

G U R P S[®]

Michael's Army[™]



**AN e23 SOURCEBOOK
FOR GURPS[®] FROM
STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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Like Poland, Romania had long been a country surrounded by unfriendly neighbors. After centuries of struggles for independence and a disastrous WWI campaign on the side of the Allies, it found itself involved in WWII as the third partner of the Axis in Europe. The Romanians never shared the global goals of the Germans or Italians, nor their ideological motives; Romania's aims were less high-flying, aimed at defending their own territorial integrity. Once they had taken back from the Soviets the border regions they had been forced to give up, the Romanians were pushed and pulled rather reluctantly along by the Germans on their way to Moscow. Another Romanian province was much closer to their hearts, but, unfortunately, it was in the hands of another Axis partner, Hungary.

Romania's surprisingly large military was ill-prepared for a modern war, however, and it soon showed. While they were prepared to pay high prices for their victories, such as taking Odessa, the toll became unbearable as the troops were caught in savage battles farther and farther away from their homeland, including the infamous disaster that was Stalingrad.

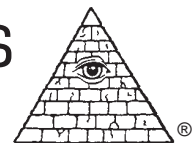
And when the tide turned, Romania chose to switch sides. Fighting alongside the Soviets, their suspicious former enemies and new allies, Romanian troops advanced through Hungary all the way to Germany.

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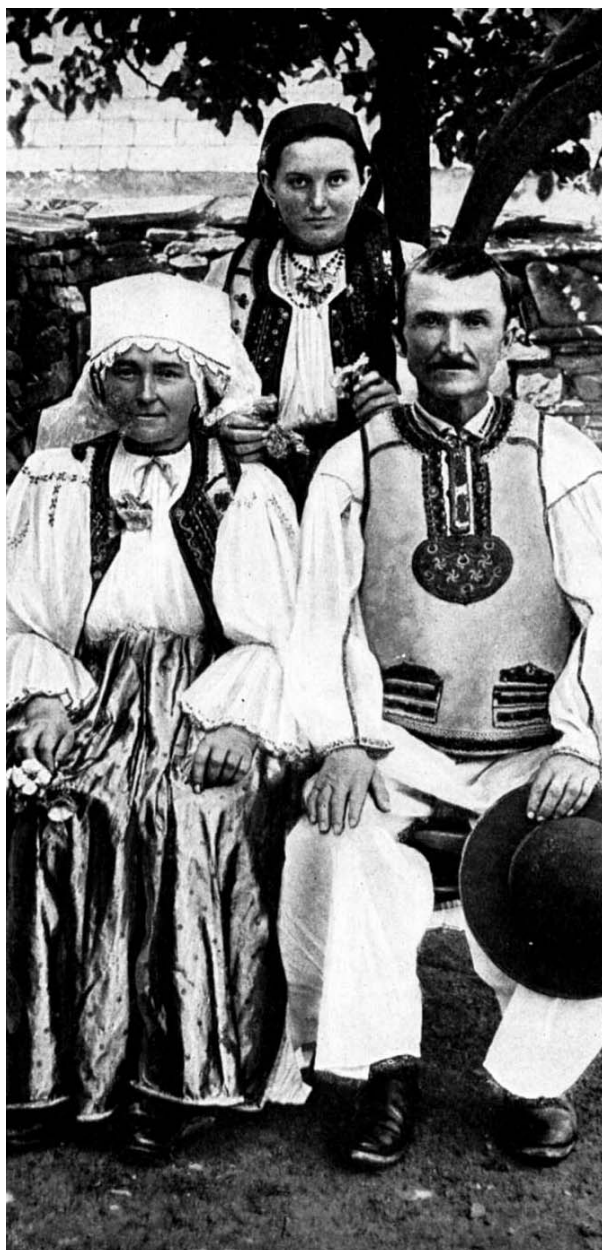
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The end of WWII saw Romania on the side of the victors, but the country gained little from the struggle. The peasantry making up most of the population was still dead poor, the military was only a shadow of itself, many Romanian citizens were dead, and the survivors would soon be shrouded by the Iron Curtain.

As a setting for a *GURPS WWII* campaign, Romania offers many interesting prospects. Internal politics allow for adventures involving Romanian agitators, courtiers, and decision makers, as well as foreign agents; backroom deals and court intrigues will often give way to political assassinations and street fighting. Other campaigns might put Romanian soldiers against the Russians (perhaps on the side of the Germans at Stalingrad), against their archenemy, the Hungarians, or even against the Germans, fighting the Nazis with their own weapons, supplied by them earlier in the war. Play-



ers wanting to fight the Soviets on the Eastern Front may do so, without having to accept characters who bear the Nazi stigma.

Foreign servicemen also have much to do in or over Romania. German troops fought side-by-side with Romanian soldiers, Soviet tankers swerved into Romania on their way to Germany, and U.S. bombers dropped their load over Romanian targets.

