

GERMANS IN ROMANIA BETWEEN THE 1930s AND THE 2002s – GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS

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Abstract. In Romania, German ethnics arrived from Central Europe in several waves – during the XIIth-XIIIth and XVIIth-XIXth centuries – and settled mostly in the historical regions of central and Western Romania (Transilvania, Banat and Crișana) – that time under Hungarian domination or integrated in the Habsburg Empire. During the second part of the XXth century – beginning of the XXIst century, the number of these ethnics decreased – from 745.421 persons in 1930 to 60.088 in 2002 – as a consequence of Romanian's and German's government disloyalty from the Second World War (1940-1945), the lack of material and juridical base for the after-war generation during the communist governance, the fear, the isolation that continued after 1989 and the discredit towards the minorities' rights, proclaimed after the Revolution of December, 1989.

Key words. German people, Saxons of Transylvania, Swabians, deportation, emigration, Romania.

Rezumat. Germanii din România între anii 1930 și 2002 – aspecte geografice. Etnicii germani au sosit în România din Europa Centrală în mai multe valuri, în timpul secolelor XII- XIII și XVII- XIX, și s-au stabilit în special în regiunile istorice din centrul și vestul României (Transilvania, Banat și Crișana), sub dominație ungară în acele timpuri sau integrate Imperiului Habsburgic. În cea de-a doua parte a secolului XX- începutul secolului XXI, numărul acestor etnici a scăzut- de la 745 421 persoane în 1930 a 60 088 în 2002- ca o consecință a lipsei de loialitate a guvernului român și german din cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial (1940-1945), a lipsei bazei materiale și juridice pentru generația de după război în timpul guvernării comuniste, a fricii, a izolării care a continuat după 1989 și a discreditării față de drepturile minorităților, proclamate după Revoluția din Decembrie, 1989.

Cuvinte cheie: populația germană, sași, șvabi, deportare, emigrație, România

The geodemographic study of national minorities is absolutely necessary, being added both to the historical and geopolitical approaches. In this respect, the academician Vladimir Trebici (1996, 61) considers that *first of all, it is interesting to outline the evolution of numerical and demographic structure of national minorities, their territorial distribution, social, economic and national characteristics.*

The German minority is one of the representative minorities in Romania, which influenced the history and culture of their living environment. The German population in our country is very heterogeneous from the point of view of the provenience and period when their settlement took place (12th-13th and 17th -19th centuries). Saxons, or Germans of Transylvania, also known in historic documents as Flandreuses, Teutons or Saxons, were colonized by Hungarians during the 12th-13th centuries, from the regions situated West of the Rhine, with the specific purpose of creating *centers of urban life they could afterwards exploit through taxes* (M. Ruffini, 1993, p. 30). They were grouped in the South and

North of the province, in Sibiu, Brașov, Târnave and Bistrița regions, where they were organized in chairs and Saxon districts. Favoured by the Hungarian Royal Administration, they stood apart among the nationalities in the province by the construction of numerous towns (Brașov, Sibiu, Mediaș, Sighișoara, Sebeș, Bistrița) and fortified churches (at Biertan, Moșna, Valea Viilor, Șeica Mare, Șeica Mică etc.). Still in Transylvania, landlers, also known as transmigrants were brought over in Sibiu's neighbourhood during the 18th century.

During the 17th -19th centuries, roaches from Banat and Satu Mare were colonized by the Austrians, being brought as agriculturers from Württemberg region; also, tipters from Maramureș (as wood carpenters) and Germans from Bucovina. The Germans of Southern Basarabia (Tarutino and Tatar Bunar) and Dobrudjea were brought by Russians. The Germans in Banat, originary from Bohemia, reached the province during three major settlement phases - Caroline, Terezian and Josephine – and founded numerous settlements in the center, North-West and forest or mining

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regions (R. Crețan, 2005, p. 83); beginning with 1775 and until 1848, twenty seven German colonies were founded, as recommended by the emperor Josef, 2nd (1780-1790), (Vl. Trebici, 1996, p. 123).

Although at January, 8th, 1919, the National Meeting of Transylvanian Saxons took place at Mediaș, approving the political deeds of December, 1st, 1918 at Alba Iulia, acknowledging *the legitimate right of the Romanian people to unite and form an estate*, the territorial autonomy of the minorities was not respected, the counties' maires being appointed by the government; the habits of the national authorities were not known by the Saxons of Transylvania, delaying the adaptation process (Th. Năgler, 2004, 60).

