accordingly.<sup>712</sup> SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Lorenz's Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, for its part, recognized its obvious ideological

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<sup>712</sup> Ibid. 238-239.

kinship with the Erneuerer. Still, meaningful financial support for the Erneuerungsbewegung would only come later.

Surprisingly, a deep and very public split simultaneously emerged after 1937 between Stefan Kraft and the Kulturbund leadership, especially Hans Moser, Johann Keks, and Georg Grassl.<sup>713</sup> As we have noted, discontent with the omnipresent Kraft had been simmering for some time among the Swabians. Despite his undeniable service to the German community, frustration had been growing with his political priorities, style, and his leadership of the German system of cooperatives, which were sometimes said to be mismanaged. In fact, much of Jakob Awender's original criticism of Kraft had been concerned with these commercial enterprises, and in 1937 Kraft's colleagues in the German leadership decided it was time for him to retire from public life. This movement against Kraft first saw public light in a March 1937 *Deutsches Volksblatt* article which called for Kraft to resign from his responsibilities in the cooperatives, especially the presidency of the Agricultural Central Loan Office (*Landwirtschaftlichen Zentral-Darlehenskasse* or LZDK).<sup>714</sup> The conflict exploded again the following year when Hans Moser published a public letter in which he

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<sup>713</sup> It is useful here to review the career of a man who was one of the Swabians' most important leaders but to whom we have thus far not devoted great focus. As we have seen, Moser was a long time Swabian activist. Born in Zemun 1889, he had been raised under the Habsburgs and studied in Zagreb, Vienna, Bonn, and elsewhere in western Europe before concluding his studies back in Zagreb. He first entered public life as a political activist on behalf of a German Sabor candidate from Ruma in 1913. Convinced after 1918 that the Germans required their own political party in Yugoslavia, he was an early promoter of the Partei der Deutschen and collaborated on the party's Hatzfeld Program. After helping establish several local chapters of the PdD, he was then elected to parliament himself, where he was a leading member of the Germans' *Klub* during the 1920s. Following the implementation of dictatorship, Moser remained active in Swabian affairs and was either a founder or participant in many of the key German civil society institutions we have discussed, including the German School Foundation and the League of Germans in Yugoslavia for the League of Nations and International Understanding. Moser returned to the Yugoslav parliament in 1931. As the 1930s wore on, Moser emerged as a premier target of the Erneuerer for being one of the leading "Systemler", or men of the System, which the Erneuerungsbewegung hoped to overcome. Moser was one of Kraft's most outspoken critics after 1937.

<sup>714</sup> Georg Grassl, "Politik und Geschaeft," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 7 1937.

appealed for Kraft, among other things, to resign from the presidency of the School Foundation.<sup>715</sup> This letter was supported in the following days by supporting appeals by Grassl<sup>716</sup> as well as Keks, Oskar Plautz, Franz Seemayer, and Hans Moser again.<sup>717</sup> When he felt that *Deutsches Volksblatt* refused to provide sufficient space in which to defend himself, Kraft launched his own rival weekly in 1938, the *Deutsche Volksbote fuer Jugoslawien*, in which criticism of the established Kulturbund leadership found a new voice.

The actual nature of the conflict between Kraft and his erstwhile colleagues (led by Moser) was opaque at the time and remains unclear today.<sup>718</sup> There had been some discontent during the 1930s with Kraft's general political line and leadership style. There were also questions about the management of the economic cooperatives in which he played a leading role.<sup>719</sup> The Kulturbund leadership may have resented a suggestion by Kraft, who worried about his parliamentary seat in places where the Erneuerungsbewegung was strong, to readmit the Erneuerer to the organization.<sup>720</sup> Of greater relevance was the fissure that it opened up among the Swabian activists, a fissure which the Erneuerer would exploit as part of their strategy to return to the Kulturbund as leaders. Ultimately, the conflict between Kraft and his opponents proved damaging for the original leadership as a whole. The established leadership suffered a loss of prestige and the conflict opened up new avenues of attack by the Erneuerer. It raised questions about the reliability of the original leadership among

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<sup>715</sup> Hans Moser, "Offener Brief," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 6 1938.

<sup>716</sup> Georg Grassl, "Das Gebot der Stunde," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 9 1938.

<sup>717</sup> Johann Keks Georg Grassl, Oskar Plautz, Hans Moser, Franz Seemayer, "Zum Offenbrief vom 6. Feber," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 8 1938.

<sup>718</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 240.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

<sup>720</sup> Bešlin. 61-63.

some Volkstumarbeit organizations abroad and allowed the Erneuerer to trumpet their own solidarity. Moser actually appealed to the KWVD to endorse his stand against Kraft but was met with refusal by Altgayer, who claimed he wanted nothing to do with a further splintering of the German minority. *Slawonischer Volksbote* called the whole conflict despicable, irrespective of whether the allegations against Kraft had merit. "How happy is the greater part of our Slavonian Germandom, which is gathered together in the KWVD and has nothing to do with this hateful strife," it wrote.<sup>721</sup> Of course, this was disingenuous, for the Kraft controversy represented a rift in the original leadership and, therefore, opportunity for the Erneuerer. Still primarily focused on seizing control of the Kulturbund, the Erneuerer at *Slawonischer Volksbote* and *Volksruf* actually sided in the dispute with their erstwhile target Kraft.

Ultimately, both the German Foreign Ministry and the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle tired of the quarrel between Kraft and Moser, which seemed to them a distracting personal disagreement even if there might have been some legitimate reasons behind it. Reich Ambassador Viktor von Heeren finally recommended that the two sides submit their grievances to a court of arbitration composed of various prominent Auslandsdeutsche in Europe, which they did in May 1938. Ultimately, the dispute between Kraft and his former colleagues was not settled until the following spring, but the slow court process at least brought the original leadership a measure of cold peace in 1938.<sup>722</sup>

Just as 1937 had been tumultuous, so was 1938 a particularly dramatic year in European politics. Events of that year resonated among the Swabians and their South

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<sup>721</sup> "Schwere Auseinandersetzungen im Habag Haus," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, February 27 1938.

<sup>722</sup> Stephan Kraft and Hans Moser, "Schiedsgerichtsverfahren in Sachen Dr. Moser - Dr. Kraft," *Deutscher Volksbote fuer Jugoslawien*, May 8 1938.

Slav neighbors in Yugoslavia. Over the years, the Swabians had watched the consolidation of Hitler's Germany and its gradual undoing of the Versailles Treaty with satisfaction. To nationally conscious Swabians of all persuasions, Germany at last seemed to be reclaiming its place as a great power in Europe and the world. In part, this meant improving the disadvantageous circumstances of German minorities abroad as well as revising the international borders that separated Germans in the Reich and neighboring states. But if the initial rise of Hitler's Germany had filled Swabians with admiration, the events of 1938 would inspire deep new pride in their ethnicity and association with the Third Reich.

As we have seen, the Swabians had long been attuned to *auslandsdeutsche* affairs in neighboring Hungary and Romania, of course, for they shared many familial, cultural and commercial ties with Swabians in those states. During the 1930s, Swabian interest in Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Partei (SdP) had likewise grown with the Henlein party's success in Czechoslovakia. Henlein's SdP seemed to provide Swabians with an obvious example of the potential power a unified German minority could wield and also offered a powerful argument for overcoming the personal and ideological squabbles that had recently so dominated Swabian public and organizational life. Meanwhile, virtually all Yugoslavia's Germans (except the German Catholic clergy) greeted the March 1938 *Anschluss* of Austria with unrestrained joy, and there were reports of particularly zealous celebrations by Germans in Slovenia, which would henceforth directly border the

Third Reich.<sup>723</sup> Germany's triumph at the international Munich Conference in September 1938 unleashed yet further enthusiasm for Hitler's Reich and inspired many more Swabians to newly identify with Germandom, which was increasingly understood as synonymous with National Socialism by both Slavs and Swabians.

All the antagonists in the mid-1930s clash within the German minority bemoaned the divisions it produced, as we have seen. Each called for German unity in Yugoslavia, albeit according to his own principles. The Erneuerer around Awender in Zbor were the most bellicose, while Altgayer strove to sound reasonable even as he created his competing German organization in Slavonia. The original leadership appealed for order in the Kulturbund and worried about Altgayer's Slavonian separatism. In fact, the original leadership and the Erneuerer conducted informal discussions and occasional negotiations throughout this period, with the aim of ultimately reaching common ground and ending the split. For its part, the original leadership remained well-established but was plainly on the defensive, losing both Swabian followers and Reich support for its efforts. The clash between Kraft and Moser and his supporters was likewise exhausting and self-defeating, ultimately producing only exasperation in Germany and new avenues of attack for the Erneuerungsbewegung. Meanwhile, the bulk of the Erneuerer were in the legal and organizational wilderness. Thus, though both the Erneuerer and the original leadership sincerely desired reconciliation, each group did so on the basis of its own values. As the division persisted, however, the need for such reconciliation became increasingly apparent to all sides.

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<sup>723</sup> The Church played a leading role in Austria during much of the interwar period and many Catholics clergymen regarded the country's independence as a barrier against the further spread of "new heathenism" from the Third Reich.

Ultimately, “reconciliation” in the German minority came in 1938 and 1939 and led to the eventual triumph of the Erneuerungsbewegung inside the Kulturbund. Nevertheless, neither the process of reconciliation nor the ascension of the reintegrated Erneuerer was direct or uncontested, and important surprises occurred along the way. Nor did either process occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, both the original leadership and the Erneuerer were constantly aware of domestic and international circumstances and made their calculations accordingly. The three events which dominated German public life during 1938 were the proclamation of the *Volksdeutsche Einheitsfront* or “Volksdeutsche Unity Front” in spring, the formal reintegration of the Erneuerer into the Kulturbund after negotiations throughout the fall, and the campaign for the Germans to vote as a bloc for Stojadinovic’s JRZ in parliamentary elections in December.

Immediately after Wehrmacht troops crossed into Austria in March 1938, Altgayer called for the creation of a common German front in *Slawonischer Volksbote* to prevent any further disintegration of the minority’s institutions.<sup>724</sup> Two weeks later, Altgayer again repeated this call, this time locating it in the context of Konrad Henlein’s own “Erneuerungsbewegung” (by which he meant the SdP) and the *Anschluss* of Austria, which, he noted, had filled *Slawoniendeutschen*, like all Germans, with joy.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>724</sup> The timing of this appeal, literally the day after the German Wehrmacht crossed into Austria, was probably coincidental. This issue contained no news about the German invasion or *Anschluss* of Austria, of which Altgayer would have had no previous knowledge, of course. Branimir Altgayer, “Solange es noch Zeit ist...” *Slawonischer Volksbote*, March 13 1938.

<sup>725</sup> Branimir Altgayer, “Volksgenossen! Slawoniendeutsche!,” *Slawonischer Volksbote*, March 27 1938.



The first formal steps toward reconciliation between the original leadership and the Erneuerer occurred on April 10, 1938, when the country's more radical German leaders met in Belgrade to work out the creation of a common front. The groups behind the resulting *Volksdeutsche Einheitsfront*, thus, were essentially the Erneuerer but also included their former quarry Stefan Kraft and his supporters.<sup>726</sup> The *Einheitsfront* proclamation foresaw the creation of a number of institutions, including a "National Committee of the *Volksdeutsche Einheitsfront*," whose task would be to represent the minority and assert its fundamental rights.<sup>727</sup> Ultimately, the *Volksdeutsche Einheitsfront*'s program consisted of the following five demands:

1. The establishment and recognition of our national individuality and our right to exist in the constitution and in law.
2. The recognition of the *Volksgruppe* as a legal corporate body.
3. The granting of the statutes for a *Volksgemeinschaft* in whose framework all questions of our *Volksgruppe* of a national, social, economic, and cultural nature can be debated and solved.
4. The recognition of the leader of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as the single valid representative of our *Volksgruppe* to the State and its authorities.
5. The recognition of our right to form the social order of the spirit and worldview of our *Volk* in the framework of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>728</sup>

Hans Moser was skeptical of the *Einheitsfront* project from the outset. He had originally been invited to participate in the *Einheitsfront*'s founding talks as the Kulturbund's representative, but had declined. The circumstances for the creation of such a body were premature, he declared. Anyway, he suspected that the *Einheitsfront* would merely be a façade from behind which the Erneuerer would continue their claims to total leadership of the minority. All such behavior, he

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<sup>726</sup> Despite Awender's earlier criticism of Stefan Kraft, the Erneuerer rallied to his defense during the latter's conflict with Moser, Grassl and the rest in 1938. In doing so, they remained focused on dethroning the Kulturbund leadership, of which Kraft was not a part.

<sup>727</sup> Die Gruppen der Volksdeutschen Einheitsfront, "Aufruf! Volksdeutschen Einheitsfront!," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, April 17 1938.

<sup>728</sup> "Das volkspolitische Programm der Volksdeutschen Einheitsfront," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, May 8 1938.

asserted, plainly rendered impossible true reconciliation within the minority, for peace was a prerequisite of a true settlement.<sup>729</sup> Ultimately, little concrete came of the *Volksdeutsche Einheitsfront*. The Kulturbund, which was still the dominant German organization in Yugoslavia, ignored its founding and then formally remained outside of the loose front.<sup>730</sup> Important pressures for unity continued to be exerted upon the Swabians, however, both domestically and from the Reich.

As we have seen, shortly after the proclamation of the *Einheitsfront*, Awender announced the Erneuerungsbewegung's formal disassociation from Zbor and his intention to reach an accord with Stojadinović's JRZ. Ultimately, the Erneuerungsbewegung's formal association with Zbor was as short-lived as it was ill-conceived. In joining Zbor, the Erneuerer had merely aligned themselves with a movement that was both marginal and extremist for little apparent benefit. Zbor was, moreover, an organization that did not endear itself to the Yugoslav government and consequently offended those offices and ministries of the Third Reich which desired placid relations between Germany and Yugoslavia. The alliance with Zbor complicated relations between the German minority and the Yugoslav government, with whom the original leadership sought good ties. Moreover, the Zbor alliance provided the original leadership with an argument for why they and not their young challengers should be trusted with leadership and Reich support. So it was not surprising when, after several months of participating in Zbor rallies and exalting Ljotić in the pages of *Volksruf*, Awender and his followers withdrew from Zbor in

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<sup>729</sup> Hans Moser, "Meine Stellungnahme zur Volksdeutschen Einheitsfront," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, April 28 1938.

<sup>730</sup> Kraft's own participation in the *Einheitsfront* was limited by the ongoing deliberations of the Court of Arbitration, to which he and Moser had submitted their mutual recriminations.

May 1938. The only way forward, Awender now announced, was through an accommodation with the governing JRZ.<sup>731</sup> By that time, steps were underway which would culminate in a “unification” of the German minority’s principal antagonistic currents, though the unification would prove to be neither smooth nor comfortable for many involved.

These were turbulent times for the Swabians, who became ever more suspect in the eyes of Yugoslav authorities as the dramatic events of 1938 unfolded. The *Anschluss* made the possibility of irredentism in Slovenia appear greater than ever before. No longer did Yugoslavia border on the relatively small and weak Austria but rather on the mighty German Reich, which was plainly hungry for treaty revision. The power of German unity as demonstrated by Henlein’s SdP was not lost on the Yugoslav people or authorities, who were growing increasingly distrustful of their Swabians. In order to prevent or at least reduce their political activation, Yugoslav authorities unleashed a wave of arrests, menacing house searches, and the confiscation of German newspapers which had printed the *Einheitsfront*’s program itself.<sup>732</sup> In the international Munich Conference, Yugoslav authorities witnessed how skillfully the Third Reich exploited the grievances of Germans in Czechoslovakia to annex parts of that state. The Yugoslavs were determined that the same fate would not befall their country. Thus, if the European events of 1938 had been inspirational for Yugoslavia’s Germans, those same events filled Yugoslavia’s authorities and Slavic citizens with great foreboding when they recalled their own domestic German community.

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<sup>731</sup> Jakob Awender, "Kameraden!," *Volksruf*, May 27 1938.

<sup>732</sup> Oberkersch, 244.

As Yugoslavia moved toward new elections in December 1938, the JRZ sought improved relations with the Germans. Owing to the mishandling the Germans had already suffered during the year, the government party's overtures at first met with Swabian disinterest. Nevertheless, negotiations continued and by late October (under some pressure from Berlin), both the Erneuerer and the original German leadership had agreed to support the JRZ and Stojadinović in the upcoming elections. Even in Croatia, the German leadership exhorted Swabians to vote for the JRZ, emphasizing the importance of maintaining national unity. Naturally, supporting the JRZ in Croatia-Slavonia was difficult for the Swabians, many of whom faced intimidation or worse by Croats who resented Germans electoral accommodation with the "Serbian" authorities, the JRZ.<sup>733</sup> As we have seen, Croats typically regarded Swabian votes for parties other than their own HSS as treacherous. Nevertheless, the Swabian leadership in Slavonia urged Germans there to vote with their coethnics in Vojvodina and support the JRZ.<sup>734</sup>

The electoral campaign provided numerous occasions, opportunities, and venues to trumpet German unity and call upon Swabians to bury their differences in order to vote as a bloc for the JRZ. The Swabians had been promised two members of parliament for their efforts and could thus make the case that a vote for Stojadinović's party was actually a vote for the Germans.<sup>735</sup> But of even greater importance than the Swabians' agreement to vote for Stojadinović's party was the formal reconciliation within the minority, which finally took place in late October 1938. The two sides had

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<sup>733</sup> Hans Bertram, "Unser Standpunkt," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, November 27 1938.

<sup>734</sup> This vote would prove awkward for the Swabians after the 1939 *Sporazum* arrangement created a separate Croatian banovina under Zagreb and effectively run by Vladko Mlaček of the HSS.

<sup>735</sup> The JRZ had originally offered Kraft a mandate in the weeks before 1938 election campaign but he turned the offer down.

held intermittent talks over the years, but the circumstances of 1938 gave those talks a new urgency, and all sides had plainly tired of the struggle. The Erneuerer continued to air personal attacks against Moser and the rest of the Kulturbund leadership throughout the summer, but during the autumn both *Volksruf* and *Deutsches Volksblatt* hinted at the possibility of renewed group unity in the Kulturbund.<sup>736</sup>

On October 17, 1938, Grassl and Keks had met with Awender and successfully worked out an agreement by which the Erneuerer could return to the Kulturbund and the dissolved chapters could be restored. The KWVD, they agreed, would be folded into the Kulturbund and its local chapters combined with existing Kulturbund ones in those places which featured both organizations. The Erneuerer press finally announced the reintegration of the Erneuerer into the Kulturbund after the Kulturbund board had formally approved of Keks', Grassl's and Awender's agreement at its meeting on November 20, 1938. This agreement specifically repealed the January 13, 1935 expulsion of Awender and the other lead Erneuerer and restored their membership in their local Kulturbund chapters. The agreement also provided for certain changes in the Kulturbund's administrative boundaries and Altgayer's installation as Chairman of the Kulturbund's Slavonia District.<sup>737</sup>

Readmission into the Kulturbund did not exactly mean victory for the Erneuerer, but they gained much from the formal conclusion of the Swabians' internal conflict. In addition to Altgayer's reinstatement as Gauobmann, Jakob Lichtenberger returned to his post (now renamed *Bundesjugendfueherer* - a title

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<sup>736</sup> Gustav Halwax, "Nicht verzoeuern!", September 23 1938. Also "Lichtschimmer im Kampfe der Deutschen Volksgruppe," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, October 30 1938.

<sup>737</sup> "Zusammenschluss der ganzen deutschen Volksgruppe auf kulturellen und sozialem Gebiet in Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbund," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, November 27 1938.

which likely reflected the idiom of the Third Reich), and Josef Beer became the Kulturbund's secretary. Additionally, important Erneuerer received seats on the Kulturbund board at its 1938 annual congress in 1938. In Slavonia, the process of integrating KWVD and Kulturbund chapters where the two coexisted in the same town proceeded, albeit not always smoothly. Velimirovac, for example, was host to two such rival chapters and was the scene of some confusion and disagreement, the Kulturbund chapter leaders claiming that they had been the victors in the whole conflict with the Erneuerer and the KWVD chapter leaders observing that they had considerably more members.<sup>738</sup> Ultimately the reconciliation offered the Erneuerer increased and important influence in the Kulturbund, but the original leadership also remained in place. Perhaps most notably, the much maligned Johann Keks retained his post as Kulturbund Chairman. However, as we shall see in Chapter Nine, he would abruptly resign in early 1939, provoking a leadership crisis and unprecedented new opportunities for the Erneuerer. The Swabian Catholic clergy, meanwhile, remained sharply critical of the Erneuerer and the Kulturbund's new and eventually ill-fated direction until the very end. In the following chapter we consider their challenge to the Erneuerungsbewegung and the more ambivalent attitude of the German Evangelical Church, which flirted with aspects of the Third Reich.

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<sup>738</sup> Jakob Lichtenberger [?] to Johann Keks. January 4, 1939. DAOS fd. 463. kut.7.



Novi Sad's Habag Haus was the seat of the Kulturbund and other German organizations in Yugoslavia during the 1930s.<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> Geiger, *Nestanak Folksdojčera*. 17.

Preis 1 Blätter

# Erwache!

National-sozialer Kampfblick - Organ der Jugosl. Volksbewegung „ZBOR“

1. Jahrgang

1. Oktober 1936

## Die Jugoslawische Volksbewegung „ZBOR“ und die „DEUTSCHEN“

Alle die Deutschen Jugoslawen... (text continues)

An issue of *Erwache* from 1936. In this article, "The Yugoslav National Movement 'Zbor' and the 'Germans'", the Ljotic movement appeals for Swabian support. Photo by the author.

Preis 1 Blätter

# Erwache!

National-sozialer Kampfblick - Organ der Jugosl. Volksbewegung „ZBOR“

11. Jahrgang

11. Oktober 1937

## Ein Willkommen unseren neuen Kameraden

Ein wichtiger Punkt... (text continues)

### Die Freimaurelei und der rote Terror in Spanien

Es ist nicht leicht... (text continues)

An issue of *Erwache* from 1937. The title reads "A welcome to our new comrades," the Erneuerer, who had only recently announced their fusion with Zbor. The other front page article discusses international free masonry. Photo by the author.



## Chapter 8: Swabian Catholic Resistance to the Erneuerungsbewegung and the Lutherans' more Ambivalent Stance on National Socialism

Yugoslavia's Swabian Catholics would come by and large to accept German nationhood and its associated movement as a fact of life. Nevertheless, the Church was intensely hostile to the strain of the German movement represented by the Erneuerungsbewegung and the extremist *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. To counteract the Erneuerer's excesses, leading Swabian Catholics organized a Catholic resistance movement, which ultimately failed to stop the Erneuerer but still caused much alarm in Nazi-oriented circles. Many priests and laymen participated in this resistance, but perhaps no figure so consistently opposed the insurrection of the *Erneuerer* as Adam Berenz, Catholic parish vicar in the town of Apatin on the Danube in Batschka. In his speeches and sermons across Swabian settled lands and in the pages of *Die Donau*, the Apatin weekly he edited, Berenz led the charge against the *Erneuerungsbewegung*, attacking its leadership, methodology, and ideology. Unfortunately, this movement led by Berenz and his collaborators was ultimately ineffectual, and Catholics streamed into the *gleichgeschaltet* Kulturbund after the triumph of the *Erneuerer*. All the same, that the Church and Berenz asserted a positive vision of German national identity in Yugoslavia which embraced Christianity but rejected National Socialism should not go unnoticed. It was also indicative of the degree to which national consciousness came to permeate interwar Swabian life, for even the Church was forced to employ the discourse of nationhood in its campaign to resist the tide of the Erneuerungsbewegung and save German souls.

By contrast with the Catholics, the German Evangelical Church demonstrated an attitude toward National Socialism that was far more accommodating during the 1930s.<sup>740</sup> Indeed, the German Evangelicals under Bishop Philipp Popp developed ever closer ties with the Third Reich. In this they demonstrated not total approval of Hitler's program but neither did they display the reflexive resistance of the Swabian Catholic Clergy to National Socialism and its local advocates, the Erneuerer. We begin with a discussion of the Catholics' resistance, reserving our discussion of the German Evangelical Church's more ambivalent position for the chapter's latter pages.

#### *German Catholics between the World Wars in Yugoslavia*

Yugoslavia's interwar borders meant that the vast majority of Catholics in the country were now decidedly Croatian or Slovenian, and the Catholic Church, for various reasons, was broadly inclined to cater to those groups. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia's Catholic population also counted a considerable number of ethnic Germans scattered in communities that might be purely German, purely Catholic, or ethnically and confessionally mixed.<sup>741</sup> Spurred by outside forces, the Church increasingly came to embrace its Swabian flock *as Germans* in the 1930s, having largely ignored them as such for the country's first decade. Certain nationally conscious German priests engaged their German parishioners and established institutions to minister to them in their mother tongue, ranging from an active German Catholic press to youth groups and even adult education. The Church organized religious pilgrimages for young Swabians in Batschka and Banat and celebrated the

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<sup>740</sup> As a reminder, "Evangelical" here means "Lutheran."

<sup>741</sup> The country's Magyars were also largely Catholic.

settlement anniversaries of Catholic villages in order to create a sense of movement, community and common values among the country's German Catholic population. Yet even as the Church sought to engage the German Catholics on the basis of nationhood, it rejected the national chauvinism of the Erneuerer, whose racism bespoke a bold "new heathenism" or *Neuheidentum* which the clergy regarded as un-Christian.

Where Catholicism had been something of a state religion under the Habsburgs, after 1918 Catholicism became a minority confession in a state that was majority Orthodox and ruled by an Orthodox monarch, who had only recently been Austria-Hungary's enemy. In an important sense, thus, the tables had dramatically turned.<sup>742</sup> The Vatican would later strive in vain to reach a concordat with the Yugoslav government, but throughout the interwar years the Church would continue to occupy a decidedly inferior position to the one it had enjoyed under the Habsburgs.

The German Catholic population was drastically reduced relative to what it had been in old Hungary, of course, but the 1931 Yugoslav census still found 383,674 German Catholics among the total German population of 499,969. As such, Catholics comprised nearly 77 percent of the country's ethnic Germans, the rest being divided between two Evangelical Churches, as we have seen.<sup>743</sup> The majority of Yugoslavia's German Catholics resided in Vojvodina, Slovenia, and Croatia-Slavonia.

Christianity and the Church were deeply embedded in Swabian society. The Donauschwaben were mostly rural, of course, and their villages were often isolated

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<sup>742</sup> Michael Lehmann, "Die katholischen Donauschwaben im jugoslawischen Banat (1918-1945)," in *Die katholischen Donauschwaben in den Nachfolgestaaten, 1918-1945: Im Zeichen des Nationalismus*, ed. Michael Lehmann (Freilassing: Pannonia-Verlag, 1972). 154-155.

<sup>743</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 19E fn 1.

and characterized by conservative, traditional values. Indeed, Christianity extended beyond the spiritual in the Swabians' agrarian society to take on a fundamental, legitimizing and world-interpreting quality, which was deeply anchored in every individual's worldview. The Church stood both literally and figuratively at the center of Swabian communities and such celebrations as *Bannerweihe* (religious banner consecration) and *Kirchweihe* (church consecration) were both religious occasions and community events. Moreover, this centrality of religion was historic, dating from the original Swabian colonists, who had promptly constructed churches in the villages they founded or adopted. As such, the many village anniversaries celebrated during the interwar period were simultaneously commemorations of the establishment of the local parish there. In sum, Christianity extended beyond the bounds of parish and community and into the Swabian mind, where it informed and often defined an individual's most fundamental world view.