Romania also offers unique possibilities for *Weird War II* campaigns. Many Romanians were deeply superstitious, and the nation offered a colorful folklore to match. Vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and other horror creatures abound. The gamemaster could easily create widely different campaigns based on one or more of these legends, with the war either a mere background, or being influenced by paranormal activities into alternative directions.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michele Armellini is a translator living in Udine, Italy. He contributed to many *GURPS WWII* books, and is the author of *GURPS WWII: Grim Legions*. He is fascinated with modern military history, wargames, and roleplaying, in whatever order. He may spend inordinate amounts of time studying the social forces at work behind obscure historical events – and trying to convert them into game mechanics!

Hans-Christian Vortisch is a writer and translator based in Berlin, Germany. He contributed to most other books in the *GURPS WWII*-line and is the author of *GURPS WWII: Motor Pool*, as well as several other *GURPS* titles. His main interest lies in technology, its interaction with man, and its statistics in the game. However, he is also fond of the weirder aspects of life . . .

GURPS REFERENCES

The authors refer to a number of other *GURPS* books in Michael's Army, and make specific page references for those who want to read further. Here is a key for those abbreviations:

B is *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*; CB is *Cabal*; CI is *Compendium I*; HB is *Hellboy*; HT is *High-Tech*; Mliii is *Magic Items 3*; W is *World War II*; W:AKM is *All the King's Men*; W:D is *Dogfaces*; W:DWE is *Doomed White Eagle*, a product only available as a PDF on e23; W:FH is *Frozen Hell*; W:GL is *Grim Legions*; W:HS is *Hand of Steel*; W:IC is *Iron Cross*; W:MP is *Motor Pool*; W:RH is *Return to Honor*; and W:WW is *Weird War II*.

1. ROMANIA AT WAR

Cornered in the uncomfortable periphery of Europe, Romania had spent centuries fighting for independence. In both World Wars, it fought to keep its borders intact and to reclaim its lost provinces, but where in World War I it stumbled upon victory in defeat, in World War II it ultimately found defeat in victory.

RUBBER- BAND BORDERS

In 1918, empires collapsed and new countries appeared on the map of Europe. Romania, however, had already been in existence as an independent state since 1861, but from that date to 1945, it was to experience wild changes to its borders. While economic, social and ideological forces were at work in Romania just as everywhere else in the interwar years, the territorial and ethnic issues were more troublesome than in many other countries.

VICTORY IN DEFEAT

When World War I began, Romania (p. W60) was a small, crescent-shaped kingdom born of the erosion of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan Wars (see *Bloody Balkan Backwaters*, p. 4). Its king, Ferdinand I, was related to the German Kaiser, and was sympathetic to the Central Powers, but an alliance with them was impossible because of the territory that filled the hollow of the crescent: Transylvania. This mountainous region's population was two-thirds Romanian, but it was part of Austria-Hungary, and the Hungarians had very much the upper hand there. So Romania remained a neutral; one, however, whose goodwill was critical for the Central Powers – Romania provided them with petroleum and the supply line that made Turkey's war possible.

For these same reasons, the Allies began pressuring the Romanians, offering them territory and military support. Siding with them could be the only way to wrest Transylvania from its Austro-Hungarian masters.

On August 27, 1916, Romania declared war against Germany and Austria-Hungary and was immediately overrun by an offensive that took over 90% of its territory; the court, government, and remaining forces were pushed into Iasi, with their backs to the Russian border, and when Russia surrendered, Romania had no choice but to do the same. However, in the end, it declared war again, just in time to make it on the winning side.

So after being thoroughly trounced on the battlefield, Romania came out smelling like a rose, doubling in size. It got Transylvania from Austria-Hungary and solidified its control over Southern Dobrudja; the collapse of Russia allowed it to grab Bessarabia, too. These were largely Romanian-speaking regions, but they came burdened with large foreign minorities. The language barrier with these minorities was a real hurdle, since Romanian was, and is, the only Romance language in the region.

Enemies Everywhere

Romania was surrounded by resentful rivals. The heir of the Czarist Empire, the Soviet Union, would remain weak for years to come, but its sheer size made it an awkward neighbor, with Ukrainian minorities in Bessarabia. Both Bulgaria and, beyond it, Turkey, had no love for the Romanians.

Most importantly, there were the Hungarians, who had just lost Transylvania and had a minority population in that now-Romanian province. Hungary was smaller than Romania, but still it made a roughly matched enemy, smarting for revenge. It did not help that, in 1919, Romanian troops had advanced all the way to Budapest in order to stomp out the short-lived Hungarian Communist government of Bela Kun. The Magyars did not forget the occupation of their capital.

Treading Carefully

The main objective of Romanian foreign policy after 1919 was making sure that those enemies wouldn't