The interbelic Germans from the Banat Highland. Coal, steel, mines and forges

C Rudolf, D M Micliuc, M D Nedeloni, E Birtarescu and A Varga

1“Eftimie Murgu” University of Resita, Department of Social Sciences, 11 Traian Vaia Square, No. 1-4, 320085, Resita, Romania
2“Eftimie Murgu” University of Resita, Department of Doctoral Studies, Traian Vaia Square, No. 1-4, 320085, Resita, Romania
3“Eftimie Murgu” University of Resita, Department of Electric Engineering and Informatics, Traian Vaia Square, No. 1-4, 320085, Resita, Romania
4“Eftimie Murgu” University of Resita, Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, Traian Vaia Square, No. 1-4, 320085, Resita, Romania
5“George Baritiu” Institute of History Cluj-Napoca, Str. M. Kogalniceanu, No. 12-14, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

E-mail: c.rudolf@uem.ro

Abstract. The difficulties of the reconstruction era, following World War I had been increased by the cessation of some activities in the industrial centres of the Banat Highland. For instance, the copper mines were closed in 1921, the Romanian state forbidding the extraction of this ore. Only in Ocna de Fier a special dispensation had been given. The copper mines from Moldova Nouă, Sasca Montană, Ciclova, Dognecea had also been shut down. This fact caused the acid reaction of some writers. We recall that one of the main ways for improving the material condition, embraced by the ethnic Germans, was working abroad. Many German workers of the Banat Highland had emigrated, taking up an offer of well-paid work during the crisis years: 1929-1933. The miners of the Banat Highland, especially those of German origin, travelled to the areas rich in iron ore and coal of France, namely Alsace and Loraine. Considering that German was spoken there by a significant percentage of the population, the integration into the new working environment did not represent a problem.

1. Introduction
The industrial activity in the Inter-War Banat Highland was concentrated around the urban and semi-urban centres of Resita, Anina, Bocsa, Moldova Nouă and Otelu Rosu. The historian Rudolf Gräf argues in his books dedicated to S.T.G., not unjustly, that this firm, as well as its successor, U.D.R. Were the main employer and profit generator for the mountain area of that historic province. Both the secondary sources, especially the primary ones, confirm this, proving the economic and socio-cultural importance that this company had for the inhabitants of the micro-region, regardless of their ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliation. In the following we will present some information about the evolution of U.D.R. in the interwar decades [1].

The company had been named U.D.R., i.e.: the Iron Factories and Resita, and was founded by a government decision on June 8, 1920. Two days later, the first general meeting had taken place. According to the financial statement for the year 1919 the company was worth 228 million crowns,
having a debt of 85 million crowns, of which 40 million at the Boden-Kreditanstalt bank in Vienna. The remaining capital was valued at 125 million lei and divided into 250,000 shares. The first distribution of shares, 60% of the total, worth RON 74.2 million, was made for the benefit of the founding members: Prince Constantin Caragea, Victor Bontescu, C.I.C. Bratianu, Mihail Pherekidje, I.G. Duca, Manole Diamandi, Ion Boamba and Adalbert Veith. The other shares, amounting to 50.8 million lei, were sold to various banks. Some of them formed the Business Finance Consortium: Marmorosch Blank and Co., Chrisovoleni, Romanian Commercial Bank, Bank of Romania, Banca Generală a Țării Românești, Albina, Temeswarer Bank and Temeswarer Handels A.G. [2]

At international level, the following companies held shares in the UDR: Syndikats-Boden Kreditanstalt Wien, Vickers-Armstrong London, Continental Trust for Bank and Industrial Values Basel. After the general meeting of the shareholders of U.D.R. On February 8, 1923, the Board of Control included members of Vickers-Armstrong London, as well as representatives of local banks: Marmorosch Blank, Romanian Credit Bank, Peasant Bank, National Bank of Romania and Banca Romaneasca [3].

