

THE GERMAN ETHNIC GROUP OF ROMANIA. THE SECOND ASSIGNMENT SOURCE FOR THE WAFFEN-SS*

Dragoş Defta**

Abstract: *An outcome of the interplay between methodical ideological indoctrination and applied war-craft schooling, the final product of the GEG training system consisted of the Waffen-SS soldier. Fully motivated, dogmatically and assiduously qualified in war-techniques, the young Volksdeutsche recruit from Romania acted as an exuberant and impetuous fighter, ready to fulfil Hitler's orders and his Weltanschauung ideals. Considering the numbers hereafter provided by several well-known historians, the GEG in Romania was able to assemble a considerable army of recruits thoroughly prepared to perform as a politized fighting force in consonance with the Waffen-SS ethos, as it had been promoted by its ideologists and military professionals.*

Keywords: German Ethnic Group in Romania, Waffen-SS, National-Socialist ideology, The Third Reich.

„Für uns Deutsche außerhalb der Reichsgrenzen muß es in dieser Kriegsphase das selbstverständliche unseres Gebot unseres Blutes sein, nach genau den gleichen Gesetzen wie das Mutterland zur Entscheidungsschlacht anzutreten“¹.

Volksgruppenführer Andreas Schmidt

General Overview

By the end of World War II, around 150.000 German ethnics² born outside the borders of the Third Reich will have served in the Waffen-SS. Among these, a great number of the *Volksdeutsche* recruits originated from Transylvania and Banat – the two Romanian provinces where German settlements had already existed for centuries; recent studies provide an estimate of around 63.000 of *Siebenbürger Sachsen* and

* This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-2081, within PNCDI III”.

** Cercetător, Institutul de Istorie „George Barițiu” din Cluj-Napoca; e-mail: adefta@yahoo.com;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9166-7999>

¹ „For us Germans outside the borders of the Reich, the natural commandment of our blood must take up the decisive battle in this phase of the war according to exactly the same laws as in the mother country”.

² Jen-Luc Leleu, *La Waffen-SS. Soldats politiques en guerre*, Paris, Perrin, 2007, p. 188.

Banater Schwaben recruits³ to Waffen-SS. If we take this estimation as a rigorous acquiescence, the outcome reveals that 42% of the entire *Volksdeutsche* recruits drafted to Waffen-SS from outside Nazi Germany came from Romania's German Ethnic Group (hereafter abbreviated as GEG) structures. Subsequently, we deal with the largest percentage of Waffen-SS soldiers that filled the ranks of the Waffen-SS were extracted from a single country except the Third Reich.

Between 1933 and 1940, the German minority in Romania had been meticulously updated with regard to the German Reich political development and also received a significant injection of National-Socialist ideology delivered through the medium of highly organised structures of GEG. Up until 1937 has the leadership of the German minority declared its unconditional loyalty towards Romanian authorities⁴. Prior to becoming the main *pépinière* for Waffen-SS from outside Germany, the GEG had to set out complex developments consisting of pre-military training schools and special camps where specific weaponry apprenticeship was provided alongside ideological schooling.

Apart from *Volksdeutsche*, tens of thousands of volunteers (*Freiwilligen*) had been allocated to Waffen-SS divisions from Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Finland⁵. The largest group of so-called *Aryan Germanic* volunteers originated from the Netherlands (an amount 23-25.000), Belgium (10.000 Flemings), Denmark (6.000) and Norway (5.000)⁶. These Nordic recruits were serving as foreign nationals within the Waffen-SS, yet maintaining strict racial criteria. Following the *Unternehmen Barbarossa*, further foreign recruits were accepted from France, Spain and the Balkans⁷. If we agree on the downwards re-evaluation of the Waffen-SS from an elite fighting force to a „quantitative over qualitative expansion” by 1943⁸, we can subsequently note that massive recruitments from Romania were coincidentally and synchronously conducted exactly in the same period; additional aspects should also be considered, such as a growing anti-Romanian frustration alongside rising enthusiasm for Germany⁹ manifested among the young *Volksdeutsche* from Romania. Towards the end of

³ Paul Milata, *Între Hitler, Stalin și Antonescu. Germanii din România în Waffen-SS*, Sibiu, Editura Schiller, 2018, p. 9.