According to the census of 1930, 745,421 persons of the Romanian inhabitants had Germanic origins during the inter-wars period, representing 4.1 percent of the country's population. Judging by this percent, the German ethnic group occupied the third place in the national structure of our country, after Romanians (71.9 percent) and Hungarians (7.9 percent); they were numerous in Transylvania (253,426 persons), Banat (223,167), Basarabia (81,089), Bucovina (75,533) and Crișana-Maramureș (67,259). Their percent within these historical provinces only outnumbered the average national percent in Banat (23.7 percent), Bucovina (8.9 percent) and Transylvania (7.9 percent). After a minute analysis of the data in the general population census of December, 29th, 1930, S. Manuilă (1940, p. 194-195) described the Germans in the West and the center of the country as *a well balanced group from a demographic point of view (the share of the urban and the rural population) and possessed an eminent economic and cultural position; due to the appropriate settlement among the fertile regions they could reach very high social standards*. But, this superiority implicitly brought the evolution: *the lowering capacity of biological increase and the lowest population growth of all the people in Romania*.

Between 1930 and 1956, the number of the German population in Romania reduced almost by half, reaching 384,708 persons (Fig. 1) which meant 2.1 percent of the national population. This drastical diminution was generated both by a low population growth, but also by the historical-political events of that time. The most influential were: a) the territorial losses suffered by Romania; b) the second world war; c) deportation. Thus, before Romania's active participation in the war, after Ribbentrop-Molotov pact (August, 23th, 1939), North Bucovina and Basarabia were taken over by U.S.S.R., meaning a population of 30,000 German people.

In 1943, during the war, Germany took over

most German ethnics in its army, according to the Romanian government. Due to this new situation made that, after Romania passed on the side of the Soviet front, soldiers and officers taken by the German army remained faithful until the end of the conflict.

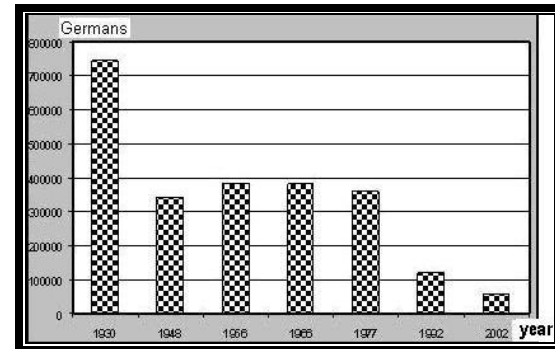


Fig. 1 The numerical evolution of German ethnics in Romania between 1930-2002

The fear induced by the entrance of the Soviet army in Transylvania generated the retreat of most Saxons of Transylvania from Bistrița and Reghin regions. Most of them arrived in Austria and Southern Germany, where they settled permanently. Although the king of Romania and premier of Romania, General Rădescu protested, part of the Germans capable of work, that had remained on the territory of Romania, were deported in the Soviet Union. During this period, the British prime minister, Winston Churchill appreciated that using Germans from Eastern Europe to reunite the USSR was a legal right of the Russians (Th. Năgler, 2004, p. 61-62).

According to statistics, over 30,000 Transylvanian Saxons were deported in the Soviet Union, which, according to the census of 1941 would represented about 15 percent of the German population of Transylvania. Nine out of ten people arrived on the territory of Ukraine, in Dnepropetrovsk, Stalino and Vorosilovgrad regions and the rest in Ural Mountains' region. From the Saxons of Transylvania deported in the 85 existent camps, one third were working in mines, one fourth in construction and the rest in industry, agriculture and camp administration. Very few of them accomplished types of work that corresponded to their studies. The first Germans unfit for work were repatriated in Transylvania at the end of the 1945's. Between 1946-1947, about 5,100 Saxons of Transylvania were brought about in Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany, using special transport for sick people. About 12% died (3,076 persons), the percent being of 3 dead men to 1 dead woman and after their release from deportation, one fourth of them were sent away to Germany (from them, only 7 came back in Transylvania). The year of liberation for persons fit

to work was 1948 (an overall of 49 percent) and in October 1949 the camps were abolished. The last third of deported persons came back to Transylvania. About 50% of the persons deported in the Soviet occupation area of Germany were allowed to come back home. Most of the others passed in West Germany, few remaining in the Democrat Republic of Germany. Only 202 persons were allowed to come back home in the period comprised between 1950 and 1952, while 7 deported persons decided to stay in the USSR ([Http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportarea_germanilor_din_Rom](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportarea_germanilor_din_Rom)).