The means of production of U.D.R. Were made up of: Reșița and Anina factories, Bocșa farm tools mill, Moravița iron mine, coal mines from Anina, Secu, Doman, copper from Oravița, Ciclova, Sasca Montană and Moldova Nouă, Gold from Oravița and sulphur from Moldova Nouă, but also in a series of concessions. These involved the holding of resources considered important for the metallurgical production process: iron and manganese in Delinești, iron and lignite in Armeni, lignite in Caransebeș, lignite in Bozovici, copper and iron in Liupcova. The U.D.R. Also had the right of ownership: the Anina, Vasiiova, Vânăt and Zăvoi sawmills, the Colțani lime burning plant, the Ramna, Tyrol and Moldavian Noua vineyards and the Vânăt and Anina fish ponds. In the U.D.R. We find references to 134 km of unrestricted railway, 103 km of wood transportation channels, 8 natural or artificial lakes owned as land and 27 retail outlets [4].

The Board of Directors consisted of the following members: Prince Barbu Știrbei, Bishop Valeriu Frențiu, Prince Mihail Cantacuzino, D. Ghica-Comănăști, Duiliu Zamfirescu, Victor Bontescu, John Boamba, Prince Constantin Caragea, Serban Fassian, Adalbert Veith, Count Germiny, Gustave Périére, Jean Huntuere, George Günther, Anton Weiler, Victor Levy, Avram Imbroane, Constantin Ghica and Stan Vidrighin [5].

The Management Board together with the Company's President and the Control Board were headed by U.D.R. They were joined by one or two administrative delegates from the government, one or two vice-presidents and 20 shareholders' representatives, of whom 4 were appointed by the government and 16 were elected. These people were the company's first echelon. The second echelon included a Chief Executive Officer and Chief Director, as well as four Managing Directors in Banat. The head of the domains was headquartered in Oravița, the mines at Anina, and the factory in Resita. The U.D.R. Representation in Timisoara was also headed by a director and the headquarters of the Bucharest firm had attached a character holding an identical function. The third echelon consisted of six deputy directors, four residents in Banat and two in Bucharest [5]. Among the directors of U.D.R. Who had worked in Banat before 1918, we mention Arpad Hajts, Viktor Jung, Eugen Links, Nikolaus Balint, Anton Hendrich, Karl Kneipert, Geza Halasz and Revay Karoly [6].

The position of President of the Council of Administration was ensured during the interwar years by the following persons: Prince Barbu Știrbey (1922-1929), General Ernest Ballif (1929-1939), General Ernest Urdaianu (1939-1940) and Constantin Groceanu 1940-1941). Administrative delegates were: Adalbert Veith (1922-1929), Constantin Busila (1929-1931), Max Auschnitt (1931-1939) and Nicolae Malaxa (1939-1941). General directors had been: Adalbert Veith (1922-1924), Constantin Orghidan (1924-1927), followed by Agrippa Popescu (1927-1931). Between 1931 and 1941, the functions of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Director were confused. Among the local directors we mention Aloys Tavy (1919-1924), V. Martian (1924-1930), C. Mihălcescu (1930, 1934-1940) and Karl Rennerth (1931-1934). Directors of the mining department were: Anton Hendrich (1919-1927) and Adalbert Ferrand (1927-1932). The department of factories was led by: Karl Kneipert (1919-1925), Johann Göbl (1925-1928, 1932-1940) and C. Teodorescu (1928-1932). The direction of
the domains was conducted during the interwar years by: Nikolaus Balint (1919-1934) and Alexandru Popp (1934-1941) [7]. With the militarization of state-owned enterprises, in 1939, the military staff from U.D.R. Had been led by the Colonels: Constantin Livezeanu and Panait Boitan.

2. Analysis

In the following we will describe a series of elements related to mining and metallurgical production of the under study. From the very beginning, we make it clear that the development of this company and of other industrial enterprises in the area has undergone numerous meanders, being influenced both by international events: World War I or the Great Economic Crisis, but also by internal ones: labour accidents, strikes, Reduced and incorrectly achieved give insufficient professional education of the staff employed. Regarding the number of employed workers, it is worth mentioning that it has risen sharply after 1919. This can also be attributed to the expansion of the UDR, which during this period had lucrative contracts, making important profits and thus had the possibility Employ and train more workers than in the past. However, coal production was not good: in 1913, for example, 1,400,000 tons of coal was exploited, while in 1937 only 226,830 t, of which: 176,000 t in Anina, 50,730 t in Doman and 22,100 t in Secu [8].

