

# The Deportation of Ethnic Minorities to the USSR and the Romanian National Idea

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**Abstract:** The article examines the general policies of the Romanian state in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War toward the German and Hungarian minority. The abuses of the human rights of ethnic minorities from 1944 until 1947 were some of the worst in the history of Romania. The massacres and deportations of German and Hungarian civilians remain a black mark on Romanian society. These actions were in keeping with the ideological pronouncements of Romanian nationalists from the interwar period. The rhetoric that legitimized these policies of ethnic cleansing continued to inform visions of the Romanian nation throughout the Communist period.

**Keywords:** Romania, nationalism, Hungarians, Transylvania

Romania's defeat in World War II left the country in political and social chaos in late 1944. The nation went through three governments in three months, was dismantled economically by the Soviet Union, and was faced with the ever-present specter of Stalinism. However, the social turmoil of this period, combined with vindictive Soviet policies towards ethnic Germans in Romania, triggered the venting of decades of frustration on the part of Romanian nationalists against the Hungarian minority of Romania. This movement came to a head in 1945, after the Soviet Union ordered the deportation of nearly 70,000 ethnic Germans to forced labor camps in the USSR; during the ensuing turmoil, Romanian nationalists committed numerous acts of ethnic cleansing against the Hungarians in Transylvania, including killings and deportations, with the end goal of returning Romanian hegemony to the region and establishing the legitimacy of Romanian control of the territory. While the Romanian government did not officially order this action, the campaign of violence was carried out under the auspices of prominent Romanian nationalist figures, like Iuliu Maniu. Though this program of ethnic cleansing did not lead to the immediate return of Northern Transylvania to Romania,

the Soviet Union would later turn the region over to Romania as a show of support for the newly-formed leftist government later in 1945, ensuring the place of the existing nationalist and anti-Hungarian sentiments in Romanian Communist discourse.

### *Nationalism and Irredentism in Prewar Romania*

Though the genealogy of the Romanian national idea can be traced back long before the First World War, the subsequent union of Transylvania with Romania was the first time in history that it came to fruition. However, far from satiating nationalist desires, it only left them with additional problems to be solved. The newly-acquired territory had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire for centuries, and, in many localities, Romanians were in the minority; the addition of Transylvania to Romania diluted the ethnic makeup of the country to the point that, in 1920, Romanians only constituted about three-fourths of the country's population.<sup>1</sup> For many Romanian nationalists, the existence of such a large minority population (particularly of Germans and Hungarians) was unacceptable and had to be remedied. The preferred method of transforming these population groups was originally cultural assimilation, termed "Romanization"; however, this policy was largely unsuccessful, and in the years leading up to World War II, it was replaced by an emphasis on population transfer. Many of the major figures involved in this interwar nationalist movement would also play a substantial role in the transitional governments of Romania in the mid-1940s.

One of the most notable leaders in the nationalist movement was Iuliu Maniu, who founded the Transylvanian branch of the Romanian National Party (Partidul Național Român) in the immediate aftermath of the war. Maniu had long been an advocate for self-determination for Romanians living within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was well known for his patriotism; thus, he was a natural leader for a Romanian nationalist party in Transylvania.<sup>2</sup> The PNR in Transylvania took its cues from Maniu with regards to its platform; as such, it was largely focused around a populist agenda, emphasizing Romanian national issues and preferring not to delve too deeply into social matters. In 1926, the PNR merged with its former rival, Ion Mihalache's Peasants' Party (Partidul Țărănesc), to form the National Peasants' Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc). The PNȚ maintained the PNR's nationalist spirit, remaining largely focused on agrarian issues and decentralization of the government. In this format, it did very well during the 1928 elections (winning

<sup>1</sup> Pertti AHONEN, Gustavo CORNI, Jerzy KOCHANOWSKI, Ranier SCHULZE, Tamas STARK, Barbara STELZL-MARX, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath*, New York: Berg, 2008, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Keith HITCHINS, *Romania 1866-1947*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 217.