⁴ Jochen Böler & Robert Gerwarth, *The Waffen-SS: A European History*, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 211.

⁵ Robert Koehl, *The SS: A History 1919-1945*, Stroud, 2004, p. 214.

⁶ Claus Bundgård Christensen, Niels Bo Poulsen, Peter Scharff Smith, *Dänen in der Waffen-SS 1940-1945. Ideologie, Integration und Kriegsverbrechen mit anderen „germanischen” Soldaten*, in vol. *Die Waffen-SS. Neue Forschungen*, Jan Erik Schulte, Peter Lieb and Bernd Wegner (eds.), Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014, p. 197.

⁷ George H. Stein, *The Waffen-SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945*, Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 172.

⁸ Bernd Wegner, *Hitlers Politische Soldaten: Die Waffen-SS 1933-1945*, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010, p. 313.

⁹ Paul Milata, *op. cit.*, p. 258-259.

World War II, the Waffen-SS recruitment offices intensified their enlistment efforts by yielding some 20.000 soldiers from Ukraine and other thousands from Estonia and Latvia¹⁰.

Throughout this article, I do emphasise on certain similarities between military training programme conducted within units of the 12th SS Panzer Division „Hitlerjugend” and youth formations of the GEG in Romania, providing relevant examples of almost identical military and training schedules. The prominence of the Romanian *Volksdeutsche* for the Waffen-SS is furthermore illustrated by a series of conspicuous personages who touched the SS’ infamous hall of fame: SS-Obergruppenführer Arthur Phleps, born in Biertan, near Mediasch (German appellation for Mediaş), SS-Obergruppenführer Stefan Hedrich from Bistriz (German appellation for Bistrița), SS-Standartenführer Albert Ludwig; not last, SS-Rottenführer Georg Fleps, born in Mächelsbärch (nowadays named Cîsnădioara, near Sibiu) was one of the main actors in the obscure action developed during the first days of *Unternehmen Wacht am Rhein*, known as the „Malmedy Massacre”¹¹. All examples above prove the perfect integration of the Romanian *Volksdeutsche* within all ranks of the Waffen-SS.

Youth Organisation of the National-Socialist Workers’ Party in Germany and its Leadership

A brief incursion into the „Father-Organisation” of the Third Reich is necessary in order to draw the appropriate analysis of the resemblance between the paramilitary formations that acted under GEG in Romania and those patented in Nazi Germany. Hitler Youth functioned as the youth organisation of the National-Socialist Workers’ Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) in Germany. Its early structures date back to the period between 1922 and 1926, when it was known under different appellations: Hitler Youth (*Hitler Jugend*) and the League of German Worker Youth (*Bund deutscher Arbeitjugend*), respectively. From the time Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 until the final surrender of the Third Reich in 1945, the Hitler Youth was the only partially para-militarised, youth organisation in Germany. The Hitler Youth consisted of two wings: German Youngsters in the Hitler Youth (*Deutsches Jungvolk in der Hitler Jugend*) which admitted young male members aged 10 to 14 and the League of German Girls (*Bund Deutsche Mädel* or *BDM*) which was open to young girls aged 14 to 18. In 1938, a new wing

¹⁰ Jochen Böler & Robert Gerwarth, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

¹¹ For further reading, see Danny Parker, *Fatal Crossroads: The Untold Story of the Malmedy Massacre at the Battle of the Bulge*, Da Capo Press, 2014; Michael Reynolds, *Massacre at Malmedy During the Battle of the Bulge*, „World War II Magazine”, 2007; Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes. United States Army in World War II, The European Theater of Operations*, Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington D.C., 1965 etc.

was attached to the League of German Girls: Faith and Beauty Society (BDM – *Werk Glaube und Schönheit*), which was open to volunteering girls aged 17 to 21.

Germany's main mobilization vector relied on Hitler Youth. Commencing March 1939, all children were conscripted into the Hitler Youth and its various organizations¹². All boys and girls from 10 to 14 had already been conscripted to the German Young People (*Deutsches Jungvolk*), while boys aged 14 to 18 belonged to Hitler Youth¹³. At the top of this massive organization was the Reich Youth Leadership (*Reichsjugendführung*, or *RJF*), whose local structures (branches) were represented by Bann, Gebiet, Stamm and Gefolgschaft offices¹⁴.

