Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania

Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania:

Perceptions, Mentalities, Propaganda

Edited by

Sorin Radu and Oliver Jens Schmitt

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INTRODUCTION

SORIN RADU AND OLIVER JENS SCHMITT

Like most countries in East Central and Southeast Europe, until the Communist take-over Romania was a predominantly peasant society. As in most countries of this region, the Romanian elites were almost obsessed with the "peasant question".[1] Intellectuals and politicians alike saw in the peasant population both the cultural and social backbone of the nation and a source of backwardness preventing modernization and occidentalization, major goals of the nation-building processes in the area. The Romanian debate in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century does not constitute a regional exception. In a society characterized by a deep gap between the rural and the urban sphere, social and national thinkers were convinced that only bridging this divide would make major social change possible. Free trade, the economic pressure to export grain as a cash crop, and the rationalization of the administration of large estates by huge (often foreign) trusts shook traditional ties between landlords and tenants, created a new class of land leasers and managers and put traditional

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[1] Stephen Fischer-Galati, "Peasantism in Interwar Eastern Europe," *Balkan Studies* 1-2 (1967), 103-114; *Europäische Bauernparteien im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Heinz Gollwitzer (Frankurt a.M.: Fischer, 1977); *Agrarismus und Agrareliten in Ostmitteleuropa*, edited by Eduard Kubů et al. (Berlin-Prague: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013); *Bauerngesellschaften auf dem Weg in die Moderne*, edited by Helga Schultz and Angelika Harre (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2010); *Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Dietmar Müller and Angelika Harre (Innsbruck, Vienna, Bozen: Studienverlag, 2011); Liviu Neagoe, *The "Third Way". Agrarianism and Intellectual Debates in Interwar* Romania (Budapest: CEU Press 2008); *Property in East Central Europe. Notions, Institutions and Practices of Landownership in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Hannes Siegrist, Dietmar Müller (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015). For the general perspective on the Romanian economic backwardness and social questions, see: Bogdan Murgescu, *România şi Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)* [Romania and Europe. The Accumulation of Economic Gaps (1500-2010)] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010).

society as a whole under enormous stress. The crisis of the pre-modern village society was all too visible and provoked reactions by the political and intellectual elites. This social crisis in the rural area coincided with the creation of strong national identities built upon an idealized rural space and peasants as the incarnation of national virtues. The decline of this social group frightened national activists, such as the historian Nicolae Iorga, who propagated an image of the peasant world which tended to conserve features he considered traditional and typically Romanian. Leading writers and poets fused national and social aspects of the rural crisis and directed their critique against what they called a superposed intermediary class which had allegedly disrupted traditional social networks; since many estate managers were Jews, especially in Eastern Romania (Moldova), anti-Semitism was fuelled in this context by writers such as Mihai Eminescu, Bogdan Petriceicu-Hasdeu or Iorga's party comrade Alexandru Constantin Cuza, professor at the University of Iași.[2] Under the influence of Russian agrarian socialism, left-wing theoreticians like Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea developed the theory of "neo-serfdom", or, like Constantin Stere, propagated ideas resembling those of

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[2] Lothar Maier, *Rumänien auf dem Weg zur Unabhängigkeitserklärung 1866-1877* (Munich: Oldenburg, 1989); Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga: A Biography* (Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 1996); Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română. Studiu de imagologie în context est-central european* [The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture. Imagology Study in East-Central Europe] (Humanitas: Bucharest, 2001, 2004; third edition, Polirom, 2012); Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew. Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian & Other Central-East European Cultures* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press for the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009); Lucian T. Butaru, *Rasism românesc. Componenta rasială a discursului antisemit din România, până la Al Doilea Război Mondial* [Romanian Racism. Racial Component of Anti-Semitic Discourse in Romania, until WWII] (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2010); Marta Petreu, *De la Junimea la Noica. Studii de cultură românească* [From Junimea to Noica. Romanian Culture Studies] (Iași: Polirom, 2011); Marius Turda, "The Nation as Object: Race, Blood, and Biopolitics in Interwar Romania," *Slavic Review* 66/3 (2007), 413-441; Marius Turda, "Conservative Palingenesis and Cultural Modernism in Early Twentieth-century Romania," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 9/4 (2008), 437-453; Horia Bozdoghină, *Antisemitismul lui A.C. Cuza în politica românească* [A.C. Cuza's Anti-semitism in Romanian Politics] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012); Bogdan C. Iacob, "Nicolae Iorga as New Man. Functions of a Teacher Cult," *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană* 13 (2014), 178-192.

the Russian Narodniki and Social Revolutionaries.[3] The peasant uprising of 1907 marked a deep caesura in Romanian political life.[4] Mass unrest provoked by intensified rural capitalism gained a dimension which threatened the very existence of state and society. The brutality of its suppression shocked important sections of the Romanian establishment, and the reform discourse which had existed since the unification of Moldova and Wallachia intensified. Still, its principal promoters were not peasants, but urban intellectuals and members of the "village intelligentsia", i.e. teachers and priests. In both cases, peasants remained the objects of a major political debate which idealized them or portrayed their lifeworld with grim images of decline, social disruption, widespread diseases like tuberculosis or pellagra and alcoholism.[5] In the latter view, peasants constituted the converse of modernity, which was linked to the urban space. Peasants were considered a major obstacle to social change, an analysis shared by Russian Bolsheviks. The idea of such a cleavage was expressed by the theory of "Two Romanias", which portrayed an occidentalized urban sphere inhabited by a minority of Romanian society – and, especially in Moldova, a majority of minority groups such as Jews – and a backward rural space which was disconnected from the pace of development in the towns.

The First World War proved to be the decisive stress test for such a divided society. Romania entered the war on the side of the Entente with the declared aim of annexing Austro-Hungarian territories with a strong

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[3] Jochen Schmidt, *Populismus oder Marxismus? Zur Ideengeschichte der radikalen Intelligenz Rumäniens 1875-1915* (Tübingen: Verlag der Tübinger Gesellschaft, 1992); Cristian Preda, *Staulul și sirena. Dilemele unui marxist român* [Fold and Siren. Dilemmas of a Romanian Marxist] (Bucharest: Nemira, 2002); Zigu Ornea, *Viaţa lui C. Stere* [C. Stere's Life]*,* vol. I-II (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 1989, 1990).

[4] Philipp G. Eidelberg, *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt of 1907: Origins of a Modern Jacquerie* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974); Karl Scheerer, *Die rumänischen Bauernaufstände vom Frühjahr 1907* (Berne: Peter Lang 1974); Ion Popescu-Puțuri, *Marea răscoală a ţăranilor din 1907* [The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt of 1907] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1987). For a critical perspective on the way Romanian historiography treated this theme, see: Alin Ciupală, "Cauzele răscoalei din 1907 – între surse și interpretare istorio-grafică," in *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României* [Changing and Making in Romanian History], edited by Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Paula Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 13-23.

[5] Constantin Bărbulescu, *România medicilor. Medici, ţărani și igienă rurală în România de la 1860 la 1910* [Doctors of Romania. Doctors, Peasants and Rural Hygiene in Romania, 1860-1910] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015).

Romanian population (the Banat, Transylvania, Bucovina). Even among the elites, enthusiasm for such a step was far from unanimous.[6] Peasants had to bear the burden of warfare, which quickly developed into an utter disaster for the Romanian army, which had entered the war badly trained and for the larger part poorly equipped. In December 1916, the capital Bucharest fell, and only important defensive successes in the Southeastern part of the Carpathian Mountains saved Romania from a complete collapse. In 1917, the Russian Revolution also involved the Romanian population in Bessarabia. Since massive contingents of Russian troops supported the Romanian army, there was a clear danger of the Bolshevik revolution spilling over to Romania. Defeat and socio-political stress explain why the Romanian political elite decided to placate peasants by offering them both universal suffrage and a radical land reform. For the first time in Romanian history, the socio-political integration of the peasant population became a political reality.[7]

In late 1918, Romania seemed to be one of the biggest benefactors of the Entente victory. The country almost doubled in size and population and gained not only the aforementioned former Austro-Hungarian territories, but also Bessarabia, whose integration into what was now called the Kingdom of Greater Romania was never acknowledged by the Soviet Union. The Romanian elites had to cope with regional cleavages and a national and confessional heterogeneity that had hitherto been unknown to the leaders of the Regat.[8]

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[6] Lucian Boia, *"Germanofilii". Elita intelectuală românească în anii Primului Război Mondial* [*Germanofilii.* Romanian Intellectuals Elite in Years of the First World War] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009).

[7] Sorin Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democraţiei parlamentare (1919-1937)* [Romanian Electorate during Parliamentary Democracy (1919-1937)] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2004), 52-73.

[8] Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Hans-Christian Maner, *Multikonfessionalität und neue Staatlichkeit. Orthodoxe, griechisch-katholische und römisch-katholische Kirche in Siebenbürgen und Altrumänien zwischen den Weltkriegen (1918-1940)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007); Andrej Kuško, Viktor Taki, *Bessarabija v sostave Rossiskoj Imperii* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozhrenie, 2012; Emanuel Turczynski, *Geschichte der Bukowina in der Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993); Kurt Scharr, *Die Landschaft Bukowina. Das Werden einer Region an der Peripherie 1774-1918* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010); Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung der Bukowina 1918-1944* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2001); Florian Kührer-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Zentralstaatliche Integration und politischer Regionalismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014).

The social and political emancipation of peasants in "Old Romania" (the Regat, i.e. Moldova and Wallachia) coincided with a major national and social revolution in the newly acquired territories in the West (and to a lesser degree in the East), where social, economic, national and confessional cleavages had marked the relations between Romanians and mostly Hungarians since the 18th century. In the Regat, the deep change did not have such a national dimension, its society being ethnically very homogenous – the socio-cultural divide ran along the rural/urban gap.

The implementation of the radical reform agenda took place in a geopolitical constellation marked by enormous upheaval: civil war in Russia, Communist revolution in Hungary, eventually put down by Romanian troops occupying Budapest (August 1919), and a radical Peasantist government in Bulgaria: in the early 1920s, Romania was surrounded by unstable neighbors. But its internal political life too was marked by instability – the enormous difficulties in homogenizing the currency, the administration, the legal system, transport, and education in a post-imperial state like Greater Romania have often been somewhat overlooked by historians focusing on the teleological narrative of the "Great Unification".[9] The very fact that the crucial question of the integration of ca. 80% of the population, peasants, into the Romanian political system has never been systematically addressed is telling in this respect.

The reasons for this astonishing lacuna in a country whose elite cultivated sophisticated discourses on peasants are manifold: in the interwar period, a genuine interest and knowledge in peasant society, beyond superficial political rhetoric, was already slowly emerging, eventually crystallizing in the sociological school of peasant studies led by Dimitrie Gusti. This village sociology stood very much in the service of state interests, and Gusti himself cultivated close relations with the royal dynasty and leading political circles.[10] His and his colleagues' findings

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[9] Constantin Iordachi, "Faschismus, Charisma und Politik. Die Legion «Erzengel Michael» im Zwischenkriegsrumänen 1927-1941," in *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts. Die "Legion Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien 1918-1938*, edited by Armin Heinen and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 20-68 (26-32).

[10] *Şcoala sociologică de la Bucureşti*, edited by Sanda Golopenţia special issue of *Secolul 21* 1-6 (2012); Zoltan Rostás, *O istorie orală a Şcolii Sociologice de la Bucureşti* [An Oral History of the Bucharest Sociological School] (Bucureşti: Printech, 2001); Zoltan Rostás, *Atelierul gustian: o abordare organizaţională* [Gustian Workshop: an Organisational Approach] (Bucureşti: Tritonic, 2005); Zoltan Rostás, *Parcurs întrerupt. Discipoli din anii 30 ai Şcolii gustiene* [Interrupted Journey. Disciples of the Gustian School in the 30s] (Bucharest:

troubled all those who took acceptance of the new political system for granted. To this day, historians overlook rural mass movements such as the "Stylists" (old calendarists, followers of the "old-style calendar") in Bessarabia, numbering over one million, mainly ethnic Romanians who distanced themselves from the very idea of the Romanian nation state.[11]

Village sociology and historical research have seldom been inter-connected for the interwar period. This is in striking contrast to the highly sophisticated interdisciplinary studies on forced collectivization of agriculture in the 1950s and early 1960s and the impact of Communist rule in rural areas: social anthropologists and historians have joined forces and produced a series of monographs and collective studies which could serve as theoretical and methodological models for similar incursions into interwar rural society.[12] This approach provides important inferences for interwar studies which so far have not produced a firm foundation for peasant studies focusing on the Communist period. In fact, research on Communist rural society still has to extrapolate its findings for the period 1918–1940.

Studies on Romanian interwar history flourished immediately after 1989, when intellectuals and historians tried to bridge the gap between the post-revolutionary system and the 1920s and 1930s, which were perceived as a golden age of Romanian democracy. However, until 2007, rather restricted access to archives prevented many historians from making full use of the enormous wealth of documentary evidence. When the archives eventually opened fully, the interest of most contemporary historians had shifted to the Communist period. Those working on the period 1918–1940 mostly followed a Bucharest-centered perspective and concentrated on topics like the institutional history of parties or national minorities. Historians interested in social conditions in interwar rural Romania still have to rely mainly on evidence produced by Gusti's school.

Paideia, 2006]; Zoltan Rostás, *Strada Latină nr. 8. Monografişti şi echipieri gustieni la Fundaţia Regală Principele Carol* [Latin Street Number 8. Gustian Monographists and Team Workers to the Royal Foundation Prince Carol] (Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2009). Antonio Momoc, *Capcanele politice ale sociologiei interbelice. Şcoala gustiană între carlism şi legionarism* [The Political Snares of Interwar Sociology: The Gusti School between Carlism and Legionarism] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012).

[11] The Stylists are currently the focus of a PhD thesis by Andreea Petruescu, University of Vienna, supported by a Grant of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

[12] Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege. The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture 1949-1962* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power. The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1962*, edited by Constantin Iordachi, Dorin Dobrincu (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2009).

It is against this background that the idea of the present volume was born. It aims to structure this field of research, its main goal being to bring together historians working on the political and social history of the Kingdom of Greater Romania in the period 1918–1940. The contributors and their contributions represent different approaches and strands of the scholarly debate. Contrary to research developments in recent years, this volume does not concentrate on agrarianism as a third-way path to modernity. Agrarianism was interpreted in post-1945 historiography primarily as a source of extreme right-wing radicalism and an obstacle to modernization processes; especially after 1989, it was rehabilitated as ideological and social potential for democratization.[13] It was of great import to the contemporary Romanian political discourse and thus attracted the interest of scholars.[14]

We decided however to focus on the social and political dimension of peasants and their integration into a national and social project of state- and nation-building in a single state, Greater Romania. While many comparable approaches are characterized by their comparative framework, we deliberately limit our endeavor to a single national case. This is explained by the astonishing lack of relevant detailed studies on rural Romania. This volume advocates an approach with a clear focus on social and cultural practices in the process of the national and social integration of peasants in Greater Romania. Moreover, in the context of modern Romanian history, it advocates a clear shift from a multiple top-down perspective (capital–province, urban political elites–rural voters) to an analysis focusing on regionally diverse rural societies with a special focus on the predominantly ethnic Romanian population. The latter element is explained by our interest in mechanisms of the social and national integration of peasants into the Romanian nation- and state-building project. It is evident that peasants belonging to one of the many national minorities were mostly excluded from this endeavor by the Romanian political elites. They are however quite prominent in this volume. This reflects the state of the art in interwar minority studies, and the readiness of colleagues working in this field to react to our call for papers.

Social and ethnic categories of identification prove to be much less clear than one might assume. A police report from the 1930s on the

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[13] Uwe Müller, Eduard Kubů, Jiří Šouša, Torsten Lorenz, "Agrarismus und Agrareliten im östlichen Mitteleuropa. Forschungsstand, Kontextualisierung, Thesen," in Kubů et al., *Agrarismus und Agrareliten in Ostmitteleuropa*, 22-24.

[14] Dietmar Müller, *Agrarpopulismus in Rumänien. Programmatik und Regierungspraxis der Bauernpartei und der Nationalbäuerlichen Partei Rumäniens in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (St. Augustin: Gardez, 2001).

emerging fascist Legionary movement pointed to the fact that its activists adapted their message to urban and rural voters; while the former were receptive to nationalist messages with anti-Semitic undertones, the latter did not show much interest in national slogans, but were very receptive to anti-Semitic ones. The anti-Semitic League of the National Christian Defence (LNCD) led by A.C. Cuza did not hesitate to address voters in Bessarabia with bilingual (Romanian and Russian) election posters. Cuza appealed to the "Christian (Orthodox)" identity of his voters and adapted his anti-Semitic nationalisms to the regional peculiarities of his electoral stronghold. These examples demonstrate that nation and social class had a very different meaning and importance in the "Two Romanias". While urban elites focused on establishing a homogenous national body, the objects of this strategy often pursued very different goals: redistribution of land resources, local self-administration, and regional and especially confessional identities.[15] Historians therefore have to be careful when adopting a top-down perspective that is dominant in our written sources, newspapers, propaganda pamphlets and police reports, which privilege a national over a social reading of political processes.

This volume has to reckon with a state of the art which does not really favor a bottom-up perspective, ideally operating with local and regional case studies linking institutional party history, the analysis of social and cultural practices in political life, and concrete social environments on a local level, combining reflections on state and elite actors and agencies and on peasants as a new political subject in a changed constitutional and political environment. At the present stage of the research however, the volume rather reflects a mixture of traditional approaches and first attempts to combine the dimensions we have referred to. The integration of peasants into a new constitutional system with universal male suffrage was implemented by state institutions and political parties.

In his chapter, Sorin Radu outlines an image of the impact of the universal suffrage on the countryside after the Great War and analyzes the way democracy was understood and applied by the peasants. In the new political world in which the peasants represented more than two thirds, political elites introduced to their political discourse the concept of "rural democracy". The author argues that the enactment of the electoral reform had the impact of a true revolution that generated radical changes both in the electors' behaviour and in the practices and the political discourse of the political parties. As sociologist Mattei Dogan argues, universal

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[15] *Ideologie şi formaţiuni de dreapta în România, 1927-1931* [Ideology and Right Wing Political Parties in Romania, 1927-1931], edited by Ioan Scurtu (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2000), 209.

suffrage transformed the peasants from subjects into citizens.[16] Largely illiterate and uninterested in public business, the peasant suddenly found himself armed with political power. The peasants, at least in the first elections, were enthusiastic and quite often happy to participate in electoral campaigns, but they perceived the political actors, the political parties, with reservations and mistrust and thus hesitated to become members of the party organizations. The information concerning the party political organizations in villages is extremely poor and does not provide a coherent image of political activity on this level. At the end of campaign seasons, peasants returned to a kind of political lethargy until the next elections. The few local party organizations that existed in the countryside lacked vitality. Unlike the urban working classes, which were predisposed to socio-political change and at least partially followed social-democratic political organisations, the rural world was withdrawn, appeared not to see the point of political parties and was uninterested in administration and politics on the local and central levels. Sorin Radu concludes that the land reform seems to have demobilized the peasants, persuading them to mostly concentrate on the soil and social problems generated by reform, and that the peasants did not successfully learn to play the role offered to them by universal suffrage.

Party politicians and state representatives aimed to integrate the peasants into the political life of Greater Romania. They viewed them as voters, taxpayers and recruits. In this perspective, peasants remain objects, and studies on rural society should avoid reproducing this approach. They should rather ask how peasants can be analyzed as political subjects. How did the (Romanian) peasants react to the great reforms, how did they respond to the messages and promises of political parties? To what degree were they integrated into party structures? Which factors influenced political life on the village level?[17] Despite its declared intention to change perspectives on peasants in Romanian interwar politics, at the present

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[16] Mattei Dogan, *Comparaţii şi explicaţii în ştiinţa politică şi în sociologie* [Comparison and Explanations in Political Science and Sociology] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2010), 281.

[17] Cornel Micu, *From Peasants to Farmers? Agrarian Reforms and Modernisation in Twentieth Century Romania* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012); Müller, *Agrarpopulismus in Rumänien ...*; Dietmar Müller, "Landreformen, Property rigths und ethnische Minderheiten. Ideen- und Institutionen-geschichte nachholender Modernisierung und Staatsbildung in Rumänien und Jugoslawien 1918-1948," in *Agrarreformen und ethnodemographische Veränderungen. Südosteuropa vom ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, edited by Karl-Peter Krauss (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009), 207-234.

stage of research this volume can offer only some clues which will hopefully serve as a point of departure for more detailed studies. Stelu Şerban's chapter on two villages in the Northern region of Maramureş comes closest to what a bottom-up perspective might achieve in terms of new insights: there was no compact rural block in Romania, but even in micro-regions the socio-economic and political situation could vary from village to village. There was, as he demonstrates, resistance to state-induced change, but it cannot be associated exclusively with extreme right-wing movements such as the Legionaries or with anti-modernist utopian ideas. He is equally reluctant to adopt mechanically powerful concepts such as "civil society and "parochial society" for studying social and political mechanisms on the level of villages. He is interested in "communal villages" characterized by kinship ties, a set of shared values, and local patterns of political life which are however not isolated from external developments, but closely linked to the failed modernization which the state tried to enforce. His two case studies illustrate the importance of local patterns of dependence, both economic (credit, debts) and socio-cultural (ritual kinship). But there were perceptible differences between the neighboring villages of Dăneşti, where moderate parties prevailed, and Cetăţele, which tended to the extreme right. While in the latter parochial and political society overlapped, both spheres were far less interlinked and competition for local power was less fierce. The dominance of the anti-Semitic National Christian Party in Cetăţele is interpreted, due to the lack of documented conflicts between ethnic Romanians and Jews, rather as opposition to the central state authorities. Legionaries were compared to Communists because of their propaganda aiming at improving rural living standards. The high degree of politicization in Cetăţele is explained by the fact that local politicians made full use of local fiscal autonomy granted by the state. In Dăneşti, on the contrary, less developed institutions, stronger traditional kinship ties, traditional forms of sociability, and a much higher rate of alphabetization (74.4% compared to only 41.8% in Cetăţele) are responsible for a minor degree of modern political activism and polarization. The Church remained important, and established peasants voted for the National Peasant Party. Only youngsters were attracted by the violent party life of the National Christian Party of A.C. Cuza and Octavian Goga. While there is ample evidence of political radicalization in rural Romania[18], Şerban

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[18] Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Approaching the Social History of Romanian Fascism. The Legionaries of Vâlcea County in the Interwar Period," *Fascism* 3 (2014), 117-151; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Wer waren die rumänischen Legionäre? Eine Fallstudie

convincingly shows that sweeping generalizations are not only impossible, but even theoretically dangerous: they might cement the idea of a backward society open to extremisms from the right and later from the left. We still need many more studies like Şerban's before we can really consider the weight of Legionary and Cuzist extremism in rural Romania. Dăneşti is not the only example of a village with high potential for developing a democratic political life.

Party history plays an important role in Romanian historiography. But often monographs remain rather descriptive, and most of them focus on party leaders and party politics in the Bucharest parliament. Very few party histories, such as Ovidiu Buruiană's thorough two-volume monograph on the National Liberal Party in the years 1927–1933 take up major currents in international research.[19] Even scarcer are studies on the regional or even local level of party life. We still do not possess monographs on all the important political parties in interwar Romania, not to mention more recent foci such as social and cultural practices. Against this background, chapters in this volume address the integration of peasants into the parliamentary system, and this means essentially party life, from different angles: party history as institutional history in a perspective from above, party history as part of the political self-organization of ethnic minorities, and first attempts to link party institutions, party activists and local contexts (see the chapter by Stelu Şerban).

An institutional approach can thus be found in several contributions. They make clear how little we know about party structures and activists on a local level. We have only vague ideas about the number of party members, the social structure of candidates in regional and national elections, or the socio-professional profile of regional and local party leaders.

The collective biography of leading party politicians is a helpful approach in these circumstances. It fits well into an important bibliography

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zu faschistischen Kadern im ruralen Umland von Bukarest (1927-1941)," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 64/3 (2016), 419-448.
[19] Ovidiu Buruiană, *Liberalii. Structuri şi sociabilităţi politice liberale în România interbelică* [The Liberals. Political Structures and Liberal Socialbilities in Interwar Romania] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013); Ovidiu Buruiană, *Construind opoziţia. Istoria politică a Partidului Naţional Liberal între anii 1927 şi 1933* [Building the Opposition. The Political History of the National Liberal Party between 1927 and 1933] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013).

on parliamentary life in interwar Romania.[20] The case of ethnic Romanian Transylvanian leaders reveals the importance of a small group of large estate holders who combined ownership of real estate with key positions in banking and cultural sociability.[21] The Transylvanian case also makes it quite clear that regional case studies cannot be extrapolated to a national level; the cleavage between the historical regions was simply too deep. The National Liberal Party with its stronghold in the Regat had difficulties in really penetrating power structures in the former Hungarian regions, where prior to 1918 the Romanian National Party had built up a tight system of political, economic and cultural control and where Romanian politicians had been trained in the stiff wind of the Budapest parliament. Whereas in the pre-1918 Regat parliamentary and generally political opposition had been the privilege of a small social, mostly urban elite, national mass mobilization against Hungarian dominance had reached a high level of organization in Transylvania. However, despite the lack of aristocratic Romanian elites in Transylvania and the Banat, the Romanian MPs in the Budapest parliament clearly came from elite families and did not represent the predominantly rural society. This did not change in the interwar period, as Florin-Răzvan Mihai's chapter demonstrates. Lawyers clearly dominated parliamentary life (constituting 35-46% of MPs in the various parliaments elected between 1919 and 1937), followed by university professors (ca. 6.5%), high school teachers (6.2%), primary school teachers

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[20] Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismus in Rumänien (1930-1940). Demokratie im autoritären Umfeld* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag) 1997; Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democraţiei parlamentare (1919-1937)*; Sorin Radu, *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866-1937)* [Modernization of the Electoral Sistem in Romania (1866-1937)] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2005); *Cultură politică şi comportament electoral în România în perioada democraţiei parlamentare (1866-1937) – între modelele europene şi specificul naţional* [Political Culture and Electoral Behavior in Romania in the Years of Parliamentary Democracy 1866-1937 – between the National Specific and European Models], edited by Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Editura Universităţii "Lucian Blaga", 2006); *Parliamentarism and political structures in Eastcentral and Southeastern Europe in the Interwar Period*, edited by Sorin Radu, Hans-Christian Maner, special issue of "Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historica" 9 (2012); *Elite parlamentare şi dinamică electorală (1919-1937)* [Parliament Elites and Electoral Dynamics (1919-1937)], edited by Florin Müller (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2009).
[21] *Elites and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe (1848-1918)*, edited by Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2014); Vlad Popovici, *Studies on the Romanian Political Elite in Transylvania and Hungary (1861-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2012).

(5%), priests (4.5%) and members of the higher clergy (4.2%). The "village intellectuals", teachers and priests, were thus certainly a strong group, but numerically much smaller than lawyers. Peasants and estate holders represented between 8% and 16% of MPs, but among them small landowners constituted only a modest group. An analysis of peasants among candidates in national elections reveals that even those parties which advocated a peasantist discourse were over-whelmingly dominated by elite professions. Even in the case of the National Peasant Party, no more than 2.79% of its candidates were peasants when it achieved a landslide victory in the 1928 national election. Among the candidates of the National Liberal Party, traditionally considered as the party of urban elites in the Regat, only 0.58% and 3% of its candidates in the elections of 1926 and 1928 were actually peasants. The People's Party, a mass movement rallying around General Alexandru Averescu, a war hero venerated by mainly peasant voters, was far removed from its rural voters, despite its political rhetoric.[22] In 1924, at a party meeting, only 63 out of 1,050 participants were registered as peasants. The highest percentage of candidates with an agricultural profession can be found in the radical anti-Semitic League of the National Christian Defense (LNCD) (6.87% of candidates running in the 1928 election). LNCD had its stronghold in Bessarabia, the most backward region of rural Romania. In 1928, it did not benefit from the slightly higher number of peasant candidates, but was literally crushed by the National Peasant Party. In conclusion, in interwar Romania peasants constituted no more than 10% of the candidates nominated by any of the political parties. Although peasants dominated much of the political discourse, they did so merely as objects, not as subjects of parliamentary political life.

These findings have to be nuanced by studies of the kind Ovidiu Buruiană provides for the National Liberal Party. He makes it clear that Liberals had a differentiated perspective on rural communities and deliberately chose their cadres among village elites and opinion-makers as mayors, notaries, teachers, priests, large and medium estate holders, innkeepers and civil servants. Since Romanian party politics were mainly centered on leading figures, personal ties played an increasingly important role within Liberal power structures, allowing significant space for village elites in an enlarged party organization. These elites served as a transmission belt between the central party institutions in Bucharest and the village level of power. However, as in the case of state institutions (see

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[22] See the rather uncritical biography by Petre Otu, *Mareşalul Alexandru Averescu: militarul, omul politic, legenda* [Marshal Alexandru Averescu: the Soldier, the Politician, the Legend] (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2009).

below), the extreme centralization of Romanian politics and of the constitutional system gradually transformed local power brokers into mere proxies of the national party leadership. Daniel Brett's study also takes political science as its point of departure; using theoretical frameworks developed by Maurice Duverger and Angelo Panebianco it attempts to deconstruct the National Peasant Party as a political organization. It argues that internal division which had its roots in ideological conflict concerning the status of the peasantry prevented organizational reform of the party. The failure to reform in turn denied the peasantry active agency within the party and hence hampered the effectiveness of the latter in representing peasant interests. Brett argues that the National Peasant Party was not exceptional in suffering from these problems, comparing and contrasting it with examples from Ireland and Scandinavia. He argues that the post-1918 period needs to be contextualised by a deeper analysis of founding moments and decisions made during the early developmental stages of the parties. Doing so will deepen our understanding of peasant politics in Romania but also situate the Romanian case within the wider family of rural/agrarian parties that were emerging across Europe during this period.

The same theme of agrarianism is present in Svetlana Suveica's study, which reconstructs the beginnings of the Peasant Party in the political scene in Bessarabia during the transitional period when the territory passed from the Russian to the Romanian regime, marked by the activity of Vladimir Țîganco, the president of the Peasantry Faction of the Country Council (Sfatul Țării). His activities have long gone ignored, due to the fact that they were not intended to support the perspective Bessarabia developed when it belonged to Romania after the Great War. Suveica argues that not only public opinion supported Țîganko, but his thoughts on the destiny of Bessarabia also reflect the hesitation of the representatives of the local elite during the transition from the Russian imperial to the Romanian national regime, a period of brief regional autonomy in the Federative Russia before an era of illusory, merely ostensible independence. The latter ended with the vote of the Country' Council (Sfatul Țării) for the status of a Romanian province, intensifying the oscillations of the Bessarabians "between Russians and Romanians", characterized not only by expectations and failures, but also by the construction of an alternative perspective on the status of the region, the active involvement in negotiations, and in controversies in the international media, which became propaganda instruments.

If we turn to state institutions such as prefects, the security forces (in the rural areas the gendarmerie), representatives of the justice system, local stakeholders such as mayors, and the local "intelligentsia" (teachers

and priests), the evidence derived from newspapers mainly concerns discourse and offers much less hard data on their social profile. There is an ongoing debate as to whether the Romanian state was a strong or a weak institution in the rural areas. Cornel Micu argues in his contribution that the state authorities failed in collecting basic data on the village population. Since there are hardly any studies on major state institutions, we can hardly answer questions concerning professional training, payment, public morale and the efficiency of civil servants.[23] Questions about the methods used for collecting taxes or enforcing public security in rural Romania have only rarely been asked, and evidence available on individual local cases should not be generalized in such a regionally heterogenous country as interwar Romania.[24] In his chapter on the village of Bordei Verde in Brăila County (Regat), Cornel Micu observes that due to the subordination of village mayors to county prefects appointed by the governments and the transformation of the heads of local communities into pure representatives of the central state, peasants were simply excluded from direct relations with the state.