77.76% of the vote), and would play an important role in every government until 1938, securing Maniu's position as a leading political figure within Romania throughout that period.<sup>3</sup>

Another figure who would come to prominence in the transitional period, (later general and prime minister) Nicolae Rădescu was also involved in nationalist politics during the interwar period. In the mid-1930s, he supported a far-right movement aimed at the cultural "Romanization" of Germans and Hungarians in Transylvania which was known as the 'Crusade of Romanianism' (Cruciada Românișmului). This short-lived movement was led by Michael Stelescu, who had fallen out of favor with the leader of the Iron Guard, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu; he retained the xenophobic rhetoric of the Iron Guard in the ideology of CR. However, Stelescu died in 1936 and the movement quickly faded. It is known that Rădescu served in a leadership role within the movement, though there has been relatively little written about CR, and Rădescu's role in the party is absent from the relevant historiography (including Dinu Giurescu's study of Rădescu's government). Nonetheless, the party's rapid demise and incorporation into the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal) prevented it from having a substantial impact on the nationalist cause in the interwar period.

By the late 1930s, the push for the assimilation of minorities in Transylvania had failed. Germans and Hungarians retained pluralities and even majorities in some locations, and often held powerful positions in the urban areas of Transylvania. The nationalists needed a new strategy to create their ideal Romania. The impetus for meaningful changes with regards to Romania's ethnic makeup, however, was to come from the outside, rather than from any political entity in Romania itself. Two separate endeavors undertaken by Nazi Germany in the 1930s would set the stage for a much more radical population shift in Transylvania, engendering a new era of Romanian irredentism. The first of these endeavors, Hitler's clarion call to the Volksdeutsche of Eastern Europe, would cause a dramatic drop in Romania's German population.

In an effort to bolster Germany's population and bring the German people of Eastern Europe "home" to the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler negotiated a series of population transfer agreements with Romania and the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940.<sup>4</sup> In 1937, Romania's German population was 740,000; by 1940, it had fallen to 470,000; most of the German emigrants left Transylvania and the Banat.<sup>5</sup> Later agreements would also allow the transfer of Germans from Dobrogea and Bucovina. These transfers of population were largely executed on amicable terms, and were not surrounded by much of the vitriolic rhetoric that was being pointed at the nation's Hungarian and Jewish

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 414.

<sup>4</sup> Pertti AHONEN, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.

populations. Though many Romanian Germans had left the country, the main thorn in the side of radical nationalists was still the Hungarians. Later in 1940, a drastic shift in the Hungarian population's border would also come, though not in the manner Romanian nationalists would have preferred.

According to Stephen Fischer-Galați, Romania had been largely unconcerned with Hungarian revisionism during the 1920s.<sup>6</sup> During that period, Romania had much greater foreign policy concerns, with the threat of Communism looming to the east and Soviet designs on Bessarabia threatening Romania's hold on the region. However, during the late 1930s, Germany began to take an increasing interest in the affairs of Eastern Europe, representing a substantial threat to Romania's dream of hegemony in the region. Romania's worst fears came to pass on 30 August 1940, when Germany authorized the Second Vienna Award, which returned northern Transylvania to Hungarian control. This measure was a shocking blow to Romania's nationalist movement, and prompted a series of frantic population exchanges between the two countries. In 1937, Romania's Hungarian population had been 1.4 million; through the Second Vienna Award and the subsequent population exchange, it plummeted to 200,000 by 1940.<sup>7</sup> This major shift in demographics contributed greatly to the old nationalist goal of homogenization, but at the cost of a great deal of territory. Naturally, this territorial shift caused a great deal of upheaval in Romania, and prompted renewed calls for radical ethnic policies from the far right.

One particular far-right figure who stood out in the wake of the Second Vienna Award was Sabin Manuilă, a government minister. Manuilă approved of the demographic shift effected by the Second Vienna Award, but felt that it had not gone far enough. He called for further expulsions of Hungarians from the Romania's remaining Transylvanian territory, as well as the ethnic cleansing of Hungarians and preparations for a re-annexation of northern Transylvania, with the overarching aim that "political borders and ethnic boundaries coincide accurately."<sup>8</sup> Though Manuilă's radical rhetoric was popular with the Romanian right, the Conducător Ion Antonescu rejected his proposals, calling for "tolerance till war's end."<sup>9</sup> There were many incidents in which Hungarians were forcibly expelled from Romania, and many Hungarian civil servants were fired, while conditions for Hungarians who remained in Romania certainly deteriorated until the beginning of Romanian involvement in World War II; nonetheless, Antonescu's declaration remained the official position in Romania until 1944.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Stephen FISCHER-GALAȚI, "The Great Powers and the Fate of Transylvania between the Two Wars", in John CADZOW, Louis ELTETO, Andrew LUDANYI (eds.), *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1983, 185.