Since they were viewed as the future of the National-Socialist Germany, all members of the Hitler Youth were thoroughly indoctrinated in the Nazi ideology and mandated to participate to specific paramilitary programmes, ranging from camping and hiking to weapon instruction, assault and basic military tactics. The main objective of the Hitler Youth Organisation was to educate and motivate its members in order for them to become loyal and resilient soldiers prepared at any moment to fight and give their life for Germany. Every Wednesday evening, a session of ideological training was held in every Hitler Youth section¹⁵, respectively every Saturday, the boys underwent military training, while the girls of BDM were taught courses of delivering first aid techniques, issues of housewares and child care lessons¹⁶. With the outbreak of World War II, Artur Axmann began to reform the Hitler Youth into an auxiliary organisation capable to perform war duties, such as assisting fire brigades and recover wounded and dead in the bombed German cities. Thus, the Hitler Youth sections became recruiting offices for the so-called „war auxiliary services”. Beginning with February 1940, the Wehrmacht started to gradually recruit young auxiliaries through demanding the RJF, via OKW, the specific needs; furthermore, the RJG asked its subordinated Gebiets and Bann to immediately respond these demands¹⁷.

¹² Michael Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totale Krieg*, München, K.G. Sauer Verlag GmbH, 2003, p. 270-289.

¹³ Ralf Blank, Jörg Echterkamp, Karola Fings, Jürgen Förster, Winfried Heinemann, Tobias Jersak, Armin Nolzen, *Germany and the Second World War. Edited for the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Potsdam*, vol. IX/I. *German Wartime Society 1939-1945: Politization, Disintegration, and the Struggle for Survival*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2008, p. 133.

¹⁴ Arno Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich. Die Hitlerjugend und ihre Gegner*, Papyrossa Verlag, 2008, p. 42-49.

¹⁵ For further reading, see Hans-Jochen Gamm, *Führung und Verführung. Pädagogik des Nationalsozialismus*, München, List Verlag, 1990, p. 354-357.

¹⁶ Arno Klönne, *op. cit.*, p. 55-66.

¹⁷ Ralf Blank et alii., *op. cit.*, p. 135.

Organisational Structure of the German Ethnic Group

In Romania, the organisational structure of the GEG was inspired from the functional templates existing within Hitler Youth Organisation in Nazi Germany. Obviously, a brief and systematic approach to Hitler Youth structures appears indispensable in order to perceive and analyse the GEG's structures in Romania. On 27 September 1940, Andreas Schmidt, then aged 28 years, was appointed as *Volksgruppenführer* of all German ethnics living within national boundaries of the, then, Kingdom of Romania. He was to remain in this office until August 1944, when Red Army entered Bucharest in order to *liberate* it. As Günther Schödl noticed, in the entire 800 years-old history of the Germans in Transylvania it was for the first time when their leadership and inner governance were decided in Germany¹⁸. Soon after, the GEG became subject of systematic adaptation of organisational model in order to meet the specific political goals aimed by the National-Socialist leadership of the Third Reich. Andreas Schmidt's close friends were shortly appointed in key-positions within the GEG in Romania: Andreas Rührig took the *Stabsamt*, Walter May was given the responsibility with the Press and Propaganda Office, Willi Depner was appointed the leader of the Youth Organisation (*Deutsche Jugend*) and Fritz Cloos took the *Frauenwerk* (German Worker's Association in Romania)¹⁹. Further positions were allocated as follows: SS-Hauptsturmführer Erich Müller became commander of the *Formationen* (Formations), Frau Lydia Müller took the office of German Women's Association in Romania and Franz Kautmes was appointed leader of the German Peasant's Organisation.