The study by Valer Moga shows the way in which the Transylvanian farmers integrated into the political life of Greater Romania. In this context, the term 'farmer', as defined by the documents of the time, meant landowners who belonged to the rural middle class and had some income with which to sustain themselves and their access to education and cultural goods. The author begins with the hypothesis that the farmers did not have a conservative attitude towards joining a political party. Indeed, it appears that they were eager to sign up. Moga's research undertakes quantitative analysis of a sample of delegates who took part in the Great Assembly of 1 December 1918. Out of 1,633 participants, the farmers numbered 372 and were the best-represented category, with 22.78%. Most of them were members of the Romanian National Party. After the unification of

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[23] Andrei-Florin Sora, *Servir l'État roumain. Le corps préfectoral 1866-1940* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2011) is to date one of the few attempts to study provincial administrative elites; Alin Spânu, *Istoria serviciilor de informații/contrainformații româneşti în perioada 1919-1945* [History of Romanian Intelligence / Counterintelligence Services during 1919-1945] (Iaşi: Demiurg 2010) contains a lot of poorly arranged evidence; for the Communist period, see Dietmar Müller and Andrei-Florin Sora, "Notarul comunal în România: Cadrul normativ al unei institutii moderne (1864-1940)," [The Communal Notary (Communal Secretary): Normative Framework of a Modern Institution (1864-1940)] *Arhivele Olteniei* 25 (2011), 369-385.

[24] In the Romanian Central State Archive in Bucharest, the archival fond Inspectoratul general al Jandarmeriei provides ample evidence.

Transylvania and Romania, monolithic membership disintegrated and the farmers, like the other social categories, split into the most important political parties.

The main goal of Vlad Popoviciʼs study is to offer a complete set of prosopographic analyses of party membership, accompanied by an image of the Romanian National Party in the reorganization process that took place in Alba County in August 1919. Such analyses seek to reveal through sampling the socio-professional composition, educational background and denominational distribution of the local party leadership and identify the main characteristics of the body of peasant members (level of literacy, denominational distribution and relation to the demographic structure of the area, ratio of the local electorate, blood- and kinship-related patterns of political behaviour). Popovici concludes that the backbone of the local organization was constituted by priests, regardless of denomination, supported by the rural intellectual elite (primary school teachers, notaries) and members of the liberal or technical professions. Peasants were represented in leading local committees as secretaries and (more infrequently) as cashiers or (commonly) as committee members. They formed the great mass of members, over 90%, of which approximately 50% were illiterate.

Gábor Egry's chapter points to the cultural gap between Romanian gendarmes and the Hungarian population in Transylvania, but it also shows how ethnicity was mobilized as a political resource in petty everyday conflicts. Archival evidence from different regions illustrates how gendarmes interfered in election campaigns by favoring government candidates and impeding the political activities of their opponents. Existing research equally shows that governments tended to manipulate elections in rural areas e.g. by imposing quarantine law during election periods. In the years of the Great Depression, which severely hit rural Romania, the fiscal system collected taxes ruthlessly and provoked small-scale local uprisings which have yet to be the focus of historical research. State repression similarly contributed to the emergence of the Stylists (supporters of the Julian calendar, which was replaced by the Gregorian calendar in 1924) in Eastern Romania, mainly in Bessarabia. In the mid-1930s, the rural mass movement numbered over one million and according to recent research by Andreea Petruescu even organized a territorialized parallel administration on a local level in Northern Bessarabia. State and Church institutions failed to explain the calendar reform to peasants, who followed a traditional religious time system. What was considered by elites to be a symbolical shift towards the West was seen by peasants as a Western, "popish" conspiracy against their most sacred religious traditions. Since state and Church institutions reacted with a mixture of repression

and provisory compromise, ethnic Romanian peasants were virtually driven into a parallel society which severely challenged the project of national integration and homogenization. It was not until 1936 that the state forcefully dissolved the Stylist parallel state.[25]

Political parties had to address and attract millions of men who before 1918 had never participated in parliamentary elections and, especially in Southern and Eastern Romania (Wallachia, Moldova, Bessarabia), had never actively taken part in political life. In Bucovina, which had the Austrian system of general male suffrage (since 1907), and in a much more limited way in Hungary with its census system, ethnic Romanian peasants had either been voters or at least could consider themselves part of a well-organized national entity. Especially in the Banat, cultural associations such as choirs essentially contributed to a politicized Romanian sociability in a multiethnic environment characterized by a high degree of institutionalized self-organization. Once again, observations on peasants and rural society in Greater Romania must not be generalized, but should be adapted to regional specificities.

Political sociability and cultural practices in political life were far from homogenous. This aspect constituted a considerable obstacle for political parties which claimed a nation-wide political mission. Political expectations, but also capacities for receiving and understanding political messages differed widely from the Banat to Bessarabia. Most parties and party activists applied traditional methods of political mobilization such as speeches, printed brochures and election posters. Written propaganda material was distributed among peasant voters, but it is not known how these messages were actually received on the ground; most probably, bearing in mind the high degree of illiteracy in Southern and Eastern Romania in particular, these propaganda texts were read out. Most parties tried to adapt to rural lifeworlds by using not only prose, but also verses which took up elements of popular culture, especially folk songs.[26] Images, photos of

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[25] This paragraph is based on research by Andreea Petruescu, University of Vienna, especially a paper presented in November 2016, and her forthcoming article in *Revista istorică*.

[26] The Legionary movement was by far the most successful political force to use songs for rural mass mobilisation; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "'Heilige Jugend der Nation'. Das Lied als Mittel und Essenz rechtsextremer politischer Mobilisierung im Rumänien der Zwischenkriegszeit," in *Das politische Lied in Ost- und Südosteuropa*, edited by Stefan Michael Newerkla, Fedor B. Poljakov and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Vienna: LIT, 2011), 87-112; Roland Clark, "Collective Singing in Romanian Fascism," *Cultural and Social History* 10/2 (2013), 251-271.

party leaders, caricatures denigrating political opponents[27] or, mostly in the case of anti-Semitic parties, minority groups such as Jews, slowly emerged. But until the early 1930s, when parties such as the fascist Legionary movement developed an expressive and deliberately modernist and almost futurist visual language, parties rather underestimated the impact of visual propaganda.

Although national homogenization was one of the main goals of interwar Romania, one has to ask to what degree political parties really converted this intention into practical politics. In this respect, a case study by Wolfram Nieß on the Legionary movement in Bessarabia in 1930 offers important insights: while traditional anti-Semites targeted their voters using bilingual propaganda material, the Legionaries aimed to construct a homogenous ethnic body in an endangered frontier area.[28]

Party rallies played an essential role in rural political life. Again, government parties were favored and supported by state institutions, while opposition groups often encountered serious obstacles. In the 1930s, the radical Legionary opposition waged a small-scale war on the gendarmerie forces, which traditionally enforced government policies in rural Romania. Especially establishment parties such as the National Liberal Party or the People's Party recruited election agents who distributed alcohol and small gifts among rural voters, but very often they also intimated voters and contributed to a high degree of violence in election periods. The 1926 election was one of the most violent events in Romanian interwar political life. As in other countries, paramilitary groups connected to political parties emerged; the Iron Guard, founded in 1930 as the armed branch of the Legionary movement, is by far the best known; but other paramilitary formations such as the Peasant Guards of the National Peasant Party, the Blueshirts (a kind of Romanian SA, part of the anti-Semitic National Christian Party) or the Stylist guards in Bessarabia have barely attracted the interest of scholars. However, research on interwar elections provides us with an initial idea of political violence in rural Romania. Election days were characterized by clashes between the gendarmerie, party activists and

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[27] Alexandru Nicolaescu, Sorin Radu, "Caricatura electorală – formă a discursului electoral al Partidului Ţărănesc în alegerile parlamentare din mai 1926. Studiu de caz," [Electoral Caricature – the Form of Electoral Discourse of the Peasant Party in the Parliamentary Elections of 1926. A Case Study] *Transilvania* 2 (2011), 1-10
[28] Wolfram Nieß, "Hai să dăm mână cu mână cei cu inima română – Der geplante Propagandazug der Legion durch Bessarabien vom Sommer 1930"*, in Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts. Die Legion Erzengel Michael in Rumänien 1918-1938*, edited by Armin Heinen and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Munich: Oldenbourg 2013), 217-276.

dissatisfied voters (e.g. when they were illegally excluded from elections) and conflicts between party activists, often with firearms. They still call for detailed study.[29]

Party propaganda was very much a phenomenon of election campaigns. There are many sources pointing to peasant voters' rapid disillusionment with political life in interwar Romania. They soon felt manipulated by party activists during election campaigns and immediately forgotten afterwards. Frustration grew, and it was alimented even further by the poor performance of state institutions in the rural area. "Politicianismul", a term describing corrupt practices of the political elites, became a key slogan not only of radical opposition forces, but also of more moderate political parties. While it is evident that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the political system of parliamentary democracy, we still do not know much about the realities of "politicianism" in rural Romania. The violent discourse about the shortcomings of the system is sometimes repeated in modern scholarship, which rarely goes beyond the discourse level. This level however has to be linked with a more down-to-earth approach of social history.

Political practices on a local level still need to be studied in more detail: they have hitherto been examined primarily on the discourse level of newspapers and party propaganda. We know the tools party activists used in order to convince rural voters. There is however little data concerning which political messages really reached their addressees and how the latter understood them. Studies on the concrete interaction between party activists and rural voters are scarce. The same holds true for mechanisms of opinion-building in villages, the role of opinion leaders such as teachers, priests, notaries and doctors. Gabriel Moisa's chapter offers first glimpses of an answer. What can be deduced from an analysis of the existing source evidence is deep disenchantment on the part of rural voters, mainly after the failure of the National Peasant Government. In fact, founded in 1926, this Party had embodied the alternative to the authoritarian political model of the National Liberal Party: a decentralized, democratized society. Newspapers in Bihor County, studied by Moisa, reveal that peasant voters were disgusted by the aggressive language during election campaigns and repulsed by the general lack of interest in rural areas once the elections were over. They felt that party competition divided village communities, and sometimes even attacked unwelcome political activists from outside. The failure of political parties to win the confidence of their rural voters led to a political apathy and general

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[29] Cf. the studies by Radu, Maner, and Florin Müller cited above.

disinterest in parliamentary democracy which considerably facilitated the instauration of an authoritarian royal dictatorship in March 1938.

The role of the local elite, priests, on the political education of the peasants in rural Transylvania is examined by Valeria Soroștineanu, who argues that the Orthodox Church in Transylvania had to continue the religious and cultural effort of educating the Romanian village. It was indeed a continuation of an older practice, after which the priest continued to be an advisor in the political sphere. The peculiar Transylvanian political culture was focused on supporting a type of party with an ethnic component, which saw many transformations and confrontation with other possible political models. The Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan established the idea that a party with a clerical basis could not find its place in the Romanian space, but he was reticent to grant priests permission to enter politics. Bălan later developed a short political handbook for priests so that they could serve as advisors to their communities. Institutionally speaking, the Orthodox Church and the Romanian state shared common causes, the most significant being the lessons of religion as a means of promoting sincere patriotism, promoting a cult of royalty in Romania and opposing Bolshevik propaganda. Another interesting aspect concerning the relationship between priests and political culture is the intervention of intellectuals in the dialogue between the Church and the state during the interwar period. As the prominent intellectuals were genuinely interested in Romanian society's evolution towards modernity, predominantly in rural areas, they had to choose between the model of exaggerated modernity and the maintenance of traditional structures, closer to the concept both Nichifor Crainic and Dumitru Stăniloae called a "Romanian Christian state".

When the reform promise of the National Peasant Party broke down under the weight of the Great Depression, internal strife and corruption, many peasants severely hit by widespread poverty, in extreme cases even famine, considered the revolutionary fascist Legionary movement as a political way out. The Legionary working camps tried to fuse rural populations and party activists into a single national and political community; they also demonstrated the inability of state institutions to guarantee adequate infrastructure in rural areas.[30] As in the case of the

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[30] Rebecca Haynes, "Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the «New Man» in the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Historical Journal* 54 (2008), 943-967; Valentin Săndulescu, "«Taming the spirit». Notes on the shaping of the Legionary 'New Man'," in *Vers un profil convergent des fascismes?* edited by Traian Sandu (Paris: Harmattan, 2010), 207-216; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "«Eine mächtige Bewegung auf den Dörfern.» Mechanismen der politischen Mobilisi-

Stylists, an often overlooked parallel society emerged in the rural area, under the guidance of social and ideological forces which openly rejected the existing political order. When discussing capacities to receive political messages, one also has to reckon with the cultural and mental consequences of the economic crises in rural Romania. The Stylists were not the only spiritual mass movement in interwar peasant Romania. In 1935, the so-called miracle of Maglavit (a shepherd who pretended to have received messages directly from the Lord) shook all of Romanian society and mobilized hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who flocked to the new shrine on the shore of the Danube.[31] This mass hysteria was interpreted by contemporaries as a direct reaction to a general socio-economic and cultural depression and the need and hope for immediate miraculous salvation and collective resurrection. While the state authorities succeeded in channeling this movement, they failed to contain the Legionary movement, which obtained ca. 25% (officially 15.5%) of the vote in the election of December 1937. The success of an openly anti-system party which unlike the established party did not offer resources and jobs was a clear indicator of the failure of the traditional party system controlled by Liberals and National Peasantists.

An important part of the volume is dedicated to the peasants belonging to the national minorities in Romania. The way in which the Hungarian minority from the countryside was mobilized politically by the Hungarian Party is shown – besides the study by Gábor Egry – by Tóth Szilard. The author analyzes the electoral campaigns organized by the Hungarian Party, the methods of electoral propaganda used by its candidates and the efficiency of these efforts, and he observes the national solidarity of the Hungarian peasants and their political discipline. Vasile Ciobanu investigates the degree to which the German peasants in interwar Romania took part in political life, examining their active presence in political parties and national organisations, but also their participation in local and

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erung der rumänischen Legionärsbewegung im ländlichen Raum (1933-1937) – Vorskizze zu einer Sozialgeschichte der «Eisernen Garde»," in *Nation, Nationalitäten und Nationalismus im östlichen Europa. Festschrift für Arnold Suppan zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Marija Wakounig, Wolfgang Mueller, Michael Portmann (Münster, Vienna, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), 389-418.
[31] Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Căpitan Codreanu. Aufstieg und Fall des rumänischen Faschistenführers* (Vienna: Paul Zsolny, 2016), 163-168; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Das «rumänische Lourdes»," in *Festschrift für Ludwig Steindorff* (in print), edited by Martina Thomsen; Florin Müller, "Das Wunder von Maglavit," in *Wessel Religion im Nationalstaat zwischen den Weltkriegen*, Hans-Christian Maner, Martin Schulze (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 189-198.

parliamentary elections. Ciobanu observes that the introduction of universal suffrage was not a subject of great importance for the German peasants. The rural elite was more interested in participation in the local leadership than in parliamentary elections. The peasants made up the majority of the national-political organizations: the national communities (*Volksgemeinschaften*) organized in provinces and led by a National Council. These were the major decision-making bodies and were autonomous from the leadership of the Union of Germans in Romania. The national structure also had local organizations. These helped the peasants to participate in the national-political life of the German minority in Romania. The nationally renowned solidarity was destroyed in the interwar period due to some dissatisfaction, which led to the formation of some groups taking the shape of political parties. The peasants were also involved in these parties. The German parties formed a distinct social group within the German minority itself. After the Great War and the creation of a new state, following the Electoral and Agrarian Reforms, these peasants behaved the same as other peasants, retaining some specific elements of participation in national-political life and in elections. This peasantry had practised selection for centuries due to the fact that the priests, the chiefs of the neighbourhoods (*Nachbarschaften*) and the teachers were all elected. Another difference was the fact that the Germans attended primary school more than other people. They were members of some professionals associations, particularly relating to agriculture, and also had access to the newspapers of these associations. The emergence of Nazism in the rural world is analyzed by Corneliu Pintilescu, who researches its rise in the press. The Transylvanian Saxons were a main target of Nazi-inspired or controlled political organizations such as the *Nationale Arbeitsfront* and the *Deutsche Volkspartei Rumäniens* during the 1930s or the *Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien* after 1940. Due to the fact that the majority of the Saxon population lived in rural areas, the propaganda of these organizations adjusted its message in order to gain support among the Transylvanian Saxon peasants. Also, these organizations, being inspired by the Nazi mass propaganda from Germany, radically modernized the methods and the instruments of political propaganda within the rural areas. This radical change attracted especially, but not only, the young population. Pintilescu argues that the success of the Nazi propaganda within the Transylvanian Saxon rural area could be explained partially by this revolution of propaganda methods, but also by ingrained prejudices among the local Saxon population concerning the other people living in Transylvania. These prejudices had been partially caused by the privileged status granted to the Transylvanian Saxons by the

Hungarian kings during the Middle Ages and preserved during the modern period. These prejudices could explain why in the interwar years the Nazi racist propaganda was better received among the Transylvanian Saxons than by the Banat Swabians.

Ivan Duminica's study focuses on the participation of Bulgarians in the parliamentary elections in Romania. He analyses the main political parties that enjoyed popularity among Bessarabian Bulgarians, shedding light on some local leaders of Bulgarian origin who represented Romanian parties in Bulgarian villages. At the same time, the author reports on the attempt of the Bulgarians from Southern Bessarabia and especially from Akkerman County to form a Bulgarian national party entitled the "Bulgarian Minority Bloc", which was supposed to represent interests of ethnic Bulgarians in Bessarabia. Duminica also presents new data concerning to the participation of Bulgarian peasants in the formation of some illegal political pro-Russian and pro-Bulgarian organizations.

Clearly, then, it is still too early to give definitive answers to questions regarding the integration of (mostly ethnic) Romanian peasants into Greater Romania. Many historians still privilege a top-down perspective and concentrate on power structures and institutions that were imposed upon village communities from outside. We still need more studies examining peasants as an internally differentiated group and not as an amorphous object of state strategies and party propaganda. This volume offers first attempts in this direction, mainly in the chapters by Micu and Şerban. It remains true however that a thorough analysis of state institutions and party structures is still badly needed. Historians should also deepen our knowledge of party structures on local and district levels. Ideally, this evidence should be linked to case studies like those on the two villages in Maramureş.

CHAPTER ONE

"PEASANT DEMOCRACY" OR WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO PRACTICE POLITICS IN COUNTRYSIDE ROMANIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS[*]

SORIN RADU

Peasants and the right to vote

In Romania, the democratic construction began together with the foundation of modern state (1859), with the Occident serving outright as a model for political elites. The 1866 Constitution would institute a modern political system based on the separation of state powers and censitary suffrage, which was essentially a reflection of the division of Romanian society: on one hand a small, limited elite, rich and educated, and on the other hand a rural class with an overwhelming demographic significance, poor and with very limited education.[1] Cristian Preda classifies the voting system instituted in 1866 as pure censitary suffrage[2], with four classes or colleges of voters (for the Chamber of Deputies): two defined according to income, and the other two according to amount of taxes paid to the state. In the first three colleges, the vote was direct. The argument for this was that only those with some property could achieve a level of education sufficient to

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[1] See Sorin Radu, *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866-1937)* [Modernisation of the Romanian Electoral System (1866-1937)] (Iași: Institutul European, 2005).
[2] Cristian Preda, *Românii fericiți. Vot și putere de la 1831 până în prezent* [Happy Romanians. Vote and Power from 1831 until Present Days] (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 113.

fully appreciate their civic duties. Peasants could serve in Parliament only in the 4th college, where the vote was indirect (50 registered voters chose a delegate who, in his turn, voted for the deputy). For the Senate, the electorate was divided into two colleges: the first was made up of all landowners of rural background with a base income of at least 300 ducats (3,000 Lei), and the second of property owners in the cities (with a base income between 100 and 300 ducats).

The small number of direct electors, the difficulty of understanding electoral competition and the underdeveloped political culture all led functionaries of the electoral system to allow the gradual development of corruption, as well as certain antidemocratic practices: repeated victory of the existing administration through a variety of dishonest means, the exertion of pressure on voters, theft of ballot boxes, falsification of votes, and the introduction of false voters on the lists.[3] The small number of voters and the absence of measures to prevent central and local authorities from interfering in the electoral process also encouraged fraud.[4] The 4th college – where peasants voted – was often referred to as the "dowry" of the government. In this situation, the discourse of the political elite focused on the idea of electoral reform, in the sense of increasing voter participation by introducing universal suffrage in place of censitary. A similar process surrounded the process of political modernization of the state. Discussion of electoral reform was accompanied by the idea of its application, and of the social emancipation of the peasants.

Stelu Șerban argues that "in advanced constitutional democracies, political modernisation advances parallel with social modernisation (urbanisation, improved education, job diversification), and especially with economic modernisation (industrialisation and capitalisation of financial institutions) [...] The nation as a political unit and privileged context offers room to maneuver for the phases of political modernisation. [...] The conflicts generated by modernisation (socio-political division), as well as its distortion, occur in the context of the nation."[5] In the case of Romania, though, there seems to have been a division between modern political

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[3] C. Axente, *Essai sur le régime représentatif en Roumanie* (Paris, 1937), 351.
[4] Keith Hitchins, *România, 1866-1947* [Romania, 1866-1947] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996), 37.
[5] Stelu Șerban, *Elite, partide și spectru politic în România interbelică* [Elites, Parties and Political Spectrum in Interwar Romania] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006), 31.

forms, democratic institutions and social modernisation.[6] Thus, Keith Hitchins and Cristian Preda observed that the electorate grew at the same rate as urbanisation occurred, that is, at the rate that the colleges in the cities became more populous.[7] So, in 1884, there were 9,151 voters in College I, 24,750 in College II and 25,576 in College III. In 1905 15,973 were registered in College I, five times more than in 1866, in College II were 34,742 and in College III 42,907 direct voters and roughly 1 million indirect voters.[8]

Considering the indirect vote, the participation of peasants in politics before the Great War was extremely limited. The principles of democracy and the value of the vote were not easily internalized by citizens in general, and especially by peasants, largely due to the extremely slow development of village public education and the peasantry being kept – economically – in a continually precarious situation. In this case, for the peasantry, politics was not only a luxury, but even an adventure. "The special college established for the Chamber of Deputies due to the governing needs of the political parties," notes Apostol Stan, "instead of being used as a school for political democratisation, became a means for the authorities to deform the will of the electorate."[9]

An interesting ideological debate took place at the end of the 19th Century in Romania on the theme of electoral reform[10], in regard to limiting the number of electoral colleges, moving away from censitary suffrage, and even the enactment of universal suffrage. Such a reform was seen as the route to modernisation. Those who pronounced themselves in favor of such a change (liberals, social democrats, and radical democrats), though they had different ideas regarding the actual reform, shared a common enemy, namely the Conservative Party. The Conservatives were openly skeptical of giving the vote to the peasants, seeing that the people were unprepared, illiterate and economically disadvantaged. Universal suffrage could throw the country into anarchy. The question of modifying the electoral system – which was not

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[6] For more detail, see Daniel Barbu, "The Nation against Democracy. State Formation, Liberalism, and Political Participation in Romania," *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* V/3 (2005), 549-560.

[7] Hitchins, *România,* 103; Preda, *Rumânii fericiți,* 113.

[8] Preda, *Rumânii fericiți,* 117.

[9] Apostol Stan, *Putere politică şi democraţie în România, 1859-1866* [Political Power and Democracy in Romania, 1859-1866] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1995), 368.

[10] About the concept of "electoral reform", see: Michael Dummet, *Principles of Electoral Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

unique to Romania, but common to other European countries[11] – entered the 19th Century as one of Romania's major problems requiring immediate resolution. The Great War was to accelerate the reform process, as the peasantry would ultimately enter politics through a radical reform under exceptional circumstances.

The enactment of universal suffrage in Romania: a revolution?

Werner Rösener[12] observes that the chances for parliamentarism and democracy to develop in Europe depended substantially on the way agrarian reforms and emancipation of peasants played out in each country. Nonetheless, in no way did the laws that would finalize the process of liberation, in most cases, bring a quick end to the political and social disadvantages of the peasants: "Deeply rooted secular traditions and behaviours, the assumption by the upper classes of a privileged position and indifference toward peasants, could not be contained all at once by a few reform laws. The dominant elites were themselves generally not prepared to easily surrender their old privileges and positions. Many peasants were further impeded, through various means, in exercising their liberty, they were disadvantaged in elections through unfair voting methods, or they were simply denied their right to vote. Even so, civic equality opened doors previously closed to the peasant for his own evolution and the realization of the value of his profession. Freed from dependence and discriminatory duties, Europe's peasants became an influential segment of the population, with their own political and economic interests, which found an audience even in the modern industrial society of the 20th Century."[13]

To probe Rösener's argument, we can ask the valid question: How was the enactment of universal suffrage perceived in Romania during the Great War (1917-1918) and what was the impact of this reform on a profoundly rural country and a peasant largely excluded from politics? It must be kept in mind that, in Romania, as in other Eastern European countries, this socio-political impact was accompanied by the simultaneous implementation of land reform. Thus, the thesis presented here is that these two

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[11] See Dieter Nohlen, Philip Stöver (Eds.), *Elections in Europe. A data Handbook* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).
[12] Werner Rösener, *Die Bauern in der europäischen Geschichte* (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag), 1993. Romanian language version: Werner Rösener, *Țăranii în istoria Europei* (Iași: Polirom, 2003).
[13] Rösener, *Țăranii în istoria Europei*, 210.

reforms undertaken in war time and applied in the very complex and delicate context that followed had the character and impact of a genuine "revolution".[14] The peasants were integrated into the new liberal state. The universal suffrage reform would produce major changes in the Romanian peasant's political mentality, as he transformed overnight into the main player in the vote and the main subject of public discourse. Simultaneously, the main stage, where voting took place, moved from the city to the village. Furthermore, these radical social transformations were deepened by the 1918 union of the three historical provinces of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania with the Old Kingdom of Romania, leading to the creation of Greater Romania. This nearly doubled the population, from 7,771,341 residents in 1914 to 15,287,528 in 1919.[15]

The modifications thus produced in the structure of the electorate were fundamental. Shifts occurred not only in the structure of the electorate, but in the mentality of the voters. With the enactment of universal suffrage, the rural class suddenly represented more than two thirds of the electorate, becoming the object of the attention of all political formations.[16] After the Great Unification, adult Romanian citizens from Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia would enter for the first time into the composition of the electorate, which not only doubled the number of voters, but brought with it a completely different mentality, contributing to "the general madness."[17] Among the new voters, was also a relatively large number of foreign ethnicities: Hungarian, German, Jewish, Gypsy, Ukrainian, Russian, etc.

Despite electoral law restrictions[18], the number of voters grew exponentially compared to the pre-war period. Comparing the pre-war voter lists, based on census, with those drawn up under universal suffrage

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[14] Leftist thinkers, such as George Grigorovici, easily impressed by the revolutionary changes in Russia, argued a few years after the Great War that the land and electoral reforms had the character of a true "peasant revolt", and that the land reform was equivalent to the Bolshevik Revolution, in terms of change. *Noua Constituţie a României şi nouile Constituţii Europene* [The New Constitution of Romania and the New European Constitution] (Bucharest: Editura Cultura Naţională, 1922), 68.

[15] *Buletin Statistic* (1940), 9; Sabin Manuilă, D. C. Georgescu. *Populaţia României* [The Population of Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938), 9.

[16] Virgil Madgearu, *Ţărănismul* [Peasantism] (Bucharest: Tipografia "Reforma Socială", [s.a.]), 12; George Popovici, "Burghezia oraşelor," [The Bourgeoisie of the Cities] *Democraţia* [Democracy], Bucharest XVII.12, December 1929, 29.

[17] N. Dașcovici, *Spre al doilea partid de guvernământ* [Toward the Second Party of Government] *Societatea de Mâine*, Cluj III/37-38, 12-19 September 1926, 595.

[18] Radu, *Modernizare sistemului electoral din România ...,* 153-177

in 1919, a remarkable increase in the number of voters can be seen. In 1911, in Old Romania, 1,644,306 men had the right to vote, of whom only 126,260 could vote directly, the rest expressing their will through delegates.[19] For 1919, in the first parliamentary elections of United Romania, with universal suffrage, the voter lists (which are only partially known for Transylvania[20]) contain 1,916,225 voters[21], equal to 12.53% of the population of the Old Kingdom and Bessarabia.

The political class was not universally enthusiastic and optimistic that universal suffrage would lead to a true democratic state. Dimitrie Drăghicescu, one of the important leaders of the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal) – the main party that supported and pushed for the enactment of universal suffrage – did not hesitate to state in 1922 that the peasantry would be nothing else but "good soil for politics, in the hands and carts of other classes".[22] Even leftist ideologists, close to the rural world, such as peasantist Virgil Madgearu, expressed their doubts regarding the peasant's political capacities.[23]

In spite of this, the masses came out of the war knowing that they had supported the worst on the front and behind it, and thus convinced that they were the true support of the state and the instrument for its command. From this belief to the idea that they deserved a better life was a small step. So, at the end of the war, the peasants had heightened expectations

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[19] Leonida Colescu, *Statistica electorală. Alegerile generale pentru Corpurile Legiuitoare din 1907 şi 1911* [Electoral Statistics. The General Elections for Legislature in 1907 and 1911] (Bucharest: Stabilimentul Grafic Albert Baer, 1913), 7.

[20] With the application of art. 46 of the electoral law as elaborated by the Directory Council of Transylvania, the election was not held in almost 2/3 of districts, so the data regarding number of registered voters, number of voters, etc., were not gathered. In Transylvania, in 1919 elections were held for only 61 of 205 deputies, and in 1922 for 87 out of 121 terms. Cristian Preda, *România postcomunistă şi România interbelică* [Postcommunist Romania and Interwar Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 2002), 79; Ivan, Marcel. *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice în cifre şi grafice 1919-1932* [The Evolution of Our Political Parties in Numbers and Graphics] (Sibiu: Editura Krafft & Drotleff, 1934), 6. Marcel Ivan was incorrect in stating that the article was also applicable to the elections in Bukovina.

[21] *Monitorul Oficial al României* [Official Gazette of Romania], no. 173, 20 November 1919, 11; Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor...*, table III.

[22] Dimitrie Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale* [Political Parties and Social Classes] (Bucharest: Tipografia Reforma Socială, 1922), 42.

[23] Virgil N. Madgearu, *Ţărănismul* [Peasantism] (Bucharest: Tipografia „Reforma Socială", [f.a.])*,* 33.

and exaggerated hopes.[24] The voters who had gone through "the school of war" were fully aware of their political rights and dues. "Today's Romanian voter – claimed the newspaper *Neamul românesc* (Romanian Nation) in November 1919 – knows what he is doing and, especially, what he will have to do in the future [...] Today, the voter sees clearly that it is a great duty for him to exercise his political rights, waiting impatiently for the chance to vote. [...] You could see an unusual level of concern on the faces of many voters: there was a great weight on their shoulders...," a sign of "heightened awareness of civic duty".[25]

Ion Mihalache, the head of the Peasant Party – which came about as a direct result of the enactment of universal suffrage – saw the new reform as an "earthquake" that had hit the country and left deep impressions on the public consciousness.[26] For many analysts and observers of public life, universal suffrage was the only possible route to the political education of the peasantry, or to repair certain flaws in the Romanian political system, rife with corruption.[27] The land and election reforms had obviously amplified public enthusiasm, already increased by the country's victory in the war, as well as the realisation of the Great Union, and left a deep impression that an era had ended and Romanians were on the verge of a great change, though no one could specify or define just what this transformation and renewal would consist of. In general, the post-war public discourse was dominated by enthusiastic interpretations[28], often exaggerated, of the positive consequences that were about to pour over the rural world and all of Romanian society. Universal suffrage seemed to hold the curative power of a panacea. The public discourse somehow

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[24] P.P. Negulescu, *Partidele politice* [Political Parties], edition prepared and prefaced by Nicolae Gogoneață and Ioan C. Ivanciu (Bucharest: Garamond, [1994]), 25.

[25] G.D. Scraba, "În timpul alegerilor," [During Election Season] *Neamul românesc* [Romanian Nation], Bucharest XIV/253, 14 November 1919.