<sup>7</sup> Pertti AHONEN, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50.

*The Transitional Governments*

After King Michael's Coup deposed Antonescu on 23 August 1944, the king tapped General Constantin Sănătescu to form a new government. This new government included many prominent figures in prewar right-wing politics, including Iuliu Maniu and PNL leader Gheorghe I. Brătianu. As Keith Hitchins states, "the most pressing task of the Sănătescu government was to stabilize its relations [...] with the Soviet Union."<sup>11</sup> The first step in accomplishing this task was to negotiate an armistice with the Soviets, which was signed in Moscow on 12 September 1944. The Romanians became a co-belligerent of the Soviet Union, and the Germans were driven from Romanian territory by 5 October.<sup>12</sup> The next major task faced by the Sănătescu government was to resist Soviet interference in the Romanian government and prevent a full occupation of Romania. Specifically, Sănătescu was most resistant to Soviet attempts at land reform, which he felt would destabilize Romania's already foundering economy. One of the most vocal opponents of the Soviets within the Sănătescu government was his Minister of the Interior, Nicolae Penescu. Ultimately, Penescu's opposition to the Soviet program would bring down the government, as the Romanian police under his direction used violence to put down Communist agitation in late November 1944.<sup>13</sup> Sănătescu was removed from power at the Soviets' behest on 2 December, and King Michael turned to another general, Nicolae Rădescu, to form a new government.

When he formally took over the position of Prime Minister on 6 December, Rădescu was faced with much the same task that Sănătescu had been: resist Soviet interference without provoking them to occupy Romania. According to Dinu Giurescu, Rădescu was intent on maintaining democracy at all costs. He sought to leverage the power of the Western Allies to prevent excessive Soviet influence; his belief in their ability to do so turned out to be misplaced.<sup>14</sup> In reality, the Soviets held almost complete control over Romania's fate, and Rădescu would be faced with almost constant challenges to his authority and Romania's sovereignty. However, under his rule, the nationalist element in Romania would be granted an opportunity to pursue some of the goals it had been forced to abandon years earlier; namely, the ethnic cleansing of the Hungarian population of Transylvania.

Rădescu continued the main points of resistance to the Soviet program that had been pursued by the previous government. He was opposed to the Soviets' proposal for swift land reform, believing that this would disrupt Romania's fragile economy and lead to famine; he wished to delay this program

<sup>11</sup> Keith HITCHINS, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 504.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 511.

<sup>14</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *Romania's Communist Takeover: The Rădescu Government*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 28.

until after the war had concluded. He was also opposed to the purge of “fascist” elements from the government, since the term was vague and could be applied to nearly anyone who opposed the Soviet order, particularly persons affiliated with the “traditional parties” (i.e., the PNT and PNL).<sup>15</sup> He also attempted to hold Communist agitation at bay, though much of this agitation was likely stirred up by the Soviets, rather than the fledgling Communist Party of Romania (Partidul Comunist Român).<sup>16</sup> With external and internal pressures already weighing on him, on 16 December 1944 the Soviets issued Order 7161, calling for the roundup and deportation of all German males aged seventeen to forty-five and women aged eighteen through thirty.<sup>17</sup> This order presented Rădescu with a moral and national crisis, and his ambivalent handling of the situation and its consequences leave in question his true motives for acquiescing to Soviet demands.