Despite this traditional, Christian outlook and the centrality of religion, a certain distance developed between many German villages and the Church in the decades preceding the outbreak of World War I. In Banat, the priests carried out their work somewhat impersonally in a climate often lacking in trust.<sup>744</sup> In Slavonia and Srijem, as we have seen, there was some resentment of the Church because the Croatian clergy, shaped by Bishop Strossmayer, was perceived as chauvinistic and condescending to their German flock. According to Valentin Oberkersch, many priests simply became hostile toward the Swabians in the years before the First World War and avoided speaking German whenever possible. Nevertheless, the mutual

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<sup>744</sup> Michael Lehmann in Wildmann, "Unterschiedliche Kulturelle Leitbilder bei der Katholischen Kirche und dem Kulturbund im Jugoslawien der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihre Wirkung auf die donauschwaebische Lebenswelt." 22.

coolness the clergy and its Swabian flock felt for one another did not lead the Germans to properly abandon the Church. Though their inner connection with the Church waned and a perceptible indifference toward confessional and even religious questions (especially among men) emerged, the Swabians did continue to attend mass and participate in the various celebrations of the Church calendar.<sup>745</sup>

The ethnic origins of the Catholic clergy in the Hungarian and Croatian lands that fell to Yugoslavia reflected the ethnic mosaic of the region. Identity was similarly complex and a priest's ethnic origins did not always serve as a reliable indicator of his national inclination. In pre-Trianon Hungary, the Catholic hierarchy had long identified with the idea of the Magyar state and had offered considerable assistance and support in the construction of that state. True, in its purely Catholic pastoral care, the Church had served the various nationalities in their mother tongue. However, such pastoral care had nothing to do with *Volkstumarbeit* in the national sense. Rather its emphasis was on the Catholic and not the national. At least as far as the Danube Swabians were concerned, the Church did not serve as an advocate for their national rights or even strive for the proper implementation of the 1868 nationalities law in prewar Hungary.<sup>746</sup>

While the collapse of Austria-Hungary produced a new central European order, which was clearly based on the national principle, much of the Swabians' parish clergy remained slow or reluctant to embrace the new national political ideas of the interwar period. Djakovo Bishop Akšamović was little interested in the

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<sup>745</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 139.

<sup>746</sup> Anton Tafferner, "Die katholischen Donauschwaben in Ungarn, 1918-1945," in *Die katholischen Donauschwaben in den Nachfolgestaaten, 1918-1945: im Zeichen des Nationalismus*, ed. Michael Lehmann (Freilassing: Pannonia-Verlag, 1972). 18.

national-linguistic needs of the Swabians in his diocese and had himself to strike a sometimes awkward balance between Croatian and pro-Yugoslav sensibilities.<sup>747</sup> Likewise, Apostolic Administrator Budanović seemed a similar attitude and even later looked askance at the Swabian clergy's efforts to resist National Socialism through a more assertively, Catholic German identity. In his study of the Catholic Church and the Kulturbund between the world wars, Georg Wildmann offers a taxonomy of the Swabian clergy (especially in Batschka and Banat) that well illustrates the complexity and nuances of their national views, which often contradicted their own ethnic origins. The Swabian clergy, he maintains, could be categorized as "Hungarists", "Magyarists" and "*Deutschbewusste*".

"Hungarists", in Wildmann's taxonomy, were those priests who had embraced Hungary but not German absorption by Magyardom. They had typically been ordained between 1870 and the turn of the century and thus formed their character before 1875, after which Magyarization pressures intensified in the schools. The worldview of the Hungarist priest was defined by a benevolent disposition to the Hungarian state, whose power to integrate peoples and historical rights he respected. That Stephen, founder and first king of Hungary, was simultaneously a saint contributed to a sort of "St. Stephen's myth", which was embodied in Hungarian political literature and national feeling. St. Stephen's kingdom had provided and ensured a kind Pannonian basic culture in which many ethnic groups could freely live their own lives. As such, the Hungarist was an opponent of Swabian assimilation by Magyardom but was nevertheless Hungarian-oriented. He enjoyed a kind of cosmopolitan Germandom, which allowed him to remain comfortably immune from

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<sup>747</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 341.

the more negative trends in contemporary German nationalism elsewhere in Europe.<sup>748</sup>

If Hungarists were Hungarian patriots but opponents of assimilation, “Magyarists” had no such reservations about surrender to Magyarization. Wildmann dates the appearance of this type of German clergy to the year after 1890. Most of this Magyarist “German” clergy would have come from the Swabian villages. Having their roots in the nationally oriented education policy of late-nineteenth century Hungary, the Magyarist clergy openly acknowledged the hegemony of Magyar culture, which they embraced as their own. Wildman calls such priests Magyar-national conservative in their outlook.<sup>749</sup> Although most Magyarist priests spoke German quite well, some could not communicate comfortably in German. This sometimes meant that these priests simply communicated better in Magyar and led to communication problems with the Swabian flock, to which their Magyar affinities frequently seemed condescending. Unsurprisingly, this situation undermined relations between the Church and common folk.<sup>750</sup>

The third and final group consisted of those members of the Catholic clergy who were nationally conscious ethnic Germans. Though fewer in number at the outset of the interwar period, their ranks would increase over time, especially as younger Swabians emerged from the interwar Catholic seminaries and were ordained as priests. The national consciousness of these young priests was not the result of a Church program or initiative. Rather, it derived from a series of changes in the place

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<sup>748</sup> Wildmann, "Unterschiedliche Kulturelle Leitbilder bei der Katholischen Kirche und dem Kulturbund im Jugoslawien der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihre Wirkung auf die donauschwaebische Lebenswelt." 20-21.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid. 24-25.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid. 25.

and nature of their training as well as the nationally tense atmosphere of interwar Yugoslavia.

The interwar period presented new challenges to the Hungarist and Magyarist clergy. In their outlook, they belonged to the camp of the Magyars. However, the new authorities were now Yugoslav and quite concerned about the possibility of Hungarian irredentism. The fledgling German national movement had regarded Hungarists with great suspicion and Magyarists with utter derision, seeing them as ethnic traitors. Hungarists were regularly smeared as Magyarones by nationally conscious Swabians. Some of them, however, including Apatin priest Adam Berenz who would rise to prominence resisting the *Erneuerungsbewegung* and *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* in the 1930s, openly embraced the program of the Kulturbund after its founding in 1920. Nevertheless, such pro-Swabian priests were few in number during the 1920s and their efforts did not please the Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Budanović, in Subotica. Likewise, Djakovo Bishop Antun Akšamović had little interest in attending to the national-linguistic needs of his Swabian flock. Many Catholic priests were distrustful of the Kulturbund, in which they believed they discerned Protestant currents.<sup>751</sup> Osijek's Catholic weekly, *Christliche Volkszeitung* was critical of the nascent German national movement.<sup>752</sup> Similarly, the pages of *Deutsches Volksblatt* were rife with incidents of intense resistance to the Kulturbund by some Catholic priests but open support by others. Caught in a twice noxious atmosphere of Croatian chauvinism and anti-Germanism, the Swabians suffered neglect by the Catholic Church for many years. And where Hungarian-oriented

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<sup>751</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. Jugoslawien. 21.

<sup>752</sup> Julius Wildmann, "Gott, Kulturbund und Staat," *Christliche Volkszeitung*, December 1920.



priests might have felt neutered by the changes in 1918, the Croatian clergy did not, leading the German consulate in Zagreb to remark in 1927 that the Swabian population in the Zagreb and Djakovo bishoprics were being Croatized at its bishops' behest and recommend that the Church organizations of Germany move to protect their German coreligionists in Slavonia.<sup>753</sup>

*Swabian Catholics in the 1930s: A New Dawn*

German Catholics would become energized and mobilized during the 1930s as never before in Yugoslavia. The forces behind this transformation of the German Catholic community were various and the leadership in this transformation featured both Swabian and Reich German actors. In fact, two basic trends were evident. On the one hand, Rome and Reich Catholics recognized the need to better tend to the German flock in Yugoslavia and thus established institutions which ministered specifically to Germans in their mother tongue and embraced the now hegemonic discourse of nationhood (albeit in a specifically Christian-Catholic manner). On the other hand, the local Swabian clergy itself rose against the provocative challenge of the *Erneuerungsbewegung* and its unholy ideology. As such, beginning in the mid-1930s, new institutions were founded that sought to galvanize and mobilize the Catholic Swabian community for Christianity and against the *Erneuerungsbewegung*. In part, this simply meant the better ministering to the Catholic Swabians through freer use of the German language and the establishment of a kind of German Catholic center in Belgrade. However, the response of especially the local clergy to the

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<sup>753</sup> Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien*. 341-342.

*Erneuerungsbewegung* went further and must be understood as foresighted and determined resistance to National Socialism. The Swabian Catholic clergy resolved to meet the *Erneuerungsbewegung's* insurgency with a counterinsurgency of its own and founded an active youth movement to challenge the appeal of the *Erneuerungsbewegung's* young “*Kameradschaft*”. To promote its movement and counteract the incessant propaganda of the *Erneuerer*, the Church launched an active press, which did not shy from decrying the “new-heathenism” (*Neuheidentum*) of National Socialism and its advocates in Germany and Yugoslavia. Inveighing in the press and pulpit against the excesses of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, Yugoslavia’s German clergy embraced German national consciousness but urged Catholics to always keep Christianity at the center of their personal worldview.

In the 1920s Swabian Catholics had often been poorly served by the Church and manifested their dissatisfaction by withdrawing from Church affairs. As discussed, the Church was a central element of earthly as well as spiritual life for the Swabians and thus could not be ignored. The Church calendar set the rhythm of daily and seasonal life for village and parish, and the Church’s sacraments retained a central place in life’s passage from cradle to grave. Nevertheless, a certain distance had developed between many Swabians and their clergy, who often seemed little-able or little-inclined to speak to them in their German mother tongue. Then, over the course of the interwar period, a new generation of young men entered the priesthood. Educated in the often tense, nationalist atmosphere of Yugoslavia, they quickly perceived their ethnic distinctiveness and gravitated toward one another to form reading circles, share German language texts and generally become acquainted with

Catholic life in Germany and Austria. Studying in Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, they discovered that their Magyar and even Croatian seminary colleagues also struggled on behalf of their respective mother tongues in Yugoslavia and thus became energized to do the same for German when they returned to their own communities.<sup>754</sup> These younger priests better understood their increasingly nationally conscious fellow Swabians than did older generations and could moreover better relate to Yugoslavia's German youth. Infused with the Catholic worldview and concerned about the attractions of the Erneuerer and the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, they turned energetically to *Jugendarbeit* in the Catholic spirit but informed by contemporary youth's own language and aesthetic.

Although the challenge of the Erneuerer provided a plain imperative for local mobilization, much of the impetus for the transformation of Swabian Catholic life in the 1930s came from abroad in the recognition that Yugoslavia's German Catholics were being poorly served by the Church. The turning point in the history of the Church in Yugoslavia viz. Germans came in the early 1930s. During the previous decades, the Church had increasingly come to appreciate the importance of the vernacular (mother tongue) in Church matters in the twentieth century. Indeed, Pope Pius XI acknowledged a natural and supernatural right to the receipt of religious instruction and pastoral care [*Seelsorge*] in one's native language.<sup>755</sup> To ensure the proper provision of such pastoral care for the German diaspora, Pius XI named

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<sup>754</sup> For more on the embrace of nationhood by young Catholic priests in Batschka and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, see Josef Haltmayer, "Die katholischen Donauschwaben in der jugoslawischen Batschka (1918-1945)," in *Die katholische Donauschwaben in den Nachfolgestaaten, 1918-1945: Im Zeichen des Nationalismus*, ed. Michael Lehmann (Freilassing: Pannonia-Verlag, 1972). 247-253.

<sup>755</sup> Michael Lehmann, "Die katholischen Donauschwaben in Serbien (1918-1945)," in *Die katholische Donauschwaben in den Nachfolgestaaten, 1918-1945*, ed. Michael Lehmann (Freilassing: Pannonia Verlag, 1972). 212.

Osnabrueck Bishop Wilhelm Berning protector of the auslandsdeutsche Catholics in Eastern Europe and overseas in 1930 and tasked him with assisting those Catholics to maintain their Christian faith and German nationality.<sup>756</sup>

Just as many Reich Germans were concerned about their coethnics beyond the homeland's borders on the basis of national identity, so did many German Catholics worry for their auslandsdeutsche co-religionists in Eastern Europe and overseas. In a Catholic form of homeland nationalism and Volkstumarbeit, these Reich Catholics advocated for their fellow German Catholics abroad, their principal organization being the Reich Association for Catholic Germans Abroad (*Reichsverband fuer die katholischen Auslandsdeutschen*). Klemens Popp, the association's leader, knew of the neglected state of the Catholics in Belgrade and sought unsuccessfully to persuade Archbishop Rodić of Belgrade to permit a German priest to tend to the city's German Catholics in the early 1930s. Later, on the request of Bishop Berning, the Belgrade archbishop consented, receiving *reichsdeutsche* Rector Augustin Hegenkoetter on May 2, 1932 and granting him permission to minister to the German Catholics in the archbishopric of Belgrade and the apostolic administrature of Banat. Thus did the Swabian Catholic community receive one of its principle drivers from abroad.

When he visited Yugoslavia in 1933 himself, Bishop Berning discovered the German Catholics there to be suffering from neglect and insufficient resources. Swabians complained of a lack of German language religious services and German speaking priests. The situation in Belgrade was particularly dire, for the community there had been without a German mass for many years. At around 10,000 souls,

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<sup>756</sup> "Im Dienste von Glaube und Volkstum: Ein Dankwort an Bischof Wilhelm Berning," *St. Raphaelsblatt*, October 8 1939.

Swabians formed approximately one quarter of Belgrade's Catholic population.<sup>757</sup> Nevertheless, anti-German sentiment lingered in the new Yugoslav capital and the Church found its resources tested there with the arrival of many Croatan and Slovene Catholics following the new state's creation. Indeed, though German religious education was available, for many years neither mass nor important sacraments were celebrated in German in the city.<sup>758</sup> Berning futilely pressed for the establishment of a German seminary in Yugoslavia and obtained some limited success in his appeal to allow ethnic Germans to train for the priesthood in Germany. However, the most lasting impact from his visit resulted from his instruction that a German Catholic center be established in the Yugoslav capital. From this initiative arose St. Raphaelsheim, a place of worship and German cultural center which would soon become not only the focal point of the German Catholic ministry in Belgrade but also a major publishing center and gathering point for Danube Swabians in the Yugoslav capital.

Despite the limited number of German Catholics in Belgrade, St. Raphaelsheim and the men associated with it soon assumed great importance in Swabian Catholic community. In January 1934, *Rektor* Hegenkoetter and his *reichsdeutsche* colleague, Vicar Emanuel Wethmar, secured written authorization to introduce German into masses in Belgrade and its surroundings. The former of these two men became a tireless servant of the Catholic Swabians in and around the capital, "the soul of St. Raphaelsheim."<sup>759</sup> Meanwhile, his partner Vicar Wethmar devoted himself to the Swabian Catholic press, participating in the founding of the three

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<sup>757</sup> Lehmann, "Die katholischen Donauschwaben in Serbien (1918-1945)." 211.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid. 212.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid. 214.

principle publications of St. Raphaelsheim, *St. Raphaelsblatt*, *Wolkenschiff*, and *Jugendruf*. He was likewise tireless, ministering to the Germans in Belgrade, providing German language religion classes, and devoting great attention to the organizational life of German Catholic youth.

Related to its Christian mission, St. Raphaelsheim also became a center of Swabian Catholic publication and resistance to the Erneuerungsbewegung. During the 1920s, Yugoslavia had featured a handful of German-language Catholic-oriented publications, such as *Christliche Volkszeitung*, but these newspapers differed in scope and orientation from those of the 1930s. *Christliche Volkszeitung* was primarily an Osijek journal of record, albeit with a Catholic (but not German nationalist) perspective. The Church's Swabian press of the 1930s was fundamentally Catholic in its orientation, of course, but also revealed itself to be simultaneously nationally conscious and frequently appealed to its Catholic readers on the basis of German national identity. As the decade wore on and the challenge of the Erneuerungsbewegung grew more menacing, the Catholic press increasingly served as a platform for spirited sermons on religion and national identity. Moreover, it became a source for news and commentary on such matters by important voices in the Vatican and Germany itself.

If external forces, especially the attention of Osnabrueck Bishop Berning and the *Reichsverband fuer katholischen Auslandsdeutschen*, resulted in the revitalization of organized Swabian Catholic life in Yugoslavia, it was the challenge of the *Erneuerer* that spurred the local German clergy to even higher levels of activity. Before Hitler's coming to power, one did not find Nazi propaganda in the Swabian

villages of Batschka, Father Josef Negele, the future editor of *Familienfreund*, observed. However, young Swabians who had studied in Germany returned to their communities possessed by the new ideas and methods of struggle that they had observed abroad. Once back in Yugoslavia, they formed small circles to discuss the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and occasionally parade through town singing fight songs (*Kampfliedern*) or shouting “Heil Hitler”. After the Nazis’ accession to power, the Erneuerer became even more brazen, holding teach-ins on the tenets of their movement and openly seeking adherents in the Catholic communities.<sup>760</sup>

Meanwhile in Germany, the Nazis did not intend to allow the Catholic Church to escape the *Gleichschaltung* they demanded of other organizations in the Third Reich for reasons of ideology and control. With over 21 million members in the Reich and vast international resources, the Church was one of the strongest organizations in Germany. At the outset of Nazi rule, German society also featured Catholic trade unions and the Catholic Center Party, which had been a key supporter of the Weimar Republic. As such, the Nazi Party quickly resolved to limit the Church with the likely goal of eventually uprooting it from German society altogether. The Nazis also had ideological problems with the Church. In his *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg had asserted a “scientific” racism based on blood and argued that each race was imbued with a unique religious impulse. According to this schema, Christianity was a foreign, Semitic import into German society which had wrongly alienated the old-Germanic tribes from their pagan

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<sup>760</sup> Josef Negele, "Unsere Arbeit fuer Volk und Glauben," in *Weitblick eines Donauschwaben*, ed. Micheal Merkl (Dieterskirch: M. Merkl, 1968).

religious nature. Thus, the Church needed to be disciplined and reduced. Naturally, German Catholics in Germany and Yugoslavia considered this outrageous.

The Nazis so pressured the Catholic Center Party that it felt compelled to dissolve itself in July 1933. The party's dissolution did not mean a cessation of anti-Catholic persecution, however, and it was against a background of arrests and threatened SA violence against Catholics, that the Vatican hastily concluded a Concordat with the Reich later that month. The Concordat guaranteed the Church's continued right to appoint the Catholic clergy, maintain Catholic schools, hold church rallies, and run youth groups. In exchange, the Vatican confirmed the dissolution of Catholic political organizations (including the Center Party) as well as trade unions and certain other Catholic-oriented groups. While not ideal from a Catholic perspective, the terms of the Concordat nevertheless offered at least a modicum of formal protection for the Reich's beleaguered Catholics.

It soon became clear, however, that the Nazis did not intend to respect the terms of the Concordat. This disrespect manifested itself in the arrest and trials of outspoken or otherwise defiant priests, the persecution of Jesuits and a general intolerance of the Catholic Action movement, about whose manifestation among Swabian Catholics in Yugoslavia we shall learn more shortly. A Catholic resistance movement of sorts developed in Germany to document the Nazi's abuses, including a series of trials designed to destroy the reputation of individual Priests and the Church. Finally, after witnessing several years of such Nazi abuses, Pope Pius XI issued "Mit brennender Sorge" or "With Burning Concern," the 1937 Papal encyclical in which he spoke out against the conditions the Church faced in Germany, Nazi violations of



the Concordat, and the problems of National Socialists' ideology generally. In Germany itself, outspoken priests such as Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich increasingly faced threats or even acts of violence. Yet many, especially Faulhaber, remained outspoken against the excesses (including racism and anti-Semitism) of Nazism. As we shall see, the Swabian Catholic clergymen were aware of the difficult circumstances faced by their colleagues in the Third Reich and shared Pius XI's concerns with their flock in Yugoslavia. It was no doubt the example of Catholic defiance in Germany that inspired Yugoslavia's Swabian clergy to launch a resistance movement of their own. As the brash Erneuerer grew more disruptive and the scope of their ambitions became apparent, the concerned German Catholic clergy resolved to respond to their challenge directly.

### Catholic Counterinsurgency

Meeting in Kula (Slavonia) in 1934, concerned German priests and laymen connected with the biweekly *Familienfreund*, including Josef Negele and Kulturbund Deputy Chairman Konrad Schmidt (who from his work in the Kulturbund was well aware of the dangerous potential of the Erneuerer), formed a working group and devised a program to resist the nascent Erneuerungsbewegung. Their program called for fighting the Erneuerer insurgency with a broad and activist counterinsurgency of their own. New energies would be directed at the German Catholic population and especially the youth. Where in previous decades the Swabian flock had been neglected, the clergy now sought to actively organize and mobilize it.

A number of new associations were to be established for German men and women, boys and girls. New, Catholic-oriented publications would specifically target the youth, who would be organized and mobilized as part of a broad movement of young Catholics in the country. In an effort to train a new cadre of Catholic youth leaders (*Jugendfueherer*), annual courses would be held at the Maria Stern (*Marija zvijezda*) monastery in Banja Luka. Similarly, religious pilgrimages would be held yearly inside Yugoslavia to maintain the Catholic movement's momentum and involve as many people as possible. In this resistance effort, the priesthood consciously borrowed forms and aesthetics from the other, sometimes rival youth movements of the day. Their efforts were greatly facilitated by the interwar development of a German national identity among young Swabian priests which allowed them to relate to their parishes as their older colleagues had been unable to.

Thus did the Church seek to activate and organize the Catholics, especially the youth, while simultaneously grappling with issues of nationhood, race, religion, etc. to which the Erneuerungsbewegung confidently offered answers steeped in the mores of National Socialism. The Catholic working group's resistance program was comprehensive, appealing to all members of the family and seeking to offer Swabians an organizational life every bit as appealing as the marches and rallies of the Erneuerer but defined by a Christian worldview.

Although the Erneuerungsbewegung's goal was to take the helm of the Kulturbund and transform the Swabian minority into a properly Nazi-inspired *Volksgemeinschaft*, much of the language and appeal of their movement lay in the cult of youth. As we noted in Chapters Five and Six, the Erneuerungsbewegung

appealed to Yugoslavia's German youth as its natural supporters, to whom it offered a movement that was at once rebellious but also promised a higher order. Taking cues from some of the younger priests and laymen, the men behind the Catholic resistance also sought to capture the power and spirit of youth and organized their own youth organizations. Indeed, under Church patronage a full blown Catholic youth movement began during the 1930s, seeking to replace religious ambivalence with German Catholic activism. This Catholic youth movement began in earnest in 1934 and grew stronger through the establishment of Catholic organizations for young men and women such as the Christian Youth, the Mary League, and the Young Troop.<sup>761</sup> Lectures, excursions, *Heimatabende* and outdoor events were held to promote the physical health, moral integrity, and Christian faith of all participants. Additionally, no small attention was lavished upon the insistent reconciliation between German national identity and the Catholic religion.

This Catholic youth movement in Yugoslavia should be understood as a local manifestation of the "Catholic Action" movement (*Katholische Aktion*) called for by Pius XI in his 1922 encyclical and which sought to extend the reach of the Church by engaging and energizing the Catholic laity. The movement's reach was increased through the publication of newspapers and magazines, especially those aimed at youth, such as *Jugendruf*, which began publication at the end of 1934. Ultimately, Catholic Action differed from political Catholicism in that it did not seek to organize Catholics into their own party or achieve specific political goals. Rather, Catholic Action aspired to shape men and women in the Christian spirit such that they might make choices and policies based upon Christian fundamentals regardless of the party

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<sup>761</sup> These were the *Christusjugend*, the *Marienbund*, and the *Jungschar* respectively.

to which they belonged.<sup>762</sup> It and the Swabian Catholic youth movement that developed in the 1930s aimed at nothing less than a kind of “*christliche Erneuerung*,” a “Christian renewal” of Yugoslavia’s Germans. As the Swabian Catholic monthly *Jugendruf* explained it in 1935, “The ultimate goal of Catholic Action is the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth from the renewed power of belief, the growth of Christ’s Kingdom in individual souls, in the families and in the parishes.” Indeed, “the conquest of the world for Christ must above all begin in the rearing of the young generation. And that is why Catholic Action must particularly seize the souls of the young.” Thus, “Erneuerung” was an expression and concept the Church itself embraced and used frequently, positing in it a spiritual renewal quite at odds with the likes advocated by Jakob Awender, Gustav Halwax and other Erneuerer.

The Catholic youth movement was highly active, being characterized not only by the above listed groups (and others) but also by a wide array of activities. These activities ranged from simple gatherings and day-outings to much more extensive excursions, summer camps, and even pilgrimages. Moreover, Catholic Action was not limited only to Swabian youth. Soon, older German men and women were sought to participate in the courses, rallies, and pilgrimages which the Church and its laypeople organized across the Germans’ area of settlement.

Having formed the Swabian Catholic youth groups, the Church also sought to create a new cadre of Catholic youth leaders to direct them. To this end, courses in leadership and religion were held for the young at the Trappist monastery Maria Stern in Banja Luka beginning in February 1935, as we noted earlier. These popular

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<sup>762</sup> Wildmann, "Unterschiedliche Kulturelle Leitbilder bei der Katholischen Kirche und dem Kulturbund im Jugoslawien der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihre Wirkung auf die donauschwaebische Lebenswelt." 35.

courses were held annually until 1940 and expanded to include older men as well. Again, the courses revealed the influence and importance of Reich German attention to the Swabian Catholic community since they were financed by the *Katholische Auslandsdeutschen Mission*, another German Catholic organization devoted to caring for its coreligionist Germans outside Germany, and included instruction by Reich German priests. Ultimately, “Through the courses for men and young men in Maria Stern, a new spirit had developed in the German Catholic communities of Batschka. One came to see that Catholic Action was indispensable. That is, one realized that it was absolutely necessary in order to wake German Catholic young men and men from their sleep and deploy them for the Church, faith and Christ.”<sup>763</sup>

A measure of the success and popularity of the Catholic youth movement can be found in the annual pilgrimages that were organized in Batschka and Banat. Such pilgrimages were actually not unprecedented in the region but their popularity had faded in the years before the 1930s, when they were embraced by the new German Catholic youth movement. Josef Negele explains that it had been decided to hold a young men’s pilgrimage already at the first young men’s course in Banja Luka in February 1935. Under his leadership, and in consultation with Adam Berenz, Vikar Wethmar and Konrad Schmidt and others, this first pilgrimage of young Batschka men to Maria Doroslovo was held on June 23 of that year and drew participants and priests from communities across Batschka.<sup>764</sup> A separate pilgrimage to Vršac was held on Pentecost of that year for the young men of Banat.

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<sup>763</sup> Haltmayer. 265-266

<sup>764</sup> Negele. 36.

When the German clergy determined to hold these pilgrimages, it was decided that they would be youth-oriented affairs with a contemporary aesthetic designed to appeal to the era's young people. As such, these pilgrimages were characterized by marching, banners and religious flags. They were intended as Christian but also mass affairs, and their announcement in *Jugendruf* regularly billed them as opportunities to proudly and publicly announce the strong Catholic faith of young Swabian men and women. *Jugendruf* found that 2106 young men participated in the event at Maria Doroslovo, marching behind Christian flags and banners accompanied by the music ensemble of the Catholic village of Filipovo. Moreover, it held up as evidence of the success of the recent Banja Luka young men's course.<sup>765</sup> According to *Jugendruf*, the 1935 pilgrimage drew over 3000 attendees.<sup>766</sup> In succeeding years, attendance would continue to grow and the tone of the events would become more confrontational as the conflict with the Erneuerer escalated.<sup>767</sup> Also in later years, the young men's pilgrimage movement would be joined by an annual pilgrimage for young women. After several smaller pilgrimages by individual *Marienbund* groups, the first such annual, all-Swabian *Maedchenwallfahrt* was held in 1939 and drew 3500 girls and women to Maria Doroslovo, where again Berenz gave the sermon.<sup>768</sup>

Another high point in the German Catholic youth movement occurred on the eve of war in Europe in August 1939 when a Congress of Catholic Men was organized in Sombor. Unlike the pilgrimages to Maria Doroslovo, this event was not

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<sup>765</sup> "Deutsche kath. Jugend auf Wallfahrt!," *Jugendruf* 2, no. 13 (1935).

<sup>766</sup> "Ueberwaeltigender Aufmarsch von 3000 Jungmaennern am Wallfahrtsort Doroslovo," *Jugendruf*, July 1 1936.

<sup>767</sup> Adam Berenz, "Dritte Jungmaennerwahllfahrt in Doroslovo," *Die Donau*, June 26 1937.