The consequence of the already presented events affecting the German population is very well reflected by the numerical evolution of the Saxons of Transylvania, which lowered from approximately 250,000 persons in 1941 to about 157,000 in 1948. Also, a negative impact on the spiritual status of the German population in Romania had:

- a) the nationalization of agricultural areas (March, 1945), factories, workshops, banks etc. (June 1948);
- b) the deportation of 10,000 German people to Bărăgan in 1951;
- c) the trials during the 60's, which resulted in sentencing some German intellectuals in Cluj and Brașov.

But Romania also offered some rights to the German minority, such as: a) the existence of German schools or schools with German teaching profiles; b) the editing of magazines, newspapers and books in their mother tongue; c) the existence of a German section within the National Theatre in Sibiu (founded, according to the decree no. 56771, at November, 1st, 1956 as a section within the National Theatre and approved by the Executive Committee of the People's Council of Stalin/Brașov region) and even a National German Theatre at Timișoara (also from 1956).

It is important to outline the fact that during those dramatic moments for the German minority, the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession was an unifying factor and moral support for the Saxons of Transylvania, with its headquarters in Sibiu and the Romano-Catholic Church in the case of the Swabian people in Banat.

As a result, the period comprised between 1956 and 1977 was characterized by a continuous numerical decrease of the German ethnics because of their emigration: from about 382,600 persons in 1966 to 359,109 persons in 1977 (Fig. 1). For the ones wishing to leave Romania, their relatives in West Germany or other Western countries were compelled to pay consistent amounts of money to officials or Romanian diplomats, reaching tens of

thousands of Deutsche Marks per person (W. Schreiber, 2000-2001, p. 86).

As compared to the previous period (1930-1956), from 1956 to 1977 the decreasing rate of the German population decreased. Moreover, in some towns founded by Saxons in Transylvania, their number registered a slight increase. Thus, the number of Saxons came to reach 8,064 persons in 1956 and 13,080 in 1977 in Mediaș; 5,096 to 5,881 in Sighișoara; and 1,385 to 2,877 in Sebeș etc. (I. Mărculeț, Cătălina Mărculeț, 2000, p. 197-198; I. Mărculeț, Alina Bejinariu, M. Popa, 2002, p. 24-25).

In 1977, most Germans were found, as well as during the inter-wars period, in Transylvania (165,117 persons; 45.9% of the entire German population), Banat (113,886; 31.7%) and Crișana-Maramureș (44,474; 12.3%), and the record regarding life environment situation was the following: 53.5% living in the rural areas and 46.5% in the urban ones. Within the historical provinces, the German population established in the urban areas was dominant in Muntenia (98.1%), Oltenia (89.5%), Dobrogea (82.3%) and Moldova (63.1%).

After 1977, Germans' emigration process towards the origins' areas progressively intensified. The fundamental causes of their leaving were not the political or ethnical persecutions, but had rather a psychological nature – by their desire of ethnical preservation – or an economic one, as the difference of the living conditions in West Germany and Romania were well known. Emigration was encouraged and even supported by the Romanian government and the foreign Saxon or Swabian associations. Thus, the unwritten agreement of 1978 between West Germany's chancellor, Helmut Schmidt and the Romanian president, Nicolae Ceaușescu, represented the starting point in raising the number of German emigrants, in exchange for certain sums of money. The phenomenon, unique in our history, was intensified by the fear of those who wished to leave Romania in order to avoid becoming too expensive. About 11,000 Germans were estimated to emigrate per year, but in 1989 their number raised to 14,598 persons per year (Fig. 2). Only between 1985–1989, the number of Germans leaving Romania raised to 60,818 persons (37.6% of our country's emigration). Because of the high rate of emigration, at the end of the 1989's, the German population in Romania only counted about 265,000 persons (W. Schreiber, 2000-2001, p. 86-87; http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanii_din_Rom). The houses of the Germans that already emigrated were taken over by the state, and, in most cases, rented to homeless Hungarian, Gipsy or Romanian

families. As a consequence, the old settlements or residential neighbourhoods, with homogenous German population were transformed into neighbourhoods with heterogeneous population, most constructions being deteriorated out of negligence.