The GEG in Romania had been legally established by Decree-Law 830/21st November 1940. The actual configuration of the GEG has, from the very beginning, followed those political frameworks acting in the Third Reich; the entire operation of setting up its structures had been finalised by end of 1941²⁰. Proceedings to setting up the organisational architecture of the paramilitary formations commenced with an elaborate selection of the future instructors who were shortly thereafter sent to Germany for further training with the SS-personnel²¹. On 6th November 1940, Karl Römer, the Commander of the GEG Mediaș Circumscription, wrote an official letter to the Prefect of Târnava-Mare Sighișoara County²², soliciting permission to organise festivities

¹⁸ Günther Schödl, *Land an der Donau. Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas*, München, 1995, p. 591.

¹⁹ Paul Milata, *op. cit.*, p. 591.

²⁰ Johann Böhm, *Die Gleichschaltung der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien und das Dritte Reich 1941-1944*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, p. 55-75.

²¹ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaș, Dosar 5, f. 105.

²² ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaș, Dosar 5, f. 113.

dedicated to the foundation of the NSDAP-GEG, an event where high-ranking SS officials had been invited. All youngsters from 18 to 21 years old had been subsequently recruited to SS units and would immediately be accepted to NSDAP. The Prefect was also informed about the fact that, along with the Romanian flags, all streets of Mediaş were about to be embellished with GEG flags containing swastika. The archives reveal an official answer from Prefect lieutenant-colonel Petre Angelian only two years later, on 31st March 1942, issuing „Ordonanța 1-1942”, which suggests that all previous actions of the GEG were either tacitly accepted, or they were organised and conducted in a form of unauthorised manner. The „Ordonanța 1-1942” had strictly forbidden a series of actions and initiatives that were – in fact – flagrantly and commonly conducted by GEG, such as: organising any paramilitary formations; setting up police units or assembling any structures of this kind; wearing GEG structures uniforms outside legally allowed festivities and special premises; swearing an oath of legality other than those specifically allowed by the Romanian laws; any meetings set up and streets gatherings which had not previously got the official permission from the Romanian authorities; organising paramilitary and military training courses, performing military exercises and marches²³. The actual display of the GEG paramilitary formations and their subsequent activities prior to May 1943²⁴, reveal that GEG did actually act as a „Staat im Staate” (Deep State institution) supra-national organisation. Following a similar organisational chart as in Germany, all leaders of the *Einsatz-Staffel*, *Deutsche Mannschaft*, *Deutsche Jugend* and *Deutsche Arbeitsdienst* were demanded to report only to the GEG leader²⁵. The GEG in Romania was structurally organised on a similar pattern as any *Reichsgau* in Germany and consisted of *Zellen* (Cells), *Blöcke* (Blocks), *Ortsgruppen* (Local Groups), *Kreisgruppen* (District Groups) and *Gebietsleitungen* (Regional Leaderships). By 1943, GEG in Romania consisted of 502 local groups, 14 districts and 4 local leadership offices as follows: (1) Region Banat, (2) Region Banatul Montan, (3) Region Transylvania and (4) Region Old Romania. As one may notice above, the GEG in Romania followed closely all organisational patterns established in the Third Reich: (1) Leadership Office (*Stabsamt*), (2) Legal Issues Office (*Rechtsamt*), (3) Statistic and Population Office (*Amt für Statistik*

²³ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 4, f. 132-133.

²⁴ On 12 May 1943 was issued and signed the Accord between Romania and the Third Reich regarding enrollment of the German ethnics of Romanian citizenship into Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS units (*Abkommen zwischen der Reichsregierung und der Rumänischen Regierung hinsichtlich der Einreihung rumänischer Staatsbürger volksdeutscher Zugehörigkeit in die deutsche Wehrmacht-SS*). This official document provided GEG with practically unlimited jurisdiction over the German ethnics of Romanian citizenship.

²⁵ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 5, f. 529.

und Bevölkerung), (4) Office for Economy (*Amt für Volkswirtschaft*), (5) Press and Propaganda Office (*Amt für Presse und Propaganda*) and (6) Office for Education (*Schulamt*)²⁶.