<sup>768</sup> "Unsere Maedchenwallfahrt nach Doroslovo," *Jugendruf*, August-September 1939. *Die Donau* estimated attendance at 3000. "Die erste Frauen- und Maedchenwallfahrt in Doroslovo," *Die Donau*, July 29 1939.

specifically German-oriented but instead drew attendees from all the nationalities in Batschka. It was celebrated in the German Catholic press as an example of the Church's delicate balance between nation and religion. The individual ethnicities did hold their own meetings at Sombor, but participants recalled this event for its supranational and tolerant character. It was billed as a time to join together with Slavs and Magyars in a celebration of the Catholic faith. But for the Germans it was also an occasion to rally in resistance to the ascendant Erneuerungsbewegung and its unholy ideology. Adam Berenz attended this Sombor rally too, of course, but the day's most memorable actor was perhaps the lawyer and former Kulturbund Deputy Chairman Konrad Schmidt, whose fiery oratory warned Catholic Swabians of the seductions of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*.

#### *New Voices and New Assertiveness in the Catholic Press*

Just as the German Catholic youth movement transformed life in the Church, so did the German Catholic press in Yugoslavia undergo a revolution in a remarkably short period of time. Initially, there were very few German Catholic publications in Yugoslavia and most Catholic literature in German was imported from Austria or Germany. True, the weekly *Christliche Volkszeitung* had existed since 1919 and boasted a circulation of 8000 to 10,000 in Slavonia and Vojvodina by the mid 1920s. Yet despite its German language, *Christliche Volkszeitung* was hardly a German national publication and its editorial staff did not foremost consider itself to be German in a national sense, as we have seen. Indeed, most German nationalists

dismissed *Christliche Volkszeitung* as a clerical newspaper or simply ignored it.<sup>769</sup>

The emergence of a more nationally conscious Swabian priesthood and the increasing appeal of the National Socialist worldview prompted a transformation in German Catholic journalism, resulting in the publication of several new periodicals and the reorientation of others. Below, we discuss the most important of these, *Der Familienfreund* and *Jugendruf*. We reserve discussion of *Die Donau*, interwar Yugoslavia's most outspoken Swabian Catholic newspaper, for a separate section.

One German Catholic periodical that underwent a reorientation by the end of the 1920s was *Der Familienfreund*. Launched in Crvenka (Batschka) in 1927 the conservative *Familienfreund* began with the intent to bring its German readers specifically *Catholic*, not nationalist content. After a series of editors, Josef Negele, who would emerge as one of the chief architects of the Swabian Catholic resistance to the Erneuerungsbewegung, took the helm of the newspaper in 1929. Under his direction, the newspaper came to include discussions of religion and nationhood as well as sermons and statements by leading Catholic clergy in Austria and Germany itself. Also under Negele's leadership, *Der Familienfreund* became a publisher of other works, perhaps most notable of which was *Can a Christian be an "Erneuerer"?*, which explored the contradictions between Christianity and the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*.

By 1933, *Der Familienfreund* had very much engaged in politics. To be sure, this engagement concerned no practical Yugoslav matters but rather reflected

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<sup>769</sup> With a few exceptions, *Christliche Volkszeitung* rarely engaged in the conflict with the Erneuerer or others in the German movement, perhaps perceiving its own lack of credibility in matters of nationhood. Josef Werni, "Die katholischen Donauschwaben in der Diözese Diakowar (1918-1945)," in *Die katholische Donauschwaben in den Nachfolgestaaten, 1918-1945: Im Zeichen des Nationalismus*, ed. Michael Lehmann (Freilassing: Pannonia-Verlag, 1972). 308-309.



contemporary Reich German Catholic debates on the role and nature of nationalism. Many such articles were in public pastoral letters and sermons by bishops in Austria or Germany, which grappled with the proper relationship between Christendom and Germandom, and Christianity and nationhood. "May a Christian be National?" Vienna's Cardinal Innitzer asked shortly after Hitler's accession to power in Germany. "We may be national, but we may not elevate the nation over the state and religion." Moreover, he stated, as Children of God we must resist racism and chauvinism, recognizing virtues in all nations and being tolerant of multi-national states.<sup>770</sup> Yet even the national chauvinism of the past paled next to the threat posed by nationalism in its latest, most pernicious guise, *Der Familienfreund* warned. "Nationalism today has degenerated into a kind of false doctrine or heresy which has not only divided peoples on the political level but also preaches a new worldview. It seeks to nationalize religion and punctuate it with narrow-minded racial theories." Such distorted and excessive nationalism was irreconcilable with the supranational character of Christianity, the newspaper cautioned as it denounced National Socialism by name.<sup>771</sup> Finally, a common theme was distinguishing between "true" (just) and false (unjust) nationalism. Editor Negele contributed a series of articles on this theme in 1939, aggressively denouncing Nazi Germany, the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, racism and national chauvinists. "Christian nationalism," he wrote, "is to be found where one stands on the ground of Christian faith, Christian righteousness, and Christian love. Where this is not the case, where one overemphasizes national thoughts at the expense of truth and does not pay heed to righteousness and love,

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<sup>770</sup> Theodor Innitzer, "Glaube und Heimat, Religion und Staat," *Der Familienfreund*, February 1933.

<sup>771</sup> "Kirche und Nationalismus," *Der Familienfreund*, May 1 1933.

there we have an over-exaggerated, heathen nationalism.” He continued, “heathenistic nationalism is therefore always bound with heavy sins against the faith, against the righteousness and against the main commandment of love.” Furthermore, “heathenistic nationalism is above all a great heresy. Indeed, one can say that next to Marxist Communism, it is the greatest lie and heresy of our times.”<sup>772</sup>

Negele was also prescient enough to recognize that nationalism in the era of National Socialism presented an unprecedented challenge. “In the past there have always been exaggerated nationalists and chauvinists who lovelessly and unjustly treated their fellow men of different nationalities, but nevertheless did not wish to deny the Christian faith,” he observed. “It remained to our current time to construct its own “national” [*voelkisch*] world view and religion out of national eccentricities. One simply places the *Volk* and race in the place of God and thus carries out a kind of self-deification.” It was thus an era of pernicious nationalist narcissism and racist madness. Moreover, such *heidnische Nationalismus* was sinful and blasphemous, being ignorant of Christian virtues and knowing only “a love of *Volk*, race, and at the most a love for the ‘*Fuehrer*’ of the nation.”<sup>773</sup> Against such things, the Catholic clergy were compelled to take a stand. For its efforts, *der Familienfreund* was denounced by *Volksruf* in 1936 as conducting “an unscrupulous, mendacious campaign of hate-mongering [*Greuelpropaganda*].”<sup>774</sup>

Like *Der Familienfreund*, *St. Raphaelsblatt*, the namesake publication from St. Raphaelsheim in Belgrade, eschewed issues of nationhood during its initial years.

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<sup>772</sup> Josef Negele, "Wahrer und falscher Nationalismus," *Der Familienfreund*, January 15 1939.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> Ulrich Baresch, "Schwarze Greuelpropaganda: Luegenfeldzug der "schwaebischen" schwarzen Front gegen das Muttervolk " *Volksruf*, July 10 1936.

It then evolved over the course of its publication to address real social and religious concerns in Yugoslavia and even in Germany. To be sure, it was less confrontational than *der Familienfreund*, *Jugendruf*, and *die Donau*. Reading *St. Raphaelsblatt*, one could easily be forgiven for thinking one was actually in Germany, so remote did any Yugoslav concerns (to say nothing of national politics) seem in its pages. Nevertheless, *St. Raphaelsblatt* was definitely more than a simple church newsletter. It likewise opposed the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and openly came to worry about the emergence of heresy during 1937 and 1938. Meanwhile, the newspaper was very concerned about the state of Christianity and the Church in Germany and printed excerpts from “Mit brennender Sorge,” Pope Pius XI’s 1937 encyclical on the matter. In the years after the Erneuerer finally prevailed in their struggle to lead the Kulturbund, *St. Raphaelsblatt* would work ever harder to prove its German credentials even as it insisted on the supremacy of religion over nationhood.

Important as these above newspapers were, however, the two most important publications in the Catholic resistance to the *Erneuerungsbewegung* were *Jugendruf* and *Die Donau*. Where *St. Raphaelsblatt* and even *Der Familienfreund* were principally Church organs, *Jugendruf* was a more focused publication which specifically targeted young people and was actively engaged in national and religious matters. It additionally lavished attention on the Swabian’s organized Catholic youth movement, which it celebrated, fostered, promoted, and guided.

At St. Raphaelsheim in Belgrade, *reichsdeutsche* priests Hegenkoetter and Wethmar were quick to embrace their work on behalf of Yugoslavia’s Swabian Catholics. Vicar Wethmar in particular took an interest in youth matters and similarly

devoted himself to the promotion of the Swabian Catholic press. When, upon the visit of *Katholische Auslandsdeutsche Mission* leader Dr. Scherer, the decision was taken to establish *Jungmaennerkurse* at the Maria Stern monastery in Banja Luka, it was also decided to found a magazine aimed at the German youth of Yugoslavia with Wethmar as publisher and editor. The fruit of this decision, *Jugendruf*, first appeared in December 1934 as a supplement to *der Familienfreund* and *St. Raphaelsblatt* but became a fully separate publication in 1936. The tireless Wethmar would dominate this “monthly journal of young German Catholics” until his recall to Germany in 1938.<sup>775</sup> Thereafter his successors would continue the battle to win young Catholic hearts and minds for the resistance against the Erneuerer and National Socialism.

*Jugendruf* targeted the German Catholic youth of Yugoslavia with the aim of being not only a chronicle of their movement, but also a spiritual and indeed political guide for Yugoslavia’s German Catholic youth. In addition to chronicling the many courses, gatherings, festivals, and pilgrimages of the German Catholic youth (especially to Doroslovo in Batschka and Maria Stern in Bosnia), *Jugendruf* also exhorted young Catholics to remain true to Catholic principles at a time when the Erneuerungsbewegung was growing in numbers and appeal. By promoting an alternative movement, *Jugendruf* hoped to help German Catholic youth resist the seduction of the Erneuerungsbewegung even as ever more Catholics rushed into the newly “Nazified” or *gleichgeschaltet* Kulturbund’s ranks.

*Jugendruf* assumed a Christian supranational outlook but it was unambiguously written for a nationally conscious, German audience. As such, it explored the relationship between religion and nationhood in several essays, and

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<sup>775</sup> Negele, "Unsere Arbeit fuer Volk und Glauben." 35.

pointed out the many and fruitful connections between the Church and Germandom. It promoted German saints as heroes and increasingly adopted the language and even the aesthetics of its adversaries. There was increasing talk of “struggle” (*Kampf*) in *Jugendruf* and even an article dedicated to a Catholic interpretation of the old-Germanic winter solstice celebration (*Sonnwendfeier*), which had been eagerly appropriated by the Nazis in Germany and the Erneuerer in Yugoslavia. In an era when Swabian Erneuerer increasingly greeted one another with “Heil Hitler”, young Catholics sometimes used their own salutation, “Treu-Heil!”<sup>776</sup> Likewise, they conspicuously referred to fellow members of the young Catholic movement as *Kameraden*, much as the Erneuerer themselves did. Finally, just as a conscious decision had been made to embrace the banners, marching and other contemporary forms in young men’s pilgrimages to Maria Doroslovo, so would *Jugendruf* embrace the idealized aesthetics of struggle and heroism that were so popular with the youth of the day.

The magazine printed numerous articles dedicated to reconciling the supremacy of religion and the importance of the nation. Its pages likewise promoted the glory of St. Bonifatius, about whom we shall hear more shortly, as part of a general effort to assert the compatibility between Christianity and the cult of heroism, which was so popular during the era of European fascism. Its cover art was particularly evocative and revealed the degree to which even the Catholic youth movement was compelled to subscribe to the heroic, idealized aesthetics of the day. Subjects included a chiseled profile of St. Bonifatius and the idealized image of a

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<sup>776</sup> Dioezesanpraeses und bischoflicher Sekretaer (and *Jugendruf* editor after 1940) Andreas Moullion "Flammenzeichen deutscher kath. Jugend in der Batschka," *Jugendruf*, July 1 1937.

strapping young Swabian farmer, who seemed borrowed directly from the Nazis' own ideal of Aryan youth. The cover of the June 1939 issue, on which an eagle clutches a crucifix, was particularly striking and eloquently revealed the delicate marriage of Catholic content and heroic aesthetics for which *Jugendruf* and the Swabian Catholic youth movement strove.



Above, *Jugendruf* calls young Swabian men to make the annual pilgrimage to Doroslovo with the bold profile of St. Bonifatius, the “German” saint. Photo by the author.



*Jugendruf* borrows the aesthetic off the young, heroic laboring male.  
Photo by the author.



*Jugendruf* borrows the aesthetics of strength, Germanism, and struggle.  
Photo by the author.



Above, *Die Donau* explains that there need be no contradiction between German national identity and Catholicism in 1937. Photo by the author.

*Jugendruf* began publication conscious of its mission to resist the *Neuheidentum* of the Erneuerer and grew increasingly galvanized in its resistance over the course of the 1930s. Richly illustrated, this magazine is an excellent source for the scholar on the ideological content and daily activities of the Swabian Catholic youth movement in Yugoslavia. It also reveals the great extent to which national identity had penetrated the Swabian youth and even much of its younger priesthood. Ultimately, the magazine sought to mobilize Swabian youth in defense of Christendom, reject Erneuerer declarations on the incompatibility of Catholicism and Germanism, and steel young Catholics to resist the attractions of the Erneuerer's dynamic movement.

*Jugendruf's* mission was simultaneously one of offense and defense. In terms of the former, the magazine and the young Catholic movement it served took a highly proactive attitude toward youth matters, hoping to save young Catholic souls from temptation by the Erneuererbewegung, whose appeal was often based precisely on



the energy and freshness of youth. As previously discussed, the Swabian Catholic clergy made a deliberate decision in its preparations for the first young men's pilgrimage to Doroslovo to embrace marching, banners, and other modern forms popular with contemporary youths. Seizing the spirit of the times, the Swabian activist clergy sought to embrace youth and youth culture. To this end, it recognized the powerful idealism of youth, which it hoped to harness for the goals of Catholic Action. From its inception, thus, Vicar Wethmar's *Jugendruf* sought to deploy Christian radicalism against the excesses and errors of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. "Let us be radical and become even more radical. That is, let us renew our selves and thereby also the church and the [Yugoslav] fatherland from the roots upward," one of its earliest issues cried.<sup>777</sup>

In terms of defense, the magazine's editors had to parry the Erneuerer's accusations that modern youth had no place in an archaic institution like the Catholic Church, or that Catholicism and even Christianity in general were somehow "foreign" to German nature and the needs of the times. The Church responded to this by arguing just the opposite, observing a long symbiotic relationship between the Church and German *Volk*. In order to highlight that relationship and the courageous nature of the Church, the Swabian activists invoked St. Bonifatius, regarded by German Catholics as a hero for bringing Christianity to their Germanic ancestors. As a missionary, they recalled, the brave Bonifatius set out from Rome to bring Christianity to the Germanic lands, thus correcting errant practices and delivering the Germans from heathen darkness. Through a half century of tireless missionary work, the tireless Bonifatius succeeded in bringing the proper word of God to the Germanic

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<sup>777</sup> "Katholische Jugend von Heute ", *Jugendruf*, March 1935.

tribes. But his mission was one of constant struggle. He labored tirelessly a half century against unbelief, heresy, against the open hatred of his enemies and hidden malice, against incomprehension among his own comrades, against weakness and regression in the communities.<sup>778</sup> The parallels for the modern Church were clear: just as the fearless Bonifatius had fearlessly confronted the paganism of the Swabians' Germanic ancestors, so must contemporary German Catholics resist the modern heresy of National Socialism, the Erneuerungsbewegung and its unchristian *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*.

As "Held und Heiliger" and other such articles on St. Bonifatius suggest, the Swabian Catholics at *Jugendruf*'s and elsewhere rejected the charge that the Church was unsuited to meet the ideals of youth, struggle and heroism which were so influential between the wars. On the contrary, they argued, Christianity had a long history of heroism, from the fearless martyrs who perished in the Roman Coliseum to the many Catholic saints who succeeded them as monks and missionaries. *Jugendruf* addressed this theme directly and indirectly over the years asserting, moreover, that the Church had not only the strength to endure suffering but also the backbone to engage in struggle. From the days of Imperial Rome, to the era of Christian chivalry and finally the First World War, Catholicism plainly was not lacking in heroic bravery, *Jugendruf* asserted.

*Jugendruf*'s editors rejected any contradiction between Germandom and Christendom, and regularly observed the loyal service of the Catholics to the Reich during the First World War, in which so many German Catholics had gallantly fought

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<sup>778</sup> "Held u. Heiliger," *Jugendruf*, October 1 1938.

and died for their Fatherland.<sup>779</sup> While *Jugendruf's* editors never suggested that nation should eclipse confession and would have rejected assertions that religion was a private matter, they nevertheless constantly exhorted Swabian youths to take pride in both aspects of their identity. Nations were, after all, a blessing and a creation of the Christian God.<sup>780</sup>

As the 1930s progressed and the divisions among the Swabians grew both deeper and more acrimonious, so did *Jugendruf* and its sister publications grapple more aggressively with Erneuerer's insurgency. Though the Church and Kulturbund undeniably had a history of mutual suspicion, this suspicion was hardly complete and there were many cases of fruitful cooperation. Many Catholics were members of the Kulturbund, of course, and many Kulturbund members were proud members of their parish communities. By 1938, *Jugendruf* boasted a circulation of 4000, which the editorship claimed translated into 15,000 to 20,000 readers.<sup>781</sup> Many of these were also affiliated with the Kulturbund.

In a lengthy speech at the 1939 Conference of Catholic Men at Sombor, Andreas Schmidt, Catholic lay activist, long-time opponent of the Erneuerer and former deputy chairman of the Kulturbund, gave a broad speech in which he warned of the grave dangers facing the Swabians and their Catholic Church. *Jugendruf* prominently republished this speech by the man Negele calls the "inspirer and leader" of the original Catholic resistance to the Erneuerungsbewegung.<sup>782</sup> So numerous were these dangers, Schmidt cautioned, that the struggle at hand literally concerned the

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<sup>779</sup> "Deutsch und katholisch!," *Jugendruf*, November 1935.

<sup>780</sup> Franz. Germann, "Jugend im Volk!," *Jugendruf*, November 1935.

<sup>781</sup> "Wir dringen durch," *Jugendruf*, August 1 1938.

<sup>782</sup> Negele, "Unsere Arbeit fuer Volk und Glauben." 34.

future existence of Swabian Christianity. Swabian Catholicism hung in the balance. The Church's opponents were tireless and had too long been allowed to conduct their struggle without an energetic response from the country's Catholics. "It is already established in every community/parish (*Gemeinde*). It has its open and dastardly followers. It does not build a church out of wood and bricks. Its churches are built out of living persons, out of misguided souls. They have no priests, they are all laymen. But all feel called to act as preachers and apostles of this new anti-Church. All followers feel themselves bound to expunge Christianity with its creed from the *Volk* and introduce their new confession into our German people." To this "antichristian" and "anti-Church" movement, Schmidt issued a call to arms, a cry for the Catholics to stand up unafraid and confront their enemies.<sup>783</sup> His was hardly a new message in 1939, however, and in his boldness he closely echoed the sermons, essays and activities of Apatin priest Adam Berenz, to whom we now turn in detail.

#### *Adam Berenz and Die Donau Confront the Erneuerer*

The tireless Adam Berenz must be singled out among Yugoslavia's German Catholic clergy for his leadership, courage and his indefatigable resistance to the Erneuerer and their ideology. Although he should not be mistaken as the leader of a proper "movement" in a political sense, Berenz nevertheless deserves mention as the most outspoken and relentless of the opponents of the Erneuerungsbewegung and National Socialism in Yugoslavia. He certainly was a public figure. His criticism was pious, caustic, eloquent and unremitting. Josef Volkmar Senz has called him the

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<sup>783</sup> Konrad Schmidt, "Jungmaenner, das geht euch alle an!," *Jugendruf*, August-September 1939.

Swabians' "spokesman in the burning conflict between the national and religious renewal of the Germans in Yugoslavia and later in Hungary, between the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and the Christian worldview."<sup>784</sup> In his book on Swabians in Batschka, Josip Mirnić asserts that Berenz was nothing less than "the central figure of the resistance" against National Socialism there.<sup>785</sup>

Berenz was born in Apatin in 1898 and attended both Gymnasium and the primatial lyceum in Kalocsa in central Hungary, where he conducted his theology studies from 1918-1921. As such, he was somewhat older than the later generation of Swabian priests who trained for the priesthood in interwar Yugoslavia and there embraced German national identity. Studying in Kalocsa, Berenz's education was inevitably colored by the hegemony of Magyar culture, and he was not unknown to spell his name in the Magyar fashion as "Berencz." Nevertheless, Berenz was no stranger to German national consciousness and became an early and active member of the Kulturbund and advocate for the Partei der Deutschen upon his return to the new Yugoslav Kingdom. Indeed, "no self-aware, serious German person could conceal his joy that a German cultural-educational association, a German Kulturbund as it would soon be known, had been founded," he declared.<sup>786</sup> Later, no Swabian in Yugoslavia thundered louder longer than Berenz against the excesses of the Erneuerungsbewegung and in defense of Catholic Germandom.<sup>787</sup>

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<sup>784</sup> Haltmayer. 244.

<sup>785</sup> Mirnić. 350.

<sup>786</sup> Adam Berenz, "Ehrenhaft deutsch aber nicht nationalsozialistisch!," in *Weitblick eines Donauschwaben*, ed. Michael Merkl (Dieterskirch: Michael Merkl, 1968). 17.

<sup>787</sup> Many Swabian Catholic priests were early advocates for the nascent German national movement in Yugoslavia after 1918. However, their enthusiasm, especially that of the Hungarists, ebbed considerably after the Yugoslav government formally conceded the right to conduct religious education in German as well as a limited system of German language schools. Later, the national advocacy of Berenz and other likeminded Swabian priests was abruptly ended by the 1924 Kulturbund



Father Adam Berenz,  
editor of *Die Donau*<sup>788</sup>



Herz-Jesu-Kirche

The Herz-Jesu Church in Apatin.<sup>789</sup>

After serving in various Church positions and parishes in Batschka during the 1920s, Berenz became chaplain at Apatin's main church and parish vicar of the city's newly constructed and prominent Herz-Jesu-Kirche. There he would remain parish vicar until 1944, shortly before his arrest by the Gestapo on May 22 of that year. In the intervening years, Berenz thundered from the pulpit, podium and printed page against the young purveyors of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, which he grimly

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ban and an order from the Catholic bishop that priests desist from political activity. Wildmann, "Unterschiedliche Kulturelle Leitbilder bei der Katholischen Kirche und dem Kulturbund im Jugoslawien der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihre Wirkung auf die donauschwaebische Lebenswelt." 23-24.

<sup>788</sup> Photograph provided by Donauschwaben Villages Helping Hands - <http://www.dvvh.org/abthausen/>.

<sup>789</sup> Josef Volkmar Senz, *Apatiner Heimatbuch: Aufstieg, Leistung und Untergang der donauschwaebischen Grossgemeinde Abthausen/Apatin im Batscher Land* (Freilassing, Germany: Pannonia Verlag, 1966).

dismissed as poisonous heresy. In the process, Berenz became a hero to some, a traitor to others, and one of the sharpest thorns in the side of the Erneuerer.

Berenz had been quick to join the Catholic resistance when the threat of the Erneuerungsbewegung became increasingly manifest and the circle of Swabian priests and laymen around Josef Negele and Konrad Schmidt resolved to oppose it. He was involved in the first young men's pilgrimage to Maria Doroslovo and was the main speaker at its successor. Thereafter, he spoke at many succeeding pilgrimages, rallies and other important Swabian events, becoming a visible and fearless symbol of the Catholic resistance against National Socialism. Yet as important as such prominent speeches and sermons were, it is Berenz's work as editor and contributor to the weekly *Die Donau* that must count as his most vital contribution to the resistance against the Erneuerungsbewegung.

Berenz's opposition to the Erneuerungsbewegung was complex and multifaceted. Though he did not say so during the interwar years, Berenz was ultimately a supporter of the great Hungarian state idea. As such, his struggle against the Erneuerer and Erneuerer-dominated Kulturbund had three main features: it was antifascist, Catholic, and motivated by the ideal of Saint Stephen.<sup>790</sup> At a fundamental level, one may say that Berenz shared a genuine sense of being German with the original leadership of the Kulturbund and even the Erneuerer, though he and the Erneuerer would surely qualify such a statement. He sought to oppose the Erneuerungsbewegung insurrection by promoting a German identity that was indivisible from the Christian spirit and worldview. Berenz himself embraced

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<sup>790</sup> Mirnić. 119. After Hungary's annexation of Batschka in 1941, Berenz emphasized his utter relief. He was clearly delighted by the return of his homeland to the Hungarian Kingdom.

German nationhood and the national principle in general but could not accept its absolute primacy, as the Erneuerer insisted. Berenz believed rather that nationhood, as a creation of God, should be but one (albeit important) aspect of a proper Christian-Catholic *Weltanschauung* that was also tolerant of other nationhoods in the spirit of Catholic brotherhood. Such an outlook precluded national chauvinism, obviously, to say nothing of the “scientific” racism promoted by National Socialism and its local advocates in the Erneuerungsbewegung.

In any event, just as the Erneuerer and the original leadership would struggle for the soul and leadership of the Kulturbund by sparring over the definition of German nationhood, what it meant to be German, so would Berenz assert a definition of Germandom that was inclusive and Christian but cast those who opposed its fundamental Christian tenets as renegades. Worse, as a priest Berenz recognized the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and the Erneuerungsbewegung insurrection to be not confined to the institutional life of Kulturbund or even the territorial boundaries of Yugoslavia. On the contrary, he recognized National Socialism as constituting nothing less than new heathenism, which aimed to expunge Christianity from the German *Volk* and would as a consequence damn the eternal souls of its German adherents. Thus, as the 1930s progressed, it became clear that Berenz, using the language of national identity, was fighting a battle not only to silence Erneuerer heresy but also to save German souls.

*Die Donau*, an Apatin weekly which began life somewhat unremarkably but soon came to rail fearlessly against the Erneuerer menace was a central element in the Swabian clergy’s strategy to resist the Erneuerungsbewegung. Indeed, *Die Donau*



stands alone for its reach, ambition, consistency and courage. The newspaper was a broadsheet and appeared weekly from 1935 until 1944. It was unapologetically ideological, being nationally conscious, Catholic, and utterly opposed to the Erneuerer and their *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. On one hand it pursued a message of positive Christian renewal and heavily promoted the German Catholic youth movement in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, it regularly engaged in ideological and personal polemics and caustic debates with the leading minds of the Erneuerungsbewegung. *Die Donau* did not limit its attention to Yugoslav matters, however, but also struck at the leaders, excesses and heresies of National Socialism in the Third Reich. Covering domestic and international politics, *Die Donau* furthermore sought to be a journal of record and the only newspaper a good Catholic Swabian need read. Indeed, it began life as a self-described “Wochenblatt fuer gesellschaftliche Politik und Volkswirtschaft.”

*Die Donau* premiered in June 1935 with a circulation of 1000<sup>791</sup> which would soon grow substantially.<sup>792</sup> The newspaper remained relatively restrained for the remainder of that year, neither mentioning the Erneuerungsbewegung by name nor tangling directly with its mouthpiece *Volksruf*. The newspaper did not lack opinions but neither was it direct or aggressive. For example, rather than critique the Third Reich directly, *Die Donau* instead printed details of a harsh letter from Germany’s bishops to Hitler, in which the bishops expressed concern about recent attacks on the

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<sup>791</sup> Bešlin, 151.

<sup>792</sup> Peter Schroeder, "Entstehung des Wochenblattes “Die Donau”," in *Weitblick eines Donauschwaben*, ed. Michael Merkl (Dieterskirch: Michael Merkl, 1968). 28. According to Schroeder, *Die Donau*’s circulation would come to reach approximately 6100. However, this maximum circulation figure seems inflated and is not cited by Branko Beslin in his authoritative study of the German press in Vojvodina. Nevertheless, *Die Donau* unquestionably had a respectable circulation and individual issues were often shared among multiple readers.