[26] Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale Bucharest [Central Historical National Archives Service Bucharest], Fond Ion Mihalache, file 40, f. 10.

[27] George N. Georgescu, "Educația politică a satelor," [The Political Education of the Villages] *Democrația* XXV/1-2, January-February 1937, 58.

[28] Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Prima manifestare a votului universal," [The First Manifestation of Universal Suffrage] *Lumea Nouă*, Bucharest, no. 13, 1 December 1919; see also Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete* [Complete Works], vol. 5 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1978), 286-289; Șerban Voinea, *Marxism oligarhic. O contribuție la problema dezvoltării capitaliste a României* [Oligarchic Marxism. A Contribution to the Problem of the Capitalist Development of Romania] (Bucharest: Editura I. Brănișteanu, 1926), 247.

centred on the importance of electoral reform, seen as the peasant's route
to political emancipation, and less on the importance of land reform.[29]

Such a background, in which hope for change was high, was
conductive to the appearance and development of a political phenomenon
common to periods of exit from crisis, that is, the founding of new
political organisations or the appearance of "homeland saviours."
Charisma played a major role in legitimising political leaders, especially in
rural areas. The most relevant case centred around General Alexandru
Averescu and the People's League. Thanks to a popularity gained during
war time, a genuine myth would arise surrounding the general.[30] Peasant-
soldiers, possessed by genuine shell-shock, would see in him "the shining
spirit of a great national Leader".[31] His qualities as military commander,
demonstrated in the Battle of Mărăşti, lent him an unprecedented
popularity within the army and in public opinion. An irresistible wave of
sympathy, reaching the level of adoration, began in Moldova and spread
across all of Old Romania.[32] After his entrance into active politics, the
myth of the "Saviour" general extended and grew, gaining new valence.
Contributing to this, obviously, were the demobilised, former soldiers,
who were then attempting to integrate into post-war civil society. They
were, however, pervaded by feelings of mistrust, that civilians would not
understand their sacrifices. In this state of mind, they received General
Averescu's guarantee that their dreams and hopes would not be betrayed

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[29] More tempered in his speech, Iuliu Maniu, president of the National Romanian
Party for Transylvania, was one of the few political leaders who argued that, for
the social and political reform of the country, "the land reform, with its results, will
have a much larger influence than universal suffrage, as electoral reform creates
only the frameworks, the possibility for the implementation of beliefs and any
political influence. The actual content of these frameworks and possibility comes
from the political awareness and conviction of the voters of a particular class. This
awareness, – believed Maniu – cannot be realized in a lasting way but through an
economic and cultural situation appropriate to today's needs." Iuliu Maniu,
Testamentul moral-politic [Moral-Political Testament] (Bucharest: Gândirea
Românească, 1991), 9.
[30] Sorin Radu, "Mitul eroului salvator – cazul generalului Alexandru Averescu,"
[The Myth of the Saviour Hero – the Case of General Alexandru Averescu]
Apulum XXXV (1998), 545-558.
[31] Mircea Ştefan Cioroiu, *O viaţă de prestigiu: Alexandru Averescu Mareşal al
României* [A Life of Prestige: Alexandru Averescu, Marshall of Romania]
(Bucharest: Tipografia "Universul", 1930), 126.
[32] Petre Gheaţă, *Oameni şi fapte* [People and Acts] (Bucharest: Editura "Ideia",
1938), 64.

by the old politicians.[33] The mission of "righting the sad state of affairs" was attributed to the general, that of establishing "answers" for the war just terminated, of pronouncing "sanctions" and introducing "reforms" for the peasants. People had had enough of the old parties and old politicians. There was a general desire for something new and good. And eyes naturally turned to the general who had been victorious in war. Averescu, together with the party he founded, must realize "the new Romania".[34] Peasant soldiers of the Old Kingdom, truly hypnotised[35], were not inclined to see his true political ambitions or the fact that the People's League had adopted many political fugitives of various orientations, who were anything but "fresh faces."

The "Averescu Phenomenon"[36] appeared only in the Old Kingdom. In Transylvania, on the other hand, we encounter another psychosis, athough more limited, that of the Romanian National Party (Partidul Naţional Român) and Iuliu Maniu.[37] Interestingly, Maniu and his Transylvanians roused passion and exaggerated interest for the political elite in Bucharest, being seen for a time as a potential "founder" destined to reinvigorate Kingdom politics. Iorga saw in Transylvanians "the new men" who had to moralise not only political and parliamentary life, but all of Old Romanian society. They embodied the Occident and democracy, compared to the old politicians of Bucharest, who seemed an incarnation of the Byzantine Orient.[38] On the same note, Constantin Argetoianu at one point believed that Transylvanians would bring about a "purification of customs, an

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[33] Radu, "Mitul eroului salvator – cazul generalului Alexandru Averescu," 550.

[34] Mihail Hottineanu, *Un partid şi un om* [A Party and a Man] (Craiova: Editura Scrisul Românesc, [s.a.]), 7, 8; Octavian Goga, *Aceeaşi luptă: Budapesta – Bucureşti* [The Same Fight: Budapest – Bucharest] (Bucharest: Editura "Universul", 1930), 37, 178.

[35] Former conservative Constantin Argetoianu, having become an important member of the People's League, would classify this phenomenon as "the Averescan religion". Constantin Argetoianu, *Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri* [For the People of Tomorrow. Recollections from the People of Yesterday] vol. VI (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 1996), 29.

[36] Mihail Manoilescu, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1993), 29.

[37] Sorin Radu, "Electoratul din Transilvania în primii ani după Marea Unire," [The Electorate of Transylvania in the Years Following the Great Unification] *Apulum* XXXVII/2 (2000), 229-245.

[38] For more detail, see Sorin Radu, "Imaginea lui Iuliu Maniu în mediile politice din Vechiul Regat, 1919-1926," [The Image of Iuliu Maniu in Political Circles of Old Kingdom, 1919-1926] *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane*, V-VI (1998-1999), 94.

improvement in administrative habits, a reaction against our oriental corruption. We all believed that the Transylvanians would help us to promote ourselves from Balkan to European."[39]

So, in the first parliamentary elections carried out with universal suffrage in November 1919, as noted one observer of the time, "the more experienced, as well as the utterly unprepared" participated.[40] The enthusiasm of the peasants who were exercising their right to vote for the first time was a characteristic of the first post-war elections. In small groups, dressed in traditional national costumes, sometimes even accompanied by fanfare or songs sung by "diplaşi" (a type of minstrel), the peasants created a unique, completely new atmosphere on election day.

Regarding the voters in the provinces united with Romania in 1918, the entrance of a significant number of ethnic minority voters into the electorate led to a special case: Hungarians, Saxons, Swabians, Jews, Ukrainians, Ruthenian Russians, etc. The election law created no discrimination regarding the exercise of the right to vote.[41] The integration of minority voters into the new Romanian state, especially of Hungarians, was, however, not an easy task. The Hungarians in Transylvania found themselves in an extraordinary situation. From members of the dominant ethnicity, they found themselves reduced to the position of ethnic minority, and from here grew a deep dissatisfaction over the loss of certain historical privileges and an arrogant, hostile attitude towards the Romanian state. Such an abrupt change of status and situation led inevitably to the categoric refusal of most Hungarians to participate in the politics of the new state. Hungarian political leaders encouraged their electorate to practice "passive resistance," carefully monitoring the pronouncements of the Paris Peace Conference, which was to clarify the status of Transylvania.[42] The Hungarian peasants' confusion was underlined by the lack of information in the rural world. A large portion of the Hungarian population did not register to vote, and did not participate in the elections of 1919. Their attitude would change upon the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, along with the formation of the

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[39] Argetoianu, *Pentru cei de mâine,* 30.

[40] Ion Constantinescu, *Din însemnările unui fost reporter parlamentar. Camera Deputaţilor, 1919-1937* [From the Writings of a Former Parliamentary Reporter. Chamber of Deputies, 1919-1937] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1973), 29.

[41] Petre Bănescu, "L'encadrament politique des minorités ethniques de Roumanie," *Revue de Transylvanie* V/4 (1939), 469.

[42] Geza Kiss, "Ideologia şi tendinţele minorităţii maghiare," [The Ideology and Tendencies of the Hungarian Minority] in *Doctrinele partidelor politice* [Doctrines of the Political Parties], 2nd edition prepared by Petre Dan (Bucharest: Garamond, 1997), 323-329.

Hungarian Party (Partidul Maghiar).[43] The new attitude of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania constituted a sign of loyalty to the Romanian state.

On a different note, the shifting of the centre of mass of the electorate to the rural areas influenced the organisation of political parties, even leading directly to the appearance of new parties. The practice of propaganda moved to the village, forcing the parties to adapt not only their political platforms and discourse, but also their organisational structures and, in some cases, even their names. In an attempt to survive, the Conservative Party led by Alexandru Marghiloman – seen as the main opponent of the land and electoral reforms before the war – would have to change its name to the Progressive Conservative Party, which was still not enough to prevent its abrupt disappearance from the political scene. The Democratic Conservative Party led by Take Ionescu was likewise unable to escape extinction. All at once, the introduction of universal suffrage put the conservative parties out of touch with the electorate. Under universal suffrage, these political organisations should have moved out from the city, appealed to the villages (where they were received with hostility), increased their numbers of members and adherents, and restructured themselves organisationally, taking in the entire territory of the country. On top of all of this, conservatives were already discredited in the Romanian village world, where their influence was already very limited and they fairly frequently met with an adversarial attitude.[44] Further, in 1923, Alexandru Marghiloman himself acknowledged the "inaptitude of the party at bowing to the demands of the new politics".[45]

Quite realistically, Andrei Corteanu, editor-in-chief of the official conservative newspaper *Steagul* (The Flag), observed in 1919 that the two great parties which had controlled politics until that moment – The National Liberal Party and the Conservative Party (Partidul Conservator) – did not have the political resources nor the necessary skills to extend their organisational networks into the rural world and to spread their propaganda among the peasants. The universal suffrage reform had made

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[43] Bănescu, "L'encadrament politique des minorités ethniques de Roumanie," 470; Silviu Dragomir, *La Transylvanie et ses minorités ethniques* (Bucharest, 1934), 267-268.

[44] Ion Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României moderne. Partidul Conservator* [The Political System of Modern Romania. The Conservative Party] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1987), 531-533.

[45] Alexandru Marghiloman, "Doctrina conservatoare," [The Conservative Doctrine] *Doctrinele partidelor politice* [Doctrines of the Political Parties] (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1924), 180.

the liberals and conservatives "lose touch with the electoral masses," leaving room on the political scene for new groups and parties, largely without platforms or political vision, but with profoundly demagogic rhetoric.[46]

The liberal elite, which had wholly devoted itself to the land and electoral reforms, quickly understood the necessity of adapting its organisational structure to the new electorate. It was no coincidence that the official newspaper *Viitorul* (The Future) repeatedly recommended the establishment of "local chapters" in all rural localities: "We must have serious organisations in all rural centres, with the mission to carry out the political education of the peasantry."[47] Without a doubt, the action initiated by the liberals to launch chapters in all rural localities – registering villages or entire regions, regardless of whether they had any actual connection to the National Liberal Party aside from the tricolor IDs they distributed to them – was mostly a formal gesture, a propagandistic move.[48] In the first parliamentary elections organised in November 1919, the liberals would be punished by the electorate, who could not overlook their hesitation in applying the reforms, as well as the governing errors during the war. Mihail Manoilescu noted in his memoirs that the liberals "were naive to believe that universal suffrage and land redistribution could assure decades of inexhaustible popularity, and they had failed to understand the elementary psychological fact that, in politics, one can never count on gratitude …"[49]

The crisis that struck the traditional parties after 1918 was also due to the fact, as previously mentioned, that the rural electorate, wishing for something new, turned its attention to those who promised a new political course, a new road. People were tired of the old parties and the old politicians. People everywhere desired a transformation, a reinvigoration.[50] A certain general political disorientation can be detected among the voters: "The citizens,"

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[46] Andrei Corteanu, "Cei zece ani din urmă," [The Last Ten Years] in *Lui Alexandru Marghiloman. Omagiu cu prilejul unei îndoite aniversări. Prietenii şi admiratorii lui* [To Alexandru Marghiloman. Homage on the Occasion of Anniversary. His Friends and Admirers] (Bucharest: Tiparul „Cultura Naţională", 1924), 87.

[47] "Viitorul" [The Future], Bucharest XII/3262, 18 November 1918.

[48] Alexandru Papacostea, *România politică* [Political Romania] (Bucharest, 1925), 214.

[49] Manoilescu, *Memorii*, 28.

[50] Nicolae Iorga, *Orizonturile mele. O viaţă de om aşa cum a fost* [My Horizons. The Life of a Man as It Was], vol. III (Chişinău: Editura Universitas, 1991), 13; Ion Rusu-Abrudeanu, *Păcatele Ardealului faţă de sufletul Vechiului Regat* [The Sins of Transylvania against the Soul of the Old Kingdom] (Bucharest, 1930), 470.

wrote *Neamul românesc* (Romanian Nation) in November 1919, "even the most attentive, know neither where to vote nor for whom to vote, until the day before the election. Still, a single idea pervades them: they no longer want the old politicians."[51] This explains the success of the parties newly arrived on the postwar political scene. Unlike, the conservatives, the liberals had the resources and skills necessary to restructure their party and reacted quickly enough. Thanks to this, in the 1926 parliamentary elections, the Liberal Party was able to nominate candidates in all electoral districts in Romania.[52]

Among the direct effects of the enactment of land and electoral reforms on the Old Kingdom's party system, with direct implications regarding the integration of peasants into politics, we can identify the birth of several political parties that were almost exclusively aimed at peasants: The People's League (Liga Poporului) and the Peasant Party (Partidul Țărănesc). While the success of the People's League (later the People's Party) was tied to the popularity of the "saviour hero" personality Alexandru Averescu, the Peasant Party was based on the desires of a second-class elite, especially from the villages, made up of teachers, priests, and local personalities, to increase the political value of a peasantry then on the threshold of social and political emancipation. The new political organisation would fit into the left of the political spectrum, declaring itself a "class party". The Peasantist elites, among whom we find also significant intellectuals (e.g., Virgil Madgearu, Constantin Stere, and Cezar Petrescu) appreciated the fact that the peasantry contained real political potential, and believed in the possibility of a political party devoted to it. There were attempts to organise political parties for the peasants even before the Great War.[53] The new leader of the Peasant Party, Ion Mihalache, seemed to understand the true needs of the peasants and advanced a rhetoric and an attitude that allowed him to identify easily with the rural electorate. Modest, dressed in traditional attire, offering simple and clear slogans, Mihalache identified with peasant voters and, in record time, transformed the Peasant Party into a successful organisation. In the 1919 parliamentary elections, the Peasant Party's numbers were surprising, enough to give them access to the government of the Parliamentary Bloc led

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[51] G.D. Scraba, "Alegerile şi educaţia cetăţenească," [Elections and Civic Education] *Neamul românesc* XIV/244, 3 November 1919.

[52] Tancred Constantinescu, "Efectele legei electorale şi învăţămintele ce decurg din alegerile făcute după război," [The Effects of the Election Law and Education following the Elections held after the War] *Democraţia* XIV/10-12 (1926), 101.

[53] See the initiatives of Constantin Dobrescu-Argeş (1895) and those of Vasile M. Kogălniceanu (1906) to found a peasant party.

by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. Peasantist euphoria also reached Bessarabia, a deeply rural province, where Ion Inculeț and Pantelimon Halippa would found the Bessarabian Peasant Party. The two peasant parties together received a number of terms in Parliament that put them in second place nationally, after the National Party of Transylvania.

We encounter an interesting phenomenon in Transylvania regarding the electorate. Here land reform and universal suffrage were enacted through the Directory Council and the High National Romanian Council, both dominated by the Romanian National Party (Partidul Național Român). The two reforms were seen by Romanian peasants as acts not only of their own social and political emancipation, but of national liberation. Maniu's Nationals were seen as the main agents of national emancipation, and from there emerged a rejection of any other political organisation. Reticence toward the Old Kingdom parties transformed into rejection of their attempts to establish chapters across the mountains. This is especially true in the villages of Transylvania, where "kingdom" political organisations were seen as "foreign." The regionalist language encouraged by the Romanian National Party authorities immediately following 1918 cultivated the idea that only the National Party was entitled to represent the "interests" of Ardeal and Banat[54], challenging the right of any political group from Old Romania to extend its influence into Transylvania. The results of the 1920 parliamentary elections[55], and especially those of 1922[56], demonstrate, however, that the categorisation of political options according to political groups had started in Transylvania. In our opinion, the Romanian electorate in urban areas was more open to a political transformation than rural voters, by definition traditionalist and consistent in their political views, the Romanian National Party remaining for them "in the dear reminiscence of all, from the time

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[54] "Unitatea şi păstrarea Partidului Naţional Român," [The Unity and Preservation of the Romanian National Party] *Patria* [Fatherland], Cluj, III/155, 17 July 1921; "Liberalii din Bucureşti şi Partidul Naţional Român," [The Liberals of Bucharest and the Romanian National Party] *Patria* IV/26, 5 February 1922; also see "Ardelenii şi liberalii," [Transylvanians and Liberals] *Patria* IV/4, 5 January 1922.

[55] The People's Party, already in power, won 84 out of 121 mandates in Transylvania; National Liberal Party won 4 mandates; Romanian National Party, 23 mandates (after winning 170 in 1919); the rest had 10 mandates. Constantinescu, "Efectele legei electorale ...," 97.

[56] National Liberal Party, then in power, won 81 mandates for deputy in Transylvania, compared to the 25 obtained by Romanian National Party and the 15 other parties. Constantinescu, "Efectele legei electorale ...," 100; Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice*, table II.

when it represented 'the nation' in Ardeal".[57] Transylvanian politicians spoke of the "impressive adherence of the rural opinion in Ardeal"[58] to the Romanian National Party and less often of the devotion of urban voters.[59]

The new voter: the peasant

Between the two World Wars, the peasantry retained its overwhelming influence in Romania's social structure. Approximately 80% of the population lived in villages and was mainly occupied with agriculture. Social ills such as illiteracy continued to represent fundamental problems for the peasantry, despite the enactment of land reforms after the war. Major social differentiation could be identified even among the ranks of peasants from different regions of the country. In Banat, for instance, the peasants' socio-cultural status – the level of literacy and wealth – was much higher than that of the peasants in Bessarabia, the exact opposite, where the recorded illiteracy rate was around 80% and poverty was deep. In this case, political behaviour and education manifested themselves in a different manner. The "incumbent voter", that is, the citizen who typically voted with the party in power[60], regardless of its political leanings, was predominant in Bessarabia. These dependable votes, mostly from peasant voters, became a true "government dowry" for the party organising the elections. Interwar Romania's deep social division was also amplified by a numerically reduced but influential social blanket of elite leaders, educated and rich, who borrowed Occidental lifestyles and cultural interests. Between these two social strata – peasant and bourgeois elite – existed a social layer made up of workers, which did not exceed 8% of the country's population. Alongside them was the category of second- and third-rung administrative functionaries, as well as the delicate category of professionals, business owners, etc. So it is justified to consider that the

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[57] Tiberiu Vornic, *Scrisorile unui fripturist* [The Letters of an Opportunist] (Braşov, 1926), 21.

[58] Vornic, *Scrisorile unui fripturist*, 21.

[59] "Propaganda, nouă politică în Ardeal," [Propaganda, the New Politics in Ardeal] *Neamul românesc* XV/50, 17 March 1920 (article reprinted from *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Braşov).

[60] Cristian Preda correctly observed: "The fragility of the partisan structures and the absence of political awareness led to voters voting with the ruling party. Alternation was controlled by the king, not by the citizen. Elections were thus a secondary element in the structure of the regime. While held regularly, they merely legitimized already-named governments." Preda, *Românii fericiţi,* 129.

archetypal Romanian voter between the two World Wars is represented by
the peasant.

Universal suffrage brought an impressively large number to the polls,
compared to the elections before the Great War. Electoral statistics
gathered by Leoinda Colescu in 1911 reported the following for Romania
(the Old Kingdom): the adult population (over 21 years of age) was
3,024,928; of them, 1,644,302 were men. Of these, a direct vote for the
Chamber of Deputies was accorded to: 15,301 voters in College I; 33,270
in College II; and 101,330 voters and delegates in College III; a total of
149,910 voters. In the Senate, 11,164 votes came from College I and
12,757 from College II, meaning a total of 24,921 voters. Thus, only 6.1%
of adult males had a direct vote for the Chamber of Deputies and 1.5% for
the Senate. Of these, only 74.2% of those registered to vote for Chamber
of Deputies and 72.2% of those registered to vote for the Senate voted in
the elections of 1911[61]. This means that approximately 75,194 voters for
the Chamber and 17,993 for the Senate chose a Parliament considered to
represent a population of over 7 million residents.

The enactment of universal suffrage in 1919 (the first parliamentary
elections taking place in November 1919, in the context of the creation of
Greater Romania) added some 1,916,225 voters to the lists[62] (although the
complete numbers are not known for Transylvania), which represented
12.53% of the population of Romania.[63] In the ensuing period, the
electorate was in a constant state of growth. From this point of view,
politics was democratised. Election statistics illustrate a constant increase
in number of voters, primarily from among the peasants[64]:

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[61] Colescu, *Statistica electoral*, Table no. 1, 7; Mattei Dogan, *Comparaţii şi
explicaţii în ştiinţa politică şi în sociologie* [Comparison and Explanations in
Political Science and Sociology] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2010), 10-11.
[62] *Monitorul Oficial al României*, III/173, 20 October 1919, 11; Ivan, *Evoluţia
partidelor noastre politice ...*, table III.
[63] Gheorghe Iacob, Luminiţa Iacob, *Modernizare – europenism. România de la
Cuza Vodă la Carol al II-lea* [Modernisation – Europeanism. Romania since Cuza
Vodă to Carol II], vol. I (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Al. I. Cuza", 1995), 267.
[64] Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democraţiei parlamentare, 1919-1937*,
75-76; Preda, *Românii fericiţi*, 92.

YEAR	Population of Romania	Registered voters	% of population
1919	15,287,528	1,916,225	12.53%
1920	15,541,428	2,924,527	18.82%
1922	15,970,836	2,908,015	18.21%
1926	16,926,647	3,496,814	20.66%
1927	15,149,321	3,586,086	20.91%
1928	17,390,605	3,671,325	21.11%
1931	18,166,336	4,037,360	22.22%
1932	18,426,159	4,219,039	22.89%
1933	18,652,053	4,380,354	23.48%
1937	19,319,330[*]	4,649,163	24.06%

[*] Population of Romania at the end of 1936.

Cristian Preda appreciates that the growth of the electorate after 1918 was not an automatic result of population increase. The population of Romania grew from 14,669,841 in 1919 to 18,057,028 in 1930, at a much lower rate than the growth of the electorate: "The organisational improvements obviously led to a significant increase in potential voters."[65]

The partial introduction of the female vote to the 1929 local elections did not draw very many women to the polls, mainly due to literacy conditions imposed by lawmakers. Still, in 1929, some women campaigned for positions in local administration; three became mayors: in Buda village in Vaslui; in Cobia in Dâmbovița; and in the city of Lipova. Additionally, around 220 women were elected to community councils.[66]

To distinguish between peasant voters and the rest, the only credible source of analysis available is *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930* (General Census of the Population of Romania of 29 December 1930), a work in 10 volumes published under the guidance of Sabin Manuilă between 1938 and 1940.[67] According to the census, the population of Romania grew to 18,057,028 residents in 1930. Of these, 8,886,833 (49.1%) were male, the rest female.[68] As only men had full voting rights, we will limit our discussion to them for now. They

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[65] Preda, *Rumânii fericiţi,* 143.

[66] Preda, *Rumânii fericiţi,* 160.

[67] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930* [General Census of the Population of Romania of 29 December 1930] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938-1940).

[68] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României ...*, vol. I, XXIV, table A.

were distributed as follows: 7,072,167 in rural areas[69] and 1.814.666 in urban areas.[70] Of these, roughly 46% were minors and thus unable to vote.[71] Thus, the relatively small numbers of registered voters in the above table should not come as a surprise.[72]

Regarding the division of voters according to class and occupation, the 1930 census indicates that only 9,521 of 3,113,951 voters working in agriculture had university educations; 9,670 of 470,802 voters working in exploitation of natural resources and industry; 12,594 of 207,657 voters working in credit and commerce; 4,024 of 147,863 working in transport; 64,033 of 373,232 working in public institutions (which includes public functionaries, clergy, educators and those in cultural institutions, the armed forces and public services); and 31,584 of 234,380 of miscellaneous occupations had higher studies.[73] The large percentage of citizens working in agriculture (78,2%) place Romania third in Europe in this regard, after the USSR and Bulgaria.[74]

Informations regarding the local chapters of political parties in the villages are very few, and it is impossible to even estimate the number of peasant members the various parties had. For the most part, local chapters of the parties had a limited number of reliable members and sympathisers, and these were mostly active during campaign seasons.[75] Statistics on the numbers of members of political parties are very few and disparate, offering us no relative certainty. The lack of these data is mainly due to the fact that, party members did not normally possess identification to attest to their membership, and the registers maintained by the local chapters were not kept up-to-date, often not even kept, or have since been lost. In spite of this, the National Peasant Party was by far the most popular political force of interwar Romania, a true "party of the masses", as named by Marcel

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[69] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României* ..., vol. I, XXV, table B.

[70] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României* ..., vol. I, XXVI, table C.

[71] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României* ..., vol. IX, 309.

[72] The numbers of registered voters cannot be exact, since, in all local or parliamentary elections in the period 1919-1937, there were numerous cases in which some citizens were not on the electoral lists. There were situations in which the government had organised the elections quickly and did not have time to actualise the lists, often excluding citizens who had reached 21 years of age, or including deceased citizens who had not been removed from the lists.

[73] Data calculated based on *Recensământul general al populaţiei României* ..., vol. IX, part XIII, 749.

[74] *Apud* Iacob, Iacob, *Modernizare – europenism* ..., 73.

[75] Ioan Saizu, Mihail Rusenescu, *Viaţa politică în România 1922-1928* (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1979), 37.

Ivan (1934).[76] An incomplete statistic from 1936 specifies that National Peasant Party had 454,003 registered members[77], making it, in this sense, the strongest party in Romania. The social structure of the party was extremely homogeneous, containing lawyers, priests, professors, teachers, and even some from the bourgeois industrial and financial world.[78] The base of the party was, however, made up of peasants.

Peasants – political culture and voter turnout

The literacy rate in 1930 in Romania was 57.1%. In urban areas, men had a rate of 84.5%, and in rural areas 64.9%.[79] Regarding those with the right to vote (men 21 years of age and older), 53.65 in rural areas were illiterate, and 28.7% in urban areas. The highest percentage of illiterate voters was to be found in Bessarabia (64.8%), and the lowest in Banat (30.6%).[80] It is interesting to note that the highest literacy rate was among men with elementary education: 66.2% in urban areas and 93% of men living in rural areas (these numbers include all who attended primary school, regardless of the number of grades completed). Only 2.2% of males in the cities had higher education and only 0.2% of those in rural areas.[81] The impact of these numbers is increased by another sad reality of the era: the 1930 census was based on the declarations of residents, so many citizens declared that they had gone to primary school, but did not mention that they had not completed the 7 years required by law since 1924. The reality was that some literate voters barely had basic knowledge of reading and writing.

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[76] Ivan. *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice ...*, 27.
[77] *Calendarul Partidului Național Țărănesc* [Calendar of the National Peasant Party] (Bucharest: Tipografia "Bucovina", 1936), 139-270 (Data from 43 county chapters were published, of a total of 54 mentioned as being active).
[78] Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc* [History of the National Peasant Party] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), 69.
[79] *Recensământul general al populației României ...*, vol. III, XIV, table VI; Manuilă, Georgescu, *Populația României*, 33.
[80] The numbers were calculated according to *Recensământul general al populației României ...,* vol. III, XXI, table XIV. After Bessarabia, followed, in decreasing order, Dobruja, Crișana-Maramureș, Oltenia, Moldova, Bukovina, Transylvania, Muntenia and Banat. A very interesting study on literacy in the villages was made by researcher Dumitru Șandru, "Răspîndirea științei de carte în satele României între cele două războaie mondiale," [Literacy Rates in Romanian Villages between the Two World Wars] *Cercetări istorice* XI (1980), 521-532.
[81] *Recensământul general al populației României ...,* vol. III, XIX, table XI.

Voter turnout fit with European standards. The lowest rates were
recorded in the elections of 1920 and 1937 (66% and 66.1%). The 1928
elections reached the highest percentage of voter turnout, 77.5%. Another
important indicator of political culture is shown by the percentage of
cancelled votes. The maximum was in 1919 (30.2%) and could be ascribed
to lack of experience on the part of voters, but also to the extremely
complicated voting procedure. A large number of peasant voters were
extremely confused when they received both a stamp for voting (if they
wished to vote for the entire list of some party) and a pencil for crossing out
candidates for whom they did not wish to vote. This confusion was also
noted among urban voters. The percentage of votes cancelled would
gradually decrease, reaching a more than reasonable number in 1937:
1.48%.

Insufficient political maturity of the Romanian electorate is also
illustrated by the extraordinary oscillations of the percentages obtained by
parties according to their position, i.e., in power or opposition. This kind
of voting encountered very frequently in rural areas, generated constant
criticism of the reform that granted peasants universal suffrage. Liberals,
conservatives, even leftist parties such as socialist and peasantist, criticized,
if not the universal suffrage reform itself, the lack of political education of
the peasants. Public discourse, especially in the 1920s, was directed by the
high leadership towards assuming "the work of the civic and political
education of the peasant." This seemed to be the man mission of the
political parties. How this was understood by each party, and, especially,
how they applied it, is outside the scope of this study. More than a few
saw the enactment of universal suffrage as a political error, and many did
not hesitate to openly doubt the peasant's capacity for political self-
education. One thing is certain: all parties were in agreement that the
peasants did not possess the political acumen to appreciate their role
within Romania's tender democracy and to avoid the slippery
demagoguery and traps set by numerous "saviour heroes", "divine leaders"
promising "salvation" of the state and the peasants from the many
"dangers" threatening them.

Political propaganda in the rural world

The propaganda disseminated by political parties in the villages was
intense and depended on the local chapters operating in the villages, but
especially on campaign trails through the rural world and word-of-mouth
propaganda from house to house, from person to person. We do not know
very much about the networks created in the villages by the parties, but

one thing is clear: the peasants did not rush to register with parties. The reasons for this can only be speculated on (apathy, association of parties with the "elite", perception of parties as extension of state authority?). The information at our disposal would seem to uphold the idea that some parties, such as National Liberal Party, did not pay too much attention to the establishment of local chapters in the villages. The Peasantists (National-Peasantists starting in 1926) and, after 1930, the legionnaires, would be the ones to attempt to extend their networks throughout the country's villages. The difficulty of maintaining constant activity within the frameworks of these chapters was obvious. A monograph about the village Ghicoeşti (in Neamţ county), published in 1938, relates several aspects of rural politics. The authors noted that, though there were not more than 250 voters in the village, local chapters of all of the important political parties could be found here. Yet the various ideologies and principles of the parties and groups did not resonate in the hearts of the peasants: "Passionate in politics, they know no other ideology or behavioural norm than the right of the legendary fox. Personal interests overrule the most beautiful principles. For this reason, every group has its militants, who are not very many and who are willing to fight to the death with their political adversaries in the other groups."[82] The number of such "politicians" is, however, not very large, "more than 50% witnessing such behaviour with indifference and even irony. These mostly vote for the incumbent party, or they vote according to impulse, trying new groups, and this not according to the party's principles, but from the desire to see something new, what the others are like who haven't yet been in power."[83]

Having modest organisational infrastructures, the parties mostly produced political propaganda during electoral campaigns, leaving the villages calm and ignored by politicians the rest of the time. The channels by which political messages were transmitted were administrative ones, in which local notables – mayor, notary and often gendarmes – played major roles. The most common means for transmitting political and electoral messages were: distributing newspapers, propaganda gazettes, brochures, posters, and slips; and the organisation of rallies or assemblies. On the other hand, not a few politicians – including Nicolae Iorga – described

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[82] Gheorghe Mareş, Dumitru Mareş, *Monografia satului Ghigoeşti Judeţul Neamţ de la înfiinţare şi până în zilele noastre* [Monograph on Ghigoeşti Village in Neamţ County, from Its Founding until Today] (Bucharest: Editura Casei Şcoalelor, 1938), 154.