### *Order 7161*

The order for the deportation of the German people of Romania was issued on behalf of the Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Ivan Mikhailovich Maisky. Maisky was in charge of devising a schematic for German reparations to the Soviet Union after the war. According to Maisky’s plan, approximately half of the value of the German reparations, \$75 billion (as cited by Pavel Polian in his 2001 study) was to come from German labor in the USSR.<sup>18</sup> Much of this labor was to come from German POWs in the USSR and in the satellite states of Eastern Europe. Lavrentiy Beria ordered the preliminary registration of German civilians in Romania in late 1944; 421,846 Germans living in the country were counted, including 70,476 men aged seventeen to forty-five. Additionally, 7,890 Germans were already interned in prison camps across Romania, eighty-two percent of which were male. Pavel Polian states that these men were “obviously intended as laborers”.<sup>19</sup> Maisky’s plan called for most of these men to be interned in labor camps in Ukraine for work in the metallurgical industry in the south or coal mining in the Donbass region. These camps were administered by the Chief Directorate for Prisoners of War and Internees’ Affairs (Russian acronym: GUPVI), which had been founded in 1939 by Beria.

The 16 December order was even more expansive than Maisky’s original plan, as it included female Germans aged eighteen to thirty, a demographic not specifically enumerated in Beria’s preliminary count.<sup>20</sup> It was this requirement

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Pertti AHONEN, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 75

<sup>18</sup> Pavel POLIAN, *Against their Will... The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, Moscow: OGI Memorial, 2001, p. 246.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 250.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 253.

that Rădescu found to be the most onerous. Holding two meetings with Soviet General Vladislav Petrovich Vinogradov in December 1944 and early January 1945, Rădescu managed to plead with the Soviets to exclude women aged thirty to thirty-five from the order.<sup>21</sup> He also managed to obtain some exceptions for German businessmen outside of Transylvania who held important roles in Romanian cities (such as Galați).<sup>22</sup>

Rădescu's overarching aim in obtaining these exemptions was to mitigate the damage to the Romanian economy that would inevitably result from such a large loss of laborers. Similarly with his opposition to land reform, Rădescu sought to prevent the destabilization of the Romanian economy, as further disruptions could have led to a drastic loss of industrial and agricultural production. While he was able to lessen the impact of Order 7161 on the Romanian economy somewhat, the actions of the Soviet military and Romanian gendarmes would devastate the country socially. Coupled with the looming political crisis that faced his government, this internal chaos greatly restricted Rădescu in his range of available actions as the Prime Minister; ultimately, political considerations had to override economic and human ones. Whether due to his action or inaction, grave violations of human rights occurred on Romania's territory during the first months of 1945, both within the scope of Order 7161 and beyond it. As a final word on the Rădescu government's implementation of Order 7161, it is important to consider Rădescu's previous nationalist activity; as Pertti Ahonen, et al. state "the new wave of forced migrations of population launched at the end of the war...were not contrary to the Romanianizing intentions on the whole."<sup>23</sup>

Those Germans who had remained in Romania after 1940 were largely concentrated in the regions now under assault by the Romanian and Soviet authorities. Some ninety percent of the remaining 470,000 Germans were concentrated in the Banat and Southern Transylvania.<sup>24</sup> Those who had chosen to stay after Hitler's call for their return to Germany were often attached to Romania and their identity as Romanians; these were the people who had been successfully Romanized. This shift in identities on their part is likely to have left them with a feeling of invulnerability to reprisals against Germans by the USSR; as a result, few of them chose to evacuate in the face of the advancing Red Army in 1944, and would remain in the same locations during the reign of terror authorized by Order 7161.<sup>25</sup>

In summarizing the execution of Order 7161 across the Soviet-occupied region, Ahonen, et al., note that "the collective punishment of Germans in East-Central Europe was carried out in the shadow of worldwide anger and

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 254.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 255.