Church as well as the fate of Germany. Just as the Church had overcome heathendom in the past, the bishops promised, so would it overcome any modern heathendom.<sup>793</sup>

The Kulturbund received prominent attention and even a regular section in the newspaper's early issues. However, the content of that section suggested that the Kulturbund was gradually being infected by precisely the National Socialist heresy to which *Die Donau* hoped to be the antidote. Meanwhile, the newspaper bemoaned contemporary youths as overly demanding, lacking respect, and pursuant of false ideals.<sup>794</sup>

Berenz was heavily involved in the newspaper during 1935, but he would not formally assume his role as publisher and managing editor until the following January. As such, *Die Donau* spent its first year finding its Catholic readership and developing its core principles. Nevertheless, Berenz's hand can be seen from *Die Donau*'s first issue, in which he contributed a front page article.<sup>795</sup> Berenz here explained the newspaper's choice of name for the binding quality that the Danube had exerted upon Swabians since their earliest colonization of its fertile banks in then-southern Hungary. The fate of Catholic Apatin had long been tied to the river, Berenz observed, which also connected the Swabian colonists to their ancestral homeland in Germany. "The Danube is from its very source a thoroughly German river," he wrote. "For us the Danube is a living connection with that land which was the *Heimat* of our ancestors. It is a constant reminder that we should remain mindful of our German essence." As such, "the newspaper *Die Donau* also seeks to be German and will tend to the German nationhood faithfully and honestly." Finally, Berenz promised that *Die*

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<sup>793</sup> "Deutschlands Bischoefe an Hitler," *Die Donau*, September 12 1935.

<sup>794</sup> Emha, "Jugend von Heute," *Die Donau*, September 7 1935.

<sup>795</sup> Berenz signed this article using his pen name, "Niederlaender."

*Donau* would demonstrate its “deep love of Apatin,” “proper loyalty to the state,” and “immutable loyalty to the nationality from which we stem.”<sup>796</sup> An accompanying article promised objectivity and patient restraint before polemics and personal attacks.<sup>797</sup> *Die Donau*, however, would soon find its restraint sorely tested.

Shortly before the conclusion of 1935, Berenz contributed the first installment of “In the Spotlight” (*Im Lichte des Scheinwerfers*), a semi-regular column he penned under the name “Niederlaender.”<sup>798</sup> After a relatively benign start that year, “In the Spotlight” became the journalistic pulpit from which Berenz would issue his most scathing judgments of his Erneuerer opponents and their pernicious ideology. Similarly, it was here that Berenz mounted his most vigorous defense of the Catholic worldview, taking both individuals and rival newspapers to task for views he deemed as heretical. Such rival periodicals in early years were primarily the *Batschkaer Zeitung* and *Volksruf* but in later came to include the satirical *die Wespe* and even *Deutsches Volksblatt* after its ultimate *Gleichschaltung* in the late 1930s.

Berenz formally assumed editorial control of *Die Donau* in January 1936 and he began his tenure with a pointed declaration that the newspaper would no longer restrain itself in its commentary on the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. *Die Donau* announced its intention to turn the newspaper into a “weekly newspaper for the Catholic German of Yugoslavia” which would be “Catholic through and through” and “German through and through.” The situation demanded such a newspaper, he

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<sup>797</sup> "Unser Programm," *Die Donau*, June 22 1935.

<sup>798</sup> Berenz may have chosen this pen name, “Niederlaender” or “the Dutchman”, to honor and emulate such Dutch priests as Titus Brandsma, who protested the excesses and heresies of Nazism in his capacity as a university professor and through his role as a Catholic advisor to Dutch Catholic journalists. Following the Nazis’ invasion of the Netherlands, Brandsma was arrested and imprisoned in the concentration camp at Dachau. He was executed in July 1942.

explained. In such harsh times, “We must look on almost daily as [our opponents] attack our Catholic worldview and our most holy sentiments with the most varied slogans and seek to bring our religion and our German nationality into conflict with one another. We must constantly experience how they strive to undermine the authority and reputation of the bishops of our church. We must even witness how they do not cease their attacks on even the Pope himself. And we stand there, without a press of our own ready to fight back and dam up this *unchristian*, indeed in essence *un-German* current.” As such, *Die Donau* would “stand up to all those who believe it possible to alienate Catholic Germandom from its Church, its spiritual leadership, and its two-thousand-year world view.”<sup>799</sup> With Berenz now at the helm, *Die Donau* now would answer the challenge of the Erneuerungsbewegung with its own declaration of war.

In fact, Berenz used *Die Donau* both as a pulpit from which to rain down reproach upon the Erneuerer insurgents and also as a platform from which to defend himself and the Church from their attacks. As such the newspaper was a showcase for high principles and also a forum for caustic exchanges with the ideologues of the Erneuerungsbewegung, especially Jakob Kraemer, Fritz Metzger, Gustav Halwax, and Hans Moerbisch. Berenz rarely addressed Jakob Awender directly but his disdain for the Erneuerer obviously extended to their movement’s leader. Underlying every issue of *Die Donau* was the same sentiment that had prompted the Swabian Catholic clergy to resist the Erneuerer’s insurgency to begin with: the belief that the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and institutional manifestations were not merely

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<sup>799</sup> "Zur gefaelligen Beachtung," *Die Donau*, January 25 1936.

unchristian but actually anti-Christian and endangered the salvation of an entire nation in Europe.

Over the years, a real dialogue developed between the Catholic press and *Volksruf*, the mouthpiece of the Erneuerungsbewegung. Catholic contributions to this dialogue consisted of a combination of insightful observations and a robust defense against the acidic commentary of the Erneuerer in *Volksruf* and elsewhere. In order to best understand *die Donau* and its agenda, thus, it is first important to understand the tactics of its opponent's principle mouthpiece, to which we now turn.

#### *The Erneuerer and the Catholic Church*

Although they could not directly repudiate Christianity for fear of alienating the conservative Swabians, it was a long-standing tactic of the Erneuerer to seek to undermine the position of the Swabian Catholic clergy and question their credentials as proper Germans. They frequently suggested that the Swabian Catholic clergy represented special interests that were foreign and likely hostile to Germandom. On the one hand, the Erneuerer pursued the policy of character assassination by attacking individual priests, especially Berenz, in print and at their rallies. Similarly, the Catholic press was regularly denounced as a collection of "smearsheets" (*Hetzblaetter*). Another tactic was to criticize the priesthood generally as being insincerely or insufficiently German. Both such tactics outraged the Swabian Catholic clergy and were part of an overall strategy to suggest that Catholicism, with its papal center in Rome, its supranational religious world view, its rejection of the blood-

based racism that defined National Socialism, and its roots in the Habsburg Monarchy, was somehow alien to Germandom.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Erneuerer understood national identity to be the supreme bond between persons and thus regarded it as prevailing over ties of history, religion or confession. Nationhood in turn was determined not merely by language, history, or the like but by the more *voelkisch* blood and destiny. Nationhood was inclusive of all people sharing a certain biology but exclusive of those not sharing such blood. Nationhood was innate, something with which one was born and which could not be later acquired, as one might learn foreign languages or customs. Such an outlook led to several points of confrontation with the Catholic clergy in Yugoslavia. In fact, the Erneuerer began to confront Catholicism and the Swabian clergy even before *Die Donau* commenced publication. The unsuitability of aspects of Catholicism for German nationalism and the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* had been a frequent topic at early gatherings of the nascent Erneuerungsbewegung, of course and the movement's leaders raised these concerns in *Volksruf* for the first time in September 1934 in response to an article in *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Written by a Swabian Catholic priest from Banat, this article suggested future Catholic tactics by defending the contributions to the German national movement by the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia while simultaneously denouncing the Erneuerer. The author praised the original leadership as standing on a positive, Christian basis and accused *Volksruf's* predecessor the *Pančevoer Post* as pursuing a *kulturkaempferischen kurs* against the Catholic and Protestant churches, seeking to

sharpen confessional differences. “Are we standing on the brink of a *Kulturkampf*?” it bluntly asked, darkly suggesting the affirmative.<sup>800</sup>

In a theme it would repeat regularly in the future, *Volksruf* responded to *Deutsches Volksblatt* by asserting the principle of unity of the *Volksgemeinschaft* over any possible differences between Catholics and Protestants. Nationality, the Erneuerer asserted, bonds people of the same blood far stronger than confession is able to unite peoples of different blood. That is, nationality was the fundamental bond, the fundamental identity, while confession represented a more superficial category of ideas or identity. Using highly racist language, the newspaper reproached Catholics who believed otherwise and concluded “Father, remain a priest and I will remain a German (of the Catholic faith).”<sup>801</sup> Recognizing that the Swabian Catholic clergy’s resistance movement had serious potential, the Erneuerer denounced it as a “*schwarze Front*” and its agents as “*Schwarzfrontler*”.<sup>802</sup> Seeking to claim the moral high ground, they claimed that the conflict with the Church was unwanted and not of their making, since they had far more important things to do than clash with “rotund, baiting chaplains, fanatical trinity-worldview-theorists, and university-stuffed shirts who are alienated from their own nationhood.”<sup>803</sup> Jakob Kraemer, an Erneuerer ideologue and regular *Volksruf* contributor with whom Adam Berenz would exchange many caustic words over the years, blasted *Die Donau* in 1937 as the “*Kampfblatt der Schwarzen Front*.” Resentful of the Catholics’ steady criticism of the *neue deutsche*

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<sup>800</sup> “Stehen wir vor einem Kulturkampf?,” *Deutsches Volksblatt*, August 19 1934.

<sup>801</sup> The fact that the Swabian Catholic clergy ministered only to their co-confessionals further disqualified them, in the view of the Erneuerer, from leadership of Yugoslavia’s German community, which was, of course, divided by confession. F.D., “Stehen wir vor einem Kulturkampf?,” *Volksruf*, September 8 1934.

<sup>802</sup> Black is the color of priestly garb and is associated with the Catholic clergy.

<sup>803</sup> Ulrich Baresch, “Poldi der Schlaue,” *Volksruf*, February 1 1936.

*Weltanschauung*, the Erneuerer condemned the Swabian Clergy of striving for the “Austrianization of the German community.” That is, “the cutting of all holy, cultural and worldview ties that bind us ever tighter to our mother nation, which is finally beginning to shake off the curse and dishonor of centuries-long division in feuding camps.” Indeed, he charged, the Swabian clergymen “feel no remorse, that by the realization of their great dream the *Volksgruppe* would have to fall back into the hopelessness and misery of the prewar Magyar spiritual-cultural suppression with no hope of rescue.”<sup>804</sup> Thus, the Erneuerer saw the Swabian Catholic resistance as seeking to shore up the confessional divisions among Yugoslav Germans and thereby resist the process of German national integration, while clinging to historical models under which Germandom had suffered in a state of national unconsciousness.

The Erneuerer additionally accused the Swabian clergy of being fundamentally out of step with the times. In an era when the national principle had triumphed across Europe, the Erneuerer charged that the Catholics remained stuck in the outdated mindset of a supranational institution which claimed primacy over the nation and even had a political center of sorts in the Vatican. In sum, their accusations were threefold, essentially seeking to smear the Swabian clergy through association with the vanquished and notoriously non-national Habsburgs or the rump Austrian republic, slander them as agents of Vatican sponsored “*politisches Katholismus*”, and smear them as traitorous Magyarones, nostalgic for the lost Hungarian order.

To interwar nationalists, the cosmopolitan Habsburgs could only seem an anachronism, a lingering hangover from a grand but outdated age. The Monarchy’s

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<sup>804</sup> Jakob Kraemer, "Schwarze Moralakrobatik: Kann 'Die Donau' auch talaufwaerts fließen? II," *Volksruf*, July 30 1937.



chief offense to its detractors, of course, was that it had been non-national in its essence and had served as a “prison of nations.” Worse, the Monarchy had privileged some nations while allegedly allowing others to be neutered or smothered. As we saw in our discussion of German national activism in the 1920s, the original leadership considered Hungary’s Germans among the victims of the Habsburgs’ policies and were quick to denounce the imperial past. The Erneuerer continued this line of criticism in the 1930s but turned any association with the Habsburg past into a stick with which to beat their elder opponents. The original leadership was the initial object of such attacks, but the beatings were soon extended to the Swabian Catholic clergy and Swabian Catholic institutions. And if Austria-Hungary had been offensive, independent Austria was an abomination, which artificially impeded the natural and historic movement toward German political unity. That political Catholicism was strong there and that the independence of the Alpine republic received strong support by many in the Church was seen by the Erneuerer as further proof of the national treason of many German Catholics.

*Volksruf* bemoaned from its earliest issues the dominance of *Klerikalismus* over *voelkisch* thought in Austria.<sup>805</sup> The German people in Austria suffered under Austro-Hungarian “Catholic-Jewish tyranny” and today the state seeks “to loosen and detach the worldview ties, which bind the *Auslanddeutschtum* of the whole world with the great mother nation in the Reich” in order to use the *Auslandsdeutschen* as extra horses for the Vatican-Habsburg-Judeo-Austrian carriage.”<sup>806</sup> And the *Schwarze Front* still worked hand in hand with its rotting sister, *Volksruf* charged. Austria and

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<sup>805</sup> Ing. FD, “Stehen wir vor einem Kulturkampf?,” *Volksruf*, September 8 1934.

<sup>806</sup> “Verklappte Habsburg-Propaganda I,” *Volksruf*, January 21 1938.

the Church were leading a “struggle against an all-German confession.”<sup>807</sup> Indeed, it inhibited natural unification of *Gesamtdeutschtum* by promoting a weird Austrian particularism. As usual, *Volksruf* had no good words for *Die Donau*, in this regard, since Berenz looked kindly upon Austria. The Erneuerungsbewegung’s mouthpiece acidly denounced *Die Donau* as an “illegitimate Austrian child” which worked not in the interests of the German *Volksgruppe* in Yugoslavia but on behalf of Vienna, “the headquarters of Habsburg propaganda.”<sup>808</sup>

As *Volksruf*’s condemnation of *Klerikalismus* suggests, the Erneuerer were highly critical of “political Catholicism”, of which they regularly accused the Church’s representatives in Yugoslavia. (In fact, here their criticism was not of the Church per se but rather of the Swabian Catholic clergy and the Church only as it concerned German affairs.) As their program stated, a principle goal of the Erneuerer was the exclusion of the Church from “earthly” affairs. That is, they formally asserted that the Church was fine as far as spiritual affairs went but saw little role for it beyond the parish walls, no doubt themselves recognizing the inherent contradictions between the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* on the one hand, and the universalism and authority of the Church on the other. Since the Swabians lacked their own formal political institutions, during the 1930s, this dispute might at first seem rather academic. However, religion occupied a very hegemonic position in the lives, thoughts, and patterns of this conservative Swabian society, rendering such a separation complicated, as we shall see. Although it hardly shied from criticizing the Church, *Volksruf*’s commentary on political Catholicism was relatively limited during

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<sup>807</sup> "Oesterreichs Kampf gegen das gesamtdeutsche Bekenntnis," *Volksruf*, April 25 1936.

<sup>808</sup> "Verklappte Habsburg-Propaganda I."

its early years. However, this would change after 1937 when it published “Political Catholicism”, a series of articles from *Das Schwarze Korps*, the official newspaper of the SS. The authors of this series did not directly address Yugoslavia itself, but the series’ “revelations” about the nature of Catholicism had clear implications for Germans in the country. The clear intent of reprinting them was to cast deep aspersions on the Church using a voice draped in the authority of the Third Reich. In essence, this “Political Catholicism” series explored the relationship between a *Volk* and its religious order/gods. These articles also clearly revealed the close connection between the leading Erneuerer and the most elite and extremist of National Socialists in Germany, of course.

*Das Schwarze Korps* assaulted the Church for its alien, oriental origins and for not being rooted in a “*blut- und bodenbedingten Vorstellungswelt*” of a single people. It furthermore criticized Catholic philosophy (*Lehrgebaeude*) for being built upon a universalist worldview, which had permeated all aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political life. It characterized Catholic norms as such that they have a “totalitarian character of a self-contained worldview.” Moreover, the newspaper charged, Catholicism sought to impose its ways upon the whole world, not only as a world Church but also as a Catholic based world order. With such aspirations, the Catholic church necessarily strove for the elimination of the personalities of individual *Voelker* and the smothering of the voice of their bloods. Far from prizing the national traits of individual peoples, *Das Schwarze Korps* charged in *Volksruf*, the Church held highest the “raceless, Catholic feeling and thinking mankind,” which could only be achieved through the destruction of the national individuality of nations. From the above

ambition derived the Catholic attitude toward *Volk*, racial consciousness, and state, the article series concluded.<sup>809</sup> The Church declared its fundamental and dogmatic opposition to National Socialism and its racially pure maintenance of the *Volkstum*. The Church, thus, was an enemy of Germandom, an agent of denationalization.

The Erneuerer and the Catholic clergy also clashed over the subject of racism. Racism, in their heated exchanges, was closely tied to the whole matter of the confessional divide and Catholic universalism versus the extreme form of blood-based nationalism being purveyed by the Erneuerer. The Erneuerer were genuinely racist and certainly did not hesitate to slander favorite targets, Jews or Africans, as we have seen. They regarded Catholic universalism as just another aspect of a denationalizing agenda that leads inevitably to degeneracy and the corruption of blood. The Erneuerer also frequently used the language of race as a tool by which to attack Catholic identity and undermine confessional divisions in the *Volk*. That is, the extreme example of race served as a way of exposing supposed Catholic notions of inclusively, exclusivity, and community as (in their minds) absurd. The Erneuerer pursued this tactic from the earliest issues of *Volksruf* in 1934, when they observed that “unfortunately, there are still Germans for whom dividing confession counts for much more than nationhood. These people would rather lend a hand to a *Neger* of their same confession than a troubled German of a different confession than themselves.”<sup>810</sup> Years later, Jakob Kraemer would taunt Adam Berenz personally by suggesting to him a potential topic for a theological doctorate: “Who is my brother, the Protestant German or the Catholic *Sudanneger*? Does my Catholic sense of

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<sup>809</sup> "Der politische Katholismus II," *Volksruf*, August 13 1937.

<sup>810</sup> FD.

community bind me more to the Catholic *Sudanneger* than to the Protestant German?"<sup>811</sup> Such a challenge must have stung in 1939, at a time when the Nazifying Kulturbund was adding many new members, including many Catholics. True, those Catholics were not simultaneously withdrawing from the Catholic Church and the clashes between the Church and the Erneuerer in the villages never affected the deeper aspects of Christian life or faith among the Catholic Swabians. There were no *voelkisch* baptisms or marriages.<sup>812</sup> Nevertheless, many Swabians had clearly determined that their Catholic identity did not preclude brotherhood with their German Protestant neighbors.

In addition to damning the Swabian Catholic clergy through association with the Habsburgs, the Erneuerer regularly assaulted them as national or ethnic traitors, Magyarones, agents of Magyarization, and accomplices in the historic retardation of German nationhood in Hungary. They had lobbed the same charge at the original leadership, of course. In that case, the charge was spurious and based in large part on the age of the men, many of whom had been raised in Austria-Hungary, fought for it during the great war, learned Hungarian as a matter of course and considered one or both halves of the Dual Monarchy their fatherland before 1918. The accusation was more complex when applied to the Swabian Catholic clergy. As we saw in Chapter One, the Church historically had been an agent (or at least an accomplice) of Magyarization in the pre-Trianon era and wielded considerable influence in the Hungarian state. Its clergy in the prewar era was trained at Hungarian seminaries and often likewise accepted Hungarian language and state patriotism as uncontroversial

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<sup>811</sup> Jakob Kraemer, "Schwarzfrontlerischer Selbstbetrug," *Volksruf*, November 10 1939.

<sup>812</sup> Wuescht. 48.

and positive. Certainly some zealously favored Magyarization while others took a more cautious or nuanced view. As such, the Swabian clergy were easy targets for allegations of Magyarophilia and the Erneuerer were not hesitant in their accusations, which exploded in their press in 1937.

The Erneuerer had always suspected its Swabian Catholic enemies of conducting their resistance campaign on false premises. That is, the Erneuerer never believed the Swabian priests' embrace of Germandom in press and pulpit to be genuine. On the contrary, the Erneuerer regarded the Swabian clergy as chameleons, proudly declaring their German orientation but so qualifying it with accompanying declarations of Catholic identity that the clergy seemed suspect at best. At meetings and in print, they regularly criticized individual priests and denounced examples of local resistance to their insurgency. They had little patience for the Catholic youth movement which they regarded as a distraction at best. Indeed, they scorned it as a competitive diversion to their own attempts to rally youth into the *Kameradschaft* of Erneuerungsbewegung. The Catholic press, meanwhile, they derided as simply treasonous and regularly dismissed as *deutschfeindlich* or anti-German. Catholic publications like *Der Familienfreund* did not share the values of the German national movement, they charged, and would not be troubled by its decline. But it was the outspoken *Donau* which clearly troubled the Erneuerer most. Indeed, Jakob Kraemer condemned *Die Donau* as being “*totally un-German.*” [original emphasis] Despite its German appearance, the newspaper merely served clerical special interests, he sneered.<sup>813</sup> “Nationality, *Geisteskultur*, honor, blood and soil are not primary” for

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<sup>813</sup> Jakob Kraemer, "Schwarze Moralakrobatik: Kann 'Die Donau' auch talaufwaerts fliessen? I," *Volksruf*, July 23 1937.

Berenz's weekly but rather were "secondary earthly things of little value. Primary above all is the afterlife and power!"<sup>814</sup> Of course, it was a perennial Erneuerungsbewegung concern that the Swabian clergy sought to confessionally split the German community.

Being older than many of the other nationally conscious Swabian priests and consequently raised and schooled in prewar Hungary, Adam Berenz was vulnerable to the accusation of being an ethnically traitorous Magyarone. With his emergence as the Erneuerungsbewegung's principle Catholic challenger, the Erneuerer did not hesitate to question his credibility as a German. *Volksruf* confronted Berenz during the following year as a Magyarone. Though Berenz was at first careful to use the German spelling of his German name in *Die Donau*, *Volksruf* observed that he was also known to spell it in the Magyarized fashion as "Berencz". "If one were of the opinion that nationality is determined by names, one would come to doubt whether [Berenz] is foremost German or a Hungarian." If the latter, then plainly he could not be trusted, *Volksruf* warned, for Magyars would never advocate on the Germans' behalf. Subsequently, *Volksruf* often mockingly referred to Berenz either as the Magyarized "Berencz" or more comically as "Berencz-Berenz". Similarly, it denounced Apatin as "the center of the *Schwarzfrontler* "German" *Donau* culture, which sprouts from the clerical-Magyar stem."<sup>815</sup> The assault on Berenz as a Magyarone then was a key tool with which to tarnish the Swabian Catholic clergy as

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<sup>814</sup> Kraemer, "Schwarze Moralakrobatik: Kann 'Die Donau' auch talaufwaerts fliesen? II."

<sup>815</sup> Jakob Kraemer, "'Deutsche' Kultur: Donauchristliche 'Deutsche' Kultur in Apatin " *Die Donau*, May 20 1938.

being products of foreign Hungary, “Arpad’s children” and ultimately alien to Germandom.<sup>816</sup>

In sum, the Erneuerer regarded the Swabian Catholic clergy as being little more than ethnic traitors and anachronistic agents of a non-national order. That they were supposedly Magyarones made them doubly treacherous both for the past damage they had allegedly inflicted upon the Swabian community and their alleged intention to keep that community nationally unconscious and divided by confession in the future. The Erneuerer’s attacks were of a highly ideological nature, but the conflict was also deeply personal, with one letter to the editor of *Volksruf* even sneering that “Herr Berencz” of the “ridiculous, anti-German, smear-rag, *Die Donau*” was rather fat.<sup>817</sup>

#### *Die Donau as Catholic, German, and Defiant*

At a time that the Erneuerungsbewegung insurrection was quite openly (and actively) causing a split in the Swabian *Volksgruppe*, every side was eager to pin the blame for the emerging divisions in the nascent *Volksgruppe* on a rival group. As such, the Erneuerer seized upon the Catholic clergy’s natural focus on other Catholics as a way of accusing them of undermining German community, working against the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and thus working against the interests of the German *Volk*. The Erneuerer additionally mocked and opposed the Catholic youth movement and

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<sup>816</sup> Arpad is the historical figure who led the nomadic Magyars into the Pannonian region around 895. Reith actually refers to Berenz in this sentence by his pen name, Niederlaender. Franz Reith, "So denken auch wir," *Volksruf*, September 16 1938.

<sup>817</sup> Martin Braun, "Es ist noch nicht aller Tage Abend!," *Volksruf*, September 16 1938.



objected to confession-based associations and confessionally-oriented celebrations. The Swabian Clergy's response to such criticism was robust and uninhibited, consisting of pointed condemnation of their accusers and a vigorous defense against their allegations. In sermons, at youth rallies, and in their personal relations, the Swabian priests strove against the Erneuerer insurgency and its accompanying, National Socialist, *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. Under Berenz, *Die Donau* became the loudest voice of Catholic resistance. Even before the Erneuerer began their printed criticism of the Swabian clergy in earnest, Berenz anticipated their attacks with a number of statements that *Die Donau* would be "thoroughly German" as well as "thoroughly Catholic". From the outset, he recognized that an effective resistance to the Erneuerer would have to be made using the language of Germandom and rest upon a bold definition of nationhood that embraced Catholicism but took an aggressive stance toward National Socialism and the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. As such, the Catholics would insist that they were totally Catholic and totally German, define Germandom as Christian, assert that there was no incompatibility between Catholicism and Germandom, emphasize a long and mutually beneficial relationship between the Church and German Volk, and insist that the Nazi Party should not be mistaken for the German *Volk*.

German mistrust of Catholicism was hardly unprecedented, of course, despite (or perhaps because of) the huge number of German Catholics. Already in the previous century the Catholic Church had faced enormous challenges during Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in the *Kaiserreich*. In interwar Germany, National Socialism was likewise distrustful of Catholicism, against which its racist worldview competed

ideologically and against whose Center Party it competed politically. Following the Nazis' accession to power and their subsequent *Gleichschaltung* of the German state and society, German national identity increasingly came to mean National Socialism in the minds of many. To such people, Catholicism, with its universal outlook, seemed to defy the essence of German nationalism by finding confessional brotherhood among other nationalities. Simultaneously, Catholicism seemed to deny the brotherhood between Germans of different confessions, or at least dismiss such brotherhood as secondary. To the Erneuerer activists and other subscribers to the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, such Catholic transgressions suggested an incompatibility between the Catholicism and Germanism.

As we have seen, many Catholic priests of Swabian origins were themselves conflicted about the primacy and place of German nationhood during the 1920s. Many Swabian Catholic priests spoke out against the Kulturbund in its early years, taking offense at its disregard of confessional differences. Organizing on the basis of nationhood, especially German nationhood, seemed to them unnatural and possibly blasphemous. This changed with the passage of time and the emergence of the Erneuerungsbewegung and National Socialism as threats to Swabians faith. Berenz, as a matter of fact, had never shared this early confliction or suspicion of German national identity. In early 1936, *Die Donau* wrote,

We wish to repeat it with all the necessary emphasis: We stand in unshakable loyalty to the fundamentals of our Catholic world view. Simultaneously, however, we are and remain self-aware and sincere persons who embrace the German nationality from which we stem. We are proud that we were born from German parents, that our mothers sang German lullabies, that they taught us in to pray to our Lord in German at a most tender young age, that we may drink from the spring of German cultural artifacts/achievements and aspire to honor and pay

tribute to our Germanness through our noble German thought, thoroughly creative achievement, and great accomplishments in all cultural fields everywhere on Earth. We love our nationality, we love our mother tongue and this undissolvable love will resound even in our last dying breath.<sup>818</sup>

The Swabian Catholics behind *die Donau* thus showed both pride in their nationhood and that there was no contradiction between being a good Catholic and a proud German. Far from it, they wrote. "We are Catholics above all but we are also Germans!" But, they warned, "we are not *Auchdeutsche*, we are Germans and we will let that be denied by no one. We are Germans, we are German Catholics."<sup>819</sup> And "there exists no contradiction between Catholic and German." In an appeal to Swabian Catholic youth, *Jugendruf* similarly argued against any suggestion that German and Catholic were contradictory.<sup>820</sup>

Far from being mutually exclusive, Catholicism and Germanness were deeply intertwined, the Swabian Catholics insisted. Sheer numbers alone argued that Catholics, who comprised 39 percent of the world's Germans, could not be dismissed as *Auchdeutsche* or otherwise denied, the newspaper implied. After all, Catholics made up one third of the Reich's population, virtually all of Austria's and comprised 62 percent of the Germans outside the Reich.<sup>821</sup> Moreover, the Swabian Clergy insisted that there need be absolutely no contradiction between Church and *Volk*. On the contrary, the Church and German nation had a long and mutually beneficial history. True, the universal nature of the Church meant that it could never be restricted to a particular country or nation. There could be no national Church.