The Germans' exodus from Romania, starting with the second world war, could not be stopped after 1989, being maintained both because of fear, isolation fright, which did not disappear, by the gregarious spirit and the distrust regarding the minorities' rights in Romania, proclaimed after the revolution of December, 1989, but also by not knowing the real situation of the emigrants in Germany (Th. Năgler, 2004, p. 63; I. Mărculeț, Cătălina Mărculeț, Elena Herda, 2007, p. 135). As a consequence, only during 1990, 60,000 Germans emigrated from Romania (Fig. 2). This flow continued until the summer of 1991, when Germany hardened receiving conditions. If in 1990, the monthly average emigration rate was of 5,006 persons, it lowered to 1,297 in 1991, 738 in 1992 and 495 in 1993 (http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanii_din_Rom).

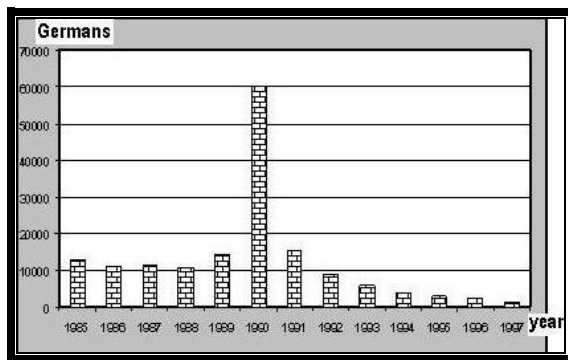


Fig. 2 The evolution of German people in Romania between 1985-1997

(Apud:[Http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanii_din_Ro](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanii_din_Ro))

According to W. Schreiber (2000-2001, p. 87), in 1990, the monthly average rate was of 9,265 persons and gradually lowered to 680 in 1991, 1,345 in 1992 and under 500 in 1993.

In 1992, according to the data registered at the census of January, 7th, the German population only counted 119,462 persons (aproximatively 0.5% of Romania's population) and occupied the fourth place in the ethnical structure of the country, following Romanians (89.5 percent), Hungarians (7,1 percent) and Gipsies (1.8 percent). As well as the preceding years, most of them lived in Transylvania (43,532 persons; 36.4 percent of the total), Banat (38,709 persons; 32.4 percent) and in Crișana-Maramureș (28,722 persons; 12.2 percent) (Fig. 3). But, this time a great change regarding the habitation environment occurred: 32.8 percent lived in villages and 67.2 percent in towns. The largest concentrations of population in urban environment were found in larger towns. Thus, over 10,000 of this ethnical group's representatives lived in Timișoara, about 5,500 were present in Sibiu and Reșița, and between 2,000 and 5,000 were established in București, Arad, Brașov, Satu Mare, Mediaș and Lugoj.

Still following the statistics of 1992's, we can observe that 59.4% of the Germans in Romania had a Romano-Catholic confession, 22.8% Evangelical religion of Augustan confession, 6.8% Orthodox, 2.4% Evangelical Sinodo-Presbiterian, 2.3% Reformed (Calvinist) etc. (Fig. 4). The Germans having a Romano-Catholic religion predominantly lived in Banat, Crișana, Maramureș and in București municipality, while the Augustan confession ones lived in Transylvania. The Orthodox and Greco-Catholic Germans come from the mixt marriages with Romanians and extremely rare, with Gipsies, while the Reformed ones, from the marriages with Hungarians.

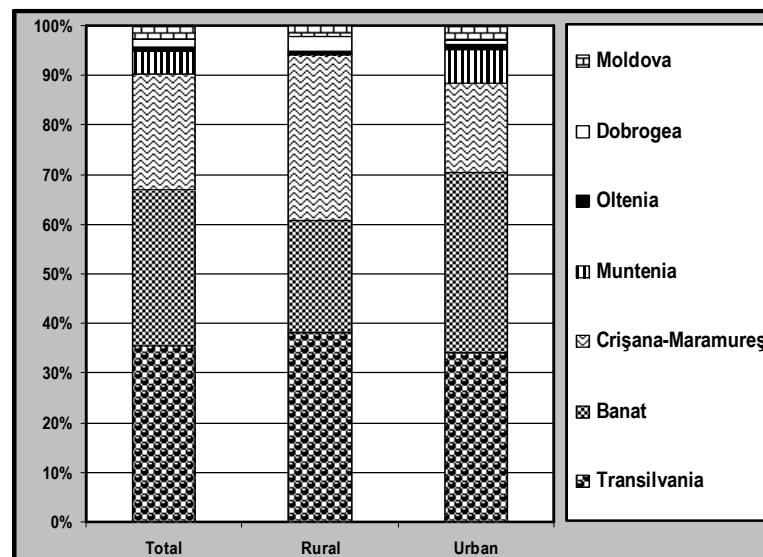


Fig. 3 The repartition of German ethnics on historical provinces and on habitation environment in 1992