The annual iron ore production in Ocna de Fier was about 20000 tons in 1926. However, the transport and processing costs were enormous, three times higher than the imported ores, and in 1927 the exploitation in this locality was reduced. The following year, out of the 74,000 tons of iron ore needed in Reşiţa plants, half was imported from abroad. Technological innovations often required drastic staff restructuring. For example, in 1925, 6.194 tons of manganese ore were extracted at the Delinești mine. On 1 December 1927 production ceased due to the modernization of the machinery. When work was restarted, only 14% of the mining personnel who were working before the modernization of the production equipment were required [9].

The UDR was the principal exploiter of 155 mine concessions, a total of 2.507 ha of carboniferous land and 633 ha of land rich in iron and manganese ore. The company belonged to the coal mines of Anina, Secu, Doman, the manganese from Delineşti, the iron from Moraviţa and Ocna de Fier, Armenis, Liupcova, Bozovici, as well as the mines closed from Oraviţa, Ciclova, Sasca Montană And Dognecea, without forgetting Anina's ammonia and coke plants, and the Bocsa, Anina and Breazova power plants [10].

The mines in Anina, seven in 1919, were named Thinfeld, Breuner, Gustav, Friedrich, Kollowrat, Ponor, and Kübeck. The first three mines had been linked through access and mining galleries and upgraded before 1918 by the installation of 4 compressed air locomotives, each of 22 hp delivered by Schwartzkopf in Berlin. In 1922 the Breuner mine was to be reopened, where in 1872 there were found coals of coal that burned underground due to the presence of high temperature and oxygen. Wilhelm Riegel, the ministry director, retired during the interwar years, attracted the attention of U.D.R. That the reopening of the mine could lead to catastrophic fires in the underground workplace. To substantiate his claims, he had presented the results of his mining prospects in 1895 and 1897 [11]. On May 15, 1923, the wooden gate that closed the Breuner mine with a concrete was doubled and the access was permanently sealed. Also in 1923 was the Ponor mine, which will not be used until 1942.

The Ferdinand mine had a depth of 644,4 m in 1919 and at 723,67 m in 1928. It was considered as the most profitable area of exploitation Carboniferous of the locality, as well as the main underground access path, because from there the access galleries to the other work and transport stations started. From the Ferdinand mine, or Nr. I, as it was called by workers, started from the horizon 4, a gallery of access to the mine Nr. II or Gustav, which had been extended in depth between 1920 and 1928 from 573.32 m to 635.92 m. The Kollowrat locality was closed in 1928 after reaching a depth of 714 m. IV, Friedrich, served as a way of venting and ventilating underground workplaces. For better air circulation, the depth of 1918 had been preserved, namely 587.56 m [12].

On January 30, 1925, the modernization of Anina began: The Kollowrat mine was equipped with a Wickers drilling machine, the Gustav mine received in 1926 an air compressor of 180 hp and in 1928 all mines in Anina were equipped with four steam boilers with a total capacity of 2,300 hp and a load
of 7,800 kg. To these were added three electric drills with a total capacity of 750 hp and a load of 4,800 kg [1].

Modernization had also been done at Doman and Secu mines, but at a slower pace. In 1932, two locomotives with electric accumulators for the transport of ore were introduced at Doman. At Secu, the Albrecht mine reached a depth of 600 meters in 1923 and 800 meters in 1930. Because of the decrease in the amount of coal exploited on June 1 of that year, the mine in question was sealed. Also in that year two more mines were extended to Secu until work XV and two electric locomotives were purchased on 100 hp each [2].

The Anina coke factory had two German batteries, one produced by Bauer, and the other produced by Kühpers, both imported between 1914 and 1918. These batteries consisted of 62 coal coke rooms with a total capacity of 13.2 tons. Along with coke, the plant also produced ammonium sulphate, the highest coke level being reached in 1928 by 40,370 tons, and ammonium sulphate in 1925 with 362 tons. The management of the UDR decided to build a coke factory in Resita, equipped with two batteries imported from Germany with a capacity of 22 rooms. These batteries began their work successively, between April 1, 1934 and March 1, 1935 [3].

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The mines and factories of Oțelu Roșu, Ruspert and Ruschița belonged to the Societatea de Mine și Uzine Călărași S.A., which was owned by Rimamurany S.A. In 1919, these facilities of exploitation and production were taken over by the Romanian state by being considered the assets of an enemy state [5]. The marble quarry in Ruschița belonged to a leading German from Banat Mountain, namely Johann Bibel, the father. As architect of this state, he made the railway construction plans: Reșița-Bocșa-Moravița, built the school and the Evangelical-Lutheran church from the last-mentioned settlement in 1871, as well as the Roman Catholic church from Anina in 1872.

Being an entrepreneur privately, he had exploited alongside the Ruschița career, Sviniața and Predet, as well as the Poiana Mărului. After 1919 these societies were taken over by his son, who was also named Johann Bibel [6].

The coal mines of Lupac and Ruspert had formed the Mining Industries in Banat in 1921. Coal production increased significantly from 2,136 t in 1921 to 31,253 t in 1927. The basic capital of 150 million lei was increased successively in 1929 to 350 million ROL. Among the main shareholders we mention French bankers: Francois Sépulchre, his brother Antoine and Pierre Liedckercke with 75 million lei, Société des Minéraux in Brussels with 10 million lei and Prince C. Basarab Brâncoveanu with 15 million lei. In 1928, a society called the Romanian Mining Industry was set up to manage the coal mines at Cozla. This company was funded by Marmorosch Blank and received a massive infusion of capital and mining equipment from the German company Julius Berger Tiebohr in Berlin [7].

Regarding the post-World War I steel production, we can state that information from primary sources has decreased significantly compared to the pre-war level. If, in 1913, S.T.E.G. Produced 115,000 tons of cast iron and 122,000 tons of steel, the steel level will only be reached in 1927, while iron production will remain during all interwar years below the level of 1913. This was probably due to the closure of a foundry section at Resita in 1921. Immediately after the First World War an engineer from Turnu-Severin, named Theodor Codreanu, rented a part of the steelworks at Oțelu Roșu and opened with them a workshop for repairing freight wagons [8].

On February 23, 1924, the Romanian Government ordered the creation of the Titan Metallurgical Plant S.A.R. With a capital of 12.4 million lei. Among the main shareholders we can mention: Max Auschnit, UDR, Titan-Nădărag-Galați Society and Chrissoveloni Bank. On 9 March of the same year, the newly established firm was granted the 10-year concession to redeem the shares of the Mining and Steel Company Calan S.A. Worth 135 million lei. On 1 April, the new name of the mining and steel company was established: Titan-Nădărag-Călan Metanurgical Plant Reunified. From the company's
properties for 1927, we mention the plants in Bucharest, Galati, Nădășești, Găvojdia, Călan, Oțelu Roșu and the iron mines in Teliuc [9].

The locomotive factory in Resita was built between 1921 and 1923. The plans were made by Simion Avram and Georg Stanek under the supervision of the Inspector C.F.R. Johann Grycz [9]. The actual building up and installation of the machinery was entrusted to a trio of engineers: Ion Pășărică (metal skeleton), Ludwig Reisinger (foundation, walls and roof) and Bernard Mendlovici (installation of production equipment). The planned production was 1,000 locomotives per year [10]. Romanian Railways promised to send locomotives for repair but to order new models. Between 1923 and 1925, 308 C.F.R. locomotives had been repaired at Resita, and from 1926 new copies were produced, 10 in that year and 11 in the following year. The economic crisis of overproduction adversely affected the demand for locomotives and wagons, however, in 1929, 34 were produced. During 1926-1929, 113 locomotives were built in the municipality of Bârzava River and other 76 were repaired. The first locomotives produced after 1926 were made after an Austrian license by German workers sent to training in Austria and equipped with a Schmidt type heater and a Fritz-Wagner type regulator. It was not an exact copy of the Austrian model, the technicians in Resita, making some changes, such as the locomotive's ability to burn both coal and crude oil for better efficiency. Several local patents, such as the Cosmovici oil nozzle and the Alexandru Popp safety valve, contributed to the security of the process. For the local railways, under the rugged relief of Banat Montan, smaller, but more robust, more powerful locomotives were built at Resita, equipped with a Kraus-Helmholtz chassis. Resident workers sent to training courses in Germany had mastered the construction of the wheels of a mountain locomotive patented by the engineer in Munich, nominated in the previous sentence.

The difficulties of the reconstruction era that followed the first global conflagration were bolstered by the ceasing of the activities of industrial sites in the Banat Mountains. Copper mines, for example, were closed in 1921, with the Romanian state banning the exploitation of this ore. Only a special authorization was granted in Ocna de Fier. Copper exploits from Moldova Nouă, Sasca Montană, Ciclova, Dognececa were equally closed. This caused the acid reaction of some writers [11]. It is worth noting the narrative approach with satirical accents, made by Simeon Samuel Moldovan: "Through this government moratorium, the local population has become unemployed, and the richest county of Romania (Caras-Severin) has been thrown into misery. After the beautiful industrial past of Ciclova, in which mining and ironmongery merged from the creation of a mechanical baroque workshop, until the opening of a mint, a catastrophic regression came about due to the obtuse of the governmental organs. Romanians, the ancestral population, are hungry and German industrial schoolmen have to emigrate, even the Gypsies who are privileged by the precious metal crafts carry a miserable existence only on their musical talent "[12].

We recall that one of the main ways to improve the material situation, adopted by the ethnic Germans, was to go to work abroad. Several workers of German origin in the Banat Mountains opted to emigrate based on a better paid job offer to mitigate the effects of the global overproduction crisis. Miners in the Banat Mountains, especially those of German origin, chose to move to the rich coal and iron ore areas in France, namely Alsace and Lorraine. Considering that German was spoken by a significant percentage of the population in these two regions, their integration into the new lucrative environment did not represent a problem [1].

A first group of 41 German miners from Secu emigrated to France at the end of May 1930. According to an agreement between the Romanian and French governments in June of that year, miners with 5 or more children were entitled to Leave with the whole family. The costs of transport and subsistence from Timișoara to France were borne by the employer. Workers continued to pay 10% of the monthly salary to the Romanian trade unions in which they were enrolled, while enjoying the rights under French labour law. The usual working day amounted to 8 hours, for which the miners were paid 28 francs for the coal mining and 30 francs for the iron ore exploitation. Accommodation was made in colonies built for workers, with a daily cost of between 10 and 20 francs. Daily foods cost between 10 and 12 francs [2]. The French employer undertakes to pay daily for each worker the equivalent of the cost per litter of wine.
In mid-July 1930, the committee for the recruitment of volunteer miners came to Resita. The French employer was represented by 2 specialists and the Romanian state of 1 inspector from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. 120 workers were employed by individual contract. A first group of them, totalling 70 people, left on August 17 of the same year to France. Professor Franz Wagner offered French free hours to work abroad [3]. On November 7, 1930, the commission returned to Resita but had also moved to Anina, and four days later 12 miners had gone to France. The working and living conditions were not the best, as Anton Stupak, a German worker from Doman who had been employed in Luneville. The letter had been published in the Reschitzzaer Zeitung. The Issuer reported the following:

"Even here our situation is not the best. We work from 7.30 to 12.30 in the morning, then we have a 45-minute meal break. In the afternoon, we work from 13.15 until 18.15. Most Luneville workers, including the natives, around 95% of them work 90 minutes over the program to earn a satisfactory salary. The average leaf is 4 francs per hour (about 24 lei, Anton Stupak's note). However, living is hard, with food being 40% to 60% more expensive than in Resita. Instead, bedding, clothes and household items are 30% to 45% cheaper. In Luneville there are 14 workers from Resita, some of whom will return home for Christmas. The others will resist the 6 months until the contract expires, then move to another city where living conditions are better. If subsistence costs are all the same we will all return after one year in Romania" [4].

3. Conclusion

These data imply unmistakable progress in demographic, but especially occupational terms, within the German minority living in the urban communities of Banat Montana. Working as vendors, barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, butchers, tanners, plumbers, painters or as doctors, dentists, lawyers, they contributed to the material and spiritual development not only of their own minority but also of communities Where they were born and thrived [5].

Within the research undertaking there have been explained the following existence aspects of the German community from the Mountainous Banat in the timeframe between the two world wars:

1. Defining of a minority group in relation to the majority one within a national European state in the interwar period. The finality of the scientific undertaking related to one or more national minorities in Romania, generally, but also to the Germans from the Banat Highland, especially [6].

2. The impact of the ascension and recession periods during the economic evolution of the interwar Romanian state, on the German community from the Banat Mountains [7].

3. The influence on the Germans from the Banat Mountains by the main political currents and doctrines during the first half of the 20th century. Their position towards socialism social democracy, communism, fascism, and national-socialism [8].

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