GEG Paramilitary Formations

On 15th October 1940, Andreas Schmidt issued an order for all German youths from age 10 to compulsory be conscripted to *Deutsche Jugend* structures in Romania. Consequently, as the „Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien” noted in 1944, a so-called „tremendous awakening” proved the success of the youth work after three years from commencing. Within this period of time, the *Deutsche Jugend* in Romania numbered some 74.000 members (boys and girls) from which 8.000 were Youth Leaders. Yet another proof of their efficiency is supported by figures: in 1943 alone, 2.481 boys respectively 2.380 girls, aged between 14 and 18, had completed their duties, or „land service” during holidays. In addition, 2.635 girls had come to help out on short notice²⁷.

The Office for the Press and Propaganda elaborated a specific ideological programme dictated by Propaganda Ministry of the Third Reich. A sample of such a course is hereby provided as a relevant example of ideological training within the *Deutsche Jugend* of the GEG Romania. Under title *The New Order in Europe under German Leadership*, the works of several National-Socialist ideologists were flawlessly been delivered: Karl-Richard Ganzer [*Das Reich als europäische Ordnungsamt*, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt Hamburg – *The Reich as a European Regulatory Power*], Paul Herre [*Deutschland und die europäische Ordnung*, Deutsche Verlag Berlin – *Germany and the European Order*], Karl-Richard Ganzer [*Das Werden des Reiches/Karten zur Geschichte der Reichsgestalt*, Lehmanns Verlag München-Berlin], Gehl [*Deutsche Geschichte in Stichwort*, Hirts Stichwort Bücher, 1940] etc²⁸. The final conclusions of each of these ideological courses were designed to fully embrace the official version of the history in the making according to German propagandists: „the German people defeated Russians today. No other people have been able to achieve this, not even the brave Finns. The brave allies – whose dead must be honoured – fought under German guidance. German history proves that the German people have always acted as a revolutionary and orderly manner at the same time. The liberation of Western Europe from the Moors was a German achievement. The battle of the Charlemagne against the Slavs and Avars was of no lesser importance”²⁹.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1944*, Hermanstadt, Kraft & Drottler A.G, p. 92.

²⁸ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 80, f. 8.

²⁹ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 80, f. 9.

The same Archives reveal an exceptional sample of festivity-event organised for the *Deutsche Jugend* under a similar format as they were held, for instance, in the 12th SS Panzer Division „Hitlerjugend”. The event referred to was named „Happy Community Evening” [*Heiteren Gemeinschaftsabend*] and commenced with a series of military, traditional marches (led by a professional military band of *Deutsche Jugend*) and lieds such as *Der Schwarzwälder Kirsch*, *Die Allmacht Gottes*, *Wenn wir marschieren*, *Gruss an König, Führer und Vaterland* etc. Every musical episode was then followed by a secondary presentation made by well-trained ideological trainers. A session of several lieds/marches and subsequent presentations was followed by a break where jokes and proactive atmosphere were encouraged³⁰.

Each event organized under „Happy Community Evening” programme focused a specific theme, such as „Eastwards We All Want to Ride”, hereafter provided. As usually, the event started with a military march followed by a lied performed by the military band. Thereafter, the first instructor introduced the main topic, being completed by the second instructor who read a short meaningful text: „the German blood has been flowing for over 2000 years to make East Europe German. German blood flowed in streams and soaked the soil of the East”. Forgery history in the aim of justifying the „German Right” over the Eastern lands was carried out by instructors who entered the stage successively. This charade consisted of a series of theatrical dialogues in which the main speaker delivered his statement: „but German Kings, German knights and German peasants took up the fight against the Slavic empire”, and then the second speaker asked the appropriate questions which facilitated the advance into the thematic ideological scheme: „who were these kings, knights and peasants?”. His question was furthermore answered by several speakers seconded by choir: „Heinrich der Löwe, the Duke of Sachsen, Knight Hermann von Salsa, and the German peasants were the German colonists in Transylvania, the German colonists in Banat, the German colonists in Bessarabia, on Volga, on the Black Sea and in the Caucasus mountains”³¹. The entire structure/model of such an event was inspired from ideological events held at the training camps of some Waffen-SS divisions displaced on the Western front³², where soldiers were delivered exactly the same thematic structured-dialogues intercalated by *lieds* and marches.

All these events were also completed by periodical reports delivered in order to upgrade the frontline information, especially – as the specific case of GEG is concerned – East front reports, the Japanese involvements³³ and relative American

³⁰ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 80, f. 155-160.