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<sup>818</sup> "'Durch und durch deutsch?'" *Die Donau*, Februar 5 1936.

<sup>819</sup> "Nicht katholisch sondern deutsche . . . ?," *Die Donau*, February 29 1936.

<sup>820</sup> "Deutsch und katholisch!"

<sup>821</sup> "Der Anteil der katholischen gesamtdeutschen Volkstum," *Die Donau*, July 28 1937.

Nevertheless, the Church had never sought to suppress the distinctness of a people, *Die Donau* claimed. Rather, the Church had respected nations' distinctiveness and had even served as a repository of German nationhood and language in Hungary, where education and public life had been so monopolized by the state that German was only to be heard in the Church.<sup>822</sup> Indeed, *Die Donau* insisted, "the Church has contributed much to the development of our German language."<sup>823</sup> Moreover, the newspaper insisted, it was only through the embrace of Christianity that the Germanic peoples became a *Kulturvolk*.<sup>824</sup> The Church, thus, was even instrumental in forging German unity as a nation (if not as a state).<sup>825</sup> Meanwhile, the German *Volk* had given the Church several Popes during their long, intertwined history.<sup>826</sup> Finally, the history of Germans in Yugoslavia was also a deeply Christian history, from the devout German colonists who immediately built local parishes,<sup>827</sup> to the new Swabian priesthood, which openly embraced nationhood and recognized Volkstumarbeit as a holy duty. As one such priest put it, "we do not want Germans, because they are Catholic, to lose their Germanness. We do not want Catholics, because they are Germans, to lose their faith."<sup>828</sup>

Even as they highlighted the important bonds between the Church and German *Volk*, the Swabian clergy pursued a complementary strategy of exposing the Erneuerer, National Socialism, and the vaunted *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* as fundamentally un-Christian and indeed anti-Christian. In this, the clergy hoped to turn

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<sup>822</sup> "Zu deutscher Kultur hat die Kirche am meisten beigetragen," *Die Donau*, July 10 1937.

<sup>823</sup> "Zur Entwicklung unserer deutschen Sprache hat die Kirche viel beigetragen," *Die Donau*, July 17 1937.

<sup>824</sup> Adam Berenz, "Deutschfeindlich?," *Die Donau*, October 16 1937.

<sup>825</sup> "Die Kirche hat unser Volk zur Einheit geführt!," *Die Donau*, July 24 1937.

<sup>826</sup> "Was gab das deutsche Volk der Kirche?," *Die Donau*, August 14 1937.

<sup>827</sup> Adam Berenz, "Ahnenehrung," *Die Donau*, November 6 1937.

<sup>828</sup> Muellerhans, "Bleiben wir doch konsequent!," *Die Donau*, October 42 1937.

some of the Erneuerer's anti-Catholic arguments on their head. Just as the Erneuerer sought to expose the Catholics as un-German for their subscription to a universalist, non-national ideology, so did the clergy hope to expose the purveyors of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* and National Socialism as being unchristian. Having established the important link between Christianity and the German Volk, the Catholics would hence seek to question the Erneuerer's very credentials as Germans, asking who was truly *deutschfeindlich* and who actually had Germans' best interests in mind. And as they would remind readers from the time Berenz first formally took the helm of the newspaper, there was a difference between the German *Volk* and the NSDAP, which was a mere political party and whose adherents could make no rightful claim to define "*Deutsch-sein*."<sup>829</sup>

The Swabian Catholic resistance was loudly critical of the abuse suffered by the Church in the Third Reich as a way of shaming its ideological champions in Yugoslavia. Following the 1936 NSDAP party congress in Nuremberg, *Die Donau* stated plainly that the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* contained much that Catholics must reject, and proceeded to list a litany of transgressions against the church in Germany, including the "elimination of Catholic institutions, the impediment of Catholic schooling, the dissolution of Catholic organizations, the persecution of Catholic priests and laypersons, the desecration of the cross, and the disruption of Catholic processions."<sup>830</sup> Based as it was upon the National Socialist

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<sup>829</sup> "'Durch und durch deutsch?'"

<sup>830</sup> "Die Parteitag der Ehre," *Die Donau*, September 19 1936.

*Weltanschauung*, the Erneuerungsbewegung was plainly anti-Christian and the Swabian clergy were outraged.<sup>831</sup>

Berenz and his collaborators derived much of the ideological evidence for their condemnation of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* from the publications, speeches, and statements by Alfred Rosenberg as well as the *Deutsche Christen*, a heretical religious movement in the Third Reich about which we will read more shortly.<sup>832</sup> As the “spiritual father of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*,”<sup>833</sup> Rosenberg was a “*fanatischer Christushasser*”, they declared.<sup>834</sup> He wanted nothing less, they charged, than for a new faith to replace Christianity, “a faith without Christ, without the Church, and without lamentable priests.”<sup>835</sup> One priest, Chaplain Paul Pfuhl, even sought to tarnish National Socialism through association with Bolshevism, observing that both odious ideologies shared a common antipathy toward Christianity. Moreover, despite Rosenberg’s hollow claims to embrace a “positive Christianity,” his *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (*Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*) was plainly anti-German, Pfuhl affirmed as a guest writer for the “In the Spotlight” column.<sup>836</sup> *Die Donau* repeated this link between Bolshevism and the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* often, noting that “our Erneuerer are also good and proper students of Rosenberg: they also want a German people without Confession

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<sup>831</sup> Adam Berenz, "Die "Erneuerer" werden immer deutlicher!," *Die Donau*, October 3 1936.

<sup>832</sup> *Volksruf* enthusiastically quoted or reprinted many of these speeches, statements, and publications from the Third Reich.

<sup>833</sup> Adam Berenz, "Die 'Erneuerer-Bewegung' legt endlich die Maske ab II," *Die Donau*, September 4 1937.

<sup>834</sup> Adam Berenz, "Sind die "alten Mächte" wirklich zu Schwach?," *Die Donau*, October 10 1936.

<sup>835</sup> Berenz, "Die "Erneuerer" werden immer deutlicher!."

<sup>836</sup> Paul Pfuhl, "Dr. Adam Schlachter greift zur Lüge - Kaplan Pfuhl Predigt. Wer lügt Herr Dr. Schlachter?," *Die Donau*, October 24 1936.

and without Christ.”<sup>837</sup> Berenz himself asserted that Rosenberg was the “the intellectual and spiritual father of the ‘Erneuerer’, his god is *Volk* and race, his ‘religion’ is the religion of blood” and that “the Erneuerungsbewegung completely works in this spirit.”<sup>838</sup> It was nothing less than a new heathenism being smuggled into the German Volk,<sup>839</sup> an ideology which aspired to eradicate Christianity in the German *Volk*. Indeed, its goal was nothing less than to transform the German nation into the first unchristian *Volk* of Europe. Thus, though there were no contradiction between Catholic and German, a person could not be a legitimate Catholic and genuine Erneuerer in *Die Donau*’s estimation. “Between the Catholic worldview and the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* there can never be compromise,” Berenz warned.<sup>840</sup>

The Swabian clergy was even critical of *Volksruf*’s Christmas issues, which typically omitted any mention of the holiday’s Christian content and instead highlighted *voelkisch* themes. Likewise, the newspaper’s Easter issues typically neglected Jesus. True, they proudly trumpeted news of “resurrection” and new life, but such themes were as clearly connected to the Erneuerungsbewegung’s effort to “renew” the German *Volksgruppe* as they were to Christianity. Easter issues also served as a useful opportunity for the Erneuerer to further fetishize youth. Likewise, the celebration of old Germanic customs with pagan overtones were a source of

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<sup>837</sup> "Was ist das besser als Bolschewismus?," *Die Donau*, February 13 1937.

<sup>838</sup> Adam Berenz, "Die "Erneuerer-Bewegung" legt endlich die Maske ab V," *Die Donau*, September 25 1937.

<sup>839</sup> "Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini!," *Die Donau*, January 1 1938.

<sup>840</sup> Adam Berenz, "Die "Erneuerer-Bewegung" legt endlich die Maske ab VI," *Die Donau*, October 2 1937.

Catholic concern but much Erneuerungsbewegung fascination at Christmas and Easter.

For the Erneuerer, youth was a source of dynamism and strength. *Die Donau* agreed but was concerned that today's youth was following the wrong path and exhorted them to embrace Christian values and groups. It held up the German Catholic youth movement as an example of both the vitality of Catholicism among Swabian youth and also as an expression of genuine German nationalism among Catholics. At their pilgrimage in 1936, for example, it observed the young men swore themselves to be "steadfastly German" but also "steadfastly Catholic" and asserted that "steadfastly Catholic" in no way formed an obstacle to being "steadfastly German." Moreover, "they have unambiguously expressed that they have confidence in a "renewal" [Erneuerung] of the individual, the family, and the entire German people only if this renewal is carried out in Christ and through his teachings."<sup>841</sup> So while both the Swabian Catholics and the Erneuerer promoted youth and *Erneuerung*, they had rather different agendas in mind.

The Swabian Catholic clergy also regularly discussed the regular transgressions against the Church in the Third Reich as a way of undermining the idealistic way that so many Swabians increasingly regarded Hitler's Germany. They warned of a kind of "*Kulturkampf*" in the country by which National Socialism hoped to marginalize the Church and even purge the German national body (*Volkskoerper*) of Christianity. The newspaper repeated the Vatican's warning that "in Germany there is truly a campaign of religious persecution."<sup>842</sup> Thus, the Swabian Catholic's

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<sup>841</sup> Adam Berenz, "Katholiken oeffnet eure Augen!," *Die Donau*, July 4 1936.

<sup>842</sup> "In Deutschland besteht wahrhaftig eine Religionsverfolgung," *Die Donau*, January 1 1938.



ultimate concern was not merely that the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* was un-Christian but rather that it was *anti-Christian*, that it sought to expunge allegedly alien Christendom from the hearts of Germans in its drive to achieve the creation of a society based on the *voelkisch* values of honor, blood and soil. The problem here, from the Swabian Catholic perspective, was that such extirpation endangered not only German culture but the salvation of German souls.

*Die Donau* only rarely entered directly into that conflict between the Erneuerungsbewegung and the original leadership, preferring instead to wage its own battle against the Erneuerer on matters of faith and national identity. The “In the Spotlight” column did not take a firm and public stand behind the original leadership or refute the charges against them. In many ways this may seem unsurprising, since there were lingering concerns among some Catholics about the secularism or perceived Protestantism of the organization. Certainly some Swabian Catholic clergymen continued to not recognize in the Kulturbund an organization that fully shared its priorities or worldview. Indeed, as we have seen, there were important areas of ideological affinity between the original leadership and the Erneuerer which suggested that the two groups’ outlooks might not be as separate as their heated conflict made it seem. Moreover, the original leadership could not help be dazzled by the impressive successes of the NSDAP and the “new Germany,” even if they had questions about the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. Both received considerable attention in *Deutsches Volksblatt*, which also evinced a positive view of Adolf Hitler even before its own *Gleichgeschaltung*. (Similarly, *Die Donau* refrained from much personal criticism of the popular Hitler.) Berenz largely ignored *Deutsches Volksblatt*

until the Erneuerer's triumph, seeing a greater threat in the Erneuerer than in any transgressions by the original leadership.<sup>843</sup> Likewise, the editors at *Deutsches Volksblatt* eschewed public conflict with Berenz, probably recognizing potential peril in tangling with such an outspoken priest in an overwhelmingly Catholic population.<sup>844</sup> This would change, however. Berenz, though an early member and supporter of the Kulturbund, gradually grew critical of the organization as it became penetrated by the Erneuerungsbewegung insurgents and their ideas. After the Erneuerer returned to the Kulturbund and began to remake the organization in a National Socialist image, Berenz disdainfully pronounced it the "*Erneuerbund*."<sup>845</sup> Following the effective *Gleichschaltung* of *Deutsches Volksblatt*, *Die Donau* took aim at that newspaper as well.

This relative silence of *Die Donau* toward the original leadership did not indicate acceptance of the Erneuerer's criticism of them, however. On the contrary, *Die Donau* took several opportunities to praise the Kulturbund's founding and long standing leadership. For example, *Die Donau* marked Georg Grassl's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1938 with a laudatory biography that highlighted the importance of his work on behalf of the German *Volksgruppe*.<sup>846</sup> Later, in 1940 when he was honored by the *Deutsche Ausland-Institut*, *die Donau* praised Grassl as "the head of our *Volksgruppe*."<sup>847</sup> Berenz personally praised Keks in 1939 on the occasion of the

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<sup>843</sup> But not always. A 1938 article observed that *Deutsches Volksblatt*'s readership was mostly Catholic and that therefore it should watch what it said about Church matters. "Was beim "Deutschen Volksblatte" doch nicht vorkommen duerfte ", *Die Donau*, May 7 1938.

<sup>844</sup> Bešlin. 153.

<sup>845</sup> "So langsam kommt alles an den Tag...", *Die Donau*, February 15 1941.

<sup>846</sup> "Der Gruender des Schwaebischen-Deutschen Kulturbundes Senator Dr. Georg Grassl begeht seinen 75. Geburtstag," *Die Donau*, April 23 1938.

<sup>847</sup> "Auszeichnung Dr. Georg Grassls mit der Goldenen Ehrenplakette des Deutschen Ausland-Institutes," *Die Donau*, August 3 1940.

latter's abrupt resignation as Kulturbund chair, of which we will read more in the following chapter. Berenz recognized in him a kindred spirit of unusual integrity, precisely whose very principles and impatience with the excesses of the Erneuerer had made him the target of their vitriol. In words, deeds, and moral conduct, Berenz declared, Keks demonstrated the importance he attached to keeping the Christian worldview as a central part of *Kulturarbeit* and *Jugenderziehung*. Indeed, had his leadership not been so challenged by the Erneuerungsbewegung, the German minority would have achieved a greater and more constructive unity. With the contest to succeed him then underway in 1939, Berenz warned darkly, "should the leadership fall into the hands of Kulturbund Chairman Kek's radical enemies after his resignation, there would be the saddest consequences for our *Volksgruppe*."<sup>848</sup> Tragically, as the events of the Second World War and its aftermath would make clear, the prescient Berenz was to prove absolutely correct in his prediction.

### *The German Evangelical Church in the 1930s*

As we saw in Chapter Five, the German Evangelical Church emerged as an increasingly nationally conscious institution during the 1920s under the guidance of its young and able leader Philipp Popp. The adoption of the Protestant Law and the church constitution in 1930 allowed the German Lutherans to move beyond their provisional institutions and formally elect Popp as bishop. With this, the German Evangelical Church ended its construction phase and entered into one of consolidation, which was later marked by important contacts with the Third Reich.

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<sup>848</sup> Adam Berenz, "Bundesobmann Johann Keks zurueckgetreten," *Die Donau*, May 6 1939.

Ties between the German Lutheran Church in Yugoslavia and Reich Protestants predated the Nazis' coming to power, of course, but Nazi-promoted changes in Reich German Protestantism altered those connections in the 1930s. During the 1930s, the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia would continue to be a nationally conscious institution and would intensify its contacts with the Protestant church in the Reich as well as with the Reich leadership. However, the Yugoslav German Lutherans also remained cautious as regards certain religious trends in Germany, being especially disturbed by Alfred Rosenberg and the *Deutsche Christen*. The Erneuerer and the German Evangelicals would occasionally clash during the 1930s, but the Lutherans never engaged the Erneuerer with the directness of the Swabian Catholics' resistance movement. On the contrary, the German Lutherans maintained close ties with the Third Reich until the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941. The German Lutheran church in Yugoslavia, therefore, had the mixed legacy of sometimes clashing with the Erneuerer but nevertheless remaining well disposed toward Hitler and the Third Reich, an attitude which surely influenced its German flock.

#### *Changes in Reich German Protestantism under Hitler*

Parallel to the consolidation of German Lutheran leadership and institutions in Yugoslavia, the Lutheran church also underwent a profound transformation in Germany itself in the years after 1933. It is not entirely accurate to speak of a single German Lutheran church in Germany in the early 1930s, because "the" church actually consisted of 28 provincial churches or *Landeskirchen*, which reflected Germany's

historical division. Since 1922 these provincial churches had been loosely organized into the *Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund*, a confederation of German Protestant churches. There had been long been talk of forming a unified church, but little concrete had come of these discussions. However, the Nazis accession to power and the subsequent, rapid *Gleichschaltung* of German society brought added urgency to these discussions on forming a single *Reichskirche*. Simultaneously, a radical strain in the Church known as the *Deutsche Christen* was growing in popularity and influence in the Reich, not least because it was favored for a time by the Nazis.

We turn briefly to the *Deutsche Christen*, because their movement caused considerable consternation in German Protestant and Catholic religious circles in Yugoslavia as well. Though formally founded in 1932, the *Deutsche Christen* movement had ideological roots in the old German *voelkisch* tradition, which had found fertile soil in the political and social uncertainty of Weimar Germany. Though religious, theirs was a highly political program.<sup>849</sup> Racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist, and indulgent in a particularly narcissistic variety of German nationalism that attached great importance to blood and soil, the *Deutsche Christen* regarded religion as dynamic, not frozen in static traditions or dusty ancient texts. They believed in “positive Christianity”, which sought to downplay Jewish elements of Christianity and deemphasize the Old Testament, even recasting Jesus as a crusader against Judaism. Led by Pastor Ludwig Mueller, the *Deutsche Christen* movement was highly compatible with the teachings of National Socialism and quickly attracted

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<sup>849</sup> For further discussion of the *Deutsche Christen* and the attempt to “coordinate” and unify Germany’s Protestant churches into one organization, see Shelley Baranowski, “The 1933 German Protestant Church Elections: Machtpolitik or Accommodation?,” *Church History* 49, no. 3 (1980). and Shelley Baranowski, “Consent and Dissent: The Confessing Church and the Conservative Opposition to National Socialism,” *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 1 (1987).

Nazi patronage. The Nazis recognized familiar beliefs in this movement and for a time regarded it as a means by which to subvert and control the country's Protestants.<sup>850</sup> At the April 1933 convention of the *Deutsche Christen* in Berlin, the movement's racist extreme wing effectively demanded the *Gleichschaltung* of the Evangelical church and the introduction of the *Fuehrerprinzip* in its affairs.

Moved as they were toward unification, Reich German Evangelical leaders were nonetheless not eager to surrender to the *Deutsche Christen*, who had much support among Protestants but had also earned much opposition. Ultimately, the *Deutsche Christen* movement was effectively hoping to hijack the unified *Reichskirche* and convert it into an "instrument of power and propaganda of the new state."<sup>851</sup> Such prospects were disturbing even to many who regarded the Nazis' coming to power with cautious optimism. The German Lutheran leaders themselves entered into a posture of resistance to such extreme plans for their church in the Reich.

In Germany, the executive committee of the *Kirchenbund* named a three-man commission of representatives from the Lutheran, Reformed and United churches to form a single, more unified Protestant church. Hitler appointed *Deutsche Christen* leader Ludwig Mueller to this commission as his representative in late April 1933. After much disagreement in Evangelical circles, on September 27, 1933, Mueller was appointed *Reichsbischof* of the new German Evangelical Church. However, the rest of the German Evangelical Church's history remained marked by internal dissent and

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<sup>850</sup> For a useful discussion of why the German Protestant leadership accepted the Nazis' accession to power, see Baranowski, "The 1933 German Protestant Church Elections: Machtpolitik or Accommodation?." 301.

<sup>851</sup> Gerhard May, "Was ist mit der evangelischen Kirche im Deutschen Reich?," *Neues Leben*, May 1933.

opposition. The *Deutsche Christen* lost Hitler's interest after it became clear they lacked the power to thoroughly control the Protestant church. Without that support, Mueller and the *Deutsche Christen* became ineffectual, and Protestant opposition forces were better able to resist the consolidation of the unified Evangelical Church in Germany. Their underground resistance movement, which fundamentally rejected the notion of any Protestant church as a state body, became known as the Confessing Church and was guided for a time by Martin Niemoeller. Unfortunately, Niemoeller and other leaders of the Confessing Church were eventually arrested and imprisoned. Meanwhile, the *Reichskirche* continued to exist but it was always a troubled project and relations between it and the government deteriorated after 1937.<sup>852</sup>

At the outset, the Yugoslav German Lutherans were optimistic about the unified *Reichskirche*. In 1934, Gerhard May described the creation of a unified German Evangelical Church as “the fulfillment of more than a century-long wish” and even offered kind words to the *Deutsche Christen* for setting the unification project in motion. The religious beliefs of the *Deutsche Christen* were well known to close observers and May was quick to condemn those same *Deutsche Christen* for creating problems, however. “Their radical wing openly denies fundamental Christian teachings. For them, it is not about the Evangelical faith, but rather about a *voelkisch* religiosity,” he observed.<sup>853</sup> The “Faith Movement of the Deutsche Christen” was not an official body of either the Reich or NSDAP, but their work had been sanctioned by

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<sup>852</sup> The episode surrounding the birth of the German Evangelical Church and the contested selection of its first bishop is instructive, for it reveals the degree to which German Protestantism had become penetrated by extreme nationalist and even National Socialist views in Germany. Yet serious Protestant resistance simultaneously existed against such views in whole or in part. And while many Protestant leaders may have accepted Hitler's accession to power due to the *Fuehrer's* anti-Communism and his promise to create order from Weimar's political chaos, they nevertheless opposed heavy intrusion into their church and its theology by the state or party.

<sup>853</sup> Gerhard May, "Ausland," *Kirche und Volk*, January 15 1934.

Hitler and their extremism suggested reasons for future concern about “*voelkisch Religiositaet*” in Germany, he believed.

Thus, at the same time that the German Lutherans in Yugoslavia were consolidating their own church and establishing relationships with fellow Lutherans in Germany, the German Evangelical Church there was itself undergoing a profound transformation and was engaged in a struggle against internal and external threats. As such, the situation was complicated for the German Lutherans in Yugoslavia, who were dealing with a moving target in their relations with Germany. Bishop Popp’s own attitude toward the *Deutsche Christen* was one of reservation, at least, and probable rejection.<sup>854</sup> As we shall see, however, he would not disavow the Nazi Party as Berenz did.

#### *Yugoslavia’s German Lutherans and Nazi Germany*

Nazism’s entry into Lutheran discourse in Yugoslavia predated the Reich Church’s founding and even the Nazis accession to power. As early as 1931, the German Evangelical Church organ *Neues Leben* published a critical essay by Mecklenburg-Schwerin *Landesbischof* Heinrich Rendtorff, which outlined Protestant suspicion of “positive Christianity” and objected to National Socialism’s elevation of *Volk* and race to the heights of idolatry.<sup>855</sup> However, Philipp Popp came to find much to admire in the Third Reich, though he may have misunderstood many aspects of the Nazi regime like many Swabians. Either attraction to the anti-Marxist promises of

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<sup>854</sup> Wild. 193.

<sup>855</sup> Heinrich Rendtorff, "Evangelische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus," *Neues Leben*, June 1 1931.



National Socialism or outright admiration for Hitler enabled Popp to explain away, forgive, or overlook many of Nazism's transgressions.

Popp issued an impassioned defense of Hitler's Germany and condemnation of its detractors in the spring of 1933. In "Against Atrocity Propaganda [*Greuelpropaganda*]," published in both *Neues Leben* and *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Popp inveighed against Hitler's critics, revealed a reflexive anti-Semitism, and demonstrated his own sympathy for the Nazis' revolution. "From the Jewish-Bolshevik side," he charged, "a propaganda campaign of lies about the German people was launched on the occasion of the victory of the national revolution in Germany, which must fill every German, wherever he lives, with indignation." The "Jewish" press abroad had evidently been predicting the persecution, imprisonment, and even slaughter of Jewish innocents. Such Jewish-Bolshevik defamation, Popp explained, was designed to influence international public opinion against the German people, branding them (especially the Lutherans) as a "nation of barbarians."<sup>856</sup> Popp also complained about the Yugoslav press, including one "Magyar-Jewish newspaper" which went so far as to claim that the Catholics were also oppressed in Germany. After presenting several statements by international church leaders expressing confidence in Germany, Popp concluded, "as the German-Evangelical Bishop I feel myself bound to protest against such malicious disseminations because such disseminations are intended to disturb the confessional peace in our ranks and in our country and cast German-Evangelical character in a false light before the public." Thus, Popp was deeply concerned that these "Jewish-Bolshevik" lies about Germany would reflect poorly on Protestants even in Yugoslavia. The minor incidents

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<sup>856</sup> Jews and Bolshevism were often conflated in European minds of the early twentieth century.

unavoidable in any revolution were being blown up by the press, he felt. Meanwhile, he was clearly offended by “Jewish” calls to boycott of German goods in Germany. In conclusion, Popp warned, “we want to live in peace with everyone, but we also wish that our nationality and our church be left in peace, and that people always remain within the bounds of truth when speaking of us.”<sup>857</sup> What is not clear, is the degree to which Popp here understood that sometimes the truth hurts.

Popp remained well disposed toward the Third Reich, despite certain ideological misgivings and the conflict over the unification of the Reich Protestant Church. Under him, relations between the Yugoslav and Reich Protestant churches would deepen, completing the Yugoslav Lutherans’ reorientation away from Hungary, which he and his collaborators had initiated years before after rising to positions of leadership. Connections with Protestants abroad intensified after 1931, culminating in Popp’s journey to Germany in February 1934 to formally conclude a friendship treaty between the German Lutheran Church in Yugoslavia and its Reich counterpart. Though in practical terms little may have come from this gesture, symbolically it was vastly important. Indeed, “the treaty was a decisive point in the historical development of German Protestantism in Yugoslavia: overcome were the historical memories of a common history with Hungarian Protestantism, the emotional ties to Hungarian tradition and sentiment. The new spiritual and theological orientation toward Germany was complete” against a background of national and intellectual affinity with the Germans in the Reich.<sup>858</sup> Popp, while in Berlin to sign this treaty, took the opportunity to meet several leading personalities in the Third

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<sup>857</sup> Philipp Popp, "Gegen die Greuelpropaganda," *Neues Leben*, March-April 1933.

<sup>858</sup> Wild. 173.

Reich, including Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath, Reich Bishop Ludwig Mueller (Popp's treaty cosignatory), and others before finally obtaining a personal audience with none other than Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler.

In 1934, an Evangelical *Kirchliches Aussenamt* or Church Foreign Office was established in Berlin with the task of maintaining church-political connections to the Protestant churches abroad and the ecumenical world. This office was headed by *Oberkonsistorialrat* Theodor Heckel. Heckel was well disposed toward the German Lutherans in Yugoslavia and generally respected the church's independence, though in the mid-1930s this office did seek to coordinate the German Lutheran churches abroad in such a way so as to conform somewhat with the Germany's foreign policy aspirations.<sup>859</sup> Still, Reich offices never themselves sought to influence relations between the Church in Yugoslavia and the *Kirchliches Aussenamt*. Relations were friendly, thus, and the church in Yugoslavia naturally became inclined to turn toward the *Kirchliches Aussenamt* for solutions to a variety of the German Lutheran diaspora's needs and problems in Yugoslavia.<sup>860</sup>

Popp's embrace of Germany and Germandom seems to not have been contradictory to genuine Yugoslav patriotism. Nor did the deepened relations between the German and Yugoslav German Evangelical Churches signal political disloyalty to Yugoslavia. After all, it was also Yugoslavia's policy for much of the 1930s to forge closer political and especially economic ties with Germany. Popp was careful to maintain the independence of his church and was a welcome presence in Belgrade even until the Third Reich's invasion in April 1941. Indeed, Popp was even

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<sup>859</sup> Ibid. 205. For more on the *Kirchliches Aussenamt*, see Wild 175-206.

<sup>860</sup> Ibid. 206.

named a Yugoslav Senator in 1940. He found many words of praise for Hitler, whom he described in a major report at the Fourth *Landeskirchentag* in 1938 as the most important force preventing Europe from sinking into Bolshevism.<sup>861</sup> Nevertheless, the local German exponents of National Socialism in Yugoslavia, the Erneuerer, were not exactly admirers of the Evangelical leadership and were not unknown to criticize him at rallies and in print.

The Evangelical leaders, despite their admiration for many of Hitler's achievements, could not help but be disturbed by the radical trends against traditional Christianity in Germany. On one hand, it seems that Popp and his colleagues were quite impressed by Hitler and Nazi Germany. On the other hand, they plainly had reservations about certain trends and tendencies in the country that seemed hostile to the churches and even Christianity in general. These reservations grew over time.

Catholics and Protestants naturally shared many of the same concerns regarding the avowed "new heathens" associated with the *Deutsche Christen* and Alfred Rosenberg. Though they did not pursue them with the venom of Adam Berenz, Yugoslav German Evangelicals were similarly repulsed by religious deviance, Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, and the idolatrous elevation of race seemed un-Christian as well as reckless. The situation was confusing, for the 1920 Nazi Party program specifically demanded "freedom of religion for all denominations" and avowed the party "to a standpoint of positive Christianity without binding itself confessionally to any one domination."<sup>862</sup> Nevertheless the "new heathens" continued to invoke the authority of National Socialism and assert

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<sup>861</sup> Philipp Popp, "Kirche und Volkstum" *Kirche und Volk*, July 15 1938.

<sup>862</sup> "The Program of the NSDAP", [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/document/nca\\_vol4/1708-ps.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/document/nca_vol4/1708-ps.htm) (accessed March 5 2008).

that proper Nazism excluded Christianity. Like Berenz and the Catholics, the German Lutherans in Yugoslavia rejected the notion that Christianity was somehow alien to Germandom and noted a long history of Christian-German synergy, during which Germans achievements would have been unimaginable without the Christian faith.<sup>863</sup>

As we saw in Chapter Five, under Popp and his colleagues, Yugoslavia's Evangelical leadership grew enthusiastic about national identity and eagerly reoriented the church from its roots in Hungary toward the German heartland. Nationality and the mother tongue were nothing less than gifts from God, according to Pfarrer Heinrich Lebherz, managing editor of *Kirche und Volk*.<sup>864</sup> Likewise, *Senioratsinspektor* Andreas Zimmermann noted that "the world is God's and in this world nationality is the God-willed order"<sup>865</sup> Nevertheless, this embrace of national identity and even its acceptance of natural order did not mean acceptance of the concept of race as the National Socialists so narrowly defined it. In 1937, Pastor Konrath of Nove Šove tackled the tricky matter of race in an article that acknowledged race's validity but cut to the heart of the church's misgivings. "Race is created by God," he observed. "It belongs to the order of creation. Treasuring race, honoring race is the will of God. He who disdains racial thinking is a bad Christian. He has no right to act on the authority of the gospel. He who disdains race has gone mad regarding God's basic order of life, indeed, regarding God himself." Thus race, like nationhood, was an expression of God and must be respected. Nevertheless, he continued, "just as erroneous as disdain for race is its deification. The overdoing of racial thought is an offense against the first commandment: 'you shall have no other

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<sup>863</sup> "Kann ein Deutscher Christ Sein?," *Kirche und Volk*, June 15 1936.

<sup>864</sup> Heinrich Lebherz, "Gott und Volk," *Kirche und Volk*, August 15 1936.

<sup>865</sup> Andreas Zimmermann, "Kirche und Volkstum," *Kirche und Volk*, August 15 1934.

gods before me.’ As such, the supreme elevation of race fundamentally contradicted Christian teachings and consequently could not be tolerated. As for racial exclusivity in the church, he concluded, “Christian knowledge of God is not racially dependent.”<sup>866</sup> In sum, the German Lutheran leadership seems to have adopted a relatively “moderate” tone as regards race. Just as they embraced national identity but recoiled from national chauvinism (the only sensible position as a minority within a minority in multiethnic Yugoslavia), so did they acknowledge racial thinking but warn against the idolization of race.

Like the Swabian Catholics, Yugoslavia’s German Lutherans began to expand their activities beyond the traditional, religious areas into matters of youth, education and social welfare. The Lutherans questionably *voelkisch* views and increased non-religious activities drew the ire of the Erneuerer. The Erneuerer were especially concerned about the Church’s initiatives among youth groups, which they regarded as a form of competition. However, the Evangelicals’ spiritual and earthly leadership plainly did regard this *Jugendarbeit*, which reinforced the Germans’ sense of a distinct identity, as part of its responsibility. One leading Lutheran stated it bluntly in 1934, when he remarked that nationality was a distinction given by God, care for which was a Swabian Lutherans’ duty.<sup>867</sup>

As it turned out, German Lutheran *Jugendarbiet* in Yugoslavia was really quite limited and sporadic. Church press organs perennially discussed the importance of youth and the need for more coordinated *Jugendarbeit* but there was never great progress. Attempts to coordinate it in the 1930s were only modestly successful and

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<sup>866</sup> F. Konrath, "Volk vor Gott oder Rasse und Evangelium " *Kirche und Volk*, August 1 1937.

<sup>867</sup> Andreas Zimmerman was the Evangelical Church’s *Senioratsinspektor*, and therefore belonged to the Church’s top leadership. Zimmermann.

many of the church's plans, remained just that, plans. Nevertheless, the church did hold youth rallies, such as the one held at Novi Sad in 1937. Three Lutheran youth organizations of consequence operated in Yugoslavia, the oldest of which, the Youth League for Decisive Christendom (*Jugendbund fuer Entschiedendes Christentum*, also known as the EC) was founded by (PdD Parliamentarian and Lutheran minister) Samuel Schumacher and Jakob Kettenbach in the village of Beška. The Christian Association of Young Men (*Christliche Verein Junger Maenner* or CVJM) was also not inconsequential, though its activities were likewise limited. Perhaps the largest and most distinctive of the German evangelical *Jungendarbeit* groups was the Crusaders or *Kreuzfahrer*, which was modeled after branches of the movement in Austria. These local *Kreuzfahrer* branches comprised the movement's "Yugoslavia District", which similarly formed part of a Bund in Germany and Austria, headed by Austrian *Landesjugendpfarrer* Georg Traar. As an international organization, the *Kreuzfahrer* also naturally proved to be a road for the exchange of persons and ideas with Germans abroad. Having founded local chapters in 1931, the *Kreuzfahrer* distinguished themselves from other youth groups through their scout-like uniforms, parading, display of banners and other such symbolism. Additionally, they conducted excursions much like the *Wandervoegel* in Germany and organized summer camps, especially in Fruška Gora area.<sup>868</sup> Naturally, the *Kreuzfaherer* also devoted themselves to religious studies, as did the other Protestant youth groups discussed above.

Despite its limited scope and wanting central direction, the German Lutheran youth movement was an unwelcome development for the Erneuerer, who regarded its

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<sup>868</sup> Wild. 239-249.

religious *Jugendarbeit* as competition for their own *voelkisch* brand. The Erneuerungsbewegung's leaders expressed their extreme displeasure in the pages of *Volksruf* in late 1937. Explicitly addressing the Lutheran leadership, *Volksruf* observed with dismay the recent increase in Lutheran *Jugendarbeit*. The Erneuerer claimed to have no problem with such work as long as it remained restricted to purely religious matters. However, *Volksruf* complained, the Lutherans' youth activities had strayed beyond their mandate. Moreover, they warned, such confessionally based *Jugendarbeit* threatened to deepen the confessional divide in the *Volksgruppe*. Finally, *Volksruf* expressed its "long-suppressed" doubts about the genuineness of the German Lutheran clergy's national orientation in Yugoslavia. The Erneuerer declared that it was the questionable attitude of Popp himself which had forced them to break their silence on the matter. Finally, the Erneuerer accused the church's highest leadership of tolerating and even endorsing "a virulent political campaign against Germany" at a recent international Protestant conference in Oxford, which Popp and May had attended. The Erneuerer closed their pointed critique by asking the church leadership first, if it would not be better leave youth work among Swabian children to national movements or organizations, given the confessional divisions between the Lutheran and Catholic Germans; and second, what was the state of national thought of the German Evangelical Church's leaders. Bishop Popp's behavior in Oxford seemed to suggest to the Erneuerer that he was not qualified to raise Swabian children in a nationally conscious manner.<sup>869</sup> Ultimately, the Erneuerer plainly demonstrated

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<sup>869</sup> "Eine notwendige Anfrage an die Leitung der Deutschen Evangelischen Landeskirche," *Volksruf*, November 5 1937.



that they considered the national attitude of the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia regrettably deficient.

Relations between the German Evangelicals in Yugoslavia and the troubled *Reichskirche* continued during the 1930s, finally culminating in February 1941 in an affiliation treaty (*Verbindungs-Vertrag*) between the two churches. This treaty, signed on February 24, 1941, only weeks before the German invasion of Yugoslavia, did not formally join the two churches but rather obliged the *Kirchliches Aussenamt* to provide certain resources for the maintenance and development of the church in Yugoslavia. It emerged as part of Popp's long standing desire for closer relations with Evangelicals in Germany, of course, but it also reflected the desire in the Reich to gain influence in the neutral states of southeast Europe after the outbreak of war. And indeed, the *Verbindungs-Vertrag* did seem to grant the *Kirchliches Aussenamt* increased influence in Yugoslav Lutheran affairs as well as greater access for the Yugoslav Germans in Protestant matters in the Third Reich.<sup>870</sup> Nevertheless, the treaty never achieved much significance since the German invasion of Yugoslavia in April would soon smash the country. Yugoslavia's subsequent division had the effect of also dividing the German Evangelical Church. As such, after more than twenty years, the German Evangelical Church in Yugoslavia would find itself back in precisely the position the legal uncertainty it experienced in the wake of Austria-Hungary's collapse.

In conclusion, the German Lutherans defended Hitler's Germany but also expressed some criticism of its ideology, which they did not fully endorse between the wars. Nevertheless, the ferocity of the Lutherans' criticism never approached the

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<sup>870</sup> Text of this *Verbindungsvertrag* is reprinted in Wild. 210-215.

determination of the Catholic clergy's resistance. To be sure, there was no real equivalency between the German Lutherans' and Swabian Catholic's opposition to the Erneuerer's insurrection. After all, the Swabian Catholic clergy were planning their resistance even as Popp traveled to Berlin to meet Hitler and sign a Friendship Treaty with Ludwig Mueller, the Reich Church Bishop and leader of the *Deutsche Christen*. By contrast with the Catholics, the German Evangelicals were far milder in their critique of the Nazi ideology. Though they touched upon many of the same issues as the Catholics, the Lutherans did so far more rarely and in a less confrontational manner. Nevertheless, they were also the target of criticism by Awender and other Erneuerer, who considered their *Jugendarbeit* threatening and sometimes charged them with being insufficiently German. In sum, one might say that the German Evangelical Church's leaders were proud Germans but eschewed national chauvinism. Until the very end of the First Yugoslavia, its head Bishop Philipp Popp achieved the impressive feat of being welcome in both Berlin and Belgrade. Ultimately, as the Erneuerer consolidated their control of the Kulturbund in 1939 and the Third Reich stunned Europe with its successes in economics, foreign policy and war, both Catholics and Protestants would rush into the Nazifying Kulturbund.

## Chapter 9: The Erneuerungsbewegung Prevails, 1939-1941

The final years before the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia were heady times for the triumphant Erneuerer. Sepp Janko assumed leadership of the Kulturbund and carried out a significant reorganization such that the organization became fully *gleichgeschaltet* like other German communities in eastern Europe. This achievement came neither smoothly nor immediately, however, and the first months after Janko's installation as the Kulturbund's chairman in August 1939 were marked by the outbreak of war in Europe, a financial crisis and further strife inside the organization. The Erneuerer had hoped to extend this process of *Gleichschaltung* to other aspects of German life in Yugoslavia and achieved much to that end, but their efforts were hampered somewhat by infighting and exigencies deriving from the European conflagration. This last period of Swabian interwar history, which began with the return of the expelled Erneuerer to the Kulturbund in late 1938, concluded with the Third Reich's invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, an event which meant the end of Yugoslavia as a single state and new realities for the Danube Swabians.

### *Genuine Reconciliation or Gradual Defeat?*

The process which ended in the eventual triumph of the Erneuerer began abruptly but endured over several subsequent months. At the meeting of the Kulturbund board on April 30, 1939, Keks, who had served as chairman for twelve years and had been the Kulturbund's principle architect, driver, and defender during those years, abruptly and unexpectedly resigned, allegedly for reasons of business and family. Likewise, Secretary Matz Giljum announced his intention to retire at the

meeting but agreed to remain in his position until such a time when a new Kulturbund chairman could be elected. The Kulturbund board then promptly elected Keks Honorary Chairman to honor his long and important service to the organization.

Keks' sudden resignation produced a new situation in the Kulturbund and the minority, for it effectively created a power vacuum. The urgency of filling this sudden vacancy was not lost on the Swabian notables, the representatives of whose factions and ideological currents met swiftly to discuss Keks' succession. The Erneuerer in particular saw opportunity in Keks' resignation and encouraged the Swabian public to follow their lead. As *Volksruf*, observed, the possibility suddenly existed to permanently resolve the lingering questions inside the Kulturbund. The selection of a new chairman offered a way out of the Swabians' long division, and the Erneuerer were determined to see it resolved in their favor.

As the acknowledged leader of the Erneuerungsbewegung, Jakob Awender naturally aspired to the post of Kulturbund chairman himself. In this, he was supported by other leading Erneuerer, many of whom (such as Slavonia District Chairman Altgayer) now held important posts inside the Kulturbund. These men gathered to discuss the matter in May 1939 but by then the selection of the Kulturbund chairman was no longer a matter for Swabians to resolve on their own. As we have seen, Reich involvement in Swabian affairs had been increasing since the 1920s and, while the Erneuerer's ideological affinity may have pleased many Reich and NSDAP offices, it was nevertheless Reich policy to avoid situations that might disrupt foreign relations. Upon learning of the support for Awender as Kulturbund chairman, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle called representatives of the various

Swabian factions (including Keks, Moser and Altgayer but not Kraft) to Graz, where it made Germany's opposition to Awender's candidacy known. As we have seen, Hitler's decree of July 2, 1938 conferred upon the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle the power to determine German minorities' domestic leadership, and VoMi now moved to exercise that authority. The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle regarded Awender as too brash. His alliance with Zbor had been a reckless embarrassment which had not made international relations easier for the Third Reich. It was plain that the new Kulturbund chairman would be an Erneuerer but, to the surprise of all present, VoMi suggested the relatively "moderate" Erneuerer Sepp Janko of Zrenjanin. Janko was known to all the Swabians present, who promptly agreed to the recommendation. Keks even agreed to smooth the path to his formal installation at the upcoming Kulturbund annual congress in August 1939. Ironically, Janko was neither present at the meeting nor aware of his own candidacy. Nevertheless, he quickly consented to his new position when informed of the meeting's proceedings. The Erneuerer, thus, had finally realized their goal of assuming the leadership of the Kulturbund. Unexpectedly, however, that new Kulturbund chairman would be the "moderate" and youthful Janko and not the Erneuerungsbewegung's leader, Awender. For many Erneuerer, this was a grave disappointment.



*Einheitstracht* clad Jakob Lichtenberger (left) and Sepp Janko (right) in Zemun in 1940.<sup>871</sup>

Finally, May 1939 was also a defining month in the other rift in the German minority, the confrontation between Stefan Kraft on the one hand and Hans Moser and associates on the other. The court of arbitration to which they had submitted their mutual recriminations finally reached its verdict in May 1939. Both sides were compelled to withdraw their allegations and Kraft agreed to “voluntarily” resign from his posts and responsibilities in the Agricultural Central Loan Office (*Landwirtschaftlichen Zentral-Darlehenskasse* or LZDK) and all other cooperatives by June 30. Kraft, who had already turned down the JRZ’s offer of a mandate in the December 1938 parliamentary elections, was assured of an appropriate pension in honor of his many years of service to the German minority.<sup>872</sup> He would not withdraw from public life entirely, but the arbitration court’s decision clearly was a blow

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<sup>871</sup> Friedrich Kuehbauch, ed., *Neu-Pasua, 1790-1945: Bilder einer donauschwaebischen Grossgemeinde in Syrmien* (Reutlingen, Germany: 1987). 289.

<sup>872</sup> "Abschluss der Schiedsgerichtsverfahrens in Sachen Dr. Hans Moser und Genossen - Dr. Stephan Kraft," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, May 27 1939.

against the man who had so long stood at the center of Swabian life but had recently grown unpopular. In light of the fact that the court of arbitration had also ordered the sitting head of the huge cooperative Agraria to resign by June 30, it was clear that there would be big changes at the top of many of the Swabians' leading institutions. Truly the possibility of a new direction in Swabian affairs appeared to exist as never before.

### *From Reconciliation to Marginalization*

The original leadership and their Erneuerer rivals may have agreed to formally bury the hatchet at the end of 1938, but their reconciliation was only partial and superficial. Over the course of 1939, the Erneuerer steadily ascended to the leading positions inside the Kulturbund, the German system of cooperatives, and other Swabian institutions, most of which had been founded by the original leadership themselves. Unsurprisingly, the original leadership did not appreciate being displaced from their prominent roles in Volkstumarbeit organizations and the economic cooperatives by their younger rivals. The accelerating spread of Nazi ideas in the Kulturbund and the transformation of Swabian institutions and even youth education according to Nazi models and principles likewise raised concerns among the older generation and the Catholic Church. The installation of the relatively "moderate" Erneuerer Janko as Kulturbund chairman failed to mitigate the situation (indeed, he carried out many of the Reich-inspired changes), although his tone and methods were perhaps less extreme than those of the more radical Erneuerer gathered around Awender. Meanwhile, that radical branch was not impressed by Janko's election as

Kulturbund chairman and continued to compete for power and influence in the organization. Conservative elements in the German minority were all the more disturbed by the radicals' continued competition because the radicals were plainly receiving support from certain bodies in the Third Reich.<sup>873</sup>

The conflict between the lead Erneuerer and the Kulturbund leadership had been long and highly personal. Ideologically the two sides probably differed less than the Erneuerer often charged, but there nevertheless were important differences between them. They differed, for example, on many of the tenets of National Socialism and certainly in their subscription to its more radical forms and manifestations. True, more "reasonable" currents were emerging in the Erneuerungsbewegung in 1938, which gradually toned down its intensely confrontational posture and instead sought to sound more "respectable". Nevertheless trust between the Erneuerer and the original leadership was not to be forged overnight. Meanwhile, the Erneuerer continued to push for Swabian reconciliation based on their principles and persisted in their highly personal attacks against the original leadership until the autumn of 1938. Indeed, their criticisms persisted even after the election of Sepp Janko as Kulturbund chairman, who spoke somewhat moderately but increased the competencies of the Kulturbund. Even Keks' energetic endorsement of Janko as his successor should not necessarily be regarded as a sign of proper reconciliation between the original leadership and the Erneuerer. After all, Janko represented the more moderate current in the Erneuerungsbewegung. Thus Keks' endorsement of Janko arguably revealed his intent to *limit* the

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<sup>873</sup> Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 41E.



Erneuerungsbewegung's radical influence, not his proper acceptance of the movement's agenda or its acknowledged leader, Jakob Awender.

Although the Erneuerer and their erstwhile opponents in the original leadership had hurled insults of incompetence, duplicity and even ethnic treason at each other, their conflict also had important ideological and methodological dimensions. After all, despite a shared heritage of *voelkisch* ideas, the men of the original leadership were not dedicated National Socialists. The Erneuerer leaders, however, basically *were* zealous Nazis. Upon properly securing control over the Kulturbund, they began a transformation of that institution according to National Socialist models. Both a cause and effect of the so called "reconciliation" and the Erneuerer's triumph in 1938/39 was the withdrawal of the original leadership from most positions of public life. As we have seen, Johann Keks resigned from the Kulturbund, as did Matz Giljum. Stefan Kraft declined to run as a JRZ candidate in the December 1938 elections and was compelled to resign from his economic offices by the German court of arbitration the following year. "Reconciliation" for the original leadership had ultimately meant the reduction of their influence and the triumph of ideas which they often did not share. Reconciliation was, therefore, a kind of gradual defeat for the original leadership. Yet even while they accepted that the Erneuerer and their ideas could no longer be ignored, the older generation continued to quietly urge a more moderate course and sought to retain some posts of influence. Their influence, however, was increasingly marginal.

From Kulturbund to "Erneuerbund," 1939-1941

Although the representatives of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, the Erneuerungsbewegung, and the original leadership had agreed on Janko's appointment as chairman in May 1939, his tenure would not actually begin until August of that year, when the Kulturbund's board could meet and formally elect him to the position. Nevertheless, the mark of the Erneuerungsbewegung preceded Janko's official installation as chairman. Prominent Erneuerer including Jakob Lichtenberger, Branimir Altgayer and Josef Beer assumed important and visible roles in the organization throughout 1939. Moreover, the Kulturbund continued its expansion, adding new local chapters wherever possible and holding events designed to reinforce group identity and cohesion. Such events included *Trachtenfeste*, lectures, concerts and the like, but they now bore a clearer imprint of the Erneuerungsbewegung. In May and June 1939 the Kulturbund also held a series of massive district rallies or *Gautagungen* in Apatin (Batschka), Lazarevo (Banat), and Indjija (Srijem).<sup>874</sup> These rivaled any previous Kulturbund gatherings in size and were clearly inspired by the mass politics and aesthetics of fascism. Speakers at the rallies included such Erneuerer luminaries as Jakob Awender and Fritz Metzger, among others. Yet despite the new prominence of the Erneuerer, 1938-1939 was also a period of shared leadership, reconciliation, and the integration of the Erneuerer and KWVD members into the Kulturbund, some for the first time. Keks, Giljum and others in the original leadership still retained their important posts for a time and

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<sup>874</sup> Each Gau had its own Rune. Slavonia had the *Odalrune*, Banat had the *Ehrrune*, Syrmien-Bosnien had the *Wolfsangel*, and Batschka-Baranja had the *Siegrune*.

exercised something of a moderating influence on their new colleagues from the Erneuerungsbewegung.

The fact of shared leadership did not prevent the Erneuerer from outlining their aspirations for the German minority and Kulturbund, and they remained outspoken at the 1939's summer rallies and in the pages of *Volksruf* and *Slawonischer Volksbote*. The radical group around Awender retained control of *Volksruf*, and used it as a platform from which to announce its priorities. The Kulturbund rallies in Lazarevo, Indjija, and especially Apatin were the largest such Swabian meetings yet, with *Deutsches Volksblatt* reporting 5000 attendees in Indjija,<sup>875</sup> another 5000 in Lazarevo, and fully 20,000 in Apatin. If correct, such numbers would have been huge for the largely rural Swabians. Leading Erneuerer shared the stage with the retiring Kulturbund leadership (Keks and Giljum had by now announced their planned retirement) and even Swabian members of parliament Franz Hamm and Josef Trischler.<sup>876</sup> Never one to miss an opportunity for hyperbole, at Lazarevo Awender compared the recent unification of the German minority in the Kulturbund and that organ's alleged infusion with the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* to the breakout of Christianity 2000 years before. The Kulturbund was not merely an organization of 300 local chapters, he insisted, but rather an organization of thousands of Germans willing to make any sacrifice for the *Volk*. All speakers emphasized the new solidarity and unity of the minority after the recent reconciliation.<sup>877</sup>

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<sup>875</sup> "Grosses Gautreffen in Indjija," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, June 8 1939.

<sup>876</sup> "Die bisher groesste Kundgebung des jugoslawischen Deutschtums," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 30 1939.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

More than their pre-reconciliation era counterparts, the Kulturbund's new rallies self-consciously adopted the aesthetics of mass politics and were regimented affairs notable for their marching, uniforms, and military-inspired order.<sup>878</sup> Another long standing institution which had by now succumbed to the Erneuerer was *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Now essentially co-opted by its erstwhile Erneuerer opponents, the newspaper was buoyant in its coverage of the 1939 district rallies, such as the one at Apatin. "The marching column was formed at 9:00," the newspaper explained. "At its head the drummers and buglers, after them the district chairman with his staff, then the district's head functionaries and finally in strict order thousands and thousands of youths and men in *Einheitstracht*. The parade moved from the town's sports field, through the main street to the town hall. Many thousands of *Volksgenossen* lined the street and looked in astonished enthusiasm on the sensational discipline of the marching parade."<sup>879</sup>

This Apatin parade was clearly orchestrated to demonstrate the supposed unity in the reintegrated Kulturbund as well as its order, discipline and celebration of youth. In uniform dress, the men and boys marched in rows beneath banners, their column led by a German brass band which announced the district rally to the city. "For the onlookers, it was indeed an unforgettable impression and exceptional experience,"

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<sup>878</sup> Similar rallies had been held in Romania by *Landesobmann* Fritz Fabritius' (Nazified) *Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft* for years. These were eagerly covered by the Erneuerungsbewegung press in Yugoslavia. For an example, see "Die Zukunft des Deutschtums in Rumaenien gesichert: Der Jugendtag der 'Deutschen Volksgemeinschaft' in Schaessburg," *Slawonischer Volksbote*, September 5 1937.

<sup>879</sup> *Einheitstracht*, the reader will recall, is the standardized variant of Swabian folk costume which had been adopted by the Erneuerungsbewegung and introduced into the Kulturbund. It effectively sought to blend the aesthetics of the Swabian colonists and those of European fascism. It consisted of a white peasant's blouse, matching dark pants and a vest, and high, dark leather boots. Through *Einheitstracht*, the Erneuerer could emphasize their connection with the Swabian *Volk*, their unity, and their connection with certain political ideas and currents in contemporary Europe.

*Deutsches Volkablatt* continued. At the town hall, one speaker intoned, “that Apatin was always German and would remain German for all time.” The parade then continued to the nearby fairground, where participants lined up in orderly ranks before a tribunal, upon which the drummers and trumpeters took up position before a background of “great red flags with white runic characters for honor, blood, and soil.” These hung alongside the symbol of the district, a white *Siegrune*, set against a red field. The remaining background was filled with state flags.” Following several speeches, a large youth rally was held on the fairground featuring yet another speech by the youth leader Lichtenberger. The gathered youths then paraded in formation with Lichtenberger and the district chairman.<sup>880</sup> The featured Erneuerer emphasized the need for a new direction in the work of the Kulturbund and the need for Swabians to universally adopt the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, which, Erneuerer Fritz Metzger reminded listeners, “did not come to our country as a foreign export ware from just anywhere, but rather was born from our blood and soil.” Metzger then closed his speech with a triple “Sieg-Heil!”

In sum, the Kulturbund’s mass rallies of 1939 were affairs dominated by the values, aesthetics and leaders of the Erneuerungsbewegung and were intended to demonstrate and reinforce Swabian group cohesion and *voelkisch* ideological conformity within the Kulturbund. They reflected the heightened recent intrusion of the aesthetics of fascism into the minority and demonstrated the mobilization of nationally conscious youth. More than ever, they were orchestrated affairs, featuring participants in the *Einheitstracht*, which had become the acknowledged uniform of the Erneuerer and reintegrated Kulturbund. The rallies were also characterized by

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<sup>880</sup> "Die bisher groesste Kundgebung des jugoslawischen Deuschtums."

marching in formation and the symbolism and trappings typical of National Socialist rallies in Germany. To be sure, coordinated dress, parades and the like had also been typical of Kulturbund rallies during the years of division in the 1930s. However, those rallies paled in scale and intensity compared to the 1939 district rallies and their aesthetics had owed as much to imitation as ideological expression. Likewise, synchronized outfits were certainly not an invention of the Erneuerungsbewegung and had not been uncommon at many Kulturbund rallies in the 1930s. Nevertheless, it was the Erneuerer who elevated a standardized version of Swabian *Tracht* into a virtual uniform, combining it with the proud leather boots reminiscent of fascist or military uniforms. The circle of Erneuerer around Awender in many ways seemed to dominate the district rallies, but Janko was also present and featured prominently at the district rallies at Lazarevo in his native Banat. The rallies' intended message was clear: "there is now only one single German movement in our *Volksgruppe!*"<sup>881</sup> This, however, was still not one hundred percent true.

Despite their readmission into the Kulturbund, the Erneuerer saw no reason to discontinue their efforts to "renew" the Swabian community. On the contrary, their return to the Kulturbund merely signaled the beginning of a new phase of their work. Reconciliation with the original leadership had largely meant the triumph of the Erneuerer's methods and ideas, they realized, but they were not yet unconstrained in their actions. The Erneuerer had learned that their most extreme radicalism, especially their alliance with the Serbian fascist Zbor, could be counterproductive and was not usually appreciated by Yugoslav, Reich or NSDAP authorities. Such recognition did

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<sup>881</sup> "Es gibt nur eine einzige deutsche Bewegung in unserer Volksgruppe," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, May 31 1939.

not mean the abandonment of their radical agenda or language, however. In many ways, their criticisms and attacks were simply broader but no less biting during these years and even targeted Janko himself.

Naturally, the Erneuerer looked upon Keks' sudden resignation in May 1939 as a golden opportunity for themselves and their movement. Deposing Keks had been one of their initial goals, of course. When VoMi decided that the Kulturbund chairman position would go to the "moderate" Erneuerungsbewegung lawyer Sepp Janko, Awender was made the head of the Swabian agricultural cooperative Agraria in compensation. This was an important position to be sure. Nevertheless, it was less powerful than even the presidency of the Agricultural Central Loan Office (LZDK), much less the position of Kulturbund chairman, who was the acknowledged leader of the German minority. Awender was disappointed and his supporters resentful.<sup>882</sup>

In Sepp Janko's election as Kulturbund chairman, the Erneuerer appeared to have finally realized their dream of controlling the Swabians' premier organization and one might have expected general elation from all quarters of their movement. Yet the early months of Janko's tenure as the Kulturbund's chief were tumultuous, being marked by financial strife, internal dissent, political rivalry, and the exigencies of the Second World War which, though it did not yet involve Yugoslavia, nevertheless had major implications for the country's German minority in that critical funding from the Reich became suddenly unavailable and the German minority became an object of suspicion and fear as never before in Yugoslavia. Thus, the new Kulturbund chairman was immediately faced with challenges from all around: the original leadership had

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<sup>882</sup> The *Landwirtschaftliche Zentraldarlehenskasse* or LZDK was now headed by Josef Trischler, who thereby effectively was the economic leader of the country's Germans

stepped down but had not vanished. They did not always agree with the Erneuerer's more extreme ideas or plans and sought (not always successfully) to retain current positions or obtain new ones in the Swabian organizations; inside the Erneuerungsbewegung itself, the division between the "moderate" Janko and the more radical group around Awender continued to fester and threatened to undermine the new Kulturbund chairman's position; and the organization was in poor financial shape due to the long division in the German minority and recent disruptions in outside funding from Germany. Moreover, the outbreak of war in Europe rendered Yugoslavia's increasingly strident Swabians even greater objects of suspicion and contempt than ever before.

Although the Erneuerer had been readmitted to the Kulturbund and even secured its highest office, their renewal movement continued to exist. In this, the Erneuerer not only demonstrated inertia but also a certain unease with the situation in the Kulturbund which persisted even after Janko's installation as chairman. Many were upset that Janko, not Awender, the Erneuerungsbewegung's acknowledged leader, had been selected for the top Kulturbund leadership post. This discontent raised the real danger that the Erneuerer might reprise their role as an opposition current in the organization. In the immediate months after the reconciliation, many Swabians had called for the Erneuerungsbewegung to disband but met determined resistance by the movement's champions. Among the more outspoken of the latter was Gustav Halwax. This extremist ideologue and one-time editor of *Volksruf* defended the Erneuerungsbewegung's continued existence in February 1939 by pointing to its spontaneous and organic nature. It was not a typical organization



bound by statutes, he claimed, but rather was a *Maennerbund*, a band of brothers bound by common belief, manly loyalty, shared struggle for the highest values of the *Volksgruppe*. It embodied the political will of the *Volksgruppe* and was the strongest expression of its will to live. "Our character and the value that we [the Erneuerer] embody are also the justification for our existence, indeed the reason why we must continue to exist."<sup>883</sup> Janko disagreed and soon determined that the Erneuerungsbewegung had become a problem.

In contradiction to the Erneuerungsbewegung's representation by its leadership, the movement was not monolithic, as we have seen. There were divisions and differences of degree, opinion, and methodology in the movement, which endured after the Erneuerer's reentry into the Kulturbund. Jakob Awender may have been able to claim leadership of the Erneuerungsbewegung, but the movement was nevertheless multifaceted, as one might expect any organization of impassioned individuals, unconstrained by formal rules or statutes, to be. Thus, the "Awender group" and its voice in Pančevo, *Volksruf*, might lead but its directions were not always uncontested. Differences of opinion and strategy had emerged shortly after the Erneuerungsbewegung's formal expulsion from the Kulturbund in 1935. While Awender led his followers into a defiant alliance with Zbor, others followed a different course. As we have seen, Branimir Altgayer pursued a more pragmatic path and established the KWVD in Slavonia, where he assured the authorities of his loyalty and publicly pleaded for Swabian unity. Sepp Janko likewise rejected the alliance with Zbor. In his memoir, he claims he too wanted to establish a new organization following the expulsion but Awender rejected such a course and instead

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<sup>883</sup> Gustav Halwax, "Einst und Jetzt," *Volksruf*, February 24 1939.

aligned with Ljotić. The Zbor association was controversial all around, however, attracting the ire of the Belgrade government and prompting some Erneuerer to withdraw from the movement. Rather than follow Awender into Zbor, Janko claims, he chose to continue his social work and Volkstumarbeit by founding smaller groups with other Erneuerer in Banat. Janko's activities did not meet with the approval of the pro-Zbor wing of the Erneueungsbewegung, however, and some Erneuerer even sought to exclude him from the movement. Other Erneuerer supported him, however, so he remained part of the Erneuerungsbewegung though out of Zbor.<sup>884</sup>

Janko had been a significant figure in the Erneuerungsbewegung before 1939. He had been active in Banat for some time and was notable enough to be a featured speaker at the 150<sup>th</sup> settlement anniversary celebration of Nove Šove in 1936. Nevertheless, his nomination to the top German position in Yugoslavia surprised many (including Janko), since he was neither a major player in Pančevo nor a regular voice in *Volksruf*. His associations in Banat notwithstanding, he had not shown the independence and skill of KWVD organizer Altgayer in Slavonia. Moreover, he was quite young, being only 34 at the time of his installation as Kulturbund chairman. For VoMi, he was a logical choice, however, representing a “moderate” course but still demonstrating ideological kinship. Altgayer originally supported Awender for the Kulturbund chairman post but found Janko acceptable, as did the original leadership. Many of the more intense Erneuerer, however, did not and a certain disaffection gradually emerged in their ranks. Janko seemed illegitimate in a role they believed

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<sup>884</sup> Janko's memoir is an intriguing source which can be useful to the historian. Nevertheless, it is one which should also be regarded with caution, for perhaps no Swabian leader who survived the Second World War and its aftermath had so much cause to whitewash his story. As such, I use Janko only occasionally to illuminate but not to explain Swabian history. Janko. 35-36

clearly intended for Jakob Awender. Such disaffection sometimes took the form of passive resistance, and even talk of further insubordination. As such, Janko soon decided that he had had enough of the Erneuerungsbewegung as distinct if amorphous entity that might potentially undermine his own authority and German unity in the Kulturbund. In 1939, therefore, he decreed the Erneuerer should only operate in the context of approved Kulturbund chapters and subgroups. That is, he effectively dissolved the Erneuerungsbewegung as an independent force.

Many Erneuerer, naturally, did not accept Janko's decree dissolving their movement. The move surprised them and added to concerns that he had not purged enough of the previous leadership and apparatus. In Janko's telling, many such *Kameraden* rallied around Gustav Halwax, who argued that the Erneuerer should be recognized as a sort of vanguard or elite, which would form a distinct organization within the Kulturbund but under its own separate leadership.<sup>885</sup> To neutralize Halwax, Janko dispatched him to Germany, where he joined the Waffen SS. Meanwhile, as Kulturbund chairman and later *Volksgruppenfuehrer*, Janko and his Erneuerer colleagues would enact changes that enlarged and enriched the Kulturbund, affording the organization a more strident profile, a more monolithic appearance, and as far as the Yugoslavs were concerned, a more threatening nature.<sup>886</sup>

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<sup>885</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>886</sup> Like other German minority leaders in eastern Europe, in 1940 Janko adopted the title "*Volksgruppenfueherer*." This change in title from Kulturbund chairman to *Volksgruppenfuehrer* indicated a clear and public break with the tradition of the interwar original leadership and also a public embrace of Nazi Germany's *Volkstumpolitik*. Whereby the unique characteristics of individual German populations had fascinated the original *Volkstumarbeiter* and scholars who sought to preserve them, Nazi *Volkstumpolitik* found little value in local peculiarities. On the contrary, the National Socialists subordinated ethnic German regional identities to more collective, corporate ones which suggested uniformity and monolithicness. Also implied was the recognition of National Socialist values and organizational principles in these German minorities, or *Volksgruppen*. The *Fuehrerprinzip* implied the need for a *Volksgruppenfuehrer* among the individual minorities themselves.

The Erneuerer found the Kulturbund to be in poor financial health in August 1939, when Janko took the reins. This situation was not improved by the outbreak of the Second World War, which meant the temporary suspension of Reich monies that had come to form a large portion of the Kulturbund's budget.<sup>887</sup> Janko and his collaborators determined to raise Kulturbund members' annual contributions, effectively introducing a system of self-taxation on the German community. Increasing the number of members would also increase the Kulturbund's budget as well, of course. This move was controversial in the German community and provoked much resistance. Nevertheless, it did raise considerable funds which would be necessary for the expanded role the Erneuerer intended for the Kulturbund. In fact, the Erneuerer's new membership drives reflected not only the need for new monies but also their desire to make the organization coextensive with the entire German minority and thereby convert the cultural association into a true mass movement.

The Erneuerer had long complained that the original leadership had yet to involve enough Germans in the Kulturbund. Despite the organization's long existence, it nowhere near included the whole minority by 1938. To correct this, the Kulturbund's new leadership launched a massive new membership drive during the winter of 1939 and 1940 while consolidating its position. More rallies and many smaller gatherings were held, where nationally conscious Swabians were called to join the Kulturbund and errant (Magyarized or Croatized) Germans were encouraged to return to the *Volk*. As usual, these rallies were regimented affairs, featuring all the

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<sup>887</sup> Circular by Ban Authorities of the Banovina Hrvatska ODZ [Odjeljak Državne zaštite] to Various Police Offices. October 20, 1939. HDA Fond 158 kut. 8. Inv. Br. 49759/1939. According to this document, the ODZ believed the material/financial situation of the Kulturbund to have deteriorated owing to a halt in funding from the Reich. The Kulturbund leadership recently gave an order to respond to the alleged loss of support. There will be a reorganization of the Kulturbund.

outward trappings of National Socialism, including marching columns, Germanic symbolism, and the quasi-uniform of the Kulturbund, Swabian *Einheitstracht*. The membership drive was highly successful.

Why the sudden, new rush to join the Kulturbund? The conservative Swabian populace doubtless was pleased to learn that the clash in the Kulturbund was formally over. However, the new popular enthusiasm for the organization derived in great part from the general German pride many felt from the Third Reich's triumphs in diplomacy and war. Membership in the Kulturbund, the only statewide German association in Yugoslavia, was the most obvious way to show one's identification with Germandom and assert one's German pride. Yet even as the population poured into the Kulturbund in unprecedented numbers, Janko suddenly declared a freeze on new memberships on July 1, 1940.<sup>888</sup> The purpose of this freeze was twofold: on the one hand the Kulturbund legitimately needed time to process its many new members, adjust to its sudden growth and consolidate itself. On the other hand, the move was clearly intended to stimulate indifferent or ill-disposed Swabians to join the organization by highlighting their failure to join before the freeze. During the four month membership freeze, numerous articles and speeches cast aspersions on the national orientation and personal character of those who remained outside of the Kulturbund, such that yet more Swabians joined the organization after the membership freeze was suddenly lifted on November 15.

The tactics of these membership drives were aggressive and thorough, extending beyond the verbal scolding in the press and from the podium to include the regular canvassing of homes and villages by Kulturbund volunteers. In this new era

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<sup>888</sup> For the original text of Janko's decree, see "Mitgliederspeere," *Volksruf*, August 2 1940.

for the organization, the Kulturbund's activists were most broadminded in their criteria for who constituted a German, encouraging even those who no longer spoke the language to join the organization so long as they *felt* German and sometimes even if they did not.<sup>889</sup> The new Kulturbund activists could be coercive as well. Shortly after the freeze on new memberships was lifted, police reported that some Germans were going door to door in one region of the Croatian banovina, pressuring the peasant Swabian population to join the Kulturbund. In one case, these activists allegedly warned that there was no time to lose since Hitler would soon rule the country. The time for thinking matters over was past, they explained, and Swabians should join the Kulturbund immediately. The police also recorded cases of Kulturbund activists exerting pressure on Germans, who hitherto had been oriented toward Yugoslavia ("*jugoslovenski orijentisani*") to join their organization.<sup>890</sup> And indeed, some such Swabians continued to resist the Kulturbund's increasingly heavy overtures. For example the Djakovo district authority reported in late November 1941 that Kulturbund activists were going to the homes of people with German surnames and pressuring them to join the organization. Nevertheless, many such people refused to join the Kulturbund because they felt Croatian, not German, despite the ethnic origins of their surnames.<sup>891</sup>

Ultimately, the Kulturbund did succeed in bringing the majority of Swabians into its ranks. In part this was achieved through a system whereby one's membership

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<sup>889</sup> Sreska Ispostava u Bosanskom Brodu, "Sreska Ispostava u Bosanskom Brodu to Kabinetu Bana Banovine Hrvatske " (1940).

<sup>890</sup> Savski žandarmerijski puk u Zagrebu, "Savski žandarmerijski puk u Zagrebu to Banskoj Vladi BH (Kabinet)," (1940).

<sup>891</sup> Sresko naceilstvo u Djakovu, "Sresko naceilstvo u Djakovo to the Krajski Ban Banovine Hrvatske," (1940).

extended to one's whole family. Thus the Swabian man who joined the Kulturbund automatically enrolled his wife and children as well. Nevertheless, the increasing zeal for German nationalism was unmistakable and was reflected in surging membership roles. True, the membership drive met with less success in towns where the German Catholic clergy mounted a fierce resistance to the now Erneuerer-dominated organization, such as Adam Berenz's Apatin and Bačka Palanka. Ultimately, however, the Kulturbund's membership drive was a resounding success.

In addition to expanding the membership roles of the Kulturbund, the organization's new leadership also sought to expand its activities, effectively making it truly coextensive with the German minority in all areas of social, cultural, and economic activity. Kulturbund activities henceforth would be aggressively infused with the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*. *Volksruf* elaborated on this in 1941, when it noted that the "Kulturbund, as the great organization of our national movement, seeks to look after and align all the aspects of life of our *Volk*. No single branch of our public life remains untouched by the influence of the Kulturbund, that is, our national movement. Indeed, the Kulturbund reaches deep into the so-called private life of the individual."<sup>892</sup> The Kulturbund would thus expand not only the scope of its activities but also its presence even into the private sphere. It furthermore expanded the number and kinds of associations and societies it embraced, including religious, sports, cultural, hunting, choral, musical, artistic and other such groups. Multiple, already extant organizations acting in one field were often combined and subordinated to the Kulturbund in a kind of local, Swabian *Gleichschaltung*.

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<sup>892</sup> "Einreihen!," *Volksruf*, February 21 1941.

The Kulturbund expanded its areas of economic activity and offered many agricultural courses and courses in leadership and administration, the latter being also useful for training an indigenous cadre of Swabian leaders. Meanwhile, Awender had moved beyond his role as head of the agricultural cooperative Agraria to become president of the Association of German Credit and Economic Cooperatives (*Verband Deutscher Kredit- und Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften*). This effectively made him the Swabians' economic leader in Yugoslavia and he used the post to begin the consolidation of economic activity either in association with or under the auspices of the Kulturbund. Economics were not a goal in themselves, Awender explained, but rather should serve the interests of the German *Volksgruppe*.<sup>893</sup>

Even *Deutsches Volksblatt*, traditionally the mouthpiece of the Kulturbund and the original leadership became remarkably less outspoken during 1938 and in subsequent years. Berenz made no exception for the broadsheet when he derided all non-Catholic German newspapers as *gleichgeschaltet* in 1939.<sup>894</sup> In the wake of the reconciliation in the *Volksgruppe*, Grassl, Keks, and the like largely withdrew from the pages of *Deutsches Volksblatt* and the newspaper eagerly toed the new party line.

### Neighboring States and New Models

The Erneuerer argued for a fundamental shift in the minority's sense of self and its relation to the Yugoslav government, and were given new encouragement by recent events in Europe. In the 1920s, the Swabian activists had basically accepted their minority status in Yugoslavia in the wake of the Habsburg defeat. In this, as we

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<sup>893</sup> Jakob Awender, "Aufruf!," *Volksruf*, January 31 1941.

<sup>894</sup> Adam Berenz, "Nimm dir noch einmal die Zeit," *Die Donau*, December 9 1939.



have seen, they insisted that the internationally guaranteed system of minority protection treaties be respected. While these early activists clearly recognized the Swabians as part of the greater German national body, the fact of being a minority in Yugoslavia apparently did not terribly trouble them. Indeed, Yugoslavia offered the Swabians greater national and cultural freedom than they had ever enjoyed, especially at the outset of the interwar period. As we have seen, however, disillusionment with the system of minority protection steadily grew profound among the country's Germans. The promised cultural freedoms (especially German language schools) were often wanting or non-existent, and professional opportunities were so scarce that the German community became increasingly insular and the newly trained Swabian intelligentsia, the Erneuerer, turned on their elders in the competition for jobs. Inspired by resurgent German nationalism elsewhere in Europe, many Swabians (particularly the young and impetuous Erneuerer) chafed at their "minority" status and argued that they should be recognized as a *Volksgruppe*, not as some "minority" or minor community but rather as a branch of a great European people. Where a minority all too often evoked contempt, the *Volksgruppe* was understood as meriting, indeed demanding, respect. Swabians had been arguing for greater cultural and administrative autonomy since the first interwar years, when Serbian authorities were installed to administer the formerly Habsburg lands in Vojvodina. Though such local authorities were meant to be temporary, they lingered for years and became resented as alien and for their antipathy toward the peace treaties' minority guarantees. Several international events of the 1930s galvanized and radicalized these

autonomous aspirations, however, such that the Germans came to aspire for legal recognition as a distinct, collective legal entity.<sup>895</sup>

The Erneuerer had always been contemptuous of the interwar minority protection system and regarded the original leadership as both weak and misguided for foolishly and futilely seeking to defend German rights within its constrictions. This general German dissatisfaction with their status in Yugoslavia continued to fester after Janko's accession to the office of Kulturbund chairman in 1939. In spring of the following year, *Student im Volk*, a Zagreb based quarterly produced by the aforementioned, Erneuerungsbewegung-oriented Association of German University Students, summarized this general dissatisfaction with the current system that recognized individual, but not collective rights. "Neither the Yugoslav constitution nor another law recognizes a "German *Volksgruppe*," *Student im Volk* complained. Today, this term lacks all legal basis, the German *Volksgruppe* is not a bearer of rights, it lacks its own state-recognized organization and there are no state approved statutes for the *Volksgruppe*. The *Volksgruppe* lacks all legal form and all legality, which would empower it and make possible a limited, independent handling of its cultural and economic questions by the government."<sup>896</sup> Such was unacceptable to the Erneuerer. Indeed, even their erstwhile opponents in the original leadership were eager for a change in the state of affairs, though they did not instinctively recoil from understanding themselves in Yugoslavia as a minority, as we have seen.

For many Swabians, events in Czechoslovakia and later Romania and Hungary offered an altogether different and more attractive approach to minority

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<sup>895</sup> The Swabians would receive such recognition in the wartime Independent State of Croatia and German occupied Banat.

<sup>896</sup> Franz Brandstetter, "Volksgruppe und Recht," *Student im Volk* 2, no. 2 (1940). 16.

affairs than the original leadership's to minority affairs in the years after 1938. The Munich Conference in October had revealed both how powerfully ethnic German claims to territory could be leveraged and how expendable eastern Europe's interwar borders were to the continent's West, anxious as it was for peace with Hitler. In the wake of Czechoslovakia's eventual destruction in March 1939, the Germans in newly independent Slovakia were recognized as a *Volksgruppe*, or legal entity (*Rechtsperson*). Similar arrangements deriving from the protocols associated with the Second Vienna Award of August 30, 1940 further inspired the Swabians to seek a comparable revision of affairs in Yugoslavia. The Second Vienna Award returned a large section of Northern Transylvania to Hungary and was a byproduct of war and the changing international situation in Europe. The ceded territories contained many Germans, of course, and thus the award had the effect of diminishing Romania's German minority but increasing the size of Hungary's German population. Of relevance to all Germans in southeast Europe, however, were supplementary protocols by which German matters were henceforth to be regulated in Hungary and Romania.<sup>897</sup>

According to the protocol with Hungary, the Germans in that country would henceforth be recognized as a national collective. Implicitly, this meant that the Germans' longing for recognition as a distinct legal entity would finally be granted. Moreover, Budapest agreed to henceforth recognize Hungarian German Franz Basch's Nazi-oriented *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn* (VDU) as the legitimate and exclusive representative of that German minority, now understood collectively as

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<sup>897</sup> Belgrade did make certain concessions to the Swabians that year in such fields as education, but such concessions still fell far short of the Swabian leadership's aspirations.

a *Volksgruppe*. Furthermore, the protocol provided for the free expression of National Socialist ideas by Germans, confirmed Germans' right to return to the original German forms of Magyarized German family names, and assured the minority's right to conduct independent and unfettered relations with Germany itself. Additionally, the VDU would hence be the determiner of just who or what was a German. Such subjective authority to determine membership in the *Volksgruppe* was obviously a powerful and coercive tool.<sup>898</sup>

Romania concluded a similar protocol with Germany after the Second Vienna Award, by which it agreed to recognize Germans there as citizens of full and equal rights and to further develop the position of the German minority so as to enhance its ability to sustain itself. This promise came to fruition on November 20, 1940, when the Antonescu regime decreed that the *Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumaenien* would be recognized as a legal entity in accordance with the August 30 protocol with Germany. Henceforth, all German citizens were subject to the authority to the *Volksgruppe*, the bearer of whose will would be the newly founded "*NSDAP der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumaenien*."<sup>899</sup>

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<sup>898</sup> Ethnic German politics underwent a rather similar evolution in Hungary and Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1930s. Following the death of the moderate, loyal, and Hungary-oriented Jakob Bleyer in 1933, a group of young German activists in Hungary grew disillusioned with the *Ungarlaendischer Deutscher Volksbildungsverein* (UDV), the rather anemic German organization Bleyer had formed in 1924. Closely supervised by the Hungarian government, the UDV basically advanced a cultural agenda with only limited ability or aspirations to serve as a German political voice. These UDV dissidents gathered in the *Volksdeutsche Kameradschaft* around the dynamic Franz Basch, who had been born in Hatzfeld in 1901 but made his name as an assistant to Bleyer in Budapest. The *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn* (VDU) evolved from Basch's *Volksdeutsche Kameradschaft* and was formally founded shortly after the signing of the First Vienna Award in November 1938. Basch and his supporters were disaffected with the older Swabian leadership in Hungary and, like their Yugoslav and Romanian conational dissidents, called for more "contemporary" and assertive methods. In their beliefs, methods, and aesthetics, the leaders of the VDU and the course they charted for Hungary's Swabian minority were decidedly National Socialist. In 1939, Basch took the title *Volksgruppenfuehrer* of the Germans in Hungary. For more, see Paikert. 115-119

<sup>899</sup> Bundesministerium für Vertriebene. 35E-36E.

The upshot of these changes was that the local German leaders' pretensions to leadership and authority over all Germans in Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary were sanctioned by law. The German minorities were transformed from being informal groups of minority individuals into ethnically-based legal collectives and constituent components of the state. Additionally, the *Volksgruppen* were effectively given the power to determine the boundaries of their membership. Finally, the *Volksgruppe* leadership obtained certain authority which was binding over its members.

Unsurprisingly, the changes in Hungary and Romania were not lost on the Germans of Yugoslavia. All the country's Swabian leaders had long desired greater autonomy, of course, especially in the cultural but also in the administrative realm. The above changes provided clear models for which the Germans in Yugoslavia to strive<sup>900</sup> And indeed the Kulturbund leadership submitted a memorandum to the Yugoslav government on January 20, 1941 based on the Hungarian and Romanian protocols. This memorandum proposed legal recognition of the country's Germans as a corporate body with far reaching autonomy and responsibility under an exclusive *Volksgruppenfueherer*.<sup>901</sup> Ultimately, however, such strivings would be in vain before the German invasion of April 1941.

The dramatic changes in the legal position of the German minorities (that is, *Volksgruppen*) in Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania resulted not from their Germans' own political strength or from German legal arguments, but rather from the utter transformation of the international situation in 1939-1940. All three countries made concessions to Germans out of a combination of opportunism and fear. The Slovaks

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<sup>900</sup> "Das Ende der Minderheit," *Volksruf*, October 18 1940.

<sup>901</sup> Mirnić. 73.

effectively owed Nazi Germany both the birth of their state and its survival next to irredentist Hungary; the Hungarians strove to recover lands lost at Trianon and recognized an alliance with Germany as the surest path to that goal; meanwhile, the Romanians meanwhile hoped to forestall further concessions in southern Transylvania and recover lands lost to the Soviet Union as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact.

Yugoslavia's situation was different, however. The Third Reich desired smooth relations with Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia had no pressing irredentist claims on its neighbors. The two countries were close trading partners and Berlin recognized that this relationship was best served by preserving Yugoslavia as a single, centralized market. Germany's major objective at this stage, thus, was to bring the country into its series of alliances, and so it pressured Belgrade to accede to the Tripartite Pact. True, Hitler had formally put all German communities outside of the Reich under his protection in his Feb 20, 1938 speech before the Reichstag. However, the Nazis were always much more interested in how Germans abroad could be of use to them, rather than the reverse.<sup>902</sup> As such, Berlin regarded the fate of Yugoslavia's Germans as a matter of priority only insofar as their discontent might disrupt the placid, if imbalanced, international relations Germany desired with Belgrade.

Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941. As is well known, by then anti-Axis sentiment had been long brewing in Yugoslavia and especially Serbia. The new alliance with Germany was particularly unpopular among Serbs. A coup followed on March 27 and the young Prince Petar was pronounced King, while

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<sup>902</sup> This prioritization of the interests of Germany over the ethnic Germans abroad represented a fundamental transformation of Volkstumarbeit and an inversion of its traditional concerns. For more, see Smelser.

General Dušan Simović assumed the post of prime minister and named Vlatko Maček deputy premier. These protests and similar manifestations of outrage were accompanied in some areas by expressions of anti-German hostility which had been simmering in recent months and weeks. There were some incidents of violence against Germans. To avoid provoking this anti-German sentiment, Janko took the unprecedented step of ordering all Kulturbund chapters to cease activities and lie low on March 28, 1941, signing his decree to this effect as the German *Volksgruppenfueherer*.<sup>903</sup> Ironically, Janko's authority would soon grow, just as the *Volksgruppe* which he oversaw was about to dramatically shrink.

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<sup>903</sup> Sepp Janko, "Kreisleiter und Ortsgruppenleiter!," *Volksruf*, March 30 1941.

## Conclusion:

As is well known, the German-led Axis invasion of Yugoslavia began on April 6, 1941 and formally ended with the Yugoslav army's surrender on April 17. In defeat, Yugoslavia would be partitioned among its opportunistic neighbors. The single, important exception to this was Croatia, which Hitler awarded independence as a Reich ally under the Ustaša regime of Ante Pavelić. The Yugoslav Germans' fate following the Axis invasion, therefore, ultimately depended on the region of Yugoslavia in which they lived. Those in Batschka and Baranja were annexed by Reich ally Hungary and subsumed by the existing German organization there, the *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn*. By contrast, Banat was occupied by the Wehrmacht as a way of forestalling competing Hungarian and Romanian claims to the region. There Germany conferred unprecedented authority upon the Swabians, who were tasked with administering the region until the war's end as a *Volksgruppe* under Sepp Janko. In the Independent State of Croatia, the Germans found themselves suddenly empowered as the *Deutsche Volksgruppe in Kroatien*, the legal recognition of the corporate status Swabian activists had so long desired. Indeed, in Croatia the German *Volksgruppe* nearly acted as a state within a state. True, the Swabians in Croatia did remain somewhat constrained by the wartime Croatian state, which was nominally sovereign. Nevertheless, Croatia's dependence on the Third Reich afforded the Swabians a unique and highly privileged position in the country as well as unprecedented opportunities to finally realize their wildest dreams of autonomy.

