

## IMPERIAL INTO NATIONAL OFFICERS

### K. (u.) k. Officers of Romanian Nationality before and after the Great War



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Postwar transitions are notoriously difficult. On both the winning and losing sides, there are both winners and losers, and change affects people in many ways. The breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 and the ensuing transition to nation-states and federations blurred the lines between winners and losers, especially when the population of the same ethnicity had been divided among empire and nation-state. This was the case of the Empire's Romanians, who, ever since a Romanian state emerged in 1859, had a nation-state to look to and in some—though by no means all—cases, gravitate toward.

Yet rather than examining Romanian irredentism in the Empire, this chapter maps the transition from empire to nation-state for those Romanians whose lives and careers were deeply embedded in and dependent upon the Empire—career officers who swore professional allegiance to the Habsburg emperor. By 1918, there were at least fifteen generals of Romanian nationality in the Austro-Hungarian army, and commensurate lower-ranking officers. The literature on these men is scant and uneven, with some of them better researched and documented and others merely figuring as names in military records. On the other hand, the literature on the Austrian Military Border, where many of the officers came from, is more substantial. Moreover, high-ranking officers from this region are particularly well represented in these works.<sup>1</sup>

In following the trajectory of Austro-Hungarian officers of Romanian nationality from the Habsburg into the Romanian army, this chapter focuses on the dual—imperial and national—nature of their allegiance and its transformation after World War I. It argues that this transformation did not presuppose a switching of allegiances, but rather the continuation of old loyalties in a new guise. My contribution thus examines the formation of a Romanian military elite in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; its relations with the Romanian state; the role these officers played in Romanian cultural politics inside the Empire; their allegiance and behavior during World War I; and their role in combatting postwar anarchy and restoring order. Finally, the chapter explores individual careers in the new state.

## The Making of Imperial Officers

By the late nineteenth century, a pyramid of military schools was available in the Habsburg Empire as career pathways to high rank for gifted students of non-noble origin. The Romanian imperial officers considered in this article all studied in such schools. The lowest level of Habsburg military education had three tiers. The first—the *Militär Unter-Erziehungshäuser* (later known as *Militär Unterrealschulen*)—prepared students for the *Militär Ober-Erziehungshäuser* (*Militär Oberrealschulen*). This was followed by the *Schul-Compagnien* (known as *Kadettenschulen* from 1866), which trained noncommissioned officers, or *Unteroffiziere*.<sup>2</sup> These institutions, whose names and location varied during the nineteenth century, formed a recruitment pool for the academies, which constituted the second level of military training. The Military Academy at Wiener-Neustadt furnished lieutenants to the infantry, cavalry, and riflemen units (*Jäger*). The Artillery Academy at Mährisch Weißkirchen (Hranice) prepared officers for artillery and sapper units, as well as for the railway and telegraph regiments.<sup>3</sup>

The more famous of these two academies, the *Wiener-Neustädter Akademie* (or *Theresianische Militär-Akademie*), was founded by Empress Maria Theresa in 1752. Joseph II's donation letter (*Stiftsbrief*) of 1786 stipulated that of the four hundred places in the Academy, 304 were to be reserved for the sons of those who had served faithfully as superior officers. The letter took special account of orphans and the children of worthy parents (or of parents who served in regions where there were no educational opportunities).<sup>4</sup> The institution was famed for producing an elite officer corps. The historian Alan Sked describes its lavish lifestyle (including four-course dinners) and strict rules, which encouraged segregation from family and, even, the outside world.<sup>5</sup>

The Wiener-Neustädter officer was easily recognizable in society and often found it difficult to integrate. Theoretically superior to other officers, he could

be socially inadequate after so many years of secluded military instruction.<sup>6</sup> Yet the Theresien Military Academy also held unexpected opportunity for the professional and social advancement of pupils from humbler backgrounds. As the archivist Michael Hochedlinger writes, “the Military Academy did not serve to discipline the nobility, unlike the Prussian cadet schools, but primarily provided a welcome opportunity for impecunious subaltern officers who had risen from the ranks to have their sons educated at public expense and then commissioned into some regiment, again without having to pay for it.”<sup>7</sup>

Although Wiener-Neustadt was the more famous of the two military academies, the *Fachanstalt* (technical academy) was the more rigorous when it came to military proficiency. This was, above all, because the latter’s skills-based admissions criteria were largely meritocratic, whereas the *Theresianische Militär-Akademie* was restricted to the sons of impoverished nobility, imperial officers, and clerks. This ensured the *Fachanstalt* a socially broader student body.<sup>8</sup>

Yet not all officers’ sons could enter the military academies due to the small number of available places. The so-called cadet schools (*Kadettenschulen*, known until 1866 as *Schulcompagnien* and after 1875 as *Infanterieschulen*) made up for this shortage.<sup>9</sup> These schools were less restrictive than the academies and privileged practical over theoretical subjects.<sup>10</sup> There was a cavalry cadet school in Mährisch-Weißkirchen (Hranice), an artillery cadet school in Vienna, and a *Pionnier-Kadettenschule* in Hainburg, which also trained officers for the railway and telegraph regiments.<sup>11</sup>

The third level of military instruction was the *Kriegsschule* (War Academy), with its advanced artillery and engineering courses for outstanding officers who had already served three years.<sup>12</sup> These schools of higher military education and specialization contributed to the erosion of the aristocratic promotion system in the Habsburg army.<sup>13</sup> They constituted a meritocratic means of advancement and, in the case of the *Kriegsschule*, a gateway to high command.<sup>14</sup> Highly skilled and professionally versatile officers were employed by the *Generalstab* (General Staff), which by the nineteenth century had become a vital military institution tasked with the army’s strategic, tactical, and administrative organization. As the historian Allmayer-Beck shows, the General Staff officers formed a special elite within the officer corps.<sup>15</sup>

The officers produced in these schools wielded what Heinz Hartmann called “functional authority,” or authority based on specialized knowledge and skills which are achieved rather than ascribed.<sup>16</sup> In other words, they are arrived at meritocratically. It’s thus no surprise that the *Kenntnisse* (knowledge) and *Geschicklichkeiten* (skills) sections of high-ranking officers’ *Qualifikationslisten* (CVs) are impressive by any measure. These men were truly the gray matter of the Habsburg military establishment.

## Imperial and National Allegiance among Romanian Officers

In his classic work *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918*, the historian István Deák argues that the education received by imperial officers was blind to all nationalism and predicated upon loyalty to the Emperor. This is confirmed by the military papers of the time, which omitted nationality from its personnel descriptions. The fact that the army as an institution was nationality-blind does not, however, mean that its individual members did not nurture a sense of national belonging, or that national identity was institutionally repressed. In the case of Romanian officers, various army institutions and organizations helped to instill both a sense of imperial loyalty *and* national awareness. Some, like in the Austrian Military Border (from which most of the officers discussed below came), did so directly. Yet others used such indirect opportunities as religious services provided in the mother tongue to encourage expressions of national pride that were consistent with imperial allegiance.<sup>17</sup>

Far from inhabiting an ivory tower that made them oblivious to their national background, imperial officers of Romanian nationality, especially the high-ranking ones, were often involved in cultural projects initiated by the Empire's Romanian community. They were among the most important subscribers to Romanian periodicals; donated funds for Romanian schools and cultural organizations/activities; and they used their military status to strengthen petitions for cultural and linguistic rights. Such initiatives may have been circumscribed by injunctions against political involvement by active officers, but they were not at variance with their imperial allegiance or military status. On the contrary, a recurrent argument in support of this cultural activism was that it strengthened the Empire by satisfying the reasonable claims of all nationalities. In other words, there was no inherent conflict between the equitable treatment of the nationalities and loyalty to the Monarchy.

Brigadier General Trajan Doda (1822–95), a graduate of the Wiener-Neustadt Military Academy and recipient of the *Militär Verdienst-Kreuz* (Military Merit Cross, or MVK), was perhaps the era's most famous Romanian general in the imperial army. He had seen action in 1848–49, 1859, and 1866, and proved to be an excellent commander and administrator. General Doda entered politics after his retirement in 1872, and was repeatedly elected to the Hungarian Parliament as an independent who supported a national-imperial program. As he stressed in the political platform he presented to his constituents in Karánsebes (Caransebeș) in 1873:

Each nationality has the right to educate and develop its youth in their mother tongue. On this premise, the Germans should have German schools, the Romanians

Romanian schools, the Serbs Serbian schools, the Slovaks Slovakian schools; in short, each nationality should have schools in its language. National education and development should not, however, be confined to popular and civil schools—they should be extended to higher institutions, including universities. . . . If a nationality does not have the necessary means to maintain these schools, it is the State's duty to provide [them] out of the State treasury. For if we are liable to support the State with our entire wealth and being, then the State, in turn, is duty-bound to give us the necessary means for our cultural national development.<sup>18</sup>

General Doda further argued that the national languages “be introduced and used in public life,” while also recognizing Hungarian as “the language of the government and legislation.” In 1889, his criticism of the Hungarian electoral system incurred charges of incitement against the Hungarian nation. Doda rejected these accusations as wholly incompatible with his military ethos, writing in his petition for grace to the Emperor (July 1889): “An imperial general inciting hatred against a nationality! I, who have always upheld the principle that only brotherly communion and the collaboration of all peoples that make up Austria-Hungary can preserve this monarchy! I should laugh at such an allegation if its consequences were not so terribly sad.”<sup>19</sup>

General Doda was hardly alone among Romanian imperial officers in terms of his national-imperial agenda. Brigadier General Michael Trapsia, a graduate of the Technical Military Academy who like Doda hailed from the Banat Military Border, supported Romanian newspapers and bequeathed funds to establish a Romanian-language girls' school in Karánsebes (Caransebeș). As with other imperial officers, Trapsia maintained close ties with leaders of the Romanian national movement in the Empire.<sup>20</sup> Another officer and MVK holder who promoted Romanian cultural activities in the Monarchy was David Urs, Baron of Margina (1816–97) and Knight of the Theresian Order. Urs was a founding member of the *Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatură Română și Cultura Poporului Român* (Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, or ASTRA), which many Austro-Hungarian generals of Romanian nationality joined. In a 1902 ASTRA report, General Alexander Lupu is listed among the donors to a fund for establishing the first historical and ethnographical museum of Romanians under the Crown of St. Stephen.<sup>21</sup> Urs himself bequeathed his wealth to the Romanian Uniate Church and regularly sponsored cultural projects, for example scholarships for Romanian students. One beneficiary of his patronage was the future General Ioan Boeriu, who, as we will see, played a central role in the transition from empire to national state in 1918.<sup>22</sup>

An examination of the activities and network of *România jună* (Young Romania), a Vienna-based Romanian literary and cultural society, shows that active officers of Romanian nationality were regularly, if most often indirectly, involved with it as well. For example, in 1896 Major General Theodor Seracsin

was listed as having attended the religious service dedicated to departed members of the society and occasioned by its twenty-five year jubilee.<sup>23</sup> Twelve years later, General Lupu spoke at a commemorative meeting of *România jună* held on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Romanian composer Ciprian Porumbescu's untimely death.<sup>24</sup> In the society's annual report for 1891, Aurelia Trapsia-Kron, General Michael Trapsia's wife, figures among its honorary members.<sup>25</sup>

Orthodoxy provided another convergent point between life in the Austro-Hungarian army and Romanian cultural politics. Romanian regiments in Vienna had long celebrated the New Year and Christian holidays in the garrison church, each confession having its own priest.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the Romanian Orthodox community in Vienna shared a church with the Greeks on the basis of a late eighteenth-century imperial privilege. Eventually, a Romanian Orthodox chapel was established in the capital thanks largely to the efforts of General Lupu.<sup>27</sup> When the chapel was consecrated in January 1907, two Romanian generals from the former Austrian Military Border, Michael Sandru and Daniel Matering, were in attendance.<sup>28</sup>

General Lupu (1838–1925) had risen from the ranks. According to his *Qualificationsliste*, he spent his first eight years of service in the Romanian Banat Border Regiment No. 13. It took him almost twenty years to be promoted to captain, another nine to reach major, and eight years to become a colonel. Twelve years after retiring in 1896, Lupu received his Brigadier General rank as *Titel und Charakter*, that is, upon retirement, without actually discharging this function in active service.<sup>29</sup> General Lupu's national allegiance manifested itself through active involvement with the Romanian Orthodox community in Vienna. In his autobiographical notes, he recorded his endeavors toward establishing the aforementioned Romanian Orthodox chapel:

After ascertaining that the parishioners of the Viennese Greek-Orthodox churches, namely the Greek, Russian, and Serbian church, spoke Romanian more than any other language, I decided to draw up a list of all the Romanians in Vienna. In 1898 I extracted all the Romanian addresses from the Lehmann dictionary; I then sent the young people from *România jună* throughout Vienna to verify the Romanian identity of these families. I personally went to Catholic monasteries to find out how many Romanian girls were there; I then requested from the *Schulrat* the name of all the Romanian Greek-Orthodox female students enrolled at secondary and national [*poporale*] schools in Vienna.<sup>30</sup>

For Lupu, Romanian identity was defined by language and Orthodoxy (hence his worry that Romanian girls were being educated as Catholics). His informal census constituted the first step toward the creation of a Romanian Orthodox Society in Vienna. After building the centrally located chapel (8 Löwelstraße), the Society went on to establish a parish church.<sup>31</sup>

These endeavors to solidify the Romanian community in Vienna represented an integrationist assertion of national identity. The resulting society—*Asociația română greco-orientală jubiliar imperială pentru zidirea bisericii și întemeierea comunității bisericești din Viena* (roughly translates as: the Greek Orthodox Romanian Association which was founded on the occasion of the Imperial Jubilee for Building a Romanian Church and Parish in Vienna)—affirmed its imperial loyalty by timing its church-building project with the jubilee celebrations of Emperor Franz Joseph’s sixty-year reign (1908). This assertion of national and religious identity thus presupposed a *reaffirmation* of Romanians’ monarchical allegiance. It also sought to dispel suspicion of secessionist intentions implicit in Lower Austrian officials’ 1892 refusal to permit the foundation of a Romanian national colony on the grounds that, as citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the applicants did not require one.<sup>32</sup> Further, Lupu resolved the problem of obtaining a Romanian priest for the chapel by directly asking the War Minister to permit the military priest, Dr. Virgil Ciobanu, to perform religious rites outside of his regimental duties.<sup>33</sup> Lupu’s action again demonstrates how high military rank and national activism were by no means incompatible in the Empire. Indeed, careful and resourceful officers profited from their prestige and connections to become leading patrons of national culture.

## Relations with the Romanian Kingdom

With the founding of a modern Romanian state in 1859 (albeit still under Ottoman suzerainty until 1878), there was a steady flow of manpower and military knowhow from the Habsburg army to the new Romanian one.<sup>34</sup> Although the first Romanian military academies had been established in the 1840s–50s, the fledgling army vitally needed expertise from abroad, and families like the Brătianus (doyens of the Romanian National Liberal Party) were keen to attract it in the form of high-ranking Romanian nationals in the Habsburg army. Thus, in 1868, during a controversy over the use of Prussian army instructors, Dumitru Brătianu wrote:

I believe that we absolutely need at least three or four of the most distinguished Romanian officers in Austria, even if this means that the Prince will have to guarantee their position until it can be regulated by Parliament; and as an incentive, it would be good if they could be promised a higher rank than the one they held or are holding in the Austrian army. . . . I do not see any pressing need for foreign instructors; on the contrary, it is a weakness on our part to show the world that, just like the Turks, we are in perpetual need of foreign leaders. We do, indeed, need several experienced officers, but [let them be] Romanian.<sup>35</sup>

The 1877–78 Russo-Turkish war boosted efforts to draw Romanian officers from the Austro-Hungarian army. Apart from volunteers who enthusiastically crossed the Carpathians from the Monarchy's Hungarian half to join Romania's campaign for independence from the Porte, Romanian authorities conducted informal and eventually abortive negotiations to secure an experienced Chief of General Staff and other high-ranking military officers. This was part of a strategic plan for Romania to strengthen its postwar claim on independence by entering the war under its own command, rather than merely providing auxiliary troops to the Tsar. Various Romanian political leaders thus went to Austria-Hungary to sound out high-ranking Romanian officers. Retired Brigadier General Trajan Doda, an MP in Hungary, was the main target of these overtures. Inquiries were also made for Colonel David Urs Baron of Margina, Colonel Michael Trapsia, and Brigadier General Alexander Guran, all of whom came from Romanian regiments in the former Austrian Military Border.<sup>36</sup>

These recruiting efforts were unprecedented only insofar as they were directed at the highest echelons of the Austro-Hungarian military. Voluntary emigration from the Habsburg into the Romanian army had been encouraged before and proven its worth to the new force's battlefield performance. Indeed, two of the army's ablest and most famous generals, Moise Groza (1844–1919) and Ioan Dragalina (1860–1916), had transferred from the Austro-Hungarian army as lieutenants and made their marks in Romania as wartime officers. Groza, who immigrated in 1873, at the urging of the War Minister Ioan Florescu (they had met two years earlier during a cartographical mission on the Transylvanian border), disregarded orders during the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish war, brought his cartographical expertise to bear on its conduct, and helped break the military deadlock. His action not only saved lives, it made Groza into a hero of the Romanian officer corps. Later in peacetime, he founded Romania's first military-geographical institute.<sup>37</sup>

Ioan Dragalina graduated from the Wiener-Neustadt Military Academy, where, like his father, he specialized in geodetic engineering. His itinerant childhood between Karánsebes (Caransebeș) and Râmnicu-Vâlcea (southeastern Romania), coupled with his experience as a young lieutenant serving in Line Regiment No. 43 (in Karánsebes), likely influenced Dragalina's decision to emigrate and join the Romanian army. In a biography by his son Virgil, there is an episode that sheds light on the young officer's loyalties. During the Hungarian parliamentary elections of June 1884, two candidates were competing for MP in Boksánbánya (Bocșa Română), southern Hungary: the future Hungarian prime minister István Tisza; and Coriolan Brediceanu, a lawyer who belonged to the Romanian National Party in Hungary. Lieutenant Dragalina was commanding the troops assigned to maintain order during the elections. When local civilian authorities instructed him only to allow voters supporting the Hungarian candidate to pass, Dragalina refused. In response, he was publicly insulted to the



point of demanding satisfaction. His son documented the episode with a copy of the official report the Lieutenant submitted to his superiors.<sup>38</sup> On 1 December 1887, the Austro-Hungarian army approved his resignation, and ten days later, Dragalina joined the Romanian army with the same rank. Upon leaving for the Romanian Kingdom, he met with retired General Trajan Doda who reportedly told him: “The oppressed Banat loses a brave fighter; free Romania wins a brilliant officer. Which will be more fateful for our nation?”<sup>39</sup>

In Romania, Dragalina embarked upon a successful military career thanks to the skills and qualifications he had acquired in Austria-Hungary. As Captain Dragalina, he served under Colonel Constantin Prezan, a Romanian general in World War I who eulogized him in 1936: “to his teachings I owe the tactics and strategy and all I knew and applied during the war and as Chief of the General Staff.”<sup>40</sup> General Dragalina died of his wounds in 1916 while commanding the 1st Romanian Army, depriving the country of one “of its most dynamic and inspiring field commanders” just months after it had entered World War I.<sup>41</sup>

Another successful military émigré from Austria-Hungary, Traian Moșoiu (1868–1932), joined the Romanian army in 1891 and was quickly promoted to colonel during the Balkan wars. In World War I, he served in the 1st Romanian Army, which pushed into Transylvania in 1916. By the war’s end, Moșoiu was a brigadier general with a central role in administering Transylvania and organizing the Romanian troops deployed against the communist regime in Budapest.<sup>42</sup>

As the historian Glenn Torrey points out, such examples of military migration were not “uncommon during the early years of Romania’s membership in the Triple Alliance.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, contact between officers in the Austro-Hungarian and Romanian armies regularly took place through military exchanges, invitations to maneuvers, social occasions like the celebration of King Carol of Romania’s birthday, and informal cross-border relations between Romanian officers in Austria-Hungary and their conationals in the Kingdom of Romania. Indeed, on the eve of the outbreak of war in 1914, retired Major General Nikolaus Cena was receiving two high-ranking Romanian officers as part of a “courtesy call.”<sup>44</sup> And in September 1914, Austrian Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf cites an exchange of letters between officers in the Romanian and Austro-Hungarian armies.<sup>45</sup>

## World War I and the Test of Allegiances

When World War I broke out, Austro-Hungarian officers of Romanian nationality were both well-integrated and nationally conscious. Some, particularly among retired officers, were highly regarded in their local communities and active promoters of Romanian language and culture. There is even evidence that they collaborated with prominent members of the Romanian National Party and had

contacts with officers in the Romanian Kingdom. During the war, however, such intermingling got some of these officers into trouble. In August 1914, retired Major General Nikolaus Cena spent nearly a month in prison on suspicion of espionage deriving from his support for the Romanian Orthodox Church and Romanian culture in Mehadia (southern Hungary) where he was president of the Orthodox parish. Cena was keenly interested in the region's Roman past and had contacts with officers in the Romanian army. Yet when interrogated about these liaisons, he insisted that whenever the subject of taking sides in a war came up, he told the Romanian officers: "I would be very sorry about that, but in that case the war would find us on opposite sides."<sup>46</sup> The espionage charges were eventually dropped.

Similarly, in early 1918, retired General Alexander Lupu was tried by a Vienna military court for providing "support through occasional monetary contributions and the procurement of salaried positions . . . at several Romanian institutions" to two persons accused of espionage. He was also alleged to have supplied them with "an ethnographic map of the Monarchy extracted from a military work and annotated with information on the number of people of Romanian nationality in the regiments," as well as other useful military knowhow.<sup>47</sup> Since no indication of the trial's outcome has been forthcoming, one may assume that, as with General Cena, the evidence was either too tenuous to produce a conviction or the Monarchy's dissolution rendered the case irrelevant. But the point is that these two legal actions involved retired officers who, by virtue of their rank and status, were highly regarded by Romanians both in the Empire and the Romanian Kingdom. Both also turned out to be wartime misinterpretations of cultural networking.

In virtually all cases, active imperial officers of Romanian nationality executed their duties faithfully throughout the war. Indeed, there were no egregious cases of defection among officers. Some were even decorated and promoted for their military accomplishments. And if this were partially abetted by an imperial policy that strove to avoid sending troops to a front where they would be fighting their conationals, this alone cannot explain the Romanian officers' impressive service record. The three officers considered below—Domaschnian, Boeriu, and Bacsilla—illustrate how successful careers in the Habsburg military and exemplary wartime performance did not preclude retaining connections with the national community in the Empire. Two of these men, as we shall also see, were to be equally successful in the post-World War I Romanian state.

One of the few sources for officers' military performance is the *Qualificationsliste*, those generally dry and pragmatic CVs with basic information on skills, training, and career path. Seldom does the superior officer's notation rise above a formulaic appraisal. Yet this is exactly what makes the assessment of General Georg Domaschnian (1868–1940) so useful to scholars. Domaschnian's 1918 military referees sang his praises: "distinguished, chivalrous character, noble-minded and

enthusiastic, full of ideals; generous and of a lucid and broad mind; quick on the uptake and accurate, with sharp judgment and rapid decisions.” According to his *Qualificationsliste*, Domaschnian possessed all the characteristics of an exceptional troop leader: courageous, coldblooded, decisive. One of the referees even recommended him for commander of the prestigious *Kriegsschule* in Vienna. Another called him “a complete man, an exceptional general.”<sup>48</sup> Two years earlier, in 1916, the Imperial War Minister Alexander Freiherr von Krobatin summed up his portrait of Domaschnian on an equally superlative note: “one of the most outstanding officers, in character and spirit that I have ever met in my long military career.”<sup>49</sup>

Domaschnian was an ethnic Romanian of Greek Orthodox faith who, like other officers we have encountered, hailed from the former Austrian Military Border. His peacetime military career—*Militär-Unterrealschule*, *Militär-Oberrealschule*, Wiener-Neustadt, War Academy in Vienna—and outstanding wartime performance mixed naturally with his concern for his fellow nationals in the Empire. Taking advantage of his elevated position in the War Ministry in 1914 (Domaschnian was working in the ministry’s fourth department when the hostilities broke out), he interceded on behalf of his colleague, General Cena, who sought satisfaction for moral injury sustained during his wrongful imprisonment in the aforementioned espionage case:

I feel duty bound to inform you that I have known FMLt Cena since I was a child, that I respect and consider him a model officer who is highly regarded by everyone in his community, Hungarian chauvinists excepted. If sufficient satisfaction is not granted to FMLt Cena, this would give the impression that the officer in general—the first class in the Monarchy—has been abandoned to the whims of the civil administration, which could have detrimental effects on the loyal population of the former Border.<sup>50</sup>

Ioan Boeriu (1859–1949) and Traian Bacsilla (1867–1931) also pursued successful military careers in the Austro-Hungarian army. Like his mentor and scholarship sponsor Colonel Urs de Margina, Boeriu was awarded both the Knight Cross of the Maria Theresa Order and the Knight Cross of the Leopold Order for his distinction in World War I. He was also promoted to major general. Injuries eventually forced Boeriu from the frontline, though he served the Empire to the very end at the War Ministry in Vienna.<sup>51</sup>

As for the Wiener-Neustadt graduate Bacsilla (1867–1931), he reached the rank of Brigadier General (*Generalmajor*) in 1917. Described in his CV as lively and sociable, Bacsilla seems to have gotten the best of both worlds: a flourishing military career *and* a family. Bacsilla was one of the lucky few officers whose fiancée’s family could guarantee the *Heiratskaution* necessary to obtain permission to marry.<sup>52</sup>

For the Habsburg officer corps, the final weeks of the world war were the swan song of their careers. Despite war weariness and social upheaval, their imperial

loyalty shone brightest just as the Empire was unraveling fastest. In a moving depiction of those days, the Transylvanian Hungarian aristocrat Miklós Bánffy, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1921 in rump Hungary, reminisced about Habsburg officers guarding the *Hofburg*:

[I] was told that a few hundred officers, of their own free will and dressed as common soldiers, had occupied the palace and the museums and in uninterrupted shifts, guarded the place so strictly that no one was allowed in or out. Deeply loyal, in spite of all that had been happening in the last weeks, they felt it their duty to guard what they considered imperial property. There, right in the centre of the city, the *Hofburg* was like a warship alone at sea, hopelessly battling against a raging storm and yet, manned by a loyal crew still faithful to their duty, still fighting on despite the fact that the leader to whom they owed that duty had abandoned them. . . .

All the same it was beautiful to see and touching. It was the last time that there was to be seen the true spirit of *Mannstreue*, that ray of moral sunshine such as had been seen in the *Nibelungenlied*.<sup>53</sup>

The Austrian journalist Friedrich Funder similarly recalled how the Transylvanian Romanian lieutenant Iuliu Maniu reported to the War Ministry in Vienna in order to offer his troops to protect government buildings and institutions. He made good on the offer—his final imperial duty before returning to Transylvania. There, as a political leader of Transylvanian Romanians, Maniu took part in the National Assembly that resolved to unify Transylvania with the Romanian Kingdom.<sup>54</sup>

## Postwar: The Transfer of Allegiance and Careers to the New State

What became of Romanian officers in the Austro-Hungarian army after 1918? Their paradoxical situation was more pronounced than that of the civilian population, since the officers had not only fought to defend the Empire, but since 1916 they had been at war with Romania itself. Moreover, their entire personal and professional ethos centered upon duty to the Habsburg dynasty and preservation of its Empire. More than any other professional class, Austro-Hungarian imperial officers were children of the Empire.

Nevertheless, many of them chose to join the enlarged Romanian state after 1918, including high-ranking officers like General Boeriu. Boeriu himself even had an important role in the negotiations that brought Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina into the Romanian Kingdom. Was this “switching sides” at odds with their status as imperial officers? Did it amount to suppressed irredentism that betrayed their imperial devotions? Correspondingly, how did their peers in the Romanian army respond to this apparent change in loyalties? Did they

receive the new officers warmly, as long-lost brethren; or rather, did friction and even animosity lurk behind the facade of national reunion?

Tracing the former Austro-Hungarian officers into the post-1918 Romanian army poses problems both orthographic and bibliographic. In his *Liste aller aus der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee hervorgegangenen Offiziere, die 1930/1931 in der rumänischen Armee noch aktiv waren* (“List of all officers originating in the Austro-Hungarian army, who in 1930–31 were still active in the Romanian Army”), Franz Kuschniriuk noted that, “once included in the Romanian army yearbook, several names were orthographically altered. First names were, for the most part, Romanianized and sometimes replaced by Romanian equivalents (for instance, Rudolf became Radu).”<sup>55</sup> Some of these alterations predated the empire’s collapse. General Michael Trapsia initially spelled his name “Trapscha,” in the German fashion. But in 1879, he requested the Romanian spelling be used instead.<sup>56</sup> General Cena’s first name varied from Nicolai in autograph documents to Nikolaus in official documents. After 1918, one finds still more variations, including Trașă/Trașă and Nicolai/Nicolae. Trajan Bacșilla would henceforth be Traian Băcilă, and Georg Domaschnian became Gheorghe Domășneanu.

The second, more crucial problem with following officers from the imperial into the national army is the dearth and fragmentary nature of the sources. The bibliography on the post-1918 period is more diffuse than that for Austria-Hungary, in part because Romanian historiography has traditionally concentrated on 1918 as a moment of national apotheosis and thus viewed the transition from empire(s) to nation-state as a natural, even teleological one. What follows in terms of the personal and professional destinies of former k. (u.) k. officers has by necessity been pieced together from sources ranging from newspapers, prosopographic articles, memoirs, and diaries.

Before the collapse of Austria-Hungary at the end of the world war, Emperor Franz Joseph’s death in 1916 had already eliminated a powerful imperial symbol and vital cohesive force for the nationalities. His young and inexperienced successor, Karl I, was unequal to the enormous task of rebuilding this bond with his various peoples. Moreover, Karl was too dwarfed by his great uncle’s mighty stature to command widespread respect and loyalty amid such an unprecedented crisis. The flight of the imperial family from the Hofburg in 1918 not only confirmed the victory of the republic—it was the final act in the life of the Habsburg Monarchy.

It was in this context that Romanian soldiers and officers gradually made their way back to their home provinces, which now de facto belonged to the enlarged Romanian state. At the end of the war and before the Treaty of Trianon came into effect, Transylvania and much of eastern Hungary were occupied by Romanian troops. From his position at the War Ministry, General Boeriu was well placed to take charge of the fluid situation and organize the Romanian troops of the disintegrating k. (u.) k. army. He thus liaised with the Governing Council

(*Consiliul dirigent*) the Romanians had established in Transylvania, and later went there to serve in the National Assembly at Alba Iulia as part of the Council's military section. On 1 December 1918, the Council decided that Transylvania would join the Romanian Kingdom. In an order issued in February 1919 and signed by Boeriu himself, the Military Command in Sibiu began forming a Transylvanian army from active Romanian nationals in the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. General Boeriu's signature was also on the circular—disseminated in both German and Romanian—that delineated the terms by which each recruit would be sworn into the new army.<sup>57</sup>

Like Boeriu, the retired general Nikolaus Cena spent the better part of the war in Vienna, though in his case it was a condition of the Hungarian authorities for his release from prison rather than a consequence of combat injuries. He returned home to Mehadia, in the Banat, at the conclusion of hostilities. His friend and Mehadia's Orthodox priest, Coriolan Buracu, wrote in his memoirs that Cena received the Romanian troops with open arms and tear-filled eyes.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, he was welcomed into the Romanian army at the same rank at which he had retired from the k. (u.) k. army. His collection of Roman artifacts—which attracted so much suspicion in 1914—was turned into a museum visited by military and civilian grandees from Bucharest. An old man at war's end, Cena appears to have remained a local personality, though his correspondence also indicates that he gradually withdrew from positions of power.<sup>59</sup>

Immediately after the war, General Domaschnian (after 1918, Romanian sources refer to him as Domășneanu) took charge of the military division in Temesvár (Timișoara). In 1929, he entered politics as a member of the Romanian National Peasant Party and was elected Mayor of Timișoara. He even ran for the Romanian Parliament, though he seems to have been sidelined by political machinations.<sup>60</sup> Iosif Iacobici (1884–1952) also entered politics after transferring into the Romanian army (as a lieutenant-colonel) in 1918. By World War II, he had risen to Major General and served as both the War Minister and Chief of Staff in Ion Antonescu's government. Iacobici was replaced in 1942 for opposing Antonescu's plan to advance into Soviet territory with German troops.<sup>61</sup>

Other former k. (u.) k. officers also went into Romanian politics. Officers had traditionally maintained connections with the Romanian National Party in the Monarchy's Hungarian half, so some, such as Domășneanu, joined the Romanian Peasant Party (created out of the merger in 1926 between the Romanian National Party of Transylvania and the Peasant Party of the Romanian Kingdom). Others supported more nationalist parties. Colonel Romulus Boldea, the son of a Romanian Orthodox priest in southern Hungary, founded the Christian National Party, which fused Octavian Goga's Agrarians with A. C. Cuza's League of National-Christian Defense.<sup>62</sup> After transferring into the Romanian army, he acted as Prefect of Severin County and eventually became an MP. Traian Moșoiu, by contrast, had liberal leanings, though he also

served several governments in key functions: War Minister (1920), Minister of Communications, and Minister of Public Works (1922–26).<sup>63</sup>

Although the outcome of retired General Lupu's trial in late 1918 remains unclear, we do know—from documents related to his wife's *Heiratskaution*—that he stayed in Vienna after the war. According to Victor Lăzărescu, Lupu applied for Romanian citizenship even though it cost him his Austrian army pension. Lăzărescu also indicates that Lupu acted as synod and congress representative (*deputat sinodal și congresual*) of the Caransebeș eparchy in Vienna until his death in 1925, and that he and his wife were founding members of ASTRA in Lugoj.<sup>64</sup> Judging from the place of death in their military records, Generals Trajan Bacșilla (Traian Băcilă) and Daniel Materinga, among others, also remained in Vienna after the war.

How were Romanian nationals from the k. (u.) k. army received by the Romanian state and military? While no comprehensive study of this integration yet exists, it is possible to hypothesize based on the lives of individual officers. For example, despite the successful careers of Moise Groza, Ioan Dragalina, and Traian Moșoiu, one still finds evidence of animosity from some of their Romanian Kingdom superiors. A long-unpublished letter from 1906 testifies to Groza's difficulties with certain members of the Romanian War Ministry, who tried forcing him into early retirement. Although their decision was ultimately vetoed by King Carol I, the archivist Valer Rus views the incident as part of a wider campaign by the Romanian Kingdom military establishment to marginalize emigré officers.<sup>65</sup> This would include, for example, Ioan Dragalina and his brother Alexandru's posting to remote poverty-stricken regions shortly after their immigration to Romania and enrollment in the army.<sup>66</sup> Still more egregiously, Traian Moșoiu was blamed for the failure of Romanian troops to take the poorly defended city of Hermannstadt (Sibiu) in August 1916. According to the accusing commanding general, Moșoiu had refused to bomb the city in order to protect family property. Yet General Moșoiu had no relatives in Hermannstadt (Sibiu). In fact, the military debacle was due to the endemically poor lines of communication between Romanian troops and the commanding general's own indecision.<sup>67</sup>

This antagonism was likely rooted in resentment—after all, the former k. (u.) k. officers were not only outsiders (*venetici*), they were better qualified and trained than most of their Romanian Kingdom counterparts. Groza made a name for himself during the 1877–78 war by blatantly disobeying orders and proving his superiors incompetent in the process. He also contributed cartographical skills sorely needed by the young Romanian army. As for Dragalina, his military records are full of superlative assessments. Yet unlike many of his Romanian colleagues, he was opposed to corporal punishment on the grounds that it attested to an officer's poor knowledge and incapacity to train his troops properly. Such a civilizing attitude toward military leadership was also evident

in General Moşoiu's command. Traveling through Hungary shortly after the withdrawal of Romanian troops in autumn 1919, Miklós Bánffy was surprised to see that looting had impoverished the inhabitants in some areas, while in others the troops had not even touched the local property: "I asked in Nagyikgyos why this was, and they told me that, south of the desolate area I had noticed, the Romanian general Moşoiu had been in command and that he had not only forbidden all looting but had also punished it severely."<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

World War I and the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy were inevitably life-changing events for Austro-Hungarian officers of Romanian nationality. Yet while their loyalties underwent a fundamental metamorphosis, this was not in the straightforward sense of forsaking old allegiances and embracing new ones. For most of these men, the imperial strand of loyalty was tightly interwoven with the national one, and the two together determined their identity. Thus, as the former unraveled and lost meaning, these officers still had a national sense of self that they had acquired by virtue of their very military background—reinforced by the fact that many, as we have seen, came from the former Austrian Military Border—and elite status, which enabled them to socialize and collaborate with political representatives of the Romanian national community in the Empire. In other words, the transformation of the officers' loyalties was quantitative rather than qualitative—their national allegiance continued into the postwar period, but one component of it was lost with the Empire itself.

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  19. Marchescu, *Grănicerii bănăţeni şi comunitatea*, 357–61; Irina Marin, “The Formation and Alliance of the Romanian Military Elite Originating from the Banat Military Border” (PhD Diss., University College London, 2009), 207–8.
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  32. Victor Lăzărescu, “Un bănățean promotor al vieții sociale românești din Viena: Generalul Alexandru Lupu,” *Almanahul Parohiei Ortodoxe Române din Viena*, XXVI (Viena, 1987), 90.
  33. Măran and Groza, *Documente vieneze referitoare*, 74–75.
  34. Modern Romania was created by the union of the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia.
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