³¹ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 80, f. 167.

³² NARA, Washington: *Microcopy T.354 Roll 156 Frame 3800042*. For further readings, see Samuel Koehne, *The Racial Yardstick: 'Ethnotheism' and Official Nazi Views on Religion*, German Studies Review, 37/3, 2014.

³³ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 80, f. 285.

Navy responses, as well as briefs regarding German domestic policies etc. Such a political report [*Politischer Lagebericht*] was issued in January 1944 by the *Amt für Presse und Propaganda*, in which Churchill was portrayed as an exponent of the international Judaism alongside with Roosevelt, their subsequent attitude against Germany being argued on that premises. As far as the war in the Far East was concerned, propaganda again replaced the real evolutions, stating that Japan's victory against British and American fleets brought their dominance in East-Asia to an end³⁴.

Corporate activities intended to foster the National-Socialist spirit among the young Romanian *Volksdeutsche* were organised by the *Amt für Presse und Propaganda* in the form of a „rally wave” (*Kundgebungswelle*), under the motto: „for our German School in the entire Land”³⁵. The GEG Department for Ideological Instruction (*Abteilung Weltanschauliche-Schulung*) in Kronstadt (German appellation for Braşov) issued a telegram³⁶ addressed to several regional leaders of *Deutsche Jugend* sections from Transylvania and Banat urging an immediate establishment of ideological training consisting of courses held in all major German cities of the two provinces named above: on 4th September in Kronstadt, at Honterusschule (hosting the young *Volksdeutsche* from Bucharest too) and Schässburg (German appellation for Sighişoara), at Bischof-Teutsch Schule; on 5th September in Mediasch, at Stephan Ludwig-Roth Schule and in Hermannstadt (German appellation for Sibiu), at Bruckenthalschule; on 6th September in Lugosch (German appellation for Lugoj), at Deutsche Mittelschule; on 8th September in Temeschburg (German appellation for Timişoara), at Prinz Eugen Schule; on 9th September in Arad, at Adam Müller Guttenbrunnsschule. The pattern of delivering *Weltanschauung* (ideological instruction) was rigorously reproduced after *Sommerlager* (summer camp) agenda in Germany, where such themes used to be declaimed weekly by specially trained Hitler Youth leaders who recourse *Schulungsbriefe* (educational paragraphs)³⁷. The final purpose encompassed flawless memorisation of National-Socialist phraseological constructions by all those participants³⁸ attending these courses.

Responsible with the physical education of the youth in Germany was Oberbannführer Dr. Ernst Schündler who had been serving as *Amtsleiter* of the *Amt*

³⁴ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 80, f. 331.

³⁵ See *Telegram nr. 13, Kronstadt, am 18. August 1942*: ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 110, f. 726.

³⁶ See *Telegram nr. 15, Kronstadt, am 27. August 1942*: ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 110, f. 725.

³⁷ Artur Axmann, *Das modernste nationalsozialistische Erziehungsmittel*, (DJD 36 1940), 248-275.

³⁸ Christian Zentner & Friedemann Bedürftig, *The Encyclopaedia of the Third Reich*, Macmillan Publishing, 1991, p. 433-436.

für Körperliche Schulung in Reichsjugendführung since 1935³⁹. Holding a doctorate in physical education, Schündler's first initiative consisted of changing the Office of Physical Fitness into the Office for Pre-military Training; his next move was to persuade Artur Axmann to replace all Wehrmacht trainers who had been overseeing the military training in the Hitler Youth with new Waffen-SS veteran instructors. In conjunction with the professionals from the Waffen-SS, Oberbannführer Schündler was able to create the famous 21-day psychological and combat programme that would be carried out in the so-called *Wehrertüchtigungslager der Hitler Jugend* (abbreviated as WEL). The new training concept released by WEL instructors – most of which holding a notable battlefield experience – fostered those values that were more appropriate to the age of the trainees, alongside concepts such as „combat readiness” and „combat capacity”.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Dr. Schündler introduced a new approach known as „content willingness to make decisions”, a concept intended to balance the spirit of free initiative – only encouraged and allowed as a fast-management measure necessary under battlefield circumstances – with the unquestionable discipline⁴¹ required by Heinrich Himmler and his entire chain-of-command of the Waffen-SS. Precise follow-ups and accurate implementation of these new learning methods are to be observed within the training process of the Romanian *Volksdeutsche* during their military preparations. The concept of military proficiency achieved through ideological training consisted of a series of political and dogmatic beliefs delivered in reciprocity to building a strong combative mentality and war-craft techniques. The schooling programme nurtured by GEG in Romania incorporated a full range of National-Socialistic precepts interwoven with Hitler's own convictions on social Darwinism, all of which being further strengthened by the youthful élan and combative ethos specific to the Hitler Youth Organisation in Germany, and as well outside Reich's borders.