[83] Mareş, Mareş, *Monografia satului Ghigoeşti ...*, 155.

electoral campaigns among the peasants as "an apostle's mission to illuminate the villagers".[84]

The press

Eugen Fillotti, one of the most important interwar gazetteers, appreciated that the press was "the most powerful means of diffusion and infiltration of ideas, of opinions, of thought currents. No other means could be so useful, but simultaneously so perilous."[85] While some saw the newspaper, the gazette, just as a means to inform and convince voters, there were not a few who gave the press the qualities of a true "popular school for political education."[86] Newspapers multiplied rapidly after 1918, an expression not only of freedom of expression, but also of the desire to spread political ideas among peasant voters. The literate in the rural world had mostly completed 2-4 grades of school. "Unknowingly," the peasants were "tributaries of the press, slaves to the newspaper." Many didn't think except through the paper. They received opinions ready-made and elaborated from its pages. The popular saying, "that's what's written in the gazette," expressed absolute truth for them.[87]

Besides the official central dailies edited in Bucharest, the important parties edited papers in every county chapter (with few exceptions, they appeared 1-3 times per week). During campaign season, special gazettes were printed, especially for peasants. A characteristic segment of the Romanian press in Transylvania at the end of the 19th Century was made up of gazettes for the people, or "poporale" (in Romanian language: "gazete poporale"). These poporale gazettes appeared as a necessity to inform the great masses of ploughmen about the ongoing national fight of Transylvanian Romanians, and about the more important events happening "in the country", in Romania, or in the world. They were written by gazeteers who knew Romanian village life well, in a simple, colloquial style, in order to be able to gather the entire population around the "flag" raised in battle for nation. Thanks to the way they were written, the way they addressed the ploughmen, "from one peasant to another", popular gazettes quickly came to be very appreciated, peasants were waiting eagerly for Sunday when they could gather to read the gazette. After the

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[84] *Neamul românesc* XXI/95, 17 April 1926.
[85] Emil Samoilă, *Ziaristica. Presa modernă* [Journalism. The Modern Press] (Bucharest: Atelierele "Adevărul" S.A., 1932), 31.
[86] "Rolul presei," [The Role of the Press] *Steagul* [The Flag], Bucharest, V/283, 9/22 February 1919.
[87] Samoilă, *Ziaristica ...*, 32.

war and the realisation of the Unification, the gazettes, like the rest of the Transylvania press, encountered a crisis and most became party gazettes, while still retaining their popular character, through the themes of the articles.[88] These papers had a pronounced effect on peasant-voters.

In these papers, political organisations published their platforms and rallies, candidate lists, biographies of certain leaders, emphasizing their various accomplishments, times and places of political meetings, and speeches from these meetings or even speeches from Parliament. Besides this, there were permanent columns where the opposition or, at times, the ruling party was attacked, denigrated, accused of all kinds of infractions. The disputes centred on the parties' platforms, but especially their leaders. Most of the time, the battle of ideas between political groups took second place to petty disagreements, personal attacks, and libel. Likewise, during campaign seasons, room was found in the papers for permanent columns detailing the *violence* and *terror* practiced by the authorities. The parties in power, for their part, brought the same accusations against the opposition. The gazettes maintained an intense agitation and tone during election campaign seasons. Mattei Dogan observed that, in the rural world, direct propaganda was preferred, direct contact of the leader / agents of the party with the peasants. Illiteracy was an impediment to the efficient use of the press.[89] Posters and photographs had the most emotional potential.

Election rallies

The high illiteracy rates in the rural world made live speech, direct communication of ideas and political messages, adapted to the understanding of the peasants vital.[90] Normally, direct contact between candidates and

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[88] Sorin Radu, "Consideraţii privind gazetele poporale din Transilvania apărute înainte de Primul Război Mondial," [Considerations regarding the "Poporale" Gazettes of Transylvania before the First World War] Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane Sibiu III (1996), 209-220; Sorin Radu. "Consideraţii privind structura şi organizarea presei româneşti din Transilvania în perioada interbelică (1919-1939)," [Considerations regarding the Structure and Organisation of the Romanian Press in Transvylania in the Interwar Period (1919-1939)] *Apulum* XXXIII (1996), 215-221.

[89] Mattei Dogan makes the valid point that the mass media, the opposite of direct communication, is addressed to the multitude of isolated people. For more detail see Dogan, *Comparaţii şi explicaţii în ştiinţa politică şi în sociologie*, 115 sqq.

[90] See the interesting study dedicated to the impact of liturgical speech among the peasants: Valer Moga, "Lexicul religios în discursul elitelor politice româneşti din Transilvania anului 1918," [Religious Language in the Speech of the Romanian Political Elite in Transylvania in 1918] *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series*

voters took place within election rallies. These were organised by local party chapters and the candidates on the lists, and were attended by certain leaders of the party in town from the "Centre" and often even the president of the respective party. The rule was that party higher-ups should organise the campaign stops, that is, to cross through many localities in a relatively short period of time in order to participate in rallies organised by local party officials. The campaign trips organised by Alexandru Averescu and Nicolae Iorga have remained in the collective memory. One constant of the campaigns in the rural world was the support of local administration for their own party. This support could take several forms: the availability of cars for trips, while, often, opposition candidates relied on inferior means of transportation such as carriage or train; the mandatory convocation of voters in certain places at precise times; the prohibition or breaking-up of opposition meetings, etc. It was important for candidates to consider the moment of contact, of interaction with the voters: possibly Sunday or on holidays, at the end of a religious ritual as peasants left the church; possibly during traditional fairs, as people circulated more and the costs and effort were much smaller.[91] Similarly, priests came to play a major role in influencing the peasants. Other social spaces such as bars and diners were also sought out for propaganda purposes.

The way election rallies in villages were perceived by politicians was interesting, their descriptions often containing a note of humour. Nicolae Iorga, in *Neamul românesc* in 1921 captured the mobilisation of peasants at rallies organised by the parties (in this case by National Liberal Party) in cities: "Arranged in groups, between party banners, they [peasants] obeyed the leaders or agents accompanying them, instructing them when to say, 'Hoorah!' In the evening, some of them went to the ticket stations for free train tickets to take them back home full of political ideas and party devotion."[92]

The campaign trips arranged by the Legionnaire Movement (Mişcarea Legionară) held a completely distinct note, their rallies coming off as shows, sensations. Their campaigns were repeatedly sensational. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Legion leader, described the first campaign undertaken in the villages of south-eastern Moldova in 1929, offering a perfect illustration

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Historica 14/I (2010), 240 sqq.

[91] During the campaign season for the legislative elections of June 1927, in Alexandria, where the Drăgaica Fair was taking place, simultaneous rallies were organised by the liberals and the national-democrats. Nicolae Iorga, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vol. V (Bucharest: Editura "Naţională" S. Ciornei, [f. a.]), 228.

[92] Nicolae Iorga, "Ţeranii şi partidele," [The Peasants and the Parties] *Neamul românesc* XVI/274, 30 November 1921.

of his methods and success: "At the time established for the meeting, a very small number of people were gathered. Barely, one hundred or so. From them I learned that many would have liked to come, but had been stopped by gendarmes around the village. The whole meeting lasted five minutes. Lefter spoke for one minute, Potolea one minute and I the rest. I said, 'I came to hold a meeting. But the authorities block people from coming. Regardless of what they say, I will hold 10 meetings! Bring me a horse and I will ride from village to village, all around the Horincea!' The horse was, of course, the single means of transportation through all that mud. Two hours later they brought me a horse and I left. Behind me, on foot, Lefter and another four legionnaires. We reached the first village, Meria. There, in the church yard, women and children. I spoke a few words to them and addressed no political programme. [...] I moved on. After 4 km or so, I reached a village, Slivna. It was evening. The people were still waiting for me, in the road, holding lit candles. At the end of the village some legionnaires came out in front with Teodosiu, so I spoke there, too. Later I moved on, to Comăneşti village, run by the legionnaires from Slivna. On roads I had never been on. And here, again, they waited with lamps and candles, singing. People were happy to see me, regardless of political party. We didn't know each other, but it was as if we had always been friends. Rivalries had melted. We were one water, one soul, one people. [...] Continuing from village to village, we were soon 20 riders. We were all young, 25-30 years old. A few were between 35 and 40, and the oldest was Mr. Chiculiţă from Cavadineşti, who was maybe 45. When there were more of us, we felt the need to have a sign, a uniform. Lacking resources, we decided to put turkey feathers in our caps. We entered the villages like this, singing. Passing in song with horses trotting, on the crests of the hills beside the Prut, where our forefathers had passed and fought so many times, it was as though we were the spirits of those who long ago appeared in Moldova. The living of today and the dead of then, we were the same spirit, the same great unity, carried by the winds on the crests of hills: of Romanianism. Word of my arrival spread, from person to person, throughout all the villages."[93] In the campaigns that followed, the legionnaires would continue to introduce successful, innovative strategies: propaganda from village to village, from house to house, from family to family, helping to gather the harvest or to repair or build churches.[94]

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[93] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For Legionnaires] (Sibiu: Editura "Totul pentru Ţară", 1936), 364-367.

[94] Armin Heinen, *Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail". O contribuţie la problema fascismului internaţional* [The Legion "Archangel Michael". A Contribution to the Problem of International Fascism] (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1999), 202.

Peasants attended the parties' rallies with enthusiasm and curiosity, at least during the first election campaigns. Yet the archived documents of the press of the time relate situations in which local authorities coerced peasant voters, sometimes with borderline illegal methods, to participate in rallies. Local political leaders and/or those coming from the "Centre" used the occasion to deliver speeches, read proclamations, and launch calls for help for the party; agents, propagandists, shared demonstrations, brochures and pamphlets, with various platforms, slogans or even poems. While participants in the cities had a higher level of culture, able to better understand the speeches at these meetings, the peasants in the villages "mostly listened very politely, with the respect accorded a guest"[95], and they could be heard saying things like "This aristocrat speaks beautifully!"[96]

The peasants' political mobilisation was handled mainly by "electoral agents" or "propagandists". They were "gifted speakers"[97] and prepared the field for rallies and gathered and roused the masses, exciting the appropriate mood. At the time, the electoral agent was described as "a professional of universal suffrage politics who crossed the villages, bars, and diners, singing the eternal praises of the party."[98] The parties accorded special attention to the preparation of election propaganda. The National-Peasantists organised, in the 1930s, special classes for election propagandists.[99] In January 1929, the People's Party edited *Guide for the Propagandist*[100], a kind of manual aimed at party organisers, to offer the fundamentals of planning propaganda. Every community chapter was to have its own propagandist responsible for spreading the ideals of the party among the electorate, "translating into the people's language" the party's

[95] Iorga, *Orizonturile mele. O viață de om așa cum a fost* [My Horizons. The Life of a Man as It Was]*,* vol. III (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1934), 42.

[96] Octavian Goga, "Un argument uzat: mulțimea," [A Tired Argument: the Crowd] *Țara Noastră* [Our Country], Cluj, 1 April 1928.

[97] Nicolae Iorga, "O impietate și o bătaie de joc. *Crucea* în alegeri," [An Impiety and a Farse. "The Cross" in Elections] *Neamul românesc* XIV/239, 29 October 1919; "Dezlănțuirea teroarei electorale," [The Release of Electoral Terror] *Neamul românesc* XXI/99, 4 May 1926.

[98] Niculae Carp, *Parlamentul și guvernul de mâine* [The Parliament and Govern-ment of Tomorrow] (Vaslui: Tipografia Alexandru Onceanu, 1930), 13; Dimitrie Drăghicescu, *Reforma electorală* [Electoral Reform] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1926), 12.

[99] *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc. Documente (1926-1947)* [The History of the National Peasant Party. Documents (1926-1947)] (București: Arc 2000, 1994), anexe.

[100] *Călăuza propagandistului* [Guide for the Propagandist] (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice, 1929), 31

platform.[101] These were only the intentions of a party that no longer had the capacity to maintain local chapters, not only in villages, but even in the urban world. The press of the time, in archived documents, related another aspect of electoral agents in the rural world: the intimidation of voters and adversaries through threats and even physical violence; corruption of voters, buying of votes; and voter suppression of opposition voters. The gendarmes and local authorities were not unfamiliar with these methods, and during the entire interwar period, opposition speeches noted these "electoral terrors" practiced by parties in power during election campaigns.

Winning the votes of the peasants required physical effort and sustained financial investment. P. P. Negulescu, conservative philosopher and politician, observed correctly in 1926 that "only organised parties, with access to numerous agents and substantial funds, invaluable for paying for trips, gatherings, printing, etc., can truly penetrate the deep masses of the people to the degree necessary to effectively influence them."[102]

Party symbols[103]

One characteristic of the entrance of peasants into politics is connected to the introduction, by law, of symbols to distinguish each political party. The symbols had a huge influence on election results and even on the lives and existence of political organisations. Their introduction was warranted by the entrance into political activity of a significant number of illiterate voters.[104] Party symbols played a double role: to clearly distinguish a political party, making it easy to identify on the ballot; and to maximise the curiosity and attention of the voter. Given this, there was an extremely wide variety of party symbols: the Peasant Party (Partidul Țărănesc) had the sickle; the People's Party, a six-pointed star; the Bessarabian Socialist Party (Partidul Socialist Basarabean), hammer and sickle; the Nationalist Democrat Party (Partidul Naționalist Democrat), in 1922 had a black flag with a sickle (in 1919, they had two clasped hands, and in 1920, campaigning together with peasantists under the National-Social Democracy Federation (Federația Democrației Național Sociale), the sickle); National

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[101] *Călăuza propagandistului*, 12.

[102] Negulescu, *Partidele politice*, 26.

[103] For more detail see Sorin Radu, "Semnele electorale ale partidelor politice în perioada interbelică," [The Symbols of the Political Parties in the Interwar Period] *Apulum* XXXIX (2002), 573-586.

[104] *Enciclopedia României* [Encyclopedia of Romania], vol. I (Bucharest: Impri-meria Națională, 1938), 241.

Liberal Party, the filled cross; the Socialist Party (Partidul Socialist), in 1919 and 1920, as well as in 1922 as the Federation of Socialist Parties in Romania (Federaţia Partidelor Socialiste din România), 2 crossed hammers; the Pan Halippa Bessarabian Peasant Party (Partidul Ţărănesc Basarabean), the crossed scythe and rake; the Take Ionescu Democrat Party (Partidul Democrat) in 1920, the sheaf of wheat; the Progressive Conservative Party (Partidul Conservator Progresist), the circle; and the Peasant and Social Harmony Party (Partidul ţărănesc şi al armoniei sociale) used the sun. Besides these better- or lesser-known political formations, in 1919, 1920 and 1922, especially in Bessarabia, a series of other groups with various titles campaigned, with symbols of the plough, the square, the candelabra, etc.

Dimitrie Xenopol, in a 1920 study regarding the Romanian electoral reform, argues that the party symbols were specifically made necessary by the large number of illiterate peasant voters.[105] The same opinion was held by most party representatives.[106] Party symbols were applied to all propaganda materials of the parties participating in elections. Some agents used them ingeniously, for example, in the 1933 parliamentary election campaign season, legionnaires in all rural local nests received instructions to draw, with chalk, lime, and tar, the Legion's symbol all over the villages and on the national road.[107] The mostly illiterate voters were more familiar with the party symbols than with the names on the candidate lists or, especially, with the parties' actual principles. Party symbols are also found in what we can call "electoral folklore". Poems and songs circulated during campaign seasons with the purpose of convincing voters to vote for the various symbols.

Between utopia and propaganda: on "rural democracy" and the "peasant state"

The political liberation of the peasantry brought with it attempts by the political parties to register the peasants. The old and new parties alike competed not only for peasants' votes, but to portray themselves as representing the true interests of the rural class. On this favourable

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[105] Dimitrie Xenopol, *Reforma electorală* [Electoral Reform] *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţa şi Reforma Socială*, Bucureşti II/1-3 (April-October 1920), 240.
[106] See also the opinions: Iorga, "O impietate şi o bătaie de joc ...; Drăghicescu, *Reforma electorală*, 11.
[107] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica şefului de cuib* [Handbook for the Leader of the Local Nest] (Bucharest, 1933), 66.

background appeared agrarian peasant parties, which took on and declared the mission of representing the political interests of the peasantry. Leo Granberg and Jouko Nikula argue that peasant thinking has had an impacto n many European states, especially those outside the industrial core of Europe.[108] In such countries, "the farmers' organizations could, on one hand successfully compete for political power with socialist or social democratic groups' organizations, and on the other hand compete with bourgeoisie organizations."[109]

In Romania, of all the peasantist organisations, the Peasant Party (Partidul Ţărănesc) of Ion Mihalache would obtain a remarkable success. From the moment it was founded, the peasantists proclaimed themselves a true party of the rural class, with the principles of "class warfare" and "agrarian democracy" behind it. They counted on the certainty that the peasantry had become instrumental in the political development of Romania, as a direct result of land and electoral reforms. Later, after its fusion with the National Party led by Iuliu Maniu, political discourse would push the concept of "rural democracy" or "peasant democracy".[110] Although at first the concept appeared clear, the party ideologists did not put forth the necessary effort to clarify exactly what "peasant democracy" meant, what their operating principles were and especially what the role of peasants was and their relations to other classes. "Rural democracy" was more a slogan to convince the peasants that, due to their number and influence, they were justified in seeing themselves leading the state.

The founders of the peasantist ideology were more inclined to answer to the expectations of the peasantry who had lost land through the reforms after the war, than to find real solutions to the economic problems of the villages. So they concentrated their ideological goals on the small and medium peasant farmsteads. These types of farmsteads should have become prosperous and liveable through the work performed by the

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[108] Leo Granberg, Jouko Nikula (eds.), *The Peasant State. The State and Rural Questions in 20th Century Finland* (Lapland: University of Lapland, 1995), see *Introduction*.

[109] Leo Granberg, Imre Kovách, "Beyond Socialism, Beyond the Peasant State?," in *Actors on the Changing European Countryside*, Leo Granberg, Imre Kovách (eds.) (Budapest: Institute for Political Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1998), 7.

[110] Keith Hitchins, *Conştiinţă naţională şi acţiune politică la românii din Transilvania, 1868-1918* [National Consciousness and Political Action among Romanians in Transylvania, 1868-1918] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1992), chapter "Ţărăniştii români – a treia cale" [Romanian Peasantists – the Third Path], 179-206.

peasant family members who owned the tracts of land belonging to the farmsteads. Several prominent Peasant Party members praised the division of agricultural terrain resulting from the reform of 1921, enthusiastically appreciating the victory of peasants eagerly receiving land before the wealthy, established owners. But it was obvious from the beginning – and the predictions came true along the way, acquiring new dimensions – that the new structure of property, with all of its important positive effects on the peasantry, created inefficient, unviable farmsteads, difficult if not impossible to organise rationally. These farmsteads, without direct support through measures taken to assure their stability and prosperity, could not survive. For the consolidation of small and medium farmsteads, the idea was proposed of associating them into productive cooperatives. These cooperatives would then receive state assistance, loans, locations and legal protection. This was also seen as a solution for the selfish tendencies of capitalism. The problem was that the peasant, a new proprietor, did not believe in association, which he saw as a route to estrangement from land ownership.[111] The economic crisis of 1929-1933 would confirm the instability of the small farmsteads, and the ideological response of the peasantists was just as inadequate as in the 1920s: the "peasant state" as means to draw peasants into politics, and not only.

As Leo Granberg and Imre Kovách argued, "The peasant state was one of the alternative political projects from outside of Europe's industrialised habitat."[112] In Romania, having been shaped already since 1919, the thesis

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[111] In the 1930s especially, peasantist ideologies generated a rather rich literature on "the peasant state": Mihai Chirițescu, *Organizarea producției agricole în statul țărănesc* [The Organisation of Agricultural Production in the Peasant State] (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 1935); Ernest Ene, *Spre statul țărănesc* [Towards the Peasant State] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, Institutul de Arte Grafice, 1932); Nicolae Ghiulea, *Organizarea statului. Mijloace și metode noi* [The Organisation of the State. New Means and Methods] (Bucharest: Tipografia Presto, 1935); Ion Mihalache, *Țărănism și naționalism* [Peasantism and Nationalism] (Bucharest: Partidul Național Țărănesc, Biblioteca de Educație Cetățenească, no. 3); Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Ideologia statului român* [The Ideology of the Romanian State] (Bucharest: Partidul Național Țărănesc, Biblioteca de Educație Cetățenească, no. 2); Vasile Serdici, *Două Conferințe. În jurul Statului Țărănesc și Regimul nostru industrial de azi cauza ruinei comerțului exterior* [Two Conferences. Around the Peasant State and Our Industrial Regime of Today Destroys Foreign Commerce] (Bucharest: Tipografia "Carmen Sylva", 1935); Gheorghe Zane, *Țărănismul și organizarea statului român* [Peasantism and the Organisation of the Romanian State] (Bucharest: Partidul Național Țărănesc, Biblioteca de Educație Cetățenească, no. 7 [1934]).

[112] Granberg, Kovách. "Beyond Socialism, Beyond the Peasant State?," 12.

of the peasant or national-peasant state would continue in the National Peasant Party (Partidul Naţional Ţărănesc) platform in 1926. In 1931, and especially in the following years, the formula of the peasant state would begin to be readopted and circulated more and more, gaining an official consecration in Congress in 1935. While having no unified approach to the various aspects of the structure of a peasant state, the peasantist idealists saw it as a new society between capitalism and socialism. In this new state, agriculture would be central, prioritised, all other levels of the national economy existing through agriculture and subordinate to its interests. Gheorghe Zane claimed that "between capitalism and socialism, we are on the third path".[113] The basis of the peasant state would be cooperation. Likewise, peasantist ideologues specified that the new state would not lead to peasant dictatorship, but to the realisation of the priority of their interests, within a climate of solidarity and collaboration with the other classes and social categories. Politically speaking, the peasant state would be a state of "rural democracy," based on social solidarity, assuring the priority of the peasantry, without exploiting and harassing the other classes. The content of this notion of "peasant state" was never precisely defined. This can be seen even in the works of the peasantist ideologues; Ernest Ene wrote in 1932 that "the notion is not yet sufficiently defined"[114], while in 1935 even Ion Mihalache himself recognized that "no one could yet describe precisely and in detail the entire physiognomy of the mature form of this state".[115] The definition of this concept was attempted both politically and economically. Politically, it would be as a parliamentary state in which, through universal suffrage, the peasantry could become very predominant. "The goal of the Peasant Party is the peasant state, based on the power of the word and will of the multitude of peasants and the classes who labour with mind and arms, and the path to the realisation of this goal is parliamentarism."[116]

The form of the "peasant state", in spite of the arguments circulated by the major Romanian scientific minds, who sincerely believed in its feasibility, was based on a mistake and furthered a social and political illusion. Thus, from the entire effort of the National Peasant Party to portray itself as the proponent of a civilisation fit to revive Romanian society, only the doctrine remained, and that not in its entirety, as some of

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[113] Zane, *Ţărănismul şi organizarea statului român*, 34.

[114] Ene, *Spre statul ţărănesc*, 3.

[115] Ion Mihalache, *Prefaţă* [Preface] to the brochure of Ion Scutaru, *Statul ţărănesc* [The Peasant State] (Bucharest, Institutul de Arte Grafice "Luceafărul", 1935), 4

[116] Ion Mihalache, "Rostul ţărănismului," [The Point of Peasantism] *Ţărănismul*, Bucharest, 15 March 1925.

its directions did not lead towards an effective modern European society. In all of its political and governmental practices, National Peasant Party, confronted with a multitude of organisational and political problems and worries, only ever minimally found the resources to promote its political ideas and plans.[117]

Conclusions

The enactment of universal suffrage in the years 1917-1919 was the equivalent of a genuine revolution, realised from the top down, through the wishes of King Ferdinand and the political elite, who brought a marginalised social class onto the political scene. This class, from being the subject of the political speech of parties, transformed overnight into a major political player: the peasantry. Universal suffrage, affirms Mattei Dogan, transformed the peasants from subjects into citizens.[118] The village, still deeply underdeveloped, became the main stage for electoral activity, to the detriment of the city. Largely illiterate and uninterested in public business, the peasant found himself armed with power derived from universal suffrage. This new electoral player entered the politics of Greater Romania aware that he had suffered the worst of the war and that electoral reform, as well as land redistribution, are just and fair. The peasants, both those of the Old Kingdom and those of the provinces united in 1918, at least in the first decade after the Great War, were enthusiastic and quite often happy to participate in elections. Still, their enthusiasm waned regarding registration in parties. At the end of campaign seasons and elections, peasants returned to a kind of political lethargy until the next elections. Local party chapters in the rural world were few and lacked vitality. Unlike the urban working classes, predisposed to socio-political change, which at least partially followed social-democratic political organisations, the rural world was withdrawn, seemingly, not under-standing the point of political parties and uninterested in administration

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[117] Keith Hitchins, "A Rural Utopia: Virgil Madgearu and Peasantry," *Studia Universitas "Petru Maior". Series Historia* 3 (2003), 188-215; Dietmar Müller, "Agrarianism as Third Way. Between Fascism and Communism and between Capitalism and Collectivism / Agrarismus als Dritter Weg. Zwischen Faschismus und Kommunismus sowie zwischen Kapitalismus und Kollektivismus," in *Transforming Rural Societies. Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Dietmar Müller, Angela Harre, Special issue of *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes* (2010), 7-22.

[118] Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, 281.

and politics at the local and central levels.[119] The land reform seems to have demobilised the peasants, persuading them to mostly concentrate on the earth and social problems generated by reform. From this point of view, the paradigm of the "agrarian issue" that marked Romania since before the war continued to manifest itself at a lower tone. We can conclude that during the period in which universal suffrage was applied in Romania as a constitutional monarchy (1919-1937), the peasants did not successfully learn to play the role offered to them by universal suffrage.

To the same extent, it can be surmised that universal suffrage transformed the peasant into a subject of political and electoral propaganda, the parties being unconcerned with their integration, their civic education. The candidates for various functions and leaders of county chapters, in their hunt for votes, did not have the patience to apply themselves to the peasant and the concerns of the village. Not even the notable figures of the village, teachers and priests, managed to fill the role of agents of change at the village level. Counter examples are few and irrelevant at the national level. Local notables seem to have been more used by parties as elements to attract votes. Even more, Dogan observed another phenomenon: while priests and teachers in rural areas held a marginal place on the parties' candidate lists, those who did manage to obtain a position of power at the local or central level quickly went through a phase of alienation towards the peasant.[120] Regarding representation of the peasantry in Parliament, as well as their presence on candidate lists, not much can be said, given their extremely low numbers for the entire period between the two World Wars.[121] Even though peasants represented some 80% of the country's

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[119] The attempts of the political parties to move the masses of peasants and to coax them to political manifestations were rare. One such rare example was that of the so-called "citizens' resistance". In autumn of 1927, National Peasant Party launched a vast campaign to overturn the liberal government, depending on the support of the masses. On this occasion, they launched the "citizens' resistance" tactic as a form of pressure on the government. Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu. Naționalism și democrație. Biografia unui mare român* [Iuliu Maniu. Nationalism and Democracy. The Biography of a Great Romanian] (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum I.O., 1997), 172-176.

[120] Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, 267.

[121] Mattei Dogan concludes: "Parliamentary representation of the various social classes depends, in fact, on their economic level. The peasantry is as poorly represented in Parliament as it is numerous, since, where it represents a large part of the population which is also poor, while in countries where it is less prominent, it enjoys a higher standard of living. [...] In turn, the standard of living and the strength of the connection with the urban world favour the appearance of social awareness. A social class that does not possess this can never play a major political

population, they were not represented by more than 0.4% in the Chamber of Deputies and 0.2% in the Senate. Dogan named this phenomenon "the upside-down pyramid".[122]

On another note, after the Great War, the majority of the elite leaders conceded the idea that Romania had entered on the road toward democratisation after the Occidental model, but there were not many who appreciated the phenomenon of Europeanisation. The contestation of liberalism was ever more present, visibly leaving room in the 1930s for antidemocratic ideological currents that exalted the ultranationalist phenomenon. Under a different form reappear the currents that exalted the rural world, that idealised the village and the peasant, the peasant tradition, understood as the keystone of the Romanian nation. He, the peasant, was the sole of the country's foot, the keeper of the moral values of Romanian society.[123] European democratic values were the opposite of the secular virtues of the Romanian peasant, the quintessence of the Romanian Orthodox nation. Thinkers on the right, such as Nicolae Iorga, Nae Ionescu, Lucian Blaga, Nichifor Crainic, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru and many others tirelessly encouraged the ethnicist direction, in which rural values were the opposite of urban (cities being places of alienation), cultivating doubt of democracy, of the Occidental model of political liberation. In such a world, and especially in an atmosphere full of ethnicist-Orthodox speech, it was extremely difficult for the politically emancipated peasant, blessed with universal suffrage and a piece of land, to comprehend his own purpose within a parliamentary democracy. The failure to integrate peasants into the politics of Greater Romania can also be seen in this light.

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role. This was the case of the Danubian peasantry. Danish or Swedish farmers, more aware of their own importance, better organised, more aggressive, were represented by a larger number of parliamentarians from among their ranks than the Danubian peasantry." Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, 268.

[122] Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, 267, 272.

[123] Alex Drace-Francis, *The Traditions of Invention. Romanian Ethnic and Social Stereotypes in Historical Context* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013).

Chapter Two

Communal Political Cultures in Interwar Romania

Stelu Şerban

> *Motto*: "Any citizen must fulfil his duty towards the State he lives in, as the State does not wish harm to individuals, only their benefit. May he who portrays the Village honor its true image and not be a coward and fear losing his status for speaking the truth… Those who lead the Village must also portray the state of affairs as it is in the Village they lead. This is what differentiates one Village from another..."[1]

The following work is based on an anthropological field study carried out between 1995 and 1996 in two neighboring villages, namely Cetăţele and Dăneşti, located in the metropolitan area of Baia-Mare, Baia-Sprie and Cavnic, in Maramureş County. One of the main hypotheses of this research has been the differentiation of political and communal attitudes during the interwar period, in a context where the political party system in Romania was being introduced locally: local chapters of political parties, the local development of electoral campaigns, local political leaders, and local institutions having a communal impact, such as the church, the community centre and other such associations.

The data gathered in the field comes from informal conversations and semi-structured interviews given by people who remembered the interwar period, either directly – such as elderly individuals – or indirectly, from

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[1] Nicolae Pop, *Amintiri* [Memories], manuscript, 83. Here, as well as in all other places, I have kept the exact same language and writing style found in the manuscript of Nicolae Pop.

descendants of people who enjoyed a certain notoriety during the interwar period.[2] Some of the individuals of the latter category, the one containing important local figures, are authors of manuscript works on subjects such as local history, which I have also utilized. The field data has been linked to and often times mixed up with the data regarding the two villages, gathered from the National Archives, Maramureș office.

The chapter aims to render an image of local politics, so as to raise questions and critical approaches towards the current preconceptions which portray life in the Romanian villages in the interwar period as that of a backward, shapeless society, incapable of meeting the requirements of political modernity. Furthermore, from our point of view, the concept of communal culture, theorized in the political sciences as being related to the third wave of political modernization in the 1960s, can be successfully applied on the interwar Romania. I place this latter concept in the theoretical field of another concept, common to both the political sciences and social anthropology and history – it is the concept of parochial society, which is opposed to that of a civil society.