<sup>23</sup> Pertti AHONEN, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73.

hatred.”<sup>26</sup> This statement is an accurate reflection of the manner in which the Soviet and Romanian authorities prosecuted Order 7161 in Transylvania. The initial actions under the order were taken in the second week of January 1945, as the German POWs interned on Romanian territory were deported to the USSR. The next, more controversial, phase of the program was the roundup and deportation of German civilians in Romania. Though Soviet troops were present, most of the actual arrests and imprisonments of German civilians were conducted by the Romanian gendarmes, overseen by Soviet General Korotkov. Thirty-six internment camps had been set up in Transylvania by early 1945, most of which were filled with those deemed to be “hazardous elements” (i.e. ethnic minorities); despite this designation, most of the people interned under such a title were non-combatants that had been victimized by the social chaos caused by the war in that region.<sup>27</sup> These people were also quickly deported to one of 350 large camps or 4000 small camps run by the GUPVI in the USSR.<sup>28</sup>

After these early measures, the Soviet program entered an even more frightening stage: the random “sweep” of territories for capturing German civilians; many of these German civilians were among those considered to have been “Romanized”, with Romanian names and cultural traditions.<sup>29</sup> One of the first such roundups had occurred around Christmas 1944; the timing of this sweep, according to Korotkov, would allow for the capture of more Germans, as families and communities would be gathered together to celebrate the holiday.<sup>30</sup> As with the other stages of the operation, these sweeps were conducted by the Romanian gendarmes. After the end of the initial round of sweeps, General Korotkov was not satisfied with the number of Germans captured, and ordered another round of sweeps.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, Soviet and Romanian forces would take captive and deport to the USSR 69,332 Germans. This figure represented three-fourths of all Germans deported to forced labor in the USSR, and over sixteen percent of Romania’s German population.<sup>32</sup>

As a final note on the deportation of German Romanians under Order 7161, it would be dishonest to ignore the level of agency that the Germans retained within Romania and the degree to which they were supported by Romania. In several cases, the Germans offered resistance to the Soviet order and the Romanian gendarmes; on rare occasions they were even joined in their efforts by local Romanian authorities. One such case occurred in Făgăraș on 21 January 1945.<sup>33</sup> In this instance, the gendarmes and Romanian military

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>30</sup> Pavel POLIAN, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 257.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 257.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 255.

helped the local German population to resist deportation. However, it should be noted that these instances, while inspiring, were few and far between. There were far more cases in which German civilians were the victims of violence at the hands of the Romanian gendarmes, and untold numbers more would suffer grave injury or perish in the labor camps within the USSR. While figures on the number of Germans who never returned from the GUPVI camps vary, the general consensus is that around 10% of the German deportees never returned to Romania.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Hungarian Minority in Transitional Romania*

Though the German population of Romania was the primary target of Soviet revanchism, the Hungarian minority fared little better; without stable government and organized protection for their civil rights, the Hungarians living in Transylvania were also subject to violence and deportation by the Romanian authorities in the region. It was in this arena that the old national idea found a new expression; nationalist desires to Romanize the population and to legitimize the return of northern Transylvania to Romanian hands coincided and helped spark a wave of human rights abuses against the Hungarians of the area. Crimes committed against the Hungarians of Transylvania provide the best evidence that ethnic violence in Soviet-influenced Romania was informed by old nationalist ideology, since Soviet Order 7161 did not include any request for deportations of Hungarians, nor was the Rădescu government under any pressure to take any action towards ethnic Hungarians. The deportation of Hungarians from Romania at the end of World War II, therefore, can be interpreted to be an act of ethnic cleansing on the part of Romanian nationalists seeking to “purify the nation” (to borrow Vladimir Solonari’s term) and legitimize Romanian control over northern Transylvania.

In his seminal work on the Rădescu regime, Dinu Giurescu stated that the Hungarian problem was the only foreign policy question Rădescu’s government faced.<sup>35</sup> However, since the 12 September armistice voided the Second Vienna Award, Romania’s Hungarian population once again swelled to around one million; thus, the problem was an internal one as well.<sup>36</sup> This issue, in both an internal and external context, and with both territorial and ethnic concerns in mind, would feature prominently in the rhetoric of the Romanian leadership during the transitional period.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen D. KERTESZ, “From the Second Vienna Award to Paris: Transylvania and Hungarian-Rumanian Relations during World War II”, in John CADZOW, Louis ELTETO, Andrew LUDANYI (eds.), *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1983, 208.