The entire effort was to prepare the young candidate to fulfil his final and ultimate goal: becoming a tough, professional soldier of the Waffen-SS, in the service of the Führer and the *Vaterland*. The combination between ideological-physical-military trainings had been designed by Paul Hausser and Felix Steiner since 1934⁴², (within the Inspectorate of the Waffen-SS) and fully transferred to

³⁹ Heinz Schreckenberger, *Erziehung, Lebenswelt und Kriegseinsatz der deutschen Jugend unter Hitler: Anmerkungen zur Literatur*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2001, passim.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

⁴¹ For further analysis, see the SS-Manual: *Obedience must be unconditional. It corresponds to the conviction that National Socialist ideology must reign supreme and every SS man, therefore, is prepared to carry out any order issued by the Führer or a superior on his behalf, without any hesitation and regardless of the sacrifice involved.* [Carl Hammer, *The Gestapo and SS Manual*, (Palatin Press 1996)].

⁴² Bastian Hein, *Himmlers Orden. Das Auslese – und Beitrittsverfahren der Allgemeinen SS*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 59 (2011), 267.

all paramilitary formations of the GEG in Romania. The statement above is fully exemplified by the Folder 120 of the GEG Archives in Sibiu which details a manual for designing physical tests needed to classify the physical performance: 100 metres sprint, long jump, shot put (metal ball throwing), hand grenade throwing and 3.000 metres run. Each group-age was allocated different scoring. The second stage of the physical training introduced the participants to an actual military instruction programme consisting of a combination of exercises and tasks: marching with complete gear including gas-mask, and carrying a 12,5 kg backpack⁴³. The trainees had to complete multiple pitches of march on open field, roads and forest paths, all intercalated with firing sessions. Firing exercises with light weapons were also part of the training. A special attention was paid on long-distance run across heavy terrain wearing gas-mask; inside this type of exercise, a series of obstacles were targeted, such as jump over fences carrying all marching gear, crossing a balancing-beam 4 metres in length and 25 cm wide and swimming in both flowing water and swimming pools⁴⁴. Similar training programme can be identified in the instruction schedule delivered to the 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment belonging to the 12th SS Panzer Division „Hitlerjugend” on 13th December 1943, while all divisional units were discharged in Beverloo camp, Belgium. The preparations for battle included firing light and medium weapons, cleaning and loading a gun, entering a mission, assault techniques, configuration of the troops on a battlefield, securing zones around the camp and military ceremonies⁴⁵. Obviously, the cross-country training was of special importance especially for those trainees who were mostly recruited to infantry and motorised-infantry units of the Waffen-SS. The Manual of the Training Regulations⁴⁶ [*Ausbildungsvorschrift für das Leistungsabzeichen/Geländesport*] provide a deep insight of all matters which needed to be acquired during the training programme: cartography and map-reading, orienteering, navigation using compass, Sun and stars, vision exercises, identifying forest trees, practicing river-crossing techniques, negotiating different types of terrain etc.

Drafting very young recruits into the Waffen-SS met a certain degree of reluctance initially, since Hitler himself had objected to the idea of creating the 12th SS Panzer Division „Hitlerjugend”, early in 1943. SS-Sturmbannführer Hubert Mayer and SS-Brigadeführer Fritz Kraemer – two of the former divisional commanders of the „Hitlerjugend” Division – regarded the insertion of young troops in the Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht as a desperate and counterproductive

⁴³ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 120, f. 135.

⁴⁴ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 120, f. 137.

⁴⁵ NARA, Washington: *Microcopy T.354 Roll 154 Frame 3797335*.

⁴⁶ ANIC Sibiu, Fond GEG Mediaş, Dosar 120, f. 66.

measure⁴⁷. It was not until after the catastrophe at Stalingrad when, facing the realities of a genuine total war, the young recruits of German origin would be accepted as a symbol of the German youth ethos and spirit of sacrifice. It was the true milestone that marked the beginning of a massive injection of *Volksdeutsche* – including the Romanian ones – into the Waffen-SS units engaged in the European theatre of operations. This devised strategy was rather straightforward and the Hitler youths would from now on complete a specific training programme prior to drafting into the Waffen-SS⁴⁸.

Conclusions

Perhaps the most condensed review with regard to the mission assigned to all young Germans incorporated to Hitler Youth Organisation was produced by Baldur von Schirach as early as 1936, with a speech dedicated to the „Year of Training”: „The Hitler Youth is a community of ideological education. Whoever marches in the Hitler Youth is not a number among millions, but the soldier of an idea. An individual member’s value to the whole is determined by the degree with which he is infused with the idea. The best Hitler Youth, irrespective of rank and office, is he who completely surrenders himself to the National Socialist Weltanschauung”⁴⁹. Everything in the organisation and ideological training provided by GEG in Romania as well as corresponding institutions in Nazi Germany commended that the Hitler Youth individual was being skilled for one purpose and one target only: the undertaking of soldier.

The impact of the complex, meticulously applied learning methods enabled all candidates who had been through the GEG schooling system to acquire a significant knowledge on warcraft techniques, solid ideological expertise and exceptional physical performance to an unparalleled level among most of the modern armies of the Allied forces united against Nazi Germany. According to different sources, the total number of the German ethnics from Romania, who were drafted to Waffen-SS divisions directly from the paramilitary organisations of GEG, varies from 54.000⁵⁰ to 60.000, or even 70.000⁵¹. In January 1944, SS-FHA⁵² issued yet another figure of 56.000 German ethnics from Romania who had been incorporated to Waffen-SS⁵³. The combat performance of these *German-Romanian*

⁴⁷ LAC, Ottawa: 12 SS and Panzer Lehr Div.: Panzer Operations 6-8 Jun 44 – Questions answered by Kraemer and Beyerlein, 28 Apr 48, Ref. No: RG24-G-3-1-a, Vol./Box number 20529, File No: 981SOM (D272).

⁴⁸ *Idem*.

⁴⁹ Hansjoachim Wolfgang Koch, *The Hitler Youth. Origins and Development 1922–1945*, New York, Cooper Square Press, 2000, p. 104.

⁵⁰ Nuremberg Military Tribunal NO-2015, *Der Reichsleiterdienst*, 28.12.1943, 2.

⁵¹ Paul Milata, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

⁵² SS-Führungshauptamt (SS Main Leadership Office).

⁵³ Paul Milata, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

soldiers has not been yet significantly analysed, even though historians like Paul Milata initiated some research focused on decorations, appointments to higher military ranks and other related indicatives which can provide relevant conclusions. It appears like there is still plenty of unexplored historiographic opportunities for further research in this investigative direction. Besides their initial military training and ideological instruction, the new recruits of the Waffen-SS extracted from GEG paramilitary structures, their combat motivation and subsequent fluctuation has to be analysed considering side-circumstances that might have affected their initial enthusiasm. Several evolvments such as disappointments caused by worsening situation at home, lack of payments to the families in Romania, inappropriate treatment from SS bureaucrats or even army superiors, along with other war adverse evolutions have all brought the soldier's commitment to the cause of Hitler into a dramatic fall of combat motivation. All these considerations taken, as well as several historians' evaluations provide us the conclusion that the overall combative value of the SS warriors drafted from GEG Romania was of an average level rather than exceptional. Taking everything into account, Waffen-SS leadership seems to have failed to maximise and make the best use of the military and ideological training which had been inflicted to the German ethnic recruits originated from Romania.