Now empowered as *Volksgruppen*, the Swabians became components of the Axis occupation system in southeast Europe and consequently were accomplices of



the criminal regimes in Berlin and Zagreb. Many Swabians participated in crimes against Jews during the war, and Swabian armed units - including an SS division - conducted campaigns against Tito's Partisans that became known for their brutality and transgressions against civilians. It was mostly Swabians who filled the ranks of this 7<sup>th</sup> SS Volunteer Mountain Division "Prince Eugen", whose emblem was the familiar Odal rune and which was notorious for its cruelty. Ultimately, the popular conflation of German and Nazi before the Second World War (which the Erneuerer had done so much to bring about) and the brutality of the war would lead to the dislocation or destruction of nearly every Danube Swabian in Yugoslavia.

*How Different were the Erneuerer and the Original Leadership Really?*

It is useful at this juncture to consider just how different the Erneuerer and the original leadership really were. Were their views truly as antithetical as the Erneuerer insisted? Ultimately, the two groups were certainly not identical but neither were they total strangers. They are perhaps best understood as cousins, each having different perspectives and experiences but nevertheless sharing a similar heritage and many common features. The original leadership sometimes admired Hitler as a German leader and were plainly sympathetic to aspects of the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung*, which they themselves sometimes claimed to share. They were not National Socialists, however. Rather they were *voelkisch*-inclined pragmatists with relatively conservative and traditional backgrounds. That they could find much to admire in distant Nazi Germany without themselves being National Socialists is hardly surprising. Indeed, many people in Germany, Austria and elsewhere in Europe felt the

same way and appreciated many Nazi accomplishments without fully endorsing the NSDAP's ideology. Meanwhile, the original leadership's pragmatism well explains their long contacts with German government and later also Nazi Party officials. After all, it had become clear already in the days of Gustav Stresemann that little of the Swabians' agenda could be accomplished without Berlin's support. As we have seen, Germany had become an essential funder of the Swabians' institutions and additionally commanded tremendous moral authority in the German minority. This situation persisted after 1933, when the endorsement of Hitler's resurgent Germany was also necessary for legitimacy, financing, and finally Reich sanction as a minority's legitimate leadership. It was precisely during these years that the conflict within the minority became most pitched, of course, and the Erneuerer and the original leadership soon found themselves competing for influential ears in Germany. When Reich and NSDAP bodies made clear that they were switching their support to the Erneuerer, the older generation basically stepped aside, just as the German motherland had expected them to.

Talk of *Erneuerung* predated the Erneuerungsbewegung and was a common theme among Germans of Catholic, Protestant, liberal, communist, and National Socialist persuasions, though these groups understood the concept of "renewal" differently. As we saw in our discussion of the *voelkisch* ideology, German longings for "renewal" predated the interwar era (and even the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and were shared by men of diverse ages and backgrounds. Even in 1929, Georg Grassl had penned a

number of articles for *Deutsches Volksblatt* in which he waxed despondently on the current state of Germandom in the world and called for a kind of *Erneuerung*.<sup>904</sup>

If the men of original leadership were not Nazis, neither were they exactly the liberals that the Erneuerer often attempted to smear them as. That said, there is no denying important liberal inclinations among the original leadership. They eagerly participated in parliament, engaged in commerce, talked of personal rights, and championed constitutionalism and the blind rule of law. In many ways, they were nationalists in the liberal mold. Nevertheless, they also owed much to an ideology that was *voelkisch* and hardly immune to anti-Semitism. Also in 1929, Grassl penned a number of fascinating essays in which he defended democracy and the liberal notion of inalienable rights, but also called for changes in our understanding of democracy so as to prevent its abuse by one majority to overcome a minority, as seemed to him to be happening with the Germans in Czechoslovakia.<sup>905</sup> He argued that the rights of man as iterated in 1789 had been inefficient and thus it was time to reconsider these rights. As such, he argued for a more collective notion of rights, including those for *Volk* and *Rasse*. The “purely individualistic view of human rights can be seen as having been overtaken today,” he argued, for it had too often led to the abuse of the weak by the strong.”<sup>906</sup>

I would argue that original leadership represented a kind of *voelkisch*-informed liberalism whose circumstances in Hungary and later Yugoslavia demanded a flexible pragmatism. Thus, their principle differences with the Erneuerer genuinely were *weltumschaulich*, that is based on differing world views, but they also concerned

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<sup>904</sup> Georg Grassl, "Zeitgedanken," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, January 15 1929.

<sup>905</sup> Georg Grassl, "Demokratie I," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 23 1929.

<sup>906</sup> Georg Grassl, "Kollektive Menschenrechte," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, July 17 1929.

methods. Of course, as Yugoslav citizens the Erneuerer were not themselves actual members of the NSDAP. Nor was their movement a creation of Berlin, though it had sympathizers in VoMi and the VDA. Nevertheless, the Erneuerer's subscription to Nazi ideology and values was total. They admired mass politics and considered individualism tantamount to an ethnically treasonous egoism. They were racists, though they sometimes had to check their racism since they lived in a Slav milieu. They promoted a mystical sense of German destiny and celebrated the *Fuehrerprinzip* and other aspects of Nazi ideology. In sum, the Erneuerer were true devotees not only of *voelkisch* ideas but also of National Socialism, which had taken *voelkisch* ideology to its radical extreme in the desperate environment of Weimar Germany. The Erneuerer found tremendous value in their struggle, which they plainly believed resembled the Nazis' own in Germany.

To be sure, the original Swabian leaders were certainly sympathetic to *aspects* of National Socialist Germany, with which they sometimes had a common *voelkisch* idiom and whose frustration with the present German condition they also sometimes shared. Nazi Germany commanded immense respect if not admiration on the international stage and therefore it is unsurprising that the original leadership should have admired it for its undeniable successes. Though they may not have shared the Erneuerer's open celebration of Nazi biological racism, many of the original leadership had nevertheless found inspiration in the work and person of the Banat Swabian author, theater director, anti-Semite and interwar politician, Adam Mueller-

Guttenbrunn, who lived in Vienna.<sup>907</sup> For the original leadership in remote Yugoslavia, Hitler's achievements were impressive and were to be admired, especially since the Third Reich was the source of the very financial and moral backing which were essential to their cause. However, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that the original Swabian leaders were open or even closet Nazis.

In a sense, the above is an argument for nuance but it is also one of qualitative difference. After all, if the original leadership and the Erneuerer truly were complete birds of a feather, why would the original Swabian leaders resist their young Nazi-oriented challengers so long and with such great determination? Why would the Erneuerer assault their elders with such vehemence? Their conflict had all the qualities of a generation clash but it was also more than that. The quarrel clearly was also more than merely one oligarchy jealously clinging to power in the face of brash challengers (though there clearly were aspects of that as well). Rather, the original leadership and the Erneuerer had deep disagreements regarding methodology, the former regarding the latter's disruptive tactics and reckless statements as perilous for the German minority as a whole. The Erneuerer, their elders believed, plainly undermined minority unity and threatened to undo all of the Swabians' accomplishments since 1918. As Keks stated at the October 1935 Kulturbund board meeting where it was resolved to exclude the Erneuerer from the organization, "no one in the *Volk* or in the leadership opposes a natural renewal [*Erneuerung*]. The opinions about [this renewal] might be highly different in terms of tempo or methods, but even given these possible different views, it need not have come to such a deeply

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<sup>907</sup> Indeed, before the First World War, Mueller-Guttenbrunn had been the guiding spirit of the association of German University Students from the Hungarian Crown Lands in Vienna, to which several men of the original leadership had belonged.

disgraceful struggle as has been unleashed by a small group [the Erneuerer]" inside the Kulturbund.<sup>908</sup>

The Erneuerer definitely did have different ideas from their elders, as demonstrated by the changes that Janko and his Erneuerer colleagues would implement in their subsequent *Gleichschaltung* of the Kulturbund. Also worthy of note is that the original leadership basically faded from public life after the Erneuerer prevailed in their struggle to lead the Kulturbund. This indicated that there really was little room for compromise between the two factions. And of course the Kulturbund's original leaders were not Magyarones, though they might have appeared as such to a younger generation which could not remember pre-Trianon Hungary, had never known life without the German national movement, and had never directly experienced Magyarization.<sup>909</sup> Indeed, one might go so far as to say that Keks, Kraft, Grassl and their colleagues had been the region's original German revolutionaries. After all, it was they who had so fervently campaigned *against* Magyarones and *Auchdeutsche* during the 1920s, when they led a nascent German movement that embraced Yugoslavia and rejected Hungarian irredentism.

The original leadership did not share the Erneuerer's aggressive tactics. The Erneuerer were brash and disruptive. They marched loudly, sang German songs provocatively, marked themselves with synchronized clothing or even uniforms, embraced Third Reich aesthetics, and prided themselves on not shrinking from

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<sup>908</sup> "Verlauf der Bundesausschusssitzung vom 27. Oktober."

<sup>909</sup> It probably did not help that the Druckerei- und Verlags- A.G. was located in Novi Sad at 76 Madjarska ulica. That is, the headquarters of the original leadership's publishing house was literally on "Magyar Street." Bundesleitung des Schwaebisch-Deutschen Kulturbundes, *Die Arbeit des Kulturbundes vom 1. November 1933 bis 31. Oktober 1934, Taetigkeitsbericht der Bundesleitung zur 10. ordentlichen Hauptversammlung in Novisad-Neusatz, 3. Dezember 1934*. Unpaginated.

confrontation. They adopted German or Germanic symbols and often greeted one another with “Heil Hitler” and “Sieg Heil!” They operated not only outside of parliament and the Kulturbund system but even outside of the law. Their admiration for Germany and Hitler was so total as to inspire legitimate fears of Swabian treason in ordinary Yugoslavs. Inside the Kulturbund, they challenged authority, undermined institutions, and held extracurricular activities that bordered on (or surpassed) the illegal. Their insurrection also undermined the authority of the Kulturbund leaders, whom the Yugoslav authorities might suppose were unable to control their own minority. The Erneuerer claimed to stand above confession even as they clashed with the Swabian Catholic clergy, but the original leadership did not attack the churches. The Erneuerer gave German nationalism a really bad name in Yugoslavia and made it seem threatening, whereas the original leadership had sought to reassure Yugoslavs that there was no contradiction between *Staatstreue* and *Volkstreue*. The Erneuerer joined Zbor, a party that never amassed more than 1 percent of the Yugoslav vote but was a disproportionate annoyance to the Yugoslav government. By contrast, the original leadership actively supported the Yugoslav government. In sum, the gulf between the Erneuerer and the original leadership was one of ideology as well as tactics.

The original leadership tired of the Erneuerer’s methods because their youthful pretensions to leadership seemed brash, ungrateful, and naïve. The original leadership had achieved much but the Erneuerer demanded more and seemed to potentially endanger everything in the process. Moreover, the young challengers derided such institutions as the Partei der Deutschen as having been ineffective and

even harmful to the Swabian community. The old men, they believed, had also steered the Kulturbund badly and only enticed a small percentage of the Swabians to join. Ultimately, when the Erneuerer called for *Erneuerung*, what they meant was a profound transformation of the structure and substance of the Kulturbund as well as a dramatic expansion of its base with an eye mass politics in Germany, Italy and elsewhere. Without a doubt, they shared an intellectual and cultural heritage with the original leadership but they interpreted this heritage in such an extreme way as to genuinely divide the minority and the two generations.

#### *Toward a Brutal End*

Space limitations again make impossible here a proper discussion of the Swabians' dark wartime experience or their ultimate fate in Yugoslavia. Very briefly, most Swabians in the Independent State of Croatia fled in a hastily but well organized evacuation effort in fall 1944, when it was plain that their settlement area could not be held against the Partisans and the Soviets. Fearing reprisals by Partisans and the incoming Red Army, Swabians also fled Banat and Batschka, but these evacuation efforts were much less organized and were even spontaneous in some cases. Far fewer Swabians were able to successfully evacuate from Banat or Batschka. In many cases, those Swabians who had reason to flee did so, and those who had spent the war years uninvolved in politics or as non-combatants remained. To the latter group belonged a disproportionate number of women, children and the elderly. These remaining Swabians would suffer horribly over the next several years, variously being interned, starved, executed, deported as slave-laborers to the Soviet Union, or



placed in camps where conditions were so harsh as to effectively render them extermination centers.<sup>910</sup>

The postwar fate of the Danube Swabians under Yugoslav communism has been covered in several excellent studies since the 1950s. To the former one may count exciting research by Serb Zoran Janjetović, Croat Vladimir Geiger, and the aforementioned West German series on German postwar expulsion, whose volume on Yugoslavia is *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. This West German investigation was the earliest of these three treatments of the Germans' fate and is a rich source of documents and personal testimony, featuring considerable work by Hans Uhlrich Wehler. In Serbia, historian Zoran Janjetović has produced an excellent study of German flight and the postwar internment and forced labor of those who remained. His book, *Between Hitler and Tito* additionally discusses the deportation of thousands of Swabians to the Soviet Union, where they languished and suffered under brutal conditions as forced laborers for years. (Many died there.) Janjetović's study is brief yet thorough, though he cautions that the whereabouts of many Yugoslav documents pertaining to the Swabians internment and deportation is unknown and may never be known.

Historian Vladimir Geiger of Zagreb's Croatian Institute for History (*Hrvatski institute za povijest*) has unearthed and published numerous documents related to the internment and suffering of those Swabians who remained in Yugoslavia (and

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<sup>910</sup> Of the camps at Molidorf and Rudolfsgnad in Banat, De Zayas writes "the purpose of these particular camps appears to have been to inflict misery and death on as many ethnic Germans as possible. The camps were decidedly not mere assembly points for group expulsion, they were consciously and officially recognized as extermination centers." de Zayas. Approximately 33,000 Germans passed through Rudolfsgnad, of whom slightly less than one third died. Bundesministerium fuer Vertriebene, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*. 108E-109E. These camps often included many children and obviously were an indelible experience. As such, many of the surviving Swabian memoirs were written by persons who were young adults or children in the Yugoslav camps.

especially Croatia) after the Partisan takeover. These include *Nestanak Folksdojčera* (“The Disappearance of the Volksdeutsche”) and *Folksdojčeri pod teretom kolektivne krivnje* (“The Volksdeutsche under the Burden of Collective Guilt”), among many notable titles. Geiger’s work is very thoughtful and courageous in its investigation of the Partisans’ excesses in the years after the war. In a country where the Swabians are today usually remembered as invaders and perpetrators of abuse, Geiger should be commended for the courage with which he exposes many crimes by the victorious partisans against those Swabians who remained after most of the German war criminals and perpetrators of excess had already fled. Indeed, Geiger’s numerous works have contributed to a shift in Croatian historical memory, making possible a reappraisal of the country’s vanished Germans. In recent years, Croats have increasingly come to understand their former Swabian minority as victims of collective crimes as well as perpetrators of wartime abuse. In *Pisma iz Krndija*, a co-edited collection of letters by Krndija concentration camp inmate Marija Mira Knoebl, Geiger has also given a very human face to the final chapter of the Swabians’ story. Knoebl’s letters highlight the paradoxes and absurdities of identity for, though interned as a German, she preferred to write in very colloquial *Croatian*, mixed with many German expressions. She died of tuberculosis at the young age of 21 while interned in the camp at Krndija.

Finally, the American human rights lawyer Alfred-Maurice de Zayas devotes a section to the Danube Swabians in his treatment of the expulsion of eastern Europe’s Germans in *A Terrible Revenge*. His work is particularly valuable for both gathering individual Swabian testimony as to the brutality of the Swabians’ postwar

experience and also locating that experience in the general context of what he calls “the Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans” in the subtitle of his book.

*Summarizing the Swabians' Belated National Consciousness*

The history of the Danube Swabians, a topic which at first seemed limited and obscure has proven to be anything but and has yielded an embarrassment of riches. Rather than being a small and uncomplicated group, the Swabians of Yugoslavia (and their coethnics in neighboring Hungary and Romania) turn out to be a subject of great complexity and nuance. Their story of “becoming national” or embracing national consciousness was an odyssey that spanned several decades and witnessed the fall of an empire, the triumph of the national principle in eastern Europe, and two world wars. As a people, they were themselves unique, being ethnically German but also deeply rooted in their Danubian homeland and the collective memory of its colonization. They were affected by the state of Germany and its intellectual crises during the interwar period just as they were seized by their own story in Yugoslavia. Transformed and shaken from their provincialism by the Great War, they then found themselves caught between the homeland and nationalizing nationalisms of Germany and Yugoslavia. In that space, they cultivated and articulated their own minority nationalism, celebrated their colonist ancestors and venerated Prince Eugen of Savoy as both the embodiment of German virtue and also as the incontrovertible proof of their right to their land. Their many anniversary celebrations during the 1920s and 1930s were likewise intended as legitimizing arguments for the historic German

presence in southeast Europe. Though divided by confession, having diverse origins, and speaking a smattering of often quite distinct dialects, the Swabians gradually coalesced as a coherent group inside of Yugoslavia, even as they remained acutely aware of their close ties to fellow Swabians in neighboring Hungary and Romania. Additionally, they grew increasingly aware of Germany itself and their relationship to it. Ultimately, it was the connection to the distant Third Reich which sealed the Germans' fate in Yugoslavia.

This work has sought to present a political and social history of what was Yugoslavia's largest minority between the world wars with special attention to the manner in which that minority broadly embraced German national identity for the first time.<sup>911</sup> We have discussed the history of the German national movement in Yugoslavia more or less from its inception until the Second World War. However, the simple necessity of introducing the Swabians' complex historical narrative to the English speaking reader has forced me to restrain my ambitions in this work at the expense of exploring Swabian culture and society even more deeply. To be sure, other authors have recognized the importance of the Germans' cultural accomplishments. Anton Scherer, for example, is widely respected for his work on Swabian literature. He and others have also written works devoted to the matter of German education in interwar Yugoslavia. However, there remains much to be explored in the Swabians' culture and sense of myth, their veneration of their ancestors and the place of their ancestors in their sense of self. The Swabians devoted considerable cultural output to these themes in the form of literature, painting and

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<sup>911</sup> Measuring by mother tongue, the 1921 Yugoslav census officially counted 505,790 Germans in the country, making them Yugoslavia's largest minority. The census additionally found 467,658 Magyars and 439,657 Albanians. Rothschild.

even sculpture. German music and song were venerated and important efforts were made to restore the indigenous German stage to Yugoslavia. Even as they developed a kind of uniform for their movement, the Swabians settled not on the black or brown shirts of the Axis fascists, but instead adapted traditional *Tracht* to suit the aesthetics of the modern age (admittedly influenced by military/party uniforms). Though many authors have touched upon these themes, I know of no comprehensive analysis of the Swabians' cultural accomplishments which takes seriously their becoming national, their embrace of their cultural heritage in a political and national sense.

My principle aims in this political and social history of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia have been several. I have sought first and foremost to restore the county's German minority to the historical narrative, which I read forward from the First World War, not backward from the Second. Despite almost two centuries of settlement history, the Danube Swabians have largely disappeared from historical consciousness and popular awareness. I have also striven to detail the early origins of the modern German national movement in southern Hungary and its Croatian dependent with attention to the catalyzing effect of the First World War. I have also sought to show that German national consciousness deepened during the 1920s and 1930s owing to encouragement from the *Mutterland* in the form of homeland nationalism and Volkstumarbeit organizations, Slavic chauvinism and nationalizing nationalism in Yugoslavia, and the actions of the original Swabian activists, who energetically developed an identity which was at once nationally German but also proudly local and Swabian. Their identity was also complex, nuanced, and sometimes even seemingly contradictory. Especially in Croatia-Slavonia, German national

consciousness emerged late and in competition with the highly developed and very attractive Croatian national movement. The German movement faced an uphill struggle in its effort to gain and organize followers in Slavonia and, as we have seen, many of its followers were conflicted or indifferent in their Germanness. Others were merely opportunistic persons who recognized material or social gain in rediscovering their roots, especially during the first years of the Second World War. Still other Slavonian Swabians wanted nothing to do with the German movement, however, and even opposed it. In Banat and Batschka, the chief rival to Germandom, as we have seen, came in the form of Magyardom or mere indifference.

I have also striven to show the depth of the fractures in the Swabian community during the 1930s and to reveal that, while there were many elements attracted by National Socialism, many other Swabians rejected the *neue deutsche Weltanschauung* either wholly or by degree. In any event, the largely Catholic and rural Swabians of Yugoslavia resisted the Nazi oriented take over of their movement until 1938/1939, later than the Swabians in neighboring Romania or Hungary. Even then, they settled on a new leader who was an Erneuerer but nevertheless sufficiently moderate that he faced disgruntlement from within the Erneuerungsbewegung itself. Under the influence of Jakob Awender and later *Volksgruppenfueherer* Sepp Janko, many Swabians embraced the forms of National Socialism and espoused its tenets. However, there are reasons to doubt that the depth of their faith and understanding reached as deep as the Kulturbund's propaganda would have one believe. To be sure, the Swabians were dazzled by Hitler and served as eager components of Nazi Germany's system of occupation in southeast Europe. However, they also were

mostly peasants whose German national consciousness emerged at precisely the moment when German nationalism assumed its most extreme and virulent form. Awender, Halwax, Janko, Altgayer and the like were doubtless National Socialists to the core. It is unlikely, however, that the broad Swabian membership in the Kulturbund should serve as an accurate measure of Swabians' belief in or understanding of the tenets of Nazism, if this overwhelmingly rural and conservative population even knew what those tenets were exactly.

Ultimately, the new realities of the Second World War allowed the recently empowered Erneuerer to implement their radical agenda with Reich support as *Volksgruppen*. The immediate triumph of German arms and the later exigencies of war and the perils of the Communist insurrection drove more Germans to participate in the institutions of the *Volksgruppe* than ever before. Nevertheless, even after April 1941, some Swabian resistance to the Nationalist Socialist agenda or even indifference toward German nationhood persisted among Swabians. We see this in the Ernst Thaelmann Partisan unit, in which Swabian opponents of the interwar regimes and the fascist occupiers were organized in 1943 as part of Tito's partisan movement. Adam Berenz continued to publically oppose National Socialism until his arrest by the Gestapo in 1944. Ultimately, then, the Swabians' 20<sup>th</sup> century saga was an aborted coming of age story, in which an ethnic splinter group embraced national consciousness just as the broader ethnic group underwent a dramatic crisis, re-imagining and radicalizing German national identity as German National Socialism. The fruits of this transformation were poisonous for all who tasted them.

## Appendix

Relevant Place Names in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania	
German	Croatian/Serbian
Agram	Zagreb
Apthausen	Apatin
Batschka	Bačka (Bácska – Hung.)
(Gross) Betschkerek	Pre-1935 (Veliki) Bečkerek, 1935→ Petrovgrad, 1946→ Zrenjanin
Cilli	Celje
Djakovar	Đakovo (Djakovo)
Donau	Dunav (Danube – Eng.)
Drau	Drava
Essegg (also Esseg or Essek)	Osijek (Eszék – Hung.)
Filipowa	Filipovo
Franzfeld	Kraljićevo
Jugoslawien (also Südslawien)	Jugoslavija (Yugoslavia – Eng.)
Hatzfeld	Džombolj/Žombolj (Jimbolia – Rom.)
Kalotscha	Kalocsa (Hung.)
Kischker (also Kleinker or Klein Ker)	Bačko Dobro Polje (Kiskér – Hung.)
Laibach	Ljubljana
Marburg	Maribor
(Maria) Doroslo	(Maria) Doroslovo (Doroszlo – Hung.)
Mediasch	Mediaș (Rom.)
Neudorf (bei Vinkovci)	(Vinkovačko) Novo Selo
(Syrmisch) Mitrowitz	(Srijemska) Mitrovica/(Sremska) Mitrovica
Neu Gradischka	Nova Gradiška
Neusiwatz (also Neu Siwatz or Siwatz)	Novi Sivac
Neusatz (also “Novisad”)	Novi Sad (Újvidék - Hung.)
Ödenburg	Sopron
Pantschowa (also “Pantschewo”)	Pančevo
Peterwardein	Petrovaradin
Pettau	Ptuj
Putince	Putinci
Save	Sava
Semlin	Zemun
Slawonien (also Slavonien)	Slavonija (Slavonia – Eng.)
Slovenien (also Slovenien)	Slovenija (Slovenia – Eng.)
Südslawien (also Jugoslawien)	Jugoslavija (Yugoslavia – Eng.)
Syrmien	Srijem/Srem (Syrmia – Eng.)
Temeschwar, Temeswar, Temeschburg, Temesvár (Hung.)	Timișoara (Rom.)
Torschau	Torža
Weißkirchen	Bela Crkva
Werbaß	Vrbas
Weretz	Virovitica
Werschetz	Vršac
Wukowar	Vukovar



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- DAOS - Državni arhiv u Osijeku [State Archive in Osijek], Osijek
- HDA - Hrvatski državni arhiv [Croatian State Archive], Zagreb
- HIP - Hrvatski institut za povijest [Croatian Institute for History], Zagreb
- IFA - Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen [Institute for Foreign Relations – successor organization to the Deutsches Ausland-Institut], Stuttgart
- IDGL - Institut fuer donauschwaebische Geschichte und Landeskunde [Institute for Danube Swabian History and Regional Studies], Tuebingen, Germany
- LOC - Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

### Bibliographical Abbreviations

- br. – broj (number)
- f. – fond
- god. – godina (year)
- inv. br. - inventarni broj (inventory number)
- knj. – knjiga (book)
- kut. – kutija (box)

### Archives and Research Institutes

- Državni arhiv u Osijeku [State Archive in Osijek], Osijek
  - Fond 463 Kulturbund und Kultur- und Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Deutschen
- Galerija likovnih umjetnosti [Gallery of Visual Arts], Osijek
- Hrvatski državni arhiv [Croatian State Archive], Zagreb
  - 1358 Zbirka Špijunaža i peta kolona (Grupa XI) 1918-1940
  - 1551 Zbirka Gradiva za povijest Židova – Zagreb; 1918-1941
  - Fond Savska Banovina - Odjeljak državne zaštite
  - Fond 155 – Banovina Hrvatska - Kabineta bana
  - Fond 156 – Banovina Hrvatska - Predsjednički ured bana
  - Fond 158 – Banovina Hrvatska - Odjeljak državne zaštite
  - Pravila društva 1845-1945
- Hrvatski institut za povijest [Croatian Institute for History], Zagreb
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- *Die Donau* (Apatin)
- *Die Drau* (Osijek)
- *Erwache* (Zrenjanin [Veliki Bečkerek/Petrovgrad])
- *Der Familienfreund* (Crkvena)
- *Deutscher Volksbote fuer Jugoslawien* (Novi Sad)
- *Gruess Gott* (Novi Vrbas)
- *Jugendruf* (Belgrade)
- *Der Jungdeutsche* (Zrenjanin [Veliki Bečkerek/Petrovgrad])
- *Kirche und Volk* (Sombor)
- *Kulturbund Kalender* (Novi Sad)
- *Heimatkalender der Deutschen in der Banschaft Kroatien* (Osijek)
- *Hrvatski branik* ([Sremska] Mitrovica)
- *Hrvatski Pokret* (Zagreb)
- *Narodna obrana* (Osijek)
- *Neues Leben* (Ljubljana)
- *Obzor* (Zagreb)
- *Pančevoer Post* (Pančevo)
- *Protestantenkalender* (Novi Vrbas)
- *Schaffende Jugend* (Novi Sad)
- *St. Raphaelsblatt* (Belgrade)
- *Slawonischer Volksbote* (Osijek)
- *Student im Volk* (Zagreb)
- *Tjednik* (Bjelovar)
- *Unsere Schule* (Novi Sad)
- *Der Volksbote* (Osijek)
- *Volksruf* (Pančevo)
- *Volkswart* (Novi Sad)
- *Werbasser Zeitung* (Novi Vrbas)
- *Židov* (Zagreb)

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