The first Romanian leader to make an inflammatory statement regarding Hungarians and the Transylvanian issue was King Michael himself. Immediately after the armistice was signed, he demanded that northern Transylvania be returned to Romania.<sup>37</sup> His wish was not granted; however, his statement reflected the desire of many leaders of the Romanian right and center during that time. Romanian irredentism toward northern Transylvania also made its way into legal rhetoric, as it was proposed that those involved with the Second Vienna Award be included among the ranks of war criminals under the new Romanian statute; this proposal did not amount to anything either.<sup>38</sup> Despite their lack of success, these early rhetorical forays into irredentism and anti-Hungarianism foreshadowed the ideology of the Rădescu government, during which time they would also come to fruition on the ground in Transylvania.

Rădescu himself is partly responsible for the proliferation of irredentist and anti-Hungarian rhetoric during his administration. In a speech delivered in the capital on 11 February 1945, he stated that “Transylvania is ours” and that Romania “must” enter northern Transylvania.<sup>39</sup> This statement fits well within the genealogy of Romanian nationalist and expansionist thought, and represents the continuation of Rădescu’s prewar right-wing inclinations with regards to his concept of Romania as a state. Rădescu also deployed anti-Hungarian rhetoric during his brief tenure as Prime Minister; in late February 1945, as his regime’s control on the country began to unravel, he railed against what he perceived to be foreign-influenced Communist agitation. Namely, he directed his criticism towards Ana Pauker (a Jewish Communist) and Vasile Luca (a.k.a. László Luka, a Hungarian Communist); these two were considered part of a foreign Communist conspiracy to subvert both the government and the Romanian nation.<sup>40</sup>

The notion of foreign, Communist interference in Romanian affairs was not a new one, as it appeared in the anti-Semitic tracts published by Alexandru C. Cuza and his protégé Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in the interwar period; however, it gained much more prescience with the increasing Soviet domination over Romanian internal affairs. Luka’s association with this alleged conspiracy would then utilize Romanian awareness of the dangers of Soviet oppression and the Hungarian problem and bind them together in citizens’ minds, a clever rhetorical ploy on Rădescu’s part. Such rhetorical tactics were also used by the PNT and Iuliu Maniu to incite public hatred of the Hungarian minority, and to craft an image of the Soviets as the “protectors” of the Hungarians.<sup>41</sup> For the PNT, however, their virulent anti-Hungarian statements were not merely rhetorical, but were also applied in the field; along

<sup>37</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 151.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 142.

with the gendarmerie, they were responsible for some of the worst abuses of Hungarians' rights that occurred under the Rădescu government.

Violent reprisals against Hungarians in northern Transylvania did not begin with the Rădescu government. In fact, they started almost as soon as the territory was liberated in the fall of 1944. Many Hungarians in northern Transylvania were arrested and taken as "prisoners of war", even though they had never taken up arms against Romania.<sup>42</sup> In addition, many Hungarians were massacred by Romanian soldiers in northern Transylvania during the last months of 1944, including the time after Rădescu's takeover.<sup>43</sup> Ahonen, et al., attribute (in part) the escalation of ethnic cleansing activities to the presence of Soviet soldiers on Romanian soil, though the Soviets had no official policy with regards to the Hungarian minority in Romania.<sup>44</sup>

It was not until the beginning of Rădescu's reign, however, that violence against Hungarians became well organized on the local level. In early 1945, a PNȚ partisan group known as the "Iuliu Maniu Guard" began sweeping the countryside in northern Transylvania, slaughtering Hungarian civilians; despite the name of the group, there is no evidence connecting Maniu himself with these actions. These massacres were condemned by the Soviet authorities, who labeled the Iuliu Maniu Guard as "a band of terrorist-chauvinistic criminals."<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Romanian actions against the Hungarians would continue until the end of the Rădescu regime. In addition to massacres, these crimes would also take the form of forced population movements to the Soviet Union, akin to the deportations of Romania's German population.

While there has been some scholarly examination of the deportation of Hungarians to the Soviet Union from Hungary proper by historians like Tamas Stark, there is very little material on the deportation of Romania's Hungarian population during the same period. Historians have not even proposed an estimate for how many Hungarians were deported from Romania to the USSR. However, it is well known that such deportations occurred, often alongside the deportation of Germans under Order 7161. Many internment camps for Hungarian civilians and "prisoners of war" were set up in Transylvania during that time.<sup>46</sup> They were sent to some two thousand labor camps across the Soviet Union, often laboring beside their fellow Hungarians who had been sent from Hungary proper. The act of rounding up and deporting Hungarians in northern Transylvania was conducted unilaterally by the Romanian gendarmes.

The Soviet Union, despite being vocally critical of the Romanian gendarmes' internment and deportation of Hungarians, notably did not choose to reject the transports of laborers, and sent them to camps along with the

<sup>42</sup> Pertti AHONEN, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 78.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>46</sup> Pertti AHONEN, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 77.

laborers they had requested.<sup>47</sup> Despite this inconsistency in their policies, the Romanian treatment of the Hungarian minority would become an important element in their decision to force Rădescu from power at the end of February 1945. While there were other determinants in this shift of power, the Hungarian question in particular would remain important throughout the political crisis of 1945, and would bear great significance in the policy of Rădescu's successor, Dr. Petru Groza.

*The Groza Government, Gheorghiu-Dej and "National Communism"*

In addition to the ethnic and social chaos occurring in Transylvania, Rădescu was faced with an enormous amount of pressure in Bucharest by February 1945. Communist agitation was at an all-time high throughout the country, largely instigated by the Soviets as the fledgling CPR was still struggling to find its footing. Nonetheless, Rădescu made his best efforts to hold out against the Communist surge. He delivered a series of speeches that month, urging Romanian workers to side with democracy and resist foreign interference in their affairs. He was largely unsuccessful however, and was faced with even more demonstrations and calls for his resignation coming from prominent leftist figures in Romania, such as Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

Rădescu's opponents increased the fervor of their rhetorical denigration of his government; the Communists labeled the traditional parties (PNȚ and PNL) as "fascist gangs", and the reputation of the former for violence in Transylvania only helped the Soviets in constructing this identity.<sup>48</sup> Rădescu sought to appease the Soviets by promising to enact land reform at the end of the war, and emphasized the co-belligerence of Romania with the Soviet Union as a reason to preserve his government; however, he also continued to use this last point to press for Romanian control of northern Transylvania, to which the Soviets remained noncommittal.<sup>49</sup> By 19 February, internal affairs in the country were spiraling out of Rădescu's control. Land reform was conducted *ad hoc* in Botoșani and Constanța Counties, and massive demonstrations continued in the streets of Bucharest and other cities.<sup>50</sup>

The internal chaos in Romania came to a head on 24 February. Another major National Democratic Front demonstration took place in Bucharest, as a crowd of protestors moved through Palace Square and ended in front of the Ministry of the Interior. Romanian military forces opened fire on the protesters, killing several people.<sup>51</sup> That night, Rădescu made a radio address

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67.

in which he angrily decried Pauker and Luca, and demanded further anti-Communist action by the military.<sup>52</sup> The Soviets were outraged by this; he was ordered to resign by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Andrey Yanuarevich Vyshinsky, and he finally agreed to step down on 28 February.<sup>53</sup> The door was now open for the Soviets to insert the Romanian left into power and begin to mold Romania into a Stalinist satellite state.

Following Rădescu's resignation, Dr. Petru Groza was nominated by A.Y. Vyshynsky to form a new government. Groza was a major figure in a leftist agrarian party, the Ploughmen's Front (Frontul Plugarilor), which had been very popular among peasants in the 1930s because it addressed the social issues that were ignored by Iuliu Maniu's PNTȚ in lieu of his nationalist aspirations; by 1944, however, this organization was largely under Communist control. It was a part of the broad leftist coalition in transitional Romania, known as the National Democratic Front. Groza became a leader within the NDF and, on 6 March, became the new prime minister of Romania, with the support of Romanian Communists (including Pauker, Luca, Gheorghiu-Dej and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu) and the Soviet Union. He met with a great deal of opposition from traditional right-wing leaders such as Iuliu Maniu, though Maniu's criticism was of little impact.<sup>54</sup>

Groza's nomination was contingent on three points: the end to violence in northern Transylvania, the immediate implementation of land reform, and the exclusion of "bourgeois parties" (i.e. the PNTȚ and PNL) from the government.<sup>55</sup> Groza, with Soviet military assistance, was able to crack down on the violence against and deportation of Hungarians from Transylvania; this process was effectively put an end to in March, though the deportation of Germans continued for some time afterwards. Land reform measures were instituted, and the redistribution of land in Romania began in earnest on 25 March 1945.<sup>56</sup> The exclusion of the PNTȚ and the PNL from the government was a more complicated matter for Groza. He allowed Nicolae Rădescu to remain in the government, in the Ministry of the Interior, much to the Soviets' chagrin; however, he expelled other rightists, such as Iuliu Maniu, from the government.<sup>57</sup>

Though Groza resisted the idea of a general purge of "fascists" (much as Rădescu had done), rightist figures who were hostile to the new government, including Iuliu Maniu and his PNTȚ partner, Ion Mihalache, were both arrested in 1947 and sentenced to hard labor in Sighet Prison, where Maniu

<sup>52</sup> Henry L. ROBERTS, *Romania: Problems of an Agrarian State*, North Haven, CT: Archon Books, 1969, p. 263.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 186.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen FISCHER-GALAȚI, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Rumania (Second Edition)*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

died in 1953 and Mihalache died in 1963. Former Prime Minister Sănătescu, however, remained in Romania, where he died of cancer in 1947. Nicolae Rădescu was allowed to leave for the United States, where he died in 1953.

Despite his resistance to the general purge, Groza's swift compliance with the other requirements placed on his government pleased the Soviets. As a reward, in what Stephen Fischer-Galați has referred to as "clearly a Russian gesture of political support for Groza," the Soviet Union returned northern Transylvania to Romanian hands later in 1945.<sup>58</sup> This measure would strengthen Groza's support even among more conservative Romanians, since he had succeeded in restoring territory that, in their minds, belonged to Romania. However, Groza's regime has still been criticized by some scholars, such as Fischer-Galați, for its loss of Romanian national identity, due to heavy physical and political Soviet influence. However, due to his good favor with the Soviets, Groza would remain Prime Minister until 1952; in 1947, the Paris Peace Treaty was signed, authorizing Soviet military presence in Romania, which would remain in place until 1958. Also in 1947, King Michael was forced to abdicate, and Romania became a socialist republic. At the end of his time in office in 1952, Groza was succeeded by the prominent Communist and "socialist patriot", Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

Known for his own nationalist sentiments, Gheorghiu-Dej began to lead Romania away from Soviet influence after the occupation of the country ended in 1958. He began to implement what has been termed "National Communism", a rejection of Soviet control and a self-interested direction for Romanian Communism. It is unclear whether this new program of "National Communism" was motivated by his "socialist patriotism" or by the fear of the "monolithizing Kremlin"; nonetheless, it did represent a strong assertion of Romanian Communist authority and a rejection of de-Stalinization.<sup>59</sup> After Gheorghiu-Dej's death in 1965, this spirit would continue under the infamous rule of Nicolae Ceaușescu, who has become notorious for his hostility to Romania's Hungarian community and for his insistence on nationalistic austerity. Eventually, his abuses of the Hungarian minority would lead to his downfall, as his persecution of Hungarian pastor László Tőkés sparked the wave of unrest which ultimately led to the end of his regime and his execution in 1989.

From the time of the Union of Transylvania with Romania to the end of the Ceaușescu regime and beyond, virulent nationalism and ethnic hatred have marred Romania's relations with the minority communities in Transylvania. The rhetoric espoused in the interwar period by the right-wing leaders who would come into power during the transitional period figures prominently in the genealogy of Romanian nationalist and irredentist thought. The

<sup>58</sup> Stephen FISCHER-GALAȚI, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Rumania (Second Edition)*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 92.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen FISCHER-GALAȚI, *20th Century Rumania (Second Edition)*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 159.

abuses against the human rights of ethnic minorities during the transitional period were some of the worst in the history of Romania. The massacres and deportations of German and Hungarian civilians remains a black mark on Romanian society. These actions were in keeping with the ideations of Romanian nationalists during the interwar period, and the rhetoric that surrounded them continued to inform the concept of Romanian nation throughout the Communist period.