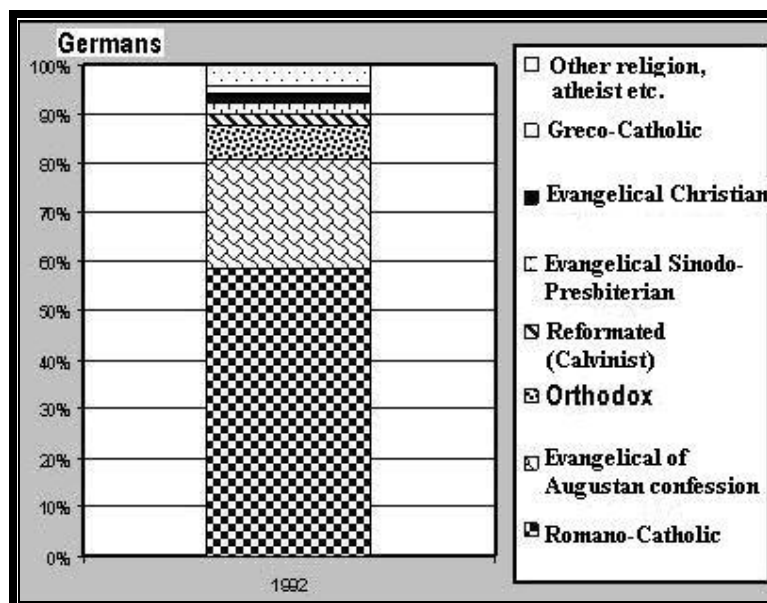


Fig. 4 The confessional structure of the German population in Romania in 1992

The numerical lowering of the German people continued during the last decade of the 20th century, so that at the last official census, in 2002, Germans in Romania only reached 59,764 persons, which represented only 0.27 percent of the country's population. By this percent, the German ethnics descended on the 5th place in the national structure after: Romanians (89.47 percent), Hungarians (6.60 percent), Gipsies (2.46) and Ukrainians (0.28 percent). Most of them lived in Timiș county (14,174 persons), Sibiu (6,554), Satu Mare (6,417), Caraș-Severin (6,149), Arad (4,852), Brașov (4,418), Mureș (2,045) and Maramureș (2,012). Within these administrative-territorial units, in the ethnical structure of Germans, percentages comprised between 1.5 percent and 2 percent were found in Sibiu (1.5 percent), Satu Mare (1.7 percent) and Caraș-Severin (1.8 percent) and over 2 percent only in Timiș (2.1 percent) (Fig.5).

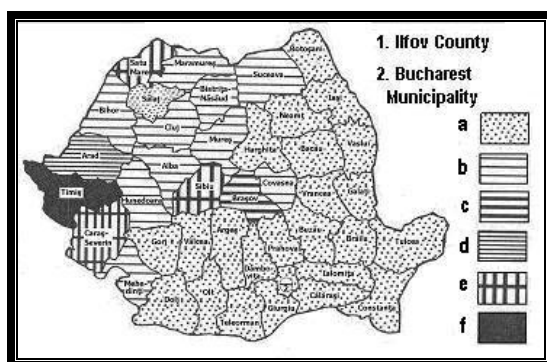


Fig. 5 The percentage of the German population in Romania's counties in 2002:
a) below 0.1%; b) 0.1-0.5%; c) 0.6-1.0%; d) 1.1-1.5%;
e) 1.6-2.0%; f) over 2.0%

Regarding the repartition on settlements, in 2002, the highest percentages of Germans were found in the following towns: Timișoara (7,157 persons), Reșița (2,696), Sibiu (2,508) București (2,358), Arad (2,247), Brașov (1,717), Satu Mare (1,607), Lugoj (1,319) and Mediaș (1,137).

Resuming the most important aspects which constituted the target of this scientific approach, we can state the following:

a) the higher percentage of German ethnics in the historical provinces from the center and the West of Romania (Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș), that have been under Hungarian domination or integrated within the Habsburgic Empire;

b) the predominantly descendant evolution of this nationality along the entire period we have studied, as a consequence of losing material and juridical basis, necessary for the generation following the second world war, the disappearance of double loyalty during this worldwide war, the fear, isolation and distrust feelings which did not disappear after December, 1989.

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