Starting from these two cases, I bring forth arguments which prove that the diversity of the traditional social structures as well as that of the local cultures which contextualize the former does not allow for the homogenization of the concept of a parochial society and its unitary implementation in the same way that the concept of a civil society does. Furthermore, the "parochial" differences, so obvious even in the case of the two neighboring villages I talk about, had an impact on the level of local politics, or on the local political society, to speak more theoretically. Even more, these effects are different, and when placed on the level of regional politics as well as on a national level, led to gaps in the political system. Because of this, I maintain that the Romanian interwar rural society cannot be seen,

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[2] I interviewed 34 people in Cetățele and 29 people in Dănești. The research method was a monographic one, and the aspects of political life were encompassed by the other spheres of social life in the two villages, furthermore trying to cover two distinct historical periods, the interwar years and the rough years of violent collectivization, the 1950s. This is why, on the one hand, the local political landscape may seem to be indefinite, juxtaposed and collated. On the other hand, however, some of the individuals I have talked to were clearly tempted to interpret history and the local state of affairs through political relationships; I have even quoted some of them in this work. Starting from their suggestions, I have looked up everything related to these political relationships in the archives, the same way I insisted on them in the other interviews. This is why I believe that I have gathered enough information to authentically render the politics as it used to be in two villages from the outskirts of interwar Romania, but in no way less alive and involved in national politics.

from a political point of view, as a shapeless world, lacking direction and attitudes or political culture.

This introduction is followed by a theoretical section in which I draw the outline of the analysis framework and of the main concepts. Several pieces of information on the local history of the two villages, which come as demographical and economical statistical data, introduce the following section, which places the accent on the structures of the parochial society. As some local personalities used to point out exasperatedly, in both villages, "politics is a family business", which is not so different from other rural settlements in interwar Romania.[3] However, the contrast between the families in the two villages casts various shades on such statements. Alongside the extensive groups made up of ten nuclear families or more, there are smaller family groups, made up of two or three nuclear families and even of isolated nuclear families. Placed in various contexts, of either economical or symbolic prestige, this family hierarchy is only partially present and it shows significant differences in the two villages. For example, being a member of a big family did not automatically imply owning the largest lands for agriculture. Similarly, often times there was a fierce social competition regarding the social prestige statuses people held (deacon, administrator, godparent, midwife, church status), which was not always won by the nuclear families pertaining to big groups, just as the relationship with the institutions of the local parochial society (the church, the community center, the associations, etc.) was not limited to the big groups.[4]

The following section directly approaches the local politics in the two villages, in which, aside from some common aspects, the propaganda and the recruitment of local leaders bear enough differences to make them easily distinguishable. For instance, Dăneşti "was not a place for extremist politics" – these are the words of a notary in the 1930s, while in the other village, both the National Christian Party and the Legionnaire Movement

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[3] Stanciu N. Stoian, "Politica Nerejului," [The Politics of Nerej] in *Cum s-a stins Ţara Vrancei* [How Vrancea County Died], ed. Paul H. Stahl (Bucharest: Paideia, 2002), 33-39.

[4] For the coherence of this paper, in the section referred to, we have used parts of two articles published beforehand, named "Structuri sociale in schimbare in doua sate din Maramureş," [Shifting Social Structures in two Villages in Maramureş] *Buletinul Institutului de Studii Sud-Est Europene* [The South-Eastern European Studies Institute Bulletin] IX/B (1998), 24-41 and "Strategii de reacţie faţă de colectivizarea pământului în două sate din nordul României," [Reaction Strategies towards the Collectivization of Land in two Villages in Northern Romania] *Buletinul Institutului de Studii Sud-Est Europene* XI (2001-2002), 99-131.

enjoyed the same success, the latter being organized in the well-known
"nests", its basic levels. Paradoxically, the local institutions in Cetăţele,
namely the church, the school and the community center were more devel-
oped than their counterparts in the other village, but in many cases, the
personalities related to them "would also deal with politics", as is written
in the state archives. Therefore, even though in both villages the local poli-
tics was done within a parochial society which had a low level of partici-
pation and of political and civil culture, therefore being the opposite of the
modern concept of a civil society, in the case of those in Dăneşti, the local
politics were separated from the political society. The case of Cetăţele
seems to intrigue the classical analyses of political extremism, according
to which such political trends established their roots in the interwar period,
in marginal, poor, backward, institutionally underdeveloped societies.[5]

The last section attempts to extract several conclusions under the um-
brella concept of communal political culture. The means of doing govern-
mental politics was indeed rudimentary, as in both villages, the image of
the political act was reduced to gathering wealth and to corruption. For
example, during one electoral campaign, the liberal Epaminonda Lucaciu,
son of Vasile Lucaciu, very plasticly described this aspect through the
testimony of Avram Ciocotişan, a resident of Dăneşti: "Hold on, he said…
Good… For how many years has the National Peasants' Party been
fighting and how much did it spend to get here? Those who have gov-
erned… have bought everything they needed, they have set themselves up
and have filled their pockets and now we take them down and set the other
ones up until they cover all their expenses and fill their pockets up, and
then take them down and set others up again… People are still the same."

But what were the interests and the problems which truly worked up
the interest and participation of the people? Several examples taken from
the research material show that they were far from the governmental pro-

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[5] The classical analysis paradigms of right-wing political extremism are brought
back into the discussion, and the conclusions are sensibly different. *Modernism şi
antimodernism. Noi perspective interdisciplinare* [Modernism and Anti-
modernism. New Interdisciplinary Perspectives], ed. Sorin Antohi (Bucharest:
MNLR and Cuvântul Publishing Houses, 2008). The right-wing extremist trends
have also had a modern political aspect, though different from the "classical" one,
derived from the Western constitutional democracies. Oliver Jens Schmitt argues,
in a recently published article, in favor of this hypothesis, starting from a local case
as well, in Vâlcea County, in the interwar period. Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Approach-
ing the Social History of Romanian Fascism. The Legionnaires of Vâlcea County
in the Interwar Period," *Fascism. Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 3 (2014),
117-151. This is also where the theoretical bibliography can be found, up to date
with the latest approach to interwar political extremism.

grams in Bucharest. Above all, the interests were communal, such as conflicts between the two villages over certain terrains, such as grazing grounds or forests, or administrative affiliation to some notary or another, or other such matters. Also, the separation between central politics and local life is understandable, though not agreeable, and the people cannot be blamed for it. As Mattei Dogan highlighted, it was more of a traditional-type state, its functions impaired, such as tax collection, the enforcement of justice or defense in war situations[6], and whose interests were far from those of its inhabitants, most of whom were peasants.[7]

Theoretical premises

The theoretical framework of this paper is built upon the intersection of anthropological, historical and politological perspectives. The blending of anthropological endeavors with historical ones is not new, at least not in the Western academic scene. More recent publications, such as *History and Anthropology*, or those bearing a long tradition, such as *Annales*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Ethnohistory,* and *Slavic Review* seek to publish academic articles in which the concepts and the theories of the two theoretical disciplines are intertwined in order to create a theoretical matrix which could explain thoroughly and in a complex manner social situations and processes. It is significant for anthropologists as well that the attempts at interdisciplinary development of perspectives based on the historical and social sciences have come from a group of French historians, rivals of the *Annales* magazine program, who decided, after the Second World War, to invest more generality and objectivity in historical studies. For historians such as Henri Berr, Fernand Braudel, Marc Bloch or Lucien Febvre, "history was scientific, not intuitive; comparative, not particular; it was about society on a larger scale, not only about politics, about all people, not only about major figures. History was implied both by the long-term evolution of the climate and geographical structures and by the local and immediate social and economic changes, or by the wars and the episodic political regimes. History would become analytic, not narrative, and theoretical, not decidedly anti-theoretical."[8]

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[6] Mattei Dogan, "Romania: 1919-1938," in *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries*, eds. Myron Weiner, Ergun Ozbudun (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 369.
[7] Henri H. Stahl, "Administraţia comunei Nereju," [Nereju Town Administration] in *Cum s-a stins Ţara Vrancei* ed. Paul H. Stahl (Bucharest: Paideia, 2002), 25-30.
[8] Shepard Krech, "The State of Ethnohistory," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20 (1991), 349.

When compared to historical sciences, I notice a significant temporal discrepancy within social and cultural anthropology. They appeared as particular initiatives at the end of the 19th century and were finalized as encyclopedic compendia based exclusively on academic sources. Anthropological studies have suffered an angular change during the interwar period, when anthropologists such as Franz Boas or Bronislaw Malinowski theorized the rules of field research.[9] But it is only after the Second World War when anthropological research gained its autonomy by being organized in departments, faculties and individual research centers. However, after the 1950s, when the theoretical paradigms of anthropology were dominated by the structural functionalism borrowed from sociology, anthropological research rapidly opened up to conceptual hybridization with other disciplines, either from the category of social, political or economic sciences, or from the category of human sciences, among which were the historical sciences.

Currently, the dialogue and the interdisciplinary nature of the relationship between historical sciences and social and cultural anthropology is extremely beneficial. If, in the 1960s, any field research had to be prepared and accompanied by some historical data relative to the community studied, today, anthropology has become "historicized", meaning that it "revalidates the relevance of the difference between the past, the present and the future, interpreting them both from an epistemic point of view, as well as from an existential one… Therefore, in a world exceeded by the exacerbation of regionalist, ethnic and nationalist trends, under the spell of modernity and development, history becomes the privileged land of collective and individual identities, therefore of that which is righteously connected to what we would call *la condition humaine*."[10]

If, therefore, during the 1950s, field research was done in "societies lacking history" (Eric R. Wolf), but which only lacked history in appearance, after the 1960s, the fall of the colonial system and the appearance of new states and ways of making politics, economy and social self-organization has brought forth a large field for anthropologists. The only issue is that they also needed to deal with the processes which led to the formation of the new identities for these societies. This is why history was employed, a particular type of history, different from the one portrayed by the traditional historical sciences. The local, oral histories, the autobiog-

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[9] Chris Hann, *Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and its Future in Central and Eastern Europe. A Debate*, Working paper, no. 90, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthroplogy, 2007, pp. 3ff. (site www.eth.mpg.de).
[10] James D. Faubion, "History in Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (1993), 44.

raphies, all of these became sources of information for the anthropologist and eventually for the historian who is interested in these societies. The same thing happens after 1990, this time including the countries in the former "Eastern bloc". As a consequence, on the one hand, a "post-colonialist anthropology" arises, which includes these countries[11], while on the other hand, the historical sciences also contribute to the materialization of the new directions of anthropological development.

The dialogue and the interdisciplinary nature of the historical sciences and of anthropology are regionalized in a good way, meaning that the traditional academic canon is still taken into account. They encompass more and more significant and relevant data, both from a historical point of view and from an anthropological one.[12] A representative case of this adequate regionalization of the dialogue between the historical sciences and between cultural and social anthropology is South-Eastern Europe.[13] Furthermore, recent analyses of nationalism found in South-Eastern Europe – all of them carried out by historians, in comparison with nationalism seen in the states which were formed in the post-colonial period – argue that the appearance of Balkan nationalism is due to a specific means of conceptualizing history and modernity. The Western model implies a specific type of modernity, as well as a progressive temporality, to which the countries in the following waves of modernization, including those in South-Eastern Europe, are fatally "backward".[14] This is why the issue arises to overcome the gap, the issues and the frustrations which have built up during the modernization of these countries towards Western-European zones. The main problem is still the same, even though this can be addressed through

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[11] Laszló Kürti, "East and West: The Scholarly Divide in Anthropology," *Anthropological Notebooks* 14 (2008), 25-38.

[12] In the case of Romania, in particular, we must take into account the paper written by anthropologist Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers. Three Centuries of Political and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983). In her paper, Verdery combines her field data and its analysis, from a village in Hunedoara, Binţinţi, which is now called Aurel Vlaicu, with a more ample evolution of the local, regional and national history. In order to develop the theoretical perspective, the author explicitly assumes the conjoining of the social anthropology perspectives with those of the historical studies.

[13] Ulf Brunnbauer (Hg.), *(Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism* (Munster: LIT Verlag, 2004).

[14] Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64 (2005),140-164.

the deconstruction of certain images, such as that of the "Balkans,"[15] or through the refinement of analytical perspectives.

At least a part of the works which have approached the themes of political modernization of the countries in South-Eastern Europe, conjoining the historical perspectives with those of the political sciences, have on their undeclared agenda the political projects of propagating and internalizing a homogenous political culture, attached to the political and mental processes in the nations having constitutionally pluralist democracies. This highlights a supposed extremist rural political culture, violently conservative, anti-democratic, thus drawing the conclusion of the appearance of "the peasant-citizen" and of "the national ontologies" which might have fed its political identity.[16]

On the one hand, even in the European nations, where political modernity was established through hard-to-control dynamics, with ups and downs, as in France, the political behavior of the rural masses, of the peasants, was largely the same. Eugen Weber, whose works have been a source of inspiration for the more recent authors who have approached the concept of peasant-citizen, says that in Bonapartist France, the rural communities would "'all act in the same key', as they had always done and as they kept on doing, voting as a whole for the government or for the opposition; the traditional solidarities themselves would therefore be expressed in electoral terms."[17] Furthermore, this type of political behavior seems to be extremely persistent among the French peasants. In *Le monde paysan et la politique*, Jacques Fauvet characterizes the peasant voters of the Fourth Republic as follows: "The extreme diversity of the agricultural environment is matched by the extreme diversity of the political behaviors to such an extent that, besides being the working class, the peasants are the clients of all political systems, with no exceptions." However, he does mention that, in spite of the excessive politicization of the peasant voters, a situa-

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[15] Maria Todorova, *Balcanii şi balcanismul* [The Balkans and Balkanism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2000) (1997).

[16] Balázs Trencsény, "Peasants into Bulgarians, or the Other Way Round: The Discourse of National Psychology," in *Location of the Political*, ed. Shawn Gorman (Vienna: IWM Working papers series, 2003) (www.iwm.at); Balázs Trencsény, *How to think about Balkans. Culture, Region, Identity* (Sofia: Center for Advanced Studies, Working Papers, 2007) (www.cas.bg); Rumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004).

[17] Eugen Weber, *La fin des terroirs. La modernization de la France rurale (1870-1914)* (Paris: Fayard, 1983) (1976), 361.

tion which resembles the interwar period in Romania, there was no party which would represent their interests.[18]

On the other hand, historians who have also assimilated into their analysis politological concepts argue that importing a promising political model, such as the constitutional democracy in the interwar period, into the Eastern-European countries led to the appearance of "façade politics"[19], which had too few connections with the actual state of affairs of the rural social majority: "all peasants of Eastern Europe were marked by the profound internalization of a set of values derived both from secular traditions and from contemporary constraints. The peasant was characterized by the fact that he lived in small, insular communities, having a prescriptive system of values … perceived as being difficult to change … based on an agriculture meant for minimum sustenance, poorly technologized and dependent on the natural environment." [20] Starting with this general image, it is not difficult to understand the territorial doubt of the peasant voters, the conservationism of their political culture and their tendency towards a type of local self-government which I wish to bring forth at the end of this paper.

In fact, the reasoning which leads to the concept of "peasant-citizen" does not account for the type of rural resurgences seen in traditional societies in South-Eastern Europe, regardless of the fact that the modernizing discourse in the capital of the state was clearly influenced by the West, or on the contrary, made up of an "interpretive", anti-modernization language, also borrowed from Western-European culture.[21] The representation of rural societies as a whole, as a people, has nothing to do with the actual state of affairs. Rural resurgences have indeed existed and have been powerful, as I shall attempt to suggest further on, but they cannot be identified through the radically nationalist discourses, through the anti-modernization political utopias.

The conjugation of social anthropology with the political sciences helps with a better shaping of the conceptual framework of our paper. A

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[18] Jacques Fauvet, "Le monde paysan et la politique," in *Les paysans et la politique dans la France contemporaine*, eds. Jacques Fauvet, Henri Mendras (Paris: Armand Colin, 1958), 7.

[19] George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe* (Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 14.

[20] Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, 26.

[21] Victor Rizescu, "Romania as a 'Periphery': Social Change and Intellectual Evolution," in *Romania and Europa. Modernization as Temptation, Modernization as Threat*, ed. Bogdan Murgescu (Bucharest: ALLFA, Edition Körber Stiftung, 2000), 29-41.

temporal delay similar to the one mentioned above, between history and social anthropology, has also marked the emergence of the interdisciplinary perspectives of anthropology and political science, even though the latter took place half a century later. This way, even though renowned anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz or James C. Scott started out as politologists, leaving room in their academic profile for this discipline as well, aside from the main option, social and cultural anthropology, it is only in the late 1980s that political anthropology emerges. Along with this period, the works of anthropologists such as Akhil Gupta, K. Sivarama-krishnan, James Ferguson or the classic James C. Scott contribute to the legitimization of this discipline and to the establishment of a specific set of concepts and theories. I must keep in mind that this interdisciplinary mix was also formed within the problematic framework of post-colonialism and has conceptually reflected a great part of the aforementioned controversies. I must not insist here upon the theoretical details. What is important for our paper is the critical work and the reinterpretation of the concept of a civil society, imposed as a normative concept by politologists, especially after the fall of the socialist bloc, from the perspectives of political anthropology, which tries to make room for the alternative concept of the parochial society.

The bibliography dedicated to the concept of civil society is considerable and well-known, at least in the fields of political philosophy and political science. However, it is significant that the number of works dedicated to this field grew considerably only in the 1980s and even more in the 1990s, along with the fall of the political regimes in the postcolonial countries, as well as with the fall of the political regimes in the countries of the former Eastern bloc. Different from the classical theories of political modernization, this time, the civil society and its local advocates have been seen as the main agents of the thorough formation of a political and civic culture capable of getting the institutions of the constitutional and pluralist democracy active. The secondary premise was that importing the democratic institutions would not be enough to deploy the democratic model, as they require an adequate political and civic culture in order to function. It therefore comes as no surprise that the normative model of civil society immediately came into collision and conflict with the diverse local models, which came already complicated and particularized from their countries of import, be them countries of the former colonial system of Africa or South-East Asia, or countries which had just escaped the grey pressure of the communist regimes. For example, political sociologist Larry Diamond, whose works have exerted a deep influence on the import of civil society and of the civic and political culture after 1990 in the former East-

ern bloc countries, pits civil society against the parochial one, seeing the persistence of the latter as a hindrance as far as the development of a civic culture goes, which is inherent to the constitutionally pluralist democracy.[22] However, Diamond accepts that the parochial society, based on relationships "particular", familial, religious, neighborly etc. in nature, is an important component which encourages civic participation. Also, similar to the civil society, it is separated from the state, i.e. political society.[23]

The difficulties of embedding the normative model of civil society in the countries belonging to the former Eastern bloc have been identified and discussed by researchers from the fields of social and cultural anthropology[24], while researchers from the area of political anthropology took up a criticism of its contents from the perspective of the deconstruction of the postcolonial political ideologies. This latter approach is indeed radical, but its theoretical framework is complex from a conceptual standpoint and, furthermore, it is based on current field research. For example, the state, in terms of power relations, is not conceptualized in the institutional framework, or at least in that of influence relations such as negotiation, competition, manipulation and so forth. Therefore, there is a 'spatialized state', devised as a framework for the exercise of political power in concentric spaces from the private-familial to the global supranational one.[25] In this context, the concept of civil society loses its outline and transforms into an apparently 'subnational' entity, but whose contents, construed in terms of

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[22] Larry Diamond, *Civil Society and the Development of Democracy* (Estudio/Working Paper 101, 1997), 26 (www.plataformademocratica.org). This work represents the grounds for his extremely influential book, published shortly after, *Developing Democracies. Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, Maryland: The "Johns Hopkins" University Press, 1999). Diamond reiterates and updates distinctions when it comes to the content, as far as the model of civic and political culture goes, distinctions which were brought up more than three decades before, by politologists which had published works on the problem of modernizing post-colonial countries, authors such as Gabriel Almond, Sydney Verba or Lucien Pye. For instance, see Gabriel A. Almond, Sidney Verba, *Cultura civică. Atitudini politice şi democraţie în cinci naţiuni* [Civic Culture. Political and Democratic Attitudes in Five Nations] (Bucharest: Du Style Publishing House, 1996) (1963).

[23] Diamond, *Civil Society and the Development of Democracy*, 11-14.

[24] For the countries belonging to the former Eastern bloc, see *Civil Society Challenging Western Models*, eds. Chris Hann, Elizabeth Dunn (London: Routledge, 1996).

[25] James Ferguson, Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States: toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29 (2002), 982.

local cultures, take over a part of the functions of the state within the global society.[26]

I have brought into discussion the abovementioned criticism of the concept of civil society just to underline its vulnerability, as well as that of the concepts connected to it such as civism, civic culture, political participation and political culture. From this perspective, the structures of parochial societies seem to be able to ensure a satisfactory functioning of democratic regimes, or, at least, they can ensure social resistance against anti-democratic, oppressive, totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, I intend to emphasize in this work that what I have before called 'structures of parochial societies' coagulate on the basic level of society into cultural models that enable the functioning of democratic regimes, but are also distinct from the normative concepts of civic culture and/or political culture.

Communal culture is also a concept that, within this work, I connect to the concept of parochial political society that I analyzed above. The term "communal culture" is relatively widespread in areas such as art studies, folk religion and social psychology. In this work, I draw inspiration to define this concept from a paper by British social historian Dror Wahrman, a paper in which communal culture is seen as covering a varied and complex plethora of local resistances, principles and loyalties that opposed the British government's projects of centralizing political power during the second half of the 17th century.[27] At the same time, Warhman argues, this communal culture that is so diffuse and varied underlies the creation of the British middle class.

The concept was also used in a work the topic of which is the long term transformation of Romanian rural society, its author being Daniel Chirot.[28] By using the term "communal village", he refers to the social organization of the free peasantry in the two Wallachian principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia, or, to use the Romanian term, to the "devălmaş" villages. Its use in this work is inspired by works of political science on the topic of political advancements. As one author notes, communalism combines "elements of some unitarian ideologies and frameworks of thought dislocated from their original basis that wander aimlessly and unrestricted in the social climate, oftentimes even outside of their temporal framework. These fragments, scattered from an original totality, are emo-

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[26] Gupta, "Spatializing States," 993, 994.

[27] Dror Wahrman, "National Society, Communal Culture: An Argument about the Recent Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Social History* 17 (1992), 43-72.

[28] Daniel Chirot, *Schimbarea socială într-o societate periferică* [Social Change in a Peripheral Society] (Bucharest: Corint, 2002) (1976).

tionally charged and summoned more or less randomly when the social body needs them".[29.] It is also emphasized that the forming of communalism and of the communal political culture are tied to the failure of forced political modernization.

The parochial society in interwar Romania

The two villages I make reference to in our work are first mentioned over 500 years ago. Cetăţele is mentioned for the first time under the name of Gyurefalwa in 1411, keeping this name (in the toponymy of the Ardeal administration) up until 1918. In parallel, from 1776, the village is also known as Czurkafalu or Csetetzel.[30] The village of Dăneşti, first mentioned in 1405 under the name of Balkonia (and in 1411 as 'villa valahalis Balotfalwa'), has been bearing the name of Bayfalu since 1566.[31] From an administrative standpoint, the villages belonged consecutively to different divisions. Dăneşti is mentioned in 1569 and 1688 as belonging to Baia-Mare, and in 1603 and 1651 as belonging to Chioar.[32] Cetăţele belonged to Baia-Mare during the 16th century, and to Sătmar during the 17th Century. The social composition of the villages situated on these lands mostly consisted of colonists and bondsmen, although there were also villages of nobles*, according to the list of Chioar. There were 14 villages of nobles apart from the 83 bondsmen villages in 1603 in this land, including Şişeşti, Şurdeşti and Plopiş, neighboring Dăneşti and Cetăţele. Two more neighboring villages, Făureşti and Lăschia, were bondsmen villages.[33]

According to the 1930 census, Dăneşti had 454 inhabitants (225 males and 229 females), with 83 families, and Cetăţele had 534 inhabitants (260

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[29] Jaweed Alam, "Political Articulation of Mass-Consciousness in Present-Day in India," in *The State, Political Process and Identity. Reflection on Modern India*, eds. Zoya Hasan, S. N. Jha, Rasheduddin Khan (New Delhi, London: Sage Publication, 1989), 247.

[30] Coriolan Suciu, *Dicţionarul istoric al localităţilor din Transilvania* [The Historical Dictionary of Transylvanian Villages], vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1967), 134.

[31] Suciu, *Dicţionarul istoric al localităţilor din Transilvania*, 192.

[32] David Prodan, *Iobăgia în Transilvania secolului al XVI-lea* [Bondage in 16th Century Transylvania], vol. II (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1968), 239 ff; David Prodan, *Iobăgia în Transilvania secolului al XVII-lea* [Bondage in 17th century Transylvania], vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1986), 376 ff.

* It is about local pity nobles, *nemzetseg (Hungarian), nemeşie (Roumanian)*. They were closer rather to the free peasant status, than to the classical nobility.

[33] Prodan, *Iobăgia în Transilvania secolului al XVII-lea*, 376.

males and 274 females), in 119 families. Age-wise, the population was
distributed as follows:

	0-6		7-12		13-19		20-64		64-	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Dăneşti	48	52	30	31	38	31	101	107	8	7
Cetăţele	54	60	29	31	28	32	134	137	14	14

From a demographic standpoint, the data seems to show a slightly su-
perior social regeneration potential among the population of Dăneşti (the
13-19-year-old segment).

But there were great differences in terms of literacy. Thus, according to
the 1930 census, while in Cetăţele only 41.8% (48.8% men, 35% women)
of the population was literate, in Dăneşti this marker stood at 74.4% (78%
men, 70% women). On the one hand, this difference is intriguing particu-
larly due to the fact that, as I will see in the following section, Cetăţele
was much more institutionally developed than Dăneşti, having both a
school, founded early during that century, and a cultural house. The con-
trast between the two villages is also evident on a zonal level. After the
First World War, Cetăţele consecutively belonged to several administra-
tive units: either centered in Baia-Mare, to which Dăneşti always be-
longed, or centered in smaller dwellings, Copalnic-Mănăştur and Târgu-
Lăpuş. In 1930, the numbers in regard to literacy in the Baia-Mare and
Mănăştur administrative units (plăşi) were, in spite of their being neigh-
bors: for Baia-Mare, 60.7% (68.5% men, 53.5% women) and for
Mănăştur, 45.5% (56.1% men, 34.7% women).[34]

From a religious standpoint, both villages were Greek Catholic during
the interwar years, as were many of the neighboring villages, such as the
larger ones, Şişeşti and Şurdeşti. This Greek Catholic majority was rela-
tive, other neighboring villages such as Făureşti or Plopiş being of an Or-

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[34] The numbers are taken from *Recensământul general al populaţiei României pe
anul 1930* [The General Census of the Romanian Population of 1930], vol. III
(Bucharest: 1938-1939). Curiously, only after seven years, in 1937, the attorney
wrote in an administrative report that in Cetăţele, only 20% of the population was
illiterate. Arhivele Naţionale ale României, Direcţia Judeţeană Maramureş a
Arhivelor Naţionale [The National Archives of Romania, the Department of
Maramureş County] (hereby DJAN Maramureş), Baia-Mare, File 8/1937, f. 7.

thodox Christian denomination.[35] From an ethnical standpoint, the population of both villages was Romanian, with the exception of several Jewish families in Cetăţele. Also, the occupational differentiation between agriculture and non-agrarian professions was virtually non-existent. With a couple of exceptions in both villages, in the civil and church records, every person has the exclusively agriculture-related terms 'ploughman' or 'administrator' tied to their names in the profession bracket.[36]

What warrants the eligibility of the social and political structure of the two villages for the category of parochial society is affiliation based on familial traditional criteria. And indeed, at a first glance, the local figureheads themselves sadly note that politics in both villages depend on belonging to a lineage. For Dăneşti, for example, priest Ştefan Ilieş said in the address he presented during one of the Baia Sprie archpriestship's conferences: "during the elections, the entire village is divided into parties. Lineages support their protégé... All this fighting does no good to the priest, when church-goers bicker amongst themselves. They do not seek the Church... they hold grudges, because they do not confess... The people lose trust in their leaders, in their lords, as they say..."[37] Lineages were the ones apparently controlling political life in Cetăţele as well. Thus Nicolae Pop, mayor during the late interwar years and curator on the parochial board, afterwards deacon from 1953 until his disappearance in 1989, notes in his handwritten memoirs: "As I have noticed, reaching the age of 73, and as I have been told by older people from the branches of Costin and Ţureni, if they reached a leading position in the village by means of avarice and deceit, they fought to make a fortune for themselves, not to develop the village to serve the people they led."[38]

In what measure did these impressions coincide with the actual situation? First, it must be said that not all of the inhabitants of the two villages

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[35] According to the 1930 census, the population of the entire county of Maramureş was 64.4% Greek Cathloic and 5.3% Orthodox.

[36] Uniformity in terms of professions is still apparent, coming from the usual classifications of profession sociology. In practice, there was a certain professional differentiation inside the agriculturalist category. The analysis I have made regarding the types of lands owned by household in 1938 starting from the data in the agrarian registers (which were in the Şişeşti Town Hall Archives in 1995) show that, even if the majority of upper and middle lineages in the villages had meadows as the dominant property (alongside the other recorded categories, ploughland, orchard, pasture and forest), there were also exceptions. In Cetăţele, for example, a lineage had mostly pasture, and in Dăneşti, two lineages had mostly pomicultural areas, orchards, and one was specialized in forest.

[37] DJAN Maramureş, The Greek Catholic Episcopacy of Maramureş, File 45/1935.

[38] Pop, *Amintiri*, 72.

were part of extended familial structures, the so-called "lineages" ("nea-
muri").[39] The recomposition of lineage affiliation supports this claim. For
the period of 1930-1940, I have considered as analysis unit, along with the
lineage unit and lineage, the lineage groups, classified by size: G1, the
group of great lineages, G2, the group of medium lineages, respectively,
G3, the group of marginal lineages (in both villages I included in this
group lineages with at least two nuclear families).[40] The data appears be-
low.

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[39] The term is used as such in both villages and with effective and precise mean-
ings. An example of the effectiveness of this structure is the name by which people
are known in villages. Using the marital status is many times fully useless to find
someone. Usually, in a village, men are known by the paternal sequence of given
names, starting with the name of said person. Here is a fictional example. One
Petru Pop is known in the village as Petru of Gheorghe of Ion, the last two names
being those of the paternal father, and grandfather, respectively. The identity lay-
out for women differs, as they are known by the husband's name. For example: the
wife of Petru Pop from the previous sentence, Floare Pop, is known as Floare of
Petru of Gheorghe. This rule comes from the fact that most of the times, wives
move in the husband's household. There are still cases where the husband moves
in the wife's household, he 'marries' or becomes a 'house son-in-law' in other
regions of Transylvania. In these cases, the husband takes up his father-in-law's
given name, while the wife takes up the husband's given name, but keeps, as a
third name, her father's given name. Oftentimes, to limit the identification layout
to three names, after the first two the village toponym where her household is –
'riverside', 'valleyside' and so on – is mentioned. Then, I was shocked by the fact
that there were people in every lineage that were able to retrace paternal genealo-
gies up to the sixth or seventh generation. That is why part of the field research
went into constructing the map of these genealogies and of the place that each
nuclear family had on this map. I have checked the accuracy of the information I
got in interviews with the marital status data from the parochial churches' matri-
ces, respectively, with the marital status registers from the state archives. The two
villages are no exceptions, it seems. I have ran into the same 'communal' identifi-
cation layouts while on another field project taking place in Lăpuș, Maramureș in
1999-2000. The ethnographic and anthropologic literature from Romania did not
reach across this subject, even though it is important. See, for example, *Name and
Social Structure*, ed. Paul H. Stahl (New York: Boulder, 1985).
[40] The three-category lineage classification is purely conventional and serves to
compare the importance of kin/lineage affiliation in the two villages. The criterion
was given by the number of nuclear families in each lineage in 1938. The classifi-
cation's conventionality is clearly seen when compared to 1930, when 'affiliation'
was different. We repeat that, even if these three categories are purely convention-
al, they help with the analysis of the differences between the two villages.

Table 1. Lineage structure in Cetăţele.

Lineage group	Lineage name	Number of families in 1930	Number of families in 1938
G1	Crăciun 1 (Cr1)	10	11
	Pop 2 (P2)	12	9
	Pop 1 (P1)	9	8
	Rogojan 1 (R1)	5	7
Total G1	**4**	**36**	**35**
G2	Tămaş 1 (T1)	3	5
	Ţura 2 (Ţ2)	6	5
	Costin 3 (Co3)	7	4
	Herţa (H)	7	4
	Bonţa (B)	4	4
	Ţura 6 (Ţ6)	3	4
	Costin 2 (Co2)	6	4
	Costin 4 (Co4)	5	3
	Costin 1 (Co1)	3	3
	Pop 4 (P4)	5	3
	Bâle 3 (Bâ3)	2	3
	Poduţ (Pd)	3	3
	Ţura 1 (Ţ1)	3	3
	Ţura 8 (Ţ8)	1	3
	Crăciun 2 (Cr2)	1	3
	Ardelean (An)	1	3
Total G2	**16**	**60**	**57**
Total G3	--	**31**	**44**

Table 2. Lineage structure in Dănești.

Lineage group	Lineage name	Number of families in 1930	Number of families in 1938
G1	Poduț 1a (Pd1a)	4	5
	Poduț 1b (Pd1b)	1	5
	Poduț 1c (Pd1c)	1	1
	Făt 2a (F2a)	1	4
	Făt 2b (F2b)	2	3
	Făt 2c (F2c)	4	3
	Făt 1 (F1)	7	7
Total G1	**3**	**21**	**28**
G2	Ardelean (A)	5	5
	Făt 3 (F3)	6	5
	Făt 4 (F4)	5	5
	Cânța (Cn)	5	4
	Pop 2 (P2)	4	4
	Gherghel 1 (Gh1)	3	4
Total G2	**6**	**28**	**27**
Total G3	--	**38**	**49**

Sources: The National Romanian Archives, Maramureș County (Şişeşti Town Hall Collections and the Maramureș Greek-Catholic Church Collections). The Archives of the Şişeşti Town Hall (the Register and Agricultural Offices Collections). Field investigations in the two villages.

By comparing the two villages, it becomes obvious that Dănești, on the one hand, had a stronger lineage structure (there are only three lineages in G1 and six in G2; also, there were no lineages consisting of three families, which was a consistent sub-group in the other village) and, on the other hand, it had a higher rate of social marginalization (42% of the nuclear families belonged to G3, in comparison with 33% in the case of Cetățele).[26] Therefore, in Dănești there was a clear boundary between the

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[41] In Dănești, I separated two of the great lineages, Poduț and Făt 2, in three branches, as a result of the serious and repeated conflicts between their nuclear families. In the article cited above, I have explained in detail their motivation and

lineage groups G1 and G2, and the marginal group G3. Conversely, in Cetăţele, G2 and G3 would make up two thirds of the population, which suggests that the importance of the lineage units had a relative value. However, beyond this, the proportion of families in the G3 group in both villages, outside of the lineage units, is relatively high, questioning the idea of the traditional social structure based exclusively on kinship.

The same conclusion also unfolds from the juxtaposition of the kinship network with the distribution of property. Starting from the repertoire of the lineages in the two villages, I have used the same conventional classification in categories based on the number of nuclear families. At a first glance, it seems that the rich – poor polarization ratio was similar in both villages. Thus, while in Cetăţele the richest twenty nuclear families held 36% of the total land fund (tillable land, grass land, meadows and forests) and 20 of the poorest nuclear families held only 1.6%, in Dăneşti the richest 15 families held 29% of the total land fund and the poorest 14 families held 1.5%. As for the affiliation according to the size of the lineages in Cetăţele, the group of rich lineages contained 6 G1 + 11 G2 + 3 G3, while the group of poor lineages contained 8 G1 + 3 G2 + 9 G3. This situation brings out the fact that the rich – poor ratio would overlap the one consisting of middle-tier rich lineages (G2) versus small (G3) and big (G1) poor lineages. This overlapping was also to be found in Dăneşti: the rich lineage group consisting of 6 G1 + 7 G2 + 2 G3, and the poor one of 4 G1 + 1 G2 + 9 G3. However, going further, I must take into account a crucial difference. The average number of properties in the G2 lineage in Cetăţele was far superior to that of the G1 lineages AG2=9.353, compared to AG1=6.492. The figures remain the same even if I leave aside the largest property in the village, which belongs to Ioan Costin and comprises 109 Transylvanian jugerums (in which case, the averages are of 7.043 for AG2 and 6.492 for AG1). Therefore, the polarization within the Cetăţele village was a structural trait of the community, not the fault of a single landlord. In Dăneşti, the greatest properties belonged to the big ligneages in the G1 category.

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context ("Structuri sociale in schimbare in doua sate din Maramureş", 26ff). In the case of the Făt 2 lineage, it was mainly related to a conflict over the land inheritance, while for the Poduţeni, the conflict was caused by the breaking of the common law which said that the position and the role of the deacon was to be inherited by the oldest son of the former deacon. Both conflicts started at the beginning of the 1900s but even as I carried out our research, the branches of each of the two lineages were separated (even though they clearly recognized their common origin).

Table 3 – The distribution of lands in Cetăţele (1938).

Group	Percentage of the total area of the village	Figure and/or composition – nuclear families	Average of property extent expressed in Transylvanian jugerums (iugăr) – 1 jugerum=0.57 hectares
G1	20.1% of the land of the village	35	AG1=6.492
G2	45.4% of the land of the village	57	AG2=9.353
G3	16.3% of the land of the village	44	AG3=4.1388
The church	3% of the land of the village	--	--
Public properties	10.7% of the land of the village	--	--
Landlords who do not reside in the village	4.5% of the land of the village	18	extA=2.81

Table 4 – The distribution of lands in Dăneşti (1938).

Group	Percentage of the total area of the village	Figure and/or composition – nuclear families	Average of property extent expressed in Transylvanian jugerums (iugăr) – 1 jugerum=0.57 hectares
G1	28.6% of the land of the village	28	AG1=9.958
G2	23.3% of the land of the village	27	AG2=8.394
G3	19.7% of the land of the village	49	AG3=3.923
The church	2% of the land of the village	--	--
Public properties	9.4% of the land of the village	--	--
Landlords who do not reside in the village	17% of the land of the village	44	extA=3.79

Source: Land registration from 1939 taken from the Archive of the Şişeşti commune Town Hall.

Being part of a large family did not necessarily imply owning more private property. If I take into consideration the average extent of the private properties belonging to the nuclear families that lived in the outskirts and belonged to the G3 group, I could say that this affiliation was an unfortunate one. Nonetheless, the fact that some of the wealthiest families lived in the outskirts of both villages may lead us to a different conclusion. In Dăneşti, some of the most important aspects were the large figures when it came to the average amount of property owned by people who did not reside in the village, on the one hand, and the multitude of those people, on the other. This suggests that the village was not a closed social unit. Instead, it was at least partially engaged in the social and economic networks in that area. This idea is reinforced by the credit situation in

1934, which was the result of the enforcement of the debt conversion law issued by Nicolae Iorga's government, according to the archive.[27] As I already mentioned in one of the two previously-cited articles, despite the fact that the number of debtors and the amount of money they borrowed were greater in Dănești than in Cetățele – 125 people had borrowed 576,712 lei altogether – the average of the debts to private creditors was a lot smaller, namely of 16%. Moreover, the creditors did not reside in the same village. In Cetățele, 92 people had borrowed 366,961 lei, but 57% of that amount had been provided by private persons. 46% of the money borrowed from private persons came from Costan Costin lu Petru, the owner of the largest property in the village.[28] The remainder of 11% of the debt

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[27] DJAN Maramureș, Șișești Town Hall Fund, File 11/1934

[28] Costan Costin, whom I mentioned earlier, was the greatest landlord in his village and an influential person, despite the fact that he was not part of a big ligneage (CO2). He was the son of a certain Petru Costin, who was born in Inău according to the archives, or in Costeni, according to oral sources. Both villages are located in Maramureș County, towards the route between Copalnic-Mănăștur and Târgu-Lăpuș. He moved to this village in the 1830s. Petru Costin was wealthy. The money he had earned through local trade enabled him to purchase a large property and to gain prestigious titles, head of the parochial council and mayor. Nicolae Pop bitterly criticizes him in his memoirs for having aggrieved the other villagers along with his wife. Petru Costin had three sons who inherited equal parts of his fortune, but one of them, namely Costan, managed to greatly increase the extent of his property due to some favorable circumstances – he joined the army in Budapest, where he learned the Hungarian language and a few notions related to administration. The legality of his means to expand his property is questionable in some cases. Nonetheless, he became a very important person in his village. Between 1910 and 1921, he owned the title of *birău* – mayor; starting from the 1900s to his death, he was the head of the parochial council. He did not have any children; following the local custom, he adopted his heir, Ioan Costin a lu Petru, who was part of the CO1 family. When Costan Costin died, Ioan Costin a lu Petru became the greatest landlord in his village. Although he was very hard-working, he lacked social skills and prestige. Ironically, he was officially invested as landlord (*moșier*) by the communist authorities in the spring of 1945 because he owned 109 jugerums of land – more than 50 hectares – only to be arrested by the Security the next night. He was then forced to live in Gherla and work as a tractor driver. His relatives in the village did not receive any news from him until the 1970s. His property was considered "abandoned", according to the communist legislation at the time, and consequently turned into a state-owned farm. Within the next few months, between December, 1961 and February, 1962, the villagers in Cetățele were forced to work the collective-owned farm around it, which was later called an agricultural co-operative (further information can be found in my article, "Strategii de reacție față de colectivizarea pământului în două sate din nordul României").

to private persons was divided between other creditors in the village and people who did not reside there. 6% was owed to the former, and 5% to the latter.

Family affiliation was a questionable advantage in the numerous instances of social competition which occured in the parochial society that governed the two villages. Considering the economic environments described above and the competition for social prestige, that statement is true, but the differences between the two villages are great in this particular case as well. One instance of competition for social prestige was the "purchase" of positions within the church. I made a thorough description of this issue in one of our previous articles, which I will cite at the beginning of the next section. Another instance of competition is the "spiritual" kinship, as it is called in Romanian ethnographic works, or the ritual kinship, as it is called in the extensive international literature on social anthropology. Kinship is a very important trait of the political environment in traditional societies and communities that are undergoing the process of modernization. It is a means to gain benefits and access to political resources, according to several social anthropologists who analyzed this phenomenon in the Catholic communities of Mediterranean countries.

Despite the fact that the data collected from the two villages are only partial, a proper interpretation is still possible. According to the parish registers, 56 marriage ceremonies were held in Cetățele during the 1930s. Most of the couples that were godparents at the weddings belong to the P2 and Co3 families – the former was of big ligneage descent, while the latter was part of the middle class. Another couple is mentioned – Vasile and Părasca Țură. Vasile Țură is a different person from the mayor during the interwar period. The members of the mentioned lineages were godparents at the weddings of 30 families. Out of the 56 families that started during the 1930s, 46 had godparents from the village. The presence of Vasile and Părasca Țură suggests that there was a tendency to individualize social life, which is also represented by Costan Costin lu Petru in many ways. Throughout their lives, Vasile and Părasca Țură were godparents at 25 weddings, 12 of which took place in the 1930s. Although Vasile Țura lu Petru was a member of the small Ț5 family and did not own extensive lands, he was a member of the parochial council and had his own spot at the choir stalls on the right side of the church.

The other two influential lineages in this network, P2 and Co3, had traits that were more or less opposed. The group of godparents of Co3 lineage comprised all four families, which attended 9 weddings during the 1930s. The families of Co3 lineage were closely related to each other –

parents and children and first cousins. Nonetheless, the families whose
weddings they attended were neither part of the same lineage, nor related
in any way but one. The group comprised the families of the school
headmaster Petru Costin, of his father, Ștefan Costin, as well as of Costan
Costin, who was a different person from Costan Costin lu Petru. He was
the father of a future activist with the House of Culture who had been the
head of the parochial council in the interwar period. The members of the
fourth family did not hold any social positions. Two of these families were
part of the church choirs. Their positions were not inherited, but rather
assigned to them due to their social status – Petru Costin was a school
headmaster, while Costan Costin was the head of the parochial council.
Only five families were elected from the other group of godfathers,
namely those of P2 lineage, out of a total of nine families. The connections
between them were based on the memory of their ancestors, as the heads
of only two families were first cousins. Moreover, five of the families
whose wedding they attended were part of their lineage.

The information about Dănești village is sparser and gives information
only about the year 1934, as well as the period between 1936 and 1939.
There was a group of related godparents that inherited the position of
deacon, but they were only first cousins. The wedded couples were
indirectly related to the godparents through their wives. The members of
the third group of godparents, group A, attended the weddings of their own
relatives exclusively. Another difference is that the group of godparents in
Dănești included the priest Ștefan Ilieș, as well as a widow. The obvious
difference from Cetățele is the absence of a lineage such as Co3, which
greatly expanded the social network. The village also lacks the
individualization of the social status of godparent, which is represented by
Vasile and Părasca Țură in Cetățele.

Parochial and political societies

Religion and family were the main sources of values and the base for
social cohesion in both villages. Ștefan Ilieș, the Dănești priest mentioned
above, conveys the principles of this unique social conservatism in the
same paper: "The bases for the entire society lie in the social life of the
parish, starting with its root, the family. The life of a single family reflects
the social life of the entire parish. A society must be administered in
accordance with the present law. The commune which is governed by a

true Christian is a fortunate one. The church ought to partake in every religious rite. So ought the mayor".[29]

That statement must be interpreted by analyzing the way in which those who held important positions were chosen.[30] Apparently, there was no clear distinction between the way in which important political and religious positions were assigned. For instance, the Administrators and the members of the parish council were elected based on campaigns that were very similar to mayoral election campaigns. According to Avram Ciocotiştan from Dăneşti, "Being a Mayor only meant owning a title. Being an Administator meant the same. A communal council comprising about seven, nine, ten or fifteen members would be formed, and after a while, the members would elect a Mayor who was part of their own group. In order for one to become Mayor, they had to make sure that as many members of the coucil as possible agreed with his election. The situation was the same when it came to the position of the head of the parochial council. For instance, the priest would say that the elections are coming. He would tell people that he wants to hold a general assembly along with the other men, of course. He would then tell everyone that they could assemble a commission of their choice. Two men chosen by them were supposed to appoint someone to the Administrative Comittee. The people in the hall always knew who they were supposed to choose; it was all arranged beforehand. The priest would always introduce the two members that had to be chosen to the people, who would then propose them at the general assembly. Nobody has ever had the courage to stand against the decision and say that they disagree with the members. It was all part of an arrangement made with another family."

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[29] DJAN Maramureş, The Greek-Catholic Bishopric of Maramureş Fund, File 45/1935.

[30] In the structural-functional theories of sociology and anthropology, status and position are different concepts. The former, on the one hand, is the place of certain people within the social relations and structures of their group in a long period of time. The concept of status is based on a series of social resources, such as personal competence, prestige, wealth and influence. The latter, on the other hand, is the function of a certain person in a shorter period of time. The qualities that a person who holds a position must have are only circumstantial. This distinction between status and position can only be applied partially in the case of traditional or parochial societies similar to the two villages analyzed in this paper. Some social functions, such as deacon or head of the parish council, were statuses, even if there were a few circumstantial exceptions, as I will see further on. Other functions, such as administrator in the Church, mayor or teacher/headmaster were more unstable, as this paper explains further on.

The head of the parochial council were reelected and replaced every four years, if needed. Moreover, the Higher Church Administration was aware of the negative influence of family relations within the council. Therefore, the presence of first, second and third-degree relatives was prohibited. There was a similar case in the neighbouring parish of Şindreşti in 1936. The archbishops ordered that the Administrator elections be held again for this exact reason.[31] Instead, the local council depended on the change of the government, according to Avram Ciocotişean: "I don't know about the local council. Its members rarely changed once every four years; instead, they were replaced when the government changed. The local Church Administration was not controlled by politicians." Nonetheless, the rise to power of a certain party did not necessarily imply the appointment of the party leader as Mayor. This explains three apparent contradictions. Firstly, Vasile Ţura lu Gavril was Mayor of Cetăţele for a long time, once from 1925 to 1929, and again from 1931 to 1937[32], in spite of the fact that he was a member of the National Liberal Party. Secondly, Gheorghe Făt lu Aurel was Mayor of Dăneşti between 1930 and 1938, in spite of the fact that he was a member of the National Peasants' Party. Thirdly, Nicolae Pop, the deacon I mentioned earlier, was invested as Mayor of Cetăţele in 1937, in spite of the fact that he was not affiliated with any political party.

But how great was this tendency of the Church to control the social and political life of the two villages? At the church in Dăneşti, the people who occupied important positions within the Church were seated in a different spot from the ones who held important social positions. The choir on the left side of the church, which had been built more recently than the other one, was occupied by the F2b lineage, whose members had built it. Between 1900 and 1945, two Mayors belonged to this lineage. Next, the seats of the choir were occupied by the members of the largest family in the village at the time, the F1 lineage. Two deacons, a head of the parochial council and a few other Administrators were members of that

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[31] DJAN Maramureş, Baia Mare Greek-Catholic Bishopric Fund, File 653/1936.

[32] Until 1925, the Mayor was Costan Costin lu Petru, who had formerly had the function of birău – mayor – before the First World War. He was supported by the liberals. The mayor from 1925 to 1929 and from 1931 to 1937 was Vasile Ţura. Nonetheless, he was unpopular among the villagers and incriminated by some important figures, such as the headmaster school Petru Costin, or Nicolae Pop, who was Administrator at that time and would later be a deacon for over 4 decades, aside from being a mayor between 1937 and 1938. There was a short break between 1929 and 1931, when Indrei Pop, member of the National Peasants' Party, held this function.

lineage. Apart from their functions as Administrators, the members of this lineage also had a high economic status. The choir on the right side on the church was occupied by the Pd1 and the Făt 1 lineages alternately. One member of each lineage became a deacon. Alongside those two lineages sat the members of the parish council, who were elected out of the F1, F3 and F4 lineages for a very long period of time, except the year 1922, when a member of the Pd1a family was among the Administrators. The important fact is the distribution of the seats at the church among the people who held the functions of deacon and Mayor and belonged to different lineages. They sat at different choirs – the choir on the right side of the church was occupied by deacons; when the members of the F1 lineage held the position of deacon, they were the ones to occupy the right choir. There was an exceptional and dramatic period in the local and national history, namely between 1938 and 1945, when the two positions were held by only one person – Vasile Poduț, a member of the Pd1a lineage. His achievement can be explained by a set of circumstances. Firstly, he had joined the Austro-Hungarian army before 1918 and earned an important military rank. Secondly, he knew the Hungarian language very well.

The distribution of seats at the church in Cetățele indicated a separation between those with social and religious positions as well, but it also marked the conflicts that occured during that particular period in local history. The choir on the left side of the church had been built back when the greatest personality in that village, Costan Costin lu Petru, had had his own separate seat next to the iconostasis. The left choir was now occupied by the members of the P2 lineage, who had owned the title of deacon almost continuously ever since the church had been built. Nicolae Pop, whom I mentioned earlier, was a member of this lineage and a deacon, too. From 1922 to 1953, this position was held by a member of the Ț2 lineage who was forced to sit at the opposite choir because he was not accepted among those of P2 descent. The new deacon sat alongside the members of the Ț1 lineage, including Vasile Țura lui Gavrilă, who was both a Mayor and a Main Administrator after Costan Costin's death in 1934. Therefore, during the entire interwar period, holders of important social and religious positions in Cetățele sat alongside one another at the church.

The coincidence between the social and the religious hierarchies in Cetățele was not a new issue. Around 1905, the members of a family of P2 lineage attained all the prestigious functions in the village. One particular member was both Main Administrator and Mayor, while his brother, Nicolae Pop's father, was a deacon. The left choir was built at that time. A member of the Co1 lineage partook in its construction, as he was in good

relations with the deacons in the P2 lineage and had a high economic status. He thus earned his place at the left choir, which was built later and therefore had a greater capacity. Alongside him sat two other people of high economic status who belonged to the Co1 lineage, but who did not hold prestigious positions – Ioan Costin lu Petru, Costan Costin lu Petru's heir, and his brother Dionisie, who inherited an extensive property because he was adopted.

By comparing the configurations of the two villages, I can infer that in Dănești, besides the two families that filled all the prestigious functions – F2b in the social milieu, and Pd1a in the religious one – there were some other families which intermediated between the two hierarchies. The families were part of the most extensive lineages, namely F1, F3 and F4. As a result, the elite of that village was rather well-organized and united. The members of the elite were very cooperative with one another and suited the social structures based on inheritance. Moreover, the elite was formed mostly according to the traditional sources of social prestige, including the position within the Church, the intermediation with the rest of society and the genealogical memory. The situation was different in Cetățele. The separation between the holders of prestigious social and religious functions depended on the circumstances. Furthermore, there was no intermediary between the prestigious hierarchies. The members of the Co1 lineage, who could have played the role of intermediaries, were engaged in the competition for power themselves. They also had great economic power, which is a very important resource in a society which is undergoing the process of modernization. As a conclusion, the local elite was divided into many groups that were competing for the available prestigious statuses. Nonetheless, the symbolic appointment of those statuses was a confusing and tense process based on exclusion rather than integration when it came to the genealogical aspect of the social structures.

The description of the moral and religious atmosphere that resulted from the distribution of social positions in Cetățele is made by the notary: "...people are mild and have respect for their commitments and for other people's property; the criminality rate is low. The villagers are religious people. There is no choir at the church. There is an extremely beautiful Greek-Catholic church that was built in 1794 in this village. Nevertheless, there is one unmarried couple which does not have children."[33] That account is supported by the fact that I could not identify any cases of conflict caused by the distribution of positions within the Church in the 1930s. None of the surveyed subjects mentioned any conflict of this sort.

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[33] DJAN Maramureș, Plășii Baia-Mare Pretorium, File 8/1937, f. 7.

Neither were there any so-called "cases of remorse". In the terminology used by the administrators of the Church, the "cases of remorse" were reports of confessions during which people admitted to having disobeyed the Orthodox morals. The reports were made by the priests of the local parishes to their superiors at the bishopric. However, out of the 214 children born between 1930 and 1939 according to the Baptism Registry, I managed to identify the cases of 12 newborns that were tagged as "illegitimate", while their mothers were tagged as "fallen women/girls."[34] The involvement of the Church in the social life of the village was augmented by the activity of a branch of the Mariana Order, whose President was Floare Langa, teacher and wife of Petru Costin, who was a Headmaster at the local school during the interwar period and the beginning of the communist era. I were not able to find any additional data concerning the activity of the Order. Even the account of Floare Langa's husband lacks significant details about the activity of the local branch of the Mariana Order.

Other local institutions that had a great influence on the civic and political life of the two villages were the school and the Culture House. Their importance within society was apparently limited, especially in Cetățele, where the literate people made up only 40% of the total population. Nevertheless, when analyzing the overall importance of the two institutions, I need to focus on the contrast between this period and the one after 1945, when both institutions were used by the newly-appointed communist authorities as a means to assert their local authority. The previously-mentioned Petru Costin was an important local personality and a long-term witness to the social and political changes of that time. He died at the age of 92 in 1996, which is exactly when I started to conduct our research. He was Headmaster at the local school before and after 1945, as well as President of the Culture House in the interwar period. His wife became President of the Culture House in 1945. Petru Costin describes the importance that the two institutions had in the lives of the villagers in Cetățele. When he was a young teacher, he supported Haret's theory, which is described in his memoirs through the following statement: "In order for teachers to educate and instruct the young generation properly, they must include extracurricular activities aside from the regular schoolwork."[35] According to Petru Costin, this ideal could be most easily fulfilled through the cultural circles of teachers, which were formed in

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[34] The data that can be found in Dănești is related to the year 1934 and the period between 1936 and 1939. Four children out of 106 are in the same category.
[35] Petru Costin, *Jurnal* [Diary], manuscript, Cetățele, 2nd volume, 33.

compliance with the implementing regulations concerning the Primary and Middle School Education Law issued by the liberal government in 1924.

Petru Costin was dissatisfied with the fact that the spiritual life of his village was limited to the influence of the church. Consequently, he and his wife initiated the foundation of a Culture House. An inaugural meeting took place in November 1934. Aside from the founders of the Culture House, the meeting was attended by some other important local personalities, including Vasile Țura, a liberal Mayor who held this position during almost the entire interwar period, as well as Costan Costin and Nicolae Pop, who were both the head of the parochial council at the time. Costan Costin, a different person from Costan Costin lu Petru, was the wealthiest man in the village. He was the godfather at nine of the 43 wedding ceremonies that were held during the 1930s and had godfathers from the same village. Costan Costin was Petru Costin's uncle. Nicolae Pop is the future deacon I mentioned earlier. He was part of the extensive P2 lineage. At the end of the interwar period, he was Mayor for one year. 36 villagers also attended the inaugural meeting of the Culture House along with the personalities mentioned above. The priest of the parish was elected president, and Petru Costin was elected secretary.

The newly-founded Culture House did not have any location of its own until 1957, despite Petru Costin's prolonged efforts. He even enrolled in the National Christian Party in 1937 to achieve this goal. Until 1957, the activity of the Culture House was performed at the local school, which had been founded in 1909 as a Greek-Catholic parochial school and became a secular, state-funded school in 1924. The importance of the activity at the Culture House did not exceed the influence of the Church. Instead, the Church was secularized to a certain degree. According to the monograph on the village made by Alexa Gavril Bâle, a choir that sang religious music was formed at the Culture House. The activity at the Culture House consisted of performing songs, reciting patriotic poems about national heroes and organizing festivities on the occasion of several social events – the foundation of the Consumers' co-operative in 1937, the donation of the first iron plow to a cultural foundation in Bucharest in 1939, etc.

The connection between the parochial society and the political milieu had a different nature in Dănești. Religion was at the root of every social relation and every aspect of the public space. According to the reports of the parish priest Ștefan Ilieș to the Greek Catholic Bishopric of Baia-Mare around 1935, "the religious life of Orthodox people is a good one. The Orthodox people always visit the Church and participate at all the religious sermons on Sundays and holidays. Most of them make confessions and

receive the Eucharist many times a year…"[36] According to another report made by the parish priest in Dănești on the occasion of an inspection of all the parishes, "Orthodox people have sacrificial spirits that manifest themselves through benevolent donations made with the purpose of embellishing the church, buying decorated flags, making paintings or purchasing carpets."[37]

It seems that the intensity of religious consciousness was greater in this village, as there is a record of a "case of remorse". However, no conflict regarding the dispotition of the seats at the church was reported. The Mariana Order had a very active branch there. This is what the parish priest states about the Order in 1936 in a report to his archpriest: "People make donations every day. The amount of money needed to purchase diplomas and medals is currently being raised with the purpose of promoting the members adequately. Christians are very drawn to the Mariana Union, which aids a lot in their spiritual development."[38]

Although the degree of literacy was higher than in Cetățele, the cultural and educational institutions were in a poor state. There was no school in the village until 1926, when the Minister of Mines gave up a house with two rooms that had previously been a bar for this purpose. Petru Costin, whom I mentioned earlier, was a teacher here for two years at the beginning of his career, from 1929 to 1931.[39] According to Gheorghe Poduț's statement, on one of the occasions when the Peasants' Party was in charge, the state funded the construction of a wood framed building exactly where the old bar had been located. That building served as the school of the village until 1955, when the communist authorities fulfilled the demands of the villagers by funding the construction of a new school and organizing their efforts to achieve this goal voluntarily. There was no Culture House in the village in the interwar period. As soon as the new building was raised in 1955, one of its chambers was turned into the headquarters of the Culture House, but it was often used as a classroom when necessary.

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[36] DJAN Maramureș, Baia Mare Greek-Catholic Bishopric Fund, File 659/1936, report made on 20th October, 1936.

[37] DJAN Maramureș, Baia Mare Greek-Catholic Bishopric Fund, File 686/1939, report made on 10th March, 1939.

[38] DJAN Maramureș, Baia Mare Greek-Catholic Bishopric Fund, File 659/1936, report made on 20th October, 1936. The file also includes a survey consisting of 15 questions regarding the ways of mobilization and local participation of the people at the activities of the association.

[39] Costin, *Jurnal*, 2nd volume, 60.

The connection between religious and social life was significantly different between the two villages. In Cetățele, the competition for positions or status was rarely separate between social and religious contexts, while in Dănești, the two contexts were relatively autonomous. This fact is startling if I consider that the society in Dănești was lineage-based, which might have suggested that the political culture of the village was not very developed. Besides the families that belonged to the middle class, other influential local personalities that were either respected or feared included Headmaster Petre Costin, Costan Costin, and Vasile and Parasca Țură, who were godparents at many weddings. I can draw the conclusion that, under certain circumstances, a traditional social structure can provide the necessary resources for a political culture to be in accordance not only with the local communal structures, but also with the entire macro political system of the country, as happened in the case of Dănești. This is a good explanation of the fact that the political processes and environments of the two villages were extremely different from one another, as I will see in the last section of this paper. The villagers in Cetățele were nationalist extremists, while those in Dănești were more balanced and moderately involved with the political life of their village.

Political Communalism

In the introduction, I stated that the apparent lack of political culture in rural Romanian societies during the interwar period can be blamed on the rather traditional way of organizing the local authorities and institutions. The functions of the state were limited in scope and unaware of the needs of local societies, which were fulfilled by the so-called "local authorities" of interwar Romania, where 80% of the population was located in rural areas. As we will see in the last section of this work, that does not mean that the local political life was inexistent or formless, at least when it came to the two cases that I analyzed. Instead, there was a communal political culture which had strong connections with the network of parochial societies in the sense I described in the previous sections of this paper. The political life was extremely lively, which caused the villagers to get involved in it.

The relationship between local society and the state was extremely faulty. For instance, according to Andrei Ciosba's previously-mentioned report of 25th September, 1937, the only obligation that the villagers were required by the state to meet was to pay their taxes. Moreover, the income of the villagers came from the rich fruit crop they were able to gather that year: "The process of tax collection is extremely difficult this year. Taxes

could not be enforced yet because the villagers have just started selling fruit. The budgets of the communes in the first three months of the financial year of 1937/1938 is only 30-35% complete! The budgets will soon be complete, as the fruit crops are rich this year." The same clerk also criticizes the Jewish merchants who compromise the crops: "The Chamber of Agriculture in this county is not interested in the situation of the Romanian peasants in this fruit-growing area. The Romanian peasants are forced to submit to the merciless Jews." There is one more problem, but it is not as important, namely "the stagnation of the cattle raising" caused by the lack of grazing lands, which is mentioned only briefly. Nevertheless, the opinion of Nicolae Pop, Mayor of Cetățele, is that this was a great problem.[40]

On the other hand, the state granted great fiscal autonomy to the administration of the communes. Nicolae Pop, who had managed to put an end to the control that the liberal Vasile Țura lu Gavrilă had had over the position of Mayor, mentions in his memoirs that the greatest part of the taxes that were collected between 1937 and 1938, when he was a Mayor, was left to the administration of the commune. "While I was Mayor, I did not allow anyone to pawn their possessions in order to be able to pay their taxes. I gave every villager the possibility of paying their taxes for the year 1937. All of them payed. When I arrived at Town Hall, there were only 218 lei in the treasury. When I left, there were 13,000 lei – 3,000 lei were supposed to go to the higher administration of the county, while the rest of 10,000 lei was part of the budget of the commune. The entire sum of money was allocated to several certain purposes."[41] Further on, Pop states that the money was used to build roads and bridges, to clean the grazing lands and to collect water from the wells: "While I was Mayor, stretches of road were built on the way to Dănești where the villagers could not use their carriages. Bridges over brooks were built; the grazing fields were cleared of spiny bushes; more wells were dug."

Given the context of the local institutions and the relationship between government and local society, the local political culture was prominently characterized by nationalism. According to the same Petru Costin, in the years that followed North Transylvania's annexation by Hungary, the teachers from the neighboring village would gather and "sing Romanian patriotic songs, the same songs that our ancestors were very enthusiastic about. Our souls were filled with the sacred flame of love for our country and the pride I took in being Romanians. During those hard times, I

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[40] DJAN Maramureș, Plășii Baia-Mare Pretorium, File 8/1937, f. 3-4.

[41] Pop, *Amintiri*, 23.

realized that I ought to keep close to one another and fight to keep our
national identity."[42] Actually, the local political culture of the village was
characterized by nationalism during the entire interwar period. Petru
Costin claims that all the villagers supported Cuza's National Christian
Party. Nonetheless, the few families of Jewish descent who lived at the
center of that village were not affected by this situation, as they were fully
integrated among the other villagers. I were not able to find any cases of
conflict between Romanian and Jewish villagers during the interviews
that I held. The Jewish people eventually migrated to Israel at the
beginning of the 1950s.[43] The nationalism that characterized the local
culture even in the case of the supporters of Cuza was rather a way of
standing against the dominant parties in the political life of interwar
Romania. Petru Costin states that the representatives of the political parties
were considered to be "liars, opportunists and untrustworthy" by the
villagers. One of the most criticized politicians was the liberal Vasile Țura,
who was "compromised from the villagers' point of view. He had become
Mayor around the year 1920, but he turned out not to be interested in the
life of the village. Not only did he take dictatorial measures, but he also
threw a lot of parties in the company of the paramilitary police officers,
the internal revenue officers and the other plunderers. Nobody in the
village loved him."[44]

    The villagers adhered not only to the party led by A. C. Cuza, but also
to the Legionnaire Movement. According to the notary report cited earlier,
"the nest leaders secretly held meetings in the village. Most of the

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[42] Costin, *Journal*, 80.

[43] At the time when this research was being conducted, there still was a family in
Dănești that bore the name of Zelig, which is the surname that Jewish families had
during the interwar period. Nonetheless, that family was a Christian one. The hus-
band was adopted by one of the Jewish families in the interwar years. He had ini-
tially belonged to an isolated family in the lineage structure, namely Poduț, a dif-
ferent family from the one in Dănești. Adopting children was a very common prac-
tice among the villagers in Cetățele, as Costan Costin lu Petru, the wealthiest man
in town, stated himself. He adopted Ioan Costin because he did not have any chil-
dren. Although Ioan Costin had the same surname, he was not part of the same
family. When Costan Costin lu Petru died in 1934, his extensive lands and fortune
were inherited by his son. The Jewish people in Cetățele also started adopting chil-
dren, which proves that the relation between the two nationalities was close in the
interwar period, despite the radical nationalism of the Romanian villagers. Alt-
hough Petru Costin supported Cuza, he sympathized with the Jews in his village
(Costin, *Jurnal*, 2nd volume, 90).
[44] Costin, *Jurnal*, 2nd volume, 65.

population consisted of political extremists."[45] Ştefan Crăciun was a villager who lacked any social prestige, but was a member of a big ligneage family. He sympathized with the Legionnaire Movement. During his interview, he confirmed that there were three Legionnaire nests in the village in the 1930s, but only one of them was led by an important figure, Costan Costin, who was a Church Administrator and a founding member of the Culture House. One of the remaining nest leaders was part of a restricted family, while the other was part of an isolated family. The political attitudes of those who sympathized with the Legionnaire Movement were not characterized by complexity at all.[46] Ştefan Crăciun sympathized with both the Legionnaire and Communist parties in the 1930s. Although he was of big lingneage descent, his family was very poor. This caused him to get a job in Baia Mare, thus becoming the first person to commute between his home and his workplace. He attained a more extensive knowledge and learned more information than his fellow villagers, who lived in a closed milieu. He was aware of the ideological differences between the two parties, but claimed that the common people who supported different parties did not stand against one another. He sympathized with the Communist Party because it was "very deprived of action". What he liked about both parties was that they had a common trait, namely social justice – "their program revolved around the same idea, that of helping the poor people."

The apparent lack of development of the local institutions in Dăneşti kept the political ideology and activism from taking over the public institutions, especially the Church. There was a clear separation between the two areas, even if it was accidental. Therefore, nationalism was not one of the main attitudes and values that influenced the political choices in the village, as opposed to the situation in the neighboring village of Cetăţele. This is a paradox, because the priest of the village had been Vasile Lucaciu, an important unionist figure. The Dăneşti parish had

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[45] DJAN Maramureş, Plăşii Baia-Mare Pretorium, File 8/1937, f. 7. Ciosba, the notary, mentions that two teachers in the village sympathized with the National Christian Party. The two teachers were Petru Costin and his wife, Floare Langa.

[46] For instance, the Legionnaire Movement or the "All for the Country" Party were referred to by communist activists in 1962 as "the Historical Legionnaire Party". The activists declared that Mihai Fekete "has an unhealthy approach towards the governmental decisions because he used to be a part of the Historical Legionnaire Party. Moreover, he exerts an unfavorable influence on other people who have not joined the collective-owned farm. He stated that he would not give up the lands he inherited and he was not willing to receive other lands in exchange" (DJAN Maramureş, Fond Sfatul Popular al comunei Făureşti, File 8/1962, f. 88).

worked as a branch of the Şişeşti parish, where Vasile Lucaciu was a priest many years before First World War.

The decisive factor seems to have been the respect that the villagers had for what is known today as political involvement. People seemed to be circumspect when it came to political activism and sympathies. For instance, Gheorghe Poduţ states that apart from the Legionnaires and the supporters of Cuza, "there weren't any trustworthy parties, they only liked to brag," but "I have never supported any of them... I was part of a great family." Avram Ciocotişean remembers that here were sympathizers of Cuza, "but the majority supported the National Peasants' Party." Cuza's supporters were young people from his generation. "They were all dressed the same – the same kind of suits, jackets, tight pants... and also bats, because other parties were distributing propaganda as well." There were neither any Legionnaire nests, nor any members of this movement that the villagers can remember.

The local political elite in Dăneşti was split between the two dominant parties within the national political system. The position of mayor was held by a member of the National Liberal Party until 1927, and from then until 1938, by a member of the National Peasants' Party. Despite this division of power, there was a certain continuity in the election of political leaders. Aurel Făt, who had been a mayor prior to 1918, kept his position until after the Great Union and joined the National Liberal Party. This situation is identical to the one of Costan Costin lu Petru in Cetăţele. When Transylvania was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was a *birău* or mayor. After 1918, he kept his position and joined the National Peasants' Party. Aurel Făt's son, Gheorghe, managed to become both a mayor and a member of the National Peasants' Party as well. Although this situation can apparently be considered a case of opportunism and political corruption, it was rather a rudimentary professionalization of the political activity and an impulse to create a local political milieu that was autonomous and did not have any connection to the central government in Bucharest.[47] Besides, Gheorghe Făt's activity as Mayor was not criticized, nor were there any complaints in the collective memory of the villagers. Aside from his performance as Mayor, another possible cause for his

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[47] See the way in which the candidates for the parliamentary elections in Brăila County were elected right after the First World War, for instance. Cornel Micu, "Centru şi periferie în procesele electorale româneşti. Studiu de caz Brăila, 1919-1922," [Center and Periphery in the Romanian Election Campaigns – Case Study – Brăila, 1919-1922] in *Elite parlamentare şi dinamică electorală în România 1919-1937* [Parliamentary Elites and Election Dynamics in Romania from 1919 to 1937], ed. Florin Müller (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 2009), 33-79.

positive reputation was the fact that he was part of a large family whose members did not occupy any prestigious religious positions and were not interested in attaining a social rank either. The great difference from Cetățele was that Costan Costin, the former *birău*, occupied two key positions until halfway through the 1920s. He was both Mayor and the head of the parochial council. He held the latter position until his death in 1934.[48]

The competition for political or other influential positions was tight in both villages. The interests, attitudes and values that influenced it were different in the cases of the two villages. Beyond this competition, there was also a local awareness of the community's interests which was sometimes connected to the political competition, but it was part of the communal political culture.

Nicolae Pop's journal and the documents in the archives that confirm Pop's statements give us an overall description of the issues regarding the political and administrative institutions that the villagers came upon during the interwar period and tried to solve without employing ideological means. A very important conflict in the history of Cetățele that reflects the motivation of the villagers to get involved in political decisions was generated by the court decision according to which the village was affiliated to the Notary Association of Dănești.[49] The two sides involved in this conflict were the administration of the Mănăștur district, to which the village had been affiliated since 1927, and an intermediary committee of the village, whose members proposed that the village be affiliated to the notary in Dănești and the Baia-Mare District. Among the members of this comittee was Mayor Vasile Țura, the teacher Petru Costin and Nicolae Pop. Out of the 80 family heads that were present – the village had 127 nuclear families, according to the 1930 census – 71 voted to be affiliated with the Dănești notary. The reason for this decision is complex and proves how involved the villagers were. Many kinds of reasons were put forth. A financial reason was that the villagers sell and purchase goods from the markets in Baia-Mare and Baia-Sprie. A judicial reason was that the marriage registers were in Dănești. An administrative reason was that the headquarters of the financial administrative divison, as well as other social and cultural institutions, was located in Baia-Sprie.

Some other circumstances that revealed the local interests in that period of time were those related to the common funds for forests and

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[48] From 1934 to 1948, Vasile Țura was the head of the parochial council. He was also a liberal mayor between 1921 and 1929, and then from 1931 to 1937, as I mentioned earlier.

[49] DJAN Maramureș, Șișești Town Hall Fund, File 11/1936.

grazing fields. Ciosba's observation regarding the lack of grazing fields was mentioned earlier. Actually, the conflicts and the involvement of the villagers were both more complex than an administrative report might indicate. Nicolae Pop talked about the disagreement between Cetățele and Dănești concerning some fields that were part of the forest fund within the boundaries of the neighboring village of Dumbrăvița.[50] The fields were administered by the forest district in Ocna Șugatag. On 25th May, some representatives of the villagers went to the headquarters of the forest district to pay for their right to use those fields between 25th May and 1st September. In 1930, the villagers failed to choose a representative to sign the contract. The fields were allocated to the villagers of Dănești, whose representative falsely claimed that the villagers of Cetățele no longer have cattle. The next year, Nicolae Pop was commissioned to sign the contract. He got involved in this issue because there was en emotional aspect to it – the fields had been used by the villagers of Cetățele ever since he was a little child. Moreover, this gave the villagers in Cetățele the right of pre-emption, so despite the fact that the villagers in Dănești made a complaint at the County Prefecture, the fields were allocated to the villagers of Cetățele.

Conclusions

The reason why I chose these two particular villages for my research project is a simple, yet a strong one. I did not have any personal or professional connection to the region of Maramureș until the project started. When I arrived there with my own personal issues, I was startled by the completely different fate that the two villages had during communist collectivization. At the beginning of the 1960s, the psychological pressure and the terror that the authorities inflicted on the villagers of Cetățele reached its peak. Eventually, a collectively-owned farm was formed after only a few months, from December, 1961 to February, 1962. The atmosphere of the communist regime was similar in Dănești, but no collectively-owned farms were formed. In the two articles cited above, I made a thorough analysis of the context and causes of this situation. The analysis is relevant to the subject matter of the present paper because it shows how two parochial local communities with a weak civic and political culture react differently to two different situations – the totalitarian oppression of the communist regime, on the one hand, and the

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[50] The records of this disagreement can be found in the official archives, cf. DJAN Maramureș, Șișești Town Hall Fund, File 3/1931.

more democratic period of the interwar. In this paper, I highlighted some of the most important aspects that explain those differences. Even if family relations were extremely important in the political life of both villages, the distinction between the local parochial society and the political milieu, the lower intensity of the competition for social statuses and positions, the degree of adequacy of the local institutions, which are either traditional or associative, and the degree of literacy prevented the villagers in Dăneşti from moving towards political extremism. The two cases that were analyzed in this paper show that the parochial societies with a communal political culture can relate to both the values of liberal democracy and the extremist or radical regimes. Regardless of this fact, the statement that the parochial, traditional societies with rudimentary civic and political cultures are the bases for totalitary regimes cannot be confirmed completely.

CHAPTER THREE

MAYORS AND LOCAL ELITES IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD: CASE STUDY – THE BORDEI VERDE COMMUNE, BRĂILA COUNTY

CORNEL MICU

Introduction

Throughout the interwar period, Romania's rural population accounted for a major portion of the total population, ranging between 81.7% in 1912 and 75.6% in 1941[1], according to national census data. During the same period, rural areas underwent ambitious policies of transformation through land reform, in 1919/1921 and again in 1945, and the introduction of universal suffrage. These changes were aimed at the economic and political emancipation of the peasantry, through the establishment of homesteads that could sustain their owners and increased political participation. Through these reforms, the interwar Romanian state wanted to diminish the regional power of the traditional Romanian elite, consisting of wealthy landowners, and to transform peasants into citizens willing to defend their country and able to pay taxes.

The importance of agrarian reforms and the extension of voting rights has been recognized by most authors who have addressed the agrarian issue in Romania, but, unfortunately, history studies on the impact of these two policies at the local level are still rare. The interwar period suffered from a bad reputation before 1989, being addressed particularly in light of the class struggle between the peasants and important landowners. With

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[1] Data taken from Ioan Alexandrescu, Ioan Bulei, Ioan Mamina, and Ioan Scurtu, *Enciclopedia de istorie a României* [Encyclopaedia of Romanian History] (Bucharest: Editura Meronia, 2000).

the fall of communism, interest in researching the rural Romanian countryside focused on two distinct topics: the collectivisation of agriculture in the period 1949-1962[2] and the process of decollectivisation and restitution of property after 1989.[3] Both were major topics in the reconsideration of the effects of communism on Romanian society and the debates regarding Romania's integration into the European Union. Post-communist historians have shown a tendency to focus on the analysis of the recent past, which had the advantage of proposing new insights on issues for the intellectual debate since 1989, but they have neglected the *longue durée* approach specific to historical analysis.

With a few notable exceptions, the period before 1949 was mostly approached in terms of the land reforms of 1919/1921 and 1945, presented as major achievements in the process of the emancipation of the peasantry, although from a perspective that focused more on issues related to state policy than its actual effects on the rural areas.[4] A few exceptions are works that have addressed the agricultural issue from the perspective of

[2] *Ţărănimea şi puterea: procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România: (1949-1962)* [The Peasantry and the Power. The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Romania (1949-1962)], eds. Dorin Dobrincu, Constantin Iordachi (Iaşi: Polirom, 2005); *Colectivizarea agriculturii în România: aspecte legislative* [The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Romania. Legal Aspects. 1945-1962], eds. Gheorghe Iancu, Virgil Ţârău, Ottmar Traşcă (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000); Octavian Roske, Florin Abraham, Dan Cătănuş, *Colectivizarea agriculturii în România: cadrul legislativ: 1949-1962* [The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Romania: The Legislative Framework], 1949-1962 (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2007); Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege. The Collecivisation of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[3] Alina Mugiu-Pippidi, Gérard Althabe, *Secera şi buldozerul: Scorniceşti şi Nucşoara. Mecanisme de aservire a ţăranului român* [Sickle and Bulldozer – Scorniceşti and Nucşoara: Mechanisms of Romanian Peasant Servitude] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2002); Katherine Verdery: *Socialismul. Ce a fost şi ce urmează* [What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2003).

[4] David Mitrany, *The Land & the Peasant in Romania: the War and the Agrarian Reform: (1917-21)* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); Andreas Saurer, *Moderniesierung und Tradition: Das Rumänische Dorf, 1918-1989* (Sankt Augustin: Gardez! Verlag, 2003); Costin Murgescu, *Reforma agrară din 1945* [The Agrarian Reform of 1945] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S. România, 1956); Dumitru Şandru: *Reforma agrară din 1921 în România* [The Agrarian Reform of 1921 in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S. România, 1975) and Dumitru Şandru, *Reforma agrară din 1945 în România* [The Agrarian Reform of 1945 in Romania] (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2000).

the modernisation of Romanian society on political,[5] social[6] and economic[7] levels. Particularly important for understanding the transformation of rural areas during the interwar period is the literature of the era, represented by Dimitrie Gusti's school of sociology, which has carried out numerous field studies and tried to extend the results of individual cases across all of Romania.[8] Nevertheless, the rural area during the interwar period has been studied rather in terms of social and economic aspects, than in the political perspective of the peasants' relationship with the state, which is a paradox given that the transformation of rural areas during the interwar period was due to policies implemented by the State.

Methodology

The object of this study is the mayors of the interwar period and their role in implementing state policies in villages. The analysis will focus on the legal status of mayors in the interwar period, which provided the general framework for their actions and defined their relationships with the Romanian state and the communities they represented. The relationships between mayors and the various political parties of the time depended on this legal framework, which also defined the procedures through which a person occupied the position of mayor. This subject is related to an article published a few years ago, analysing the structures of various lists of candidates proposed by different political parties in Brăila parliamentary elections in 1919, 1920 and 1922.[9] The results of that research showed

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[5] Henry Roberts, *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Yale, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951); *Elite Parlamentare şi dinamică electorală în România, 1919-1937* [Parliamentary Elite and Electoral Dynamics in Romania, 1919 - 1937], ed. Florin Müller (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 2009).

[6] Daniel Chirot, *Schimbarea socială într-o societate periferică: formarea unei colonii balcanice* [Social Change in a Peripheral Society: The Formation of a Balkan Colony] (Bucharest: Corint, 2002) [1976], translation by Victor Rizescu.

[7] Bogdan Murgescu, "The Economic Performance of Interwar Romania: Golden Age Myth and Statistical Evidence," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur für Südosteuropas* 6 (2004), 43-64; Bogdan Murgescu, *România şi Europa: acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)* [Romania and Europe: The Accumulation of Economic Disparities (1500-2010)] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010).

[8] Anton Golopenţia, D. C. Georgescu, *60 de sate româneşti cercetate de echipele studenţeşti în vara 1938: anchetă sociologică* [60 Romanian Villages Studied by Student Teams in the summer of 1938: Sociological Investigation] (Bucharest: Romanian Institute for Social Sciences, 1941-1942).

[9] Cornel Micu, "Centru şi periferie în procesele electorale Româneşti. Studiu de caz: Judeţul Brăila," [Center and Periphery in the Romanian Electoral Processes.

that, after the political parties proposed candidates from rural areas, stressing their peasant origin in 1919 and 1920, they abandoned such a strategy and proposed almost exclusively candidates from urban areas in 1922. The present study, aimed at analysing mayors' status as local politicians in the interwar period, is intended to complement the previous one, attempting to determine why the interwar political parties were relatively uninterested in rural areas.

The approach used in this research consisted of a case study in a commune in Brăila County and the correlation of its results with the general situation in Romania, mirrored by the sources of the Central Archives in Bucharest, the published legislative texts and the existing literature regarding Romanian rural areas during the interwar period. The term "commune" is used throughout the text in order to define the basic administrative division in Romania, consisting of several villages under the administration of a mayoralty located in the communal centre (in this case Bordei Verde). In view of the case study, the Bordei Verde commune in the county of Brăila has been chosen because it is a representative example, in our point of view, for the situation of the communes in the regions administered by the Romanian state before the First World War, namely the "Old Kingdom".

The choice of a commune and not a village as a case study raises a number of methodological problems, because the number of villages in the Bordei Verde commune varied during the interwar period according to the different administrative reorganisations of the time. Generally, the commune consisted of the villages Bordei Verde, Constantin Gabrielescu, Filiu and Lişcoteanca, although for short periods of time some of these villages formed separate communes (Constantin Gabrielescu in 1919, Lişcoteanca in 1945). As the commune is the simplest administrative structure in Romania, with its mayor's office and archive, selecting a specific village for the case study was not possible.

Sources used in this study consist of documents from the local archives of the Bordei Verde Mayor's Office, documents from the central archives of the Ministry of Agriculture in Bucharest and the legislation governing the organisation of the communes during the interwar period. With regard to the local archives, research took place in 2005-2007, when the author was participating in two research projects regarding Romanian rural areas: "Land Law, Cadastre and Land Registers in Eastern Europe. 1918 – 1945

Case Study: County of Brăila] in *Elite Parlamentare şi dinamică electorală în România, 1919-1937*, 33-78.

– 1989 Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia in Comparison"[10] organised by the University of Leipzig and doctoral research at the graduate school at the University of Jena on the topic of the transformation of Romanian rural areas between 1917 and 2007.[11]

Theoretical framework

Some aspects related to Southeastern Europe in the pre-Communist period, appearing frequently in the literature, are relevant for the theoretical framework of this study. The first of these relates to the subsistence agriculture practiced by peasants during the interwar period. In this regard, there is a rich literature that underlines the reluctance of interwar households to produce for the market and the tendency to consume most of the production within the family.[12] Subsistence agriculture is generally associated with poverty in rural areas and lack of modernisation of agricultural practices. While we do not deny the correlation between subsistence agriculture and the lack of modernisation specific to Romanian agriculture, we consider that the relationship between them is far from clear. Subsistence farming involves a series of practices such as avoiding the use of paid labour (daily labourers) and using family members to carry out agricultural work, avoiding the extension of property to an extent greater than that permitted by the number of family members and their capacity of work, distribution of land within the family through the marriage of children, and growing plants that can be consumed directly in the household, thus avoiding industrial crops, which are well suited to commercialisation.

[10] For the final results of this study see: Cornel Micu: "Property and Agricultural Policy in Twentieth-Century Romania: Intentions, Technical Means and Social Realities," in *Property in East Central Europe. Notions, Institutions and Practice of Landownership in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Siegrist Hannes, Müller Dietmar, (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 223-245.

[11] See Cornel Micu, *From Peasants to Farmers? Agrarian Reforms and Modernisation in Twentieth Century Romania. A Case Study: Bordei Verde Commune in Brăila County* (Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Vienna: Peter Lang, 2012).

[12] Armin Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail". O contribuţie la problema fascismului internaţional* [The "Archangel Michael" Legion. A Contribution to the Problem of International Fascism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 144; Roberts, *Rumania*, 60-61; Virgil Madgearu, *Agrarianism, capitalism, imperialism: contribuţii la studiul evoluţiei sociale Româneşti* [Agrarianism, Capitalism, Imperialism: Contributions to the Study of Romanian Social Evolution] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1999), 82-88.

On the other hand, in terms of the interwar rural environment, the prevalence of subsistence farming is the direct result of the general policy of the Romanian state, especially in regards to the taxation system.[13] In this respect, some authors have noted a tendency of states in Southeastern Europe to propose interventionist policies in the name of modernising the societies in the areas they govern.[14] Such interventionist projects, whose purpose was to improve the human condition, are associated with modernity and were implemented in various countries, including the classic Western democracies. According to the anthropologist James C. Scott, the most tragic social engineering projects organised by the state are the result of a combination of four elements, the last two of which especially contribute to radicalisation: administrative ordering of nature and society; an ultra-modernist ideology, which proposes a social order based on scientific understanding of natural laws; an authoritarian state; and a passive society, with little capacity to oppose these projects.[15]

All of these elements can be identified in the states of Southeastern Europe, including interwar Romania. The first two came with the adoption of the Western model of development in the mid-Nineteenth Century, while the last two are specific to the historical context that led to the formation of the modern states in the Balkans. In this regard, Southeastern Europe is an extreme example due to the late formation of modern states in the area amid the struggle for emancipation from Ottoman suzerainty. The prolonged struggle for independence led states in the region to consider, unlike the Western model which they often made reference to, that the process of "nation-building" is a short-term priority and a vital prerequisite for modernisation.[16] The purpose of the new states was precisely to eliminate local differences, in the name of a national logic which aimed at the construction of imagined communities after the Western model. With regard to Romania, significant from this point of

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[13] Mitrany, *The Land & the Peasant in Romania*, 434; Murgescu, *România şi Europa*, 235-237.

[14] Wolfgang Höpken, "Zwischen Bürokratie und Bürgertum: 'Bürgerliche Berufe' in Südosteuropa," in *Eliten in Südosteuropa: Rolle, Kontinuitäten, Brüche in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, eds. Wolfgang Höpken, Holm Sundhausen (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1998); Klaus-Detlev Grothausen, "Modernisierung und Nationsbildung: Modelltheoretische Überlegungen und ihre Anwendung auf Serbien und die Türkei," *Südost-Forderungen* 43 (1984), 135-180;

[15] James C. Scott, *În numele statului. Modele eşuate de îmbunătăţire a condiţiei umane* [In the Name of the State. Failed Models to Improve Human Condition] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2007), 20-22.

[16] Grothausen, "Modernisierung und Nationsbildung," 179-180.

view is the vehement rejection by Old Kingdom politicians of any proposals on the autonomy of Transylvania after the 1918 union and the thoroughly implemented policy of administrative unification and elimination of regional differences during the 1920s.

From this point of view, both the land and electoral reforms in the '20s could be interpreted as an attempt by the Romanian state to emancipate the peasants from the domination of traditional elites, represented by noble landowners. Through them, the regional authority of traditional elites was replaced by the centralised nation-state, which proposed ambitious policies of modernisation in the name of progress and national interest.

Finally, a last aspect remains relatively unapproached in the literature, namely the actual capacity of the interwar Romanian State to implement its ambitious projects of transformation in rural areas. On this subject, there are few studies on the Romanian administration and its efficiency between the two world wars. Generally, it is accepted that interwar parties were not well-prepared to mobilise the agrarian population, which explains the success of fascists in rural areas[17] and that the communist regime in the 1950s had problems implementing collectivisation due to shortages of staff in rural areas.[18] What is particularly relevant in this regard is the subsistence nature of agriculture practiced by small households. As they did not engage in trade with other social categories, their owners manifested little interest in the world outside the village, which is one possible explanation for the difficulties encountered by the interwar parties in their attempts to mobilise the peasants around national political platforms.

The theoretical framework raises some questions to which the case study can provide answers. The first concerns the mayors' relationship with the state, given that the state in the interwar period manifested a preference for centralising policies that provided little autonomy to local communities. Thus, it is important to determine to what extent the communal mayors in the interwar period had the ability to represent rural communities in relation to other state institutions. The second relates to how the turning points from 1919/1921 and 1945 are reflected in the Bordei Verde commune. Is there a discontinuity of local elites, which would imply that national policies have had an impact locally, or is there continuity? Finally, a third aspect of interest is related to the economic

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[17] Cristian Preda, *Introducere în ştiinţa politică* [Introduction to Political Science] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2000), 91; Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaţionalismului* [Iron Guard History 1919-1941. The Mysticism of Ultranationalism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995), 106, 134-137; Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 183.

[18] Kligman, Verdery, *Peasants under Siege*, 150-152.

status of the mayors in a rural space dominated by subsistence agriculture. Are mayors the local economic elite, which runs for those functions in order to protect both their own interests and the collective interests of the community they belong to, or are they professional politicians or bureaucrats who use their position of power in order to gain economic advantages?

The mayor's function in the interwar Romanian political system

Modern Romanian jurisprudence defines the leaders of villages for the first time in the Organic Regulations, a constitutional organic law enforced by the Russian administration in Wallachia and Moldova in 1834-1835. The law refers to "pârcălab" (Wallachia) or "vornicel" (Moldova), with responsibilities such as keeping order and collecting taxes in the villages. They are elected by the villagers, with the approval of the county's ruler ("ocârmuitor") and the owner of the estate on which the village is located. Besides the village leaders, the legal texts mention an assembly of six elected villagers who, together with the priest and the owner of the estate, handle the finances of the village.[19] The village leader and rural assembly are in fact the predecessors of the two defining institutions of the interwar Romanian commune: the mayor and communal council. Important for the issue of regional domination of traditional elites is the way in which the two institutions are established: with the approval of both the county's ruler, appointed by the central administration, and the owner of the estate on which the village is situated. This dual approval procedure denotes the subordination of local institutions to both regional nobility and representatives of the central power.

The modern function of the mayor ("primar") is rooted in the law of communal organisation published in March 1864.[20] According to it, rural communes are defined as administrative divisions composed of one or more villages with at least one hundred families or 500 inhabitants (art. 4).

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[19] I. C. Filliti, I. V. Gruia, "Administrația locală a României," [The Local Administration of Romania] in *Enciclopedia Romaniei* [Romanian Encyclopedia], vol. I, eds. Dumitru Gusti, Constantin Orghidan, Mircea Vulcănescu, Virgiliu Leonte (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1938-1943), 305-306.

[20] "Lege pentru comunele urbane și rurale," [Law for the Urban and Rural Communes] in *Colecțiune de legiuirile României vechi și noi, cate s-au promulgat până la finele anului 1870* [Collections of Old and New Romanian Laws, as many as were promulgated by the end of 1870], ed. Ioan M. Bujoreanu (Bucharest: 1973), 877-887.

The legislative text mentions two administrative bodies of the commune: a Communal Council and a Mayor with responsibilities in the administration of the commune's current affairs (art. 18). The electorate of a commune consists of all male inhabitants able to pay a minimum tax contribution of 48 lei per year, plus a number of categories of "de jure" voters exempted from the annual taxes, such as school teachers, professors, priests, degree holders, etc. Communal elections take place every two years. The mayor, defined as "magistrate", is elected by the commune's electorate and his appointment is sanctioned by the representative of the central power at the county level, namely the prefect (art. 83).

The mayor's legal position is ambiguous: he represents the interests of the inhabitants of a commune but is also the "delegate of the central government", under the authority of the central administration (art. 88). This means that the mayor may be suspended by the prefect and revoked by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in communes with a population of less than 3,000 inhabitants (art. 95). The mayor's subordination to the prefect continues a trend set by the Organic Regulations, namely the importance of central authority at the local level, which was a staple of Romanian administrative centralism. It should be noted that the 1864 law implicitly revokes the great landowners' right to sanction the election of mayors, which is a significant step forward for the modern State's policy of reducing their regional authority.

Generally, pre-war Romanian legislation preserves the status of the mayor as something between a representative chosen by the commune's population (although after 1900 the tendency is to leave this choice in the hands of the Communal Council) and a delegate of the central government. In this respect, it is important to note that the last communal organisation law promulgated before the interwar period stipulates that local ordinances published by the mayor's office become binding only after their approval by the prefect (Article 80).[21] Defining the mayor rather as an agent of government than as a representative of the local community is reflected in the *Status of Public Servants* published in 1923. Its legal annotations define mayors as "public servants, in terms of criminal law": "The mayor, being charged by law with different services of municipal administration and, in addition, as a delegate of the central government, having other tasks of general interest, belonging therefore to a public service, both he and the deputy mayor, whose function has the same

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[21] "Lege pentru organizarea comunelor rurale," [Law for the urban and rural communes] *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Gazette] (hereafter MO) 14/1, May 1904, 985-1009.

character, are considered, in terms of criminal law, as communal public servants."[22]

During the interwar period, mayors' activity is regulated through three administrative laws published in 1925,[23] 1929[24] and 1936.[25] The one in 1929, published during the National Peasant administration, constitutes a deviation from the classical Romanian jurisprudence in regard to the role of local government, because it seeks to redefine the legal status of the mayor as rather a representative of the commune that elected him than of the State. Therefore the law was amply criticized at the time, and its provisions were fully cancelled on 15 July 1931.[26]

As a matter of fact, the law published in 1929 is representative of the interwar debate regarding the unification of Transylvania with Romania in 1918. Although desired by both sides, the union raised a number of concerns regarding the definition and role of the State. In the Old Kingdom, state centralism was closely linked to the idea of national unity and a strong state, whose goal was ultimately to modernise society. In contrast, the regional differences and some degree of local autonomy were considered desirable in Transylvania due to the Austro-Hungarian tradition which did not consider administrative centralisation as a precondition for the development of modernisation. The National Peasants' Party was formed in 1926 through the merging of the Peasants' Party, an outsider party that emerged in the Old Kingdom after the First World War, and the National Party in Transylvania, the traditional political group which represented the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Therefore its perspective on administration was a novelty in interwar Romania, and this is noticeable in the status of mayors according to the law published in 1929, which differs from the legislative texts of 1925 and 1936 in two key

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[22] *Statutul funcţionarilor publici (lege şi regulament) din 19 iulie 1923: cu toate legile modificatoare (1923-1937), adnotat cu jurisprudenţă* [Status of civil servants (law and regulation) of 19 July 1923 with all modifying laws (1923-1937), annotated with case law], ed. George Alexianu (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei "Universala" Alcalay & Co., *s.a.*), 12.

[23] "Lege pentru unificarea administrative," [Law for Administrative Unification] MO, 14 June 1925, 6850-6893.

[24] "Lege pentru organizarea administraţiei locale," [Law for the Organisation of Local Administration] MO, 3 August 1929, 6186-6254.

[25] "Legea administrative," [Administrative Law] MO, 27 March 1936, 2612-2655.

[26] "Lege pentru modificarea unor dispoziţiuni din Legea pentru Organizarea Administraţiei Locale şi din Legea Organizării Administraţiunii Municipiului Bucureşti," [Law on the modification of some stipulations from the Law on the Organisation of Public Administration and the Law of Administrative Organisation of Bucharest] MO, 15 July 1931, 6035-6037.

issues: the relationship between mayor and prefect and the composition of the Communal Council that elected the mayor.

As a constant of the interwar legislation, the mayor was elected by the Communal Council, formed in a significant proportion (up to two-fifths in 1925, at least one quarter in 1936) of "de jure", unelected, members. In this respect, the law of 1929 is different in two aspects: the Communal Councils no longer include unelected members and, in the particular case of mayors from communes consisting of a single village,[27] the mayor is elected directly by the electorate of the commune.

For most of the interwar period, "de jure" Communal Council members are an important part of the Council, being generally representatives of local bureaucracy. According to the law from 1925, the Communal Council in rural areas consisted of nine elected members, plus a number of "de jure" members: the oldest teacher and the priest, representatives of ministries such as the physician of the commune (where he existed) and a representative of the Chamber of Agriculture, appointed by decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs (art. 19). The text of 1936 mentions a Council of ten elected members with the following "de jure" members, appointed by the prefect: the teacher, the priest or representatives of the two largest religions, the physician with the highest function, the agronomist or local agronomic agent, the forester of the commune and the donors of public buildings such as schools, hospitals or churches (art. 29). In the case of a medium-sized commune, without physicians and donors of public buildings, the share of "de jure" councillors (priests, teachers, agronomic agent and/or forester) is important: at least 3 in addition to the 10 elected, i.e. slightly less than 25%.

The composition of Communal Councils is particularly relevant for the status of mayors during the interwar period, since one of their main responsibilities was to elect the mayors. The final result of the election was decided by absolute majority (1925) or at least 2/3 of the votes (1936), which only increased the importance of "de jure" councillors. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of the "donors" mentioned in the law of 1936, the "de jure" council members are state employees, hence members of the local bureaucracy. In this regard, interwar Romanian jurisprudence is clear: both priests and teachers are state officials,[28] which means that the state, represented by the local bureaucracy, played an important role in the election of mayors at the local level.

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[27] In the actual situation of Law no. 1929, rural communes are defined as having a minimum number of 10,000 inhabitants, which means that the number of rural communes consisting of only one village was low.

[28] *Statutul funcţionarilor publici*, 6.

The second relevant element of interwar legislation is the mayor's subordination to the prefect, as representative of central authority in the territory. This is mentioned in the text of 1925 (art. 79, according to which the prefect had the capacity to suspend mayors) and 1936 (art. 86, according to which the prefect could fine mayors or assistant mayors in the countryside; art. 158, according to which the prefect was the superior authority for rural communes; art. 61, paragraph q, according to which the prefect had the right to cancel the mayor's orders which they considered contrary to public order; art. 164, according to which mayors could be suspended by the prefect; art. 167, paragraphs e and g, according to which Communal Councils could be dissolved at the initiative of the prefect when taking decisions of a political nature or when compromising state security or national interests). The law published by the National Peasants' Party administration in 1929 is a noticeable departure from the traditional political perspective in the Old Kingdom, in the sense that dismissal of mayors and dissolution of Communal Councils can take place only if there is a court order against them.

Differences between the 1925 and 1936 laws, on the one hand, and that of 1929, on the other hand, are representative for two distinct perceptions of the relationship between individuals and the state, and thereby the position of mayors in the political system. In the first case, according to the line defined in the theoretical section of this article, the mayors are representatives of state in the territory, a state that, through local officials, aims at transforming the society it governs. In the second case, the mayors are representatives of communities that are part of that state, serving as representatives of them in relation to the central authority.

The significant percentage of unelected members in the Communal Council is representative for the interwar state's attempt to co-opt the rural elite and use it in order to strengthen its position in the villages. On the other hand, "de jure", unelected, members are in most cases members of the local administration of the village, such as teachers, priests or agronomic agents. They represent an elite paid by the state, whose income depends on their position in bureaucratic systems controlled by the state. Therefore, in order to become mayor, one was largely dependent on the support of the local bureaucracy, and the mayors were legally assimilated as civil servants and subordinates of the prefects.

The legal status of mayors can be an explanation for the lack of mobilisation of the rural population throughout the interwar period, as the stakes of the local elections were rather low, given that voters' influence on the process of the election of a mayor was limited. Paradoxically, in these circumstances it is not clear why anyone would want to be a

candidate for a temporary bureaucratic position, giving him minimal real political power. A possible explanation for this paradox comes from the subsistence nature of agriculture practiced in the interwar period, which made remunerated functions particularly attractive in rural areas.

The studies conducted by the Romanian School of Sociology in the interwar period, which referred to numerous villages in Romania, are relevant in this regard. The results of field research show that, in the general income received by countryside households, the share of income earned by selling agricultural products reached a maximum value of 31.2% in Bucovina, with an average of 20.4% throughout the country and 23.4% in Wallachia-Moldova, the region where Bordei Verde is located.[29] The majority of agricultural production was consumed in households or used for sowing the harvest for the next year.

An interesting aspect underlined by the interwar sociological studies is the fact that the revenue obtained from agriculture accounted for no more than one third of the total income of farms, while non-agricultural income, or so-called "auxiliary revenue", represented the rest, hence an important percentage.[30] A closer look at the components of auxiliary revenues of interwar countryside households (see table I) shows that wages and professions are two of their main sources of income. Revenues from auxiliary businesses (mills, sawmills, etc.) were an important component of the indirect income for households larger than 20 hectares, which represented rather the exception than the norm in interwar Romania.

The table shows that the most appropriate strategy to gain an income above average during the interwar period was not farming, but holding some paid positions, such as that of mayor, and practicing certain professions. The importance of jobs and salaries as a source of income for households raises questions about the definition of the two major categories of rural elite (employees and professionals) and the relationship between them. The terms themselves are difficult to define because their meanings at the time were different from today. The term "employee" was often synonymous with state employee, while workers in the private sector rather belonged to the category of manual workers or day labourers. Yet the category of "employees" includes various occupational groups which in the interwar period were defined as "office workers" and part of the

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[29] P. Stănculescu, C. Ştefănescu, "Situaţia economică prezentă," [Current Economic Situation] in *60 sate româneşti cercetate de echipele studenţeşti în vara 1938* [60 Romanian Villages studied by the Student Teams in the Summer of 1938], vol. II, eds. Anton Golopenţia, Dr. D.C. Georgescu (Bucureşti: National Institute of Social Sciences of Romania, 1941), 222.

[30] Stănculescu, Ştefănescu, "Situaţia economică prezentă," 252.

Table I. Auxiliary income of households studied through field surveys in the 30s[31]

Sources of income	0.1-3 ha	3.1-5.0 ha	5.1-10 ha	10.1-20 ha	20.1-40.0 ha	Average share in the total income
Wages	41%	12%	20%	2.5%	8%	16.7%
Manual labour	19%	13%	16%	0.8%	0.04%	9.76%
Professions	9%	20%	11%	19%	6%	13%
Transport	7%	21%	10%	6%	2%	9.2%
Communal wealth	3%	9%	7%	5%	1%	5%
Auxiliary enterprises	2%	3%	1.5%	2%	56%	12.9%
Animal labour	2%	0.6%	1%	3%	0.1%	1.34%

state administration: mayors, priests, teachers and physicians. The concept that I would use to describe these occupations is "position elite", in the sense that it owes its elite status to the role it plays in the functioning of the state bureaucracy.[32]

In terms of professions, documents issued by the Bordei Verde Mayor's Office in 1926 defined innkeepers as "professionals", although nowadays one would consider them rather local entrepreneurs.[33] Moreover, their number is rather low. In this respect, a list of residents with the right to vote in 1935 contains references to the professional structure of the population in the commune. From a total of 324 people, 311 are ploughmen, two pensioners, two innkeepers, two blacksmiths, three office workers, a teacher, a priest and two students. To these one

[31] Source: after Stănculescu, Ştefănescu, "Situaţia economică prezentă," 265-266.
[32] Günter Endruweit, *Elite und Entwicklung: Theorie und Empirie zum Einfluß von Eliten auf Entwicklungsprozesse* (Frankfurt am Main, Ben, New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 46-47.
[33] Brăila County Office of the National Archives (hereafter called DJAN Brăila), Bordei Verde Mayor's Office (hereafter called PBV), File 5/1926, 7.

may add the mayor who, for unclear reasons, is not mentioned among voting residents, but signs the list.[34]

In terms of numbers, most rural elite in interwar Romania were represented by the position elites, employed by the state, and so-called "professionals", represented by traders or local craftsmen. Due to the subsistence nature of agriculture, the lack of capital represented a serious obstacle to the development of professionals. This is reflected in Table I by the fact that revenues from auxiliary businesses are important only for large households, which worked between 20 and 40 hectares and could afford the initial large investment.

Unfortunately, data collected at the macro-social level gives little information about the relationship between the two types of dominant elites. The only clue that the table above gives is that position elites generally had higher incomes than economic elites. On the other hand, it could be argued that because of their strict subordination to the central administrative structures, the first had a more precarious position and enjoyed less freedom than the latter. Therefore, the case study comes with a number of additional data that will provide more insights regarding the relationship between the two categories of elite.

Mayors and local elites in the Bordei Verde commune

The interwar archives of the Bordei Verde commune offer a rich collection of information about the activity of mayors, but data about the people who occupied this position is not as vast and we found even less about the strategies they used in order to obtain it. The striking aspect about the interwar mayors in Bordei Verde is the high number of persons who either occupied this position or signed the documents issued by the mayor's office as substitutes of the mayor. Yet, there are no lists of individuals who have held this position and no minutes of the Communal Council regarding the communal elections, making it very difficult to establish a chronology, at least approximate, of the mayors in Bordei Verde. The strategy used in this investigation was to identify the signatures on the documents issued by the mayor's office and put together a table with the people who occupied this position at various dates (table II). One relevant aspect of the mayors' activity during the interwar period is the title which they used in order to sign the documents: mayors or presidents of the Interim Committee of the commune. This is particularly important because, according to interwar legislation, if the mayor's

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[34] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1935, 50-53.

position was vacant, most often following his revocation by the prefect, an Interim Commission was established, headed by a president who replaced the mayor until new elections. Without claiming that the list is exhaustive, the table can provide some general information on interwar mayors in the Bordei Verde commune.

Table II. List of mayors identified in Bordei Verde in the interwar period[35]

Name	Dates on which names were mentioned	Position held (if available)
Crețu, Gheorghe	Nov. 1940	Mayor
Domițian, N.	1921	President (of the Interim Committee)
Gavrilă, Antohe	Nov. 1929	President
Fodulu, M.	June1922, February 1923	President
Lipan, Costea	Dec. 1926, June 1927, January 1928	Mayor
Lancea, Gheorghe	July 1937, February 1938, March1938	President in 1937, mayor in 1938
Manta, (*unreadable*)	1947	Mayor
Manta, Ionel	January 1946	Mayor
Manta, Milea	1919	Mayor
Motoc, Mihalache	May 1931, February 1932, May 1934, 1935, February-August 1936, April-June 1937, 1944, February 1945	President in May 1931, May 1934, April-June 1937, Mayor in February 1932, 1935, 1944 and February 1945

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[35] Source: table based on the documents of the Bordei Verde Mayor's Office file, Brăila Archives.

Motoc, I. S.	February 1923, October 1923	President
Nicorescu, Mircea	August 1939	Mayor
Năstăsescu, Gheorghe	1926, August, Sept., Oct., 1926	Mayor in 1926 and August 1926, President in Sept. and Oct. 1926
Petre, Boboc	March 1934	President
Robitu, Neagu	Sept. 1928	No title used
Răileanu, Alexandru	1932, Oct. 1942, April 1944	President in 1932, Mayor in 1942,1944
Vioreanu, Ștate	January 1938	President

This table is notable for two aspects of mayoral activity during the interwar period. The first of these is the prominence of two families, Motoc and Manta, which "provided" the most mayors between the two world wars. Members of both families have been identified as mayors in the pre-war period and occupy this position after the Second World War as well (Motoc in February 1945, Manta in January 1946 and in 1947) (see below), which demonstrates the tendency of the rural position elite to collaborate with the state, including the communist one, and their long-term continuity. A second relevant aspect is the large number of presidents of the Interim Committee who functioned during the period in question (12 out of 25 entries). This demonstrates that the Prefecture made full use of its right to dismiss mayors, who were replaced by persons approved by the central government. An explanation of this trend would refer to the interwar practice through which the King appointed a new administration before the parliamentary elections, an administration which would organise the elections in its favour by replacing mayors in order to gain control of the voting process in the villages.[36] On the other hand, Table II shows that the practice of replacing mayors did not depend solely on the elections: Gavrilă Antohe served as President of the Interim Committee in October 1929, although the last elections had taken place in December 1928 and the next ones would be held in 1931. The same is true for M.

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[36] Matei Dogan, *Sociologie politică. Opere alese* [Political Sociology. Selected Works] (Bucharest: Alternative, 1999), 154, Sorin Radu has broadly approached this issue in *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)* [The Electorate in Romania during Parliamentary Democracy (1919-1937)] (Iași: Institutul European, 2004).

Fodulu, President of the Interim Commission in February 1923, during the liberal government of 1922-1926.

    From this point of view, mayors appear as public servants replaced at the prefect's discretion, with a very low capacity to represent the commune's interests toward the central government. This may explain the scarcity of local sources regarding the political affiliation of mayors, despite the fact that the mayor's office was the only institution that issued official documents and preserved archives during the interwar period. The few electoral lists that we were able to identify do not contain data about the political affiliation of candidates. For example, the list of 1933 included two groups of candidates, under the headings "the first list" and "the second list", but nothing about the political parties they represented.[37] The only information about the political affiliation of local elites appears in a list of local kulaks drawn up by the Communist Party in 1950[38] (table III).

Table III. List of kulaks (wealthy peasants) in the parish of Bordei Verde

	Name	*Land owned (ha)*	*Political affiliation*		*Observations*
			Past	*Current*	
1	Stan G. Muşat	11.5	National Liberal	-	
2	Dumitru Davidescu	21.05	National Liberal	National Liberal	Agronomical Agent
3	Ioniţă Mânică	4.10	Peasants' party	Ex Workers' Party (communist)	
4	Ion Dumitriu	-			
5	Alexandru Răileanu	21.4	Peasants' party	Peasants' party	Former mayor
6	Ion S. Motoc	17	National Liberal	National Liberal	Former mayor

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[37] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1934, 172.
[38] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 24/1950, 119.

7	Gheorghe Lancea	21.75	National Liberal	National Liberal	Former mayor
8	Ion D. Gârbă	17.30	National Liberal	National Liberal	
9	Milea Manta	17.05	Averescu Movement	Peasants' Party	Former mayor
10	Ioniţă Boboc	24.60	-	-	
11	Mircea Nicorescu	27.75	National Liberal	National Liberal	Mill owner
12	Neculae Fecioru	7.5	-	-	
13	Sandu Chiţoiu	19	Legionary Movement	Peasants' party	
14	Costică Borţan	14.75	-	-	
15	Gheorghe Măcreanu	8	-	-	
16	Victor Leu	14.4	-	-	
17	Vasile Vârnav	11.3	Legionary Movement	Ex Worker's Party (communist)	School Principal
18	Grigore Băjan	20	Peasant's party	Ex Worker's Party (communist)	
19	Ionel Manta	42	Legionary Movement	Ex Ploughmen's Front	Lawyer in Brăila

Sources from local archives also contain mentions of professionals from the Bordei Verde commune, a category that included blacksmiths, innkeepers and grocers. Their number is very low, as shown by an electoral list from 1935 comprising occupations of the inhabitants in the commune.[39] Of the 324 names listed, 311 are identified as ploughmen.

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[39] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1935, 50-53.

Among the rest, one can find four professionals, namely two tavern owners and two blacksmiths. Of the two categories of professionals, the tavern owners are most often mentioned in local sources. Their importance is explained through the subsistence agriculture practiced in the area: interwar peasants did not have enough income to buy products on the market and produced much of their own household consumption needs. Nevertheless, the tavern appears as a place of socialisation for the male population, making it one of the most profitable commercial enterprises in the villages. Regarding the tavern owners, I used the same strategy as with mayors, and identified their names and the date on which they were mentioned in local sources (Table IV).

Table IV. Table of tavern owners identified in the Bordei Verde commune during the interwar period[40]

Name	Year of reference	Observations
Chițoiu, Sandu	1932	Grocery owner
Danciu, Nicolae	1928	
Gâlă, Niță	1926, 1930, 1932	Listed as a grocer in 1932
Manta, Ion I.	1930, 1932, 1934,	
Manta, Milea I.	1926, 1930, 1932,	
Motoc,	1930, 1932, 1934	
Tarachiu,	1935	

This table is significant for the connection between tavern owners and mayors as representatives of economic and position elites. Out of the seven names of tavern owners identified, three belong to the two families from which most mayors in the interwar period came, which demonstrates a close personal relationship between the two categories of elites. On the other hand, sources from local archives contain information about the relationship between the two. Since, between the First and Second World Wars, alcohol trade was considered a monopoly of the state, the right to open taverns was conditioned by the submission of a certificate of good conduct issued by the mayor.[41] Therefore, the case study confirms the hypothesis defined by the macrosocial studies, according to which, ultimately, the path to economic achievement was the bureaucratic one,

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[40] Source: table was compiled based on the documents of the Bordei Verde Mayor's Office file, Brăila Archives.
[41] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1926, 7.

since to become tavern owner one needed the agreement of the mayor. The importance of the bureaucratic positions is shown in the table of kulaks presented above, which shows the tendency of some members of the local bureaucratic and political elite to join the Communist Party or the Ploughmen Front during the 50s. The extent to which this trend was only local or a generalized strategy of rural elites in Romania remains unclear. Yet, the fact that during the 50s, the Communist Party conducted a comprehensive purge of its ranks, which ended with the elimination of 44 percent of its members[42], and during the same period individuals identified as kulaks were forbidden to join the collective farms, shows that the traditional position elites were rather ready to cooperate with the new political system in the attempt to preserve their bureaucratic positions.

The need for a certificate issued by the mayor's office in order to open a commercial enterprise in the village is representative of the Romanian interwar state policy of controlling the rural area in the name of modernisation. As shown in the theoretical section of this study, this characteristic of interwar states in Southeastern Europe appears frequently in the literature. Nevertheless, it is yet unclear to what extent the state developed local bureaucratic structures to implement such policies, and the local sources in Bordei Verde could provide some hints in this regard.

Another relevant aspect is that major changes in state policy toward the rural area are not accompanied by changes in the structure of local elites, which shows a tendency toward continuity, until the collectivisation of agriculture by the communist regime. Mayors of the two aforementioned families signed documents issued by the Bordei Verde Mayor's Office in 1913 (Manta)[43] and 1899 (Motoc),[44] which demonstrates that the changes at the central level did not have the expected impact in the village of Bordei Verde. The same continuity occurs after 1944, when Mihalache Motoc holds the position of mayor in 1945 and Ionel Manta in 1947 (see Table II). The continuity of the pre-war elites throughout the interwar period and even after the Second World War demonstrates the state's inability to implement the policies developed at the central level in the villages, which helps to explain the difficulties faced by the communist regime during the collectivisation of agriculture.

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[42] Stelian Tănase, *Elite si societate, guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej. 1948-1965* [Elites and Society, the Governance of Gheorghiu-Dej. 1948-1965] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 53.

[43] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1926, not numbered.

[44] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1919, f. 12. According to his signature on a birth certificate.

The inefficiency of the local administrative structures, which shows the inability of the State to control the already underdeveloped local bureaucracy, manifested itself in various ways. An illustration of this matter is the status of civil servants published in 1923 and its provisions related to the training of officials, who, in rural areas, could occupy an administrative function without presenting a certificate of completion of primary education.[45] As the communication between mayor's office and superior institutions relied on written correspondence, lack of basic education among the village level office workers made it very difficult. An example of interwar Romanian state failure to collect basic data about the countryside are seven applications for issuing birth certificates submitted to the Bordei Verde Mayor's Office in 1926.[46] The applicants needed such certificates in order to get married, hence they were adults most probably in their 20s, never officially registered as citizens of Romania. This shows that during the 1920s the State had still problems with collecting basic data such as the real number of people in a village. Yet, despite the lack of a clear image about the state of the countryside, it was attempting to implement complex policies aimed at changing it.

Exactly this incapacity of the state to act effectively at the local level gives a new dimension to the function of mayor. Given that, after the land reform in 1919/1921, the owners of estates lost much of their influence at the local level, mayors from villages acted as representatives of a state trying to impose ambitious policies from above, but lacking the ability to control the people implementing them at the local level. This gives real power to the local position elites, as agents of a state unable to oversee their activity.

A good example of State weakness is the implementation of agrarian reform in 1919/1921. Aiming at the radical transformation of the rural area, the reform represents just one element of a complex policy of modernising agriculture, consisting of internal colonisation, oversight of methods of production through introduction of plans for farming and compulsory periods of harvesting, obligations for peasants to provide different forms of compulsory labour, and control of land transactions through their approval by regional administrative structures. With regard to the Bordei Verde commune, mayors, as heads of local administration, were able to consolidate their power in the villages by using and diverting for their own interest the complex policies of transformation imposed by a state too weak to be able to implement them. In the case of both reforms,

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[45] *Statutul funcţionarilor publici*, 68.
[46] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1926, not numbered.

documents issued by the Mayor's Office include elementary calculation mistakes, which raise questions about the real fashion in which the expropriated land was distributed. The table of the total amount of land distributed in the commune in 1921 (Table V), signed by the mayor and countersigned by the regional agronomist, is illustrative in this regard. It contains calculation errors, which makes the total area of distributed land 11.5 hectares lower than the final area listed in the table. It is hard to say what happened to the extra land which had no legal owners, but the monograph of the Bordei Verde commune, drawn by the local history teacher, noted that during the 1930s, villagers were using land which was not officially registered and on which there existed no property deeds.[47]

Table V. Distributed land in the Bordei Verde commune after the agrarian reform of 1921[48]

Number of people	Distributed surface (ha)	Total (ha)
195	5	975
2	4.75	9.5
11	4.5	49.5
14	4	56
7	3.5	24.5
5	3	15
3	2.5	7.5
1	2	2
1	1.5	1.5
2	0.5	1
Total: 241		Total: 1153.00 (official data)[49] 1141.5 (recalculated)

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[47] Ion Bănică, *Monografia comunei Bordei Verde, Județul Brăila* [Monograph of Bordei Verde Commune, County of Brăila] (unpublished paper of the history teacher in Bordei Verde), 137.

[48] Source: The Central Historical National Archives of Romania (hereafter ANIC), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (hereafter MAD), Land Department in Brăila, File 173/1923-1929, 6-15. Such elementary calculation errors occur in other tables relating to the allotment of land in the studied area.

[49] Official data are the total, as mentioned in the cited source. Recalculated data have resulted after checking the mathematical operations, done by the author.

Although overall the amplitude of measurement errors is difficult to establish, local sources indicate that these were not insignificant. An example in this regard would be the difference between two successive measurements of the grazing lands in the Filiu village. After the Cadastral Directorate established its area as 280 hectares in 1925, a new measurement conducted a year later by the same institution corrected the total area to 227 hectares[50], which implied an initial measurement error of about 20 percent. This example shows once again that the state did not have a clear picture of the situation of property and persons in rural areas and the local bureaucracy, including the mayors, had massive opportunities to take advantage of this.

Sources in the central archives show that such situations were far from being peculiar to the Bordei Verde commune. Interesting in this respect is the correspondence between the lawyer representing the Romanian state at the International Court in Paris, which was established in order to solve the disputes between the Transylvanian Hungarians who had chosen Hungarian citizenship after 1918, and the Romanian state. Because the possession of land by foreigners was forbidden by Romanian interwar law, one of the main tasks of this court was to establish the value of compensations paid by the Romanian state to the individuals that lost their land by choosing Hungarian citizenship. In this case, the letters sent by the Romanian lawyer in Paris mention cases which show striking similarities to those from Bordei Verde: "While the claimant indicates 566 jugers[51] as the expropriated surface, you indicate 533, but without justifying – and not even explaining – the basis on which you have established this number. While the claimant presents a cadastral paper issued on the 2nd of January 1932, indicating a surface of 563 jugers and an income of 2,149.17 crowns, you are sending me a cadastral paper issued by the same mayor´s office and the same notary on the 18th of June 1932, with a surface of 518 jugers and an income of 1,708 crowns. Why are there these contradictions in two official documents issued by the same authority? Please explain!"[52]

Such unclear situations strengthened the power of the local position elites, whose role was precisely to clarify and sort relevant information in order to provide a coherent picture of the situation of the people and property in villages. This kind of situation is reflected by the sources in the Lişcoteanca commune where, during the 1945 agrarian reform, all members of the Communal Committee of Land Granting received plots of

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[50] ANIC, MAD, DFB, File 198/1925-1935, 2, 11.
[51] Juger (*Iugăr*): old Transylvanian unit for measuring area, equal to 0.5775 hectares
[52] ANIC, Agrarian Reform of 1921, File 31/1932, 56.

land higher than the average distributed in the commune. The best example is that of the president of the Committee and mayor of the commune, Chiriță Costin, granted four hectares of land, although the average area distributed in the commune was three hectares. Moreover, according to the local land granting table, he was one of the two persons who received land surfaces of four hectares, the second being a member of the same family: Petre Costin.[53]

On the other hand, the rural transformation policies implemented by the Romanian state in the interwar period did not consist only of distribution of land through agrarian reforms. The interwar state tried to implement solid interventionist agricultural policies, both in terms of transfer and usage of land property. An example of control over the usage of property was the introduction of compulsory farming plans for the owners who gained their land through the agrarian reform. This action required the development of administrative structures whose task was to establish the periods in which land owners were allowed to harvest, a fact that gave even more power to the local position elites. This is reflected in both the tone and content of a request, written by a villager to the mayor, in which he was asking permission to harvest his own cornfield: "Mayor, as I have no corn for food and I have sown some corn in the field, I kindly ask permission to harvest a cart of corn to grind at the mill, because I don´t have any food and my children will die of starvation".[54]

From a modernist perspective, such a policy is based on the capacity of state-employed professionals to offer expertise in agriculture, which would have had the effect of changing farming practices and increasing overall production. On the other hand, the number of experts was reduced and their quality questionable: in 1920, the position of regional agronomist was occupied by a lawyer,[55] and the first agronomist of the Chamber of Agriculture in Brăila, founded in 1928, was not employed until 1936.[56] The solution adopted was to use local position elites as a factor of transformation of agricultural practices, although their members lacked the necessary expertise in agriculture. What resulted was an increase of power for the local position elite, acting on behalf of a state with limited overseeing capacities. One illustration is the structure of the local commission which had to determine whether the corn on the villagers' lands was ripe to be harvested in Bordei Verde: the mayor, the school's principal, the priest, the chief of the gendarme post, the health worker and

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[53] DJAN Brăila, Lişcoteanca Mayor's Office, File 7/1945, 12-17.
[54] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 4/1926, not numbered.
[55] ANIC, Personal Fund Ion Mihalache, File 73, 24-25.
[56] DJAN Brăila, Agricultural Chamber Brăila, File 2/1927, 2.

the notary public.[57] All of its members were the local position elite, who, although without genuine professional expertise, were called on to decide on how land owners should use their newly obtained property.

Conclusions

The analysis of this case study supports the general theories presented in the first part of this study: the interventionist policies promoted by the interwar Romanian state to modernise rural areas, and the lack of effective political and bureaucratic structures that could efficiently implement such policies. In the specific case of mayors, they are defined as office workers directly responsible to the central authority represented by the prefect, whose task is to implement the centrally devised state policies in the villages. Paradoxically, this situation gives them real power in the commune. On the one hand, their activity is difficult to oversee by the central bureaucracy and, on the other hand, due to the tendency of the interwar state to act as the main agent of modernisation in rural areas, there is no real counterweight for position elites in the villages. The existence of families among whom both mayors and tavern owners could be identified and their continuity up to the beginning of the collectivisation process shows that mayors enjoyed an important position in the village, and the modernist policies promoted by the interwar state did not have a profound impact in the commune of Bordei Verde.

From another perspective, the administrative subordination of mayors to prefects and their role as state agents had negative effects on the integration of peasants into the interwar political system. Through the "confiscation" of the position of mayor by the central administration, peasants were underrepresented in their relation with the State, which explains the apparent political apathy shown by them during the interwar period. The lack of any information regarding the activity of the interwar political parties in the archives of the Bordei Verde commune shows a lack of interest in the rural areas, or at least in the local electoral competition among interwar politicians. However, such indifference is understandable if we consider that during the interwar period prefects regularly used their right to remove mayors from their positions. Under these circumstances, the local elections did not represent an electoral challenge for interwar parties that focused more on parliamentary or senatorial positions.

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[57] DJAN Brăila, PBV, File 5/1935, 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY
AND THE FAILURE OF POLITICAL
INTEGRATION OF THE RURAL WORLD
IN THE INTERWAR ROMANIA

OVIDIU BURUIANĂ

1. Introduction. The difficult situation of the Romanian Liberals at the end of the First World War. The image of an anachronistic "Bourgeois Party"

In 1919, Ion Gheorghe Duca, a former member of the Liberal cabinet led by Ion I. C. Brătianu, was campaigning in Bătăşani, a village from his home county Vâlcea. Confronted with political fantasies that had been previously unknown in Old Romania, such as the *saviour's myth*, embodied by General Alexandru Averescu, or the collective neurosis and frenzy of agrarianism, he was complaining in his *Memoirs* about the peasants' ingratitude towards the government efforts of the National Liberal Party: "(...) people would tell me such things, and they knew me well (…), I was the author of the expropriation decree-law (…), whose name was standing beside Brătianu's on the proclamations that had been posted at the city hall right at the moment of these strange statements"[1].

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[1] I. G. Duca, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vol IV, *Războiul* [The War], 2nd part (1917-1919), edition and index by Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 1994), 231. According to Duca, the peasants claimed that, during wartime, Averescu had come by airplane and had taken care personally of the supplies and their needs and that now he was the one who had given them land. Also for Pamfil Seicaru, the unpopularity of the National Liberal Party in villages was difficult to explain, given that the initiative of the land reform and electoral reform was due to Ionel Brătianu (Pamfil Şeicaru, *Istoria partidelor naţional, ţărănist şi naţional*

The leader of the National Liberal Party was expressing a generalized feeling among the Romanian Liberals in the immediate period after the Great War: the astonishment that they found themselves in a 'foreign'[2] country regarding the public space. Not only that the new boundaries were generating apprehensions for those who had been the main party members until that date. Besides, they had been arguing for a Unified Romania, phrase meant to suggest the political and cultural community of all ethnic Romanians. Moreover, they were expecting praises from the other institutional actors and also from ordinary citizens. Their private or official representations chimed with the placing of the National Liberal Party as the decisive factor of achieving the national unity and the transformations of the Romanian society during the last century. Masters of power in a country that had changed within the framework of Western modernity after 1850, the Liberals claimed their preeminence in terms of their national approaches and social actions. The Union of 1918 and the subsequent enactment of agrarian and electoral reforms, which they originally initiated through the manifesto of October 1913, bestowed a halo of historical infallibility upon the party and its leaders, the policies promoted by the liberals and their pace seeming to be validated by the reality. After the war, while psychologically confined to a paradigm of political superiority and legitimate expectations, they were expecting therefore the reward for what they designated as the "great sacrifices", the "payment of dues", in fact the efforts they had made in order to change the society. The Brătianu family, who had led the Liberal Party in this period, seemed timeless, endowed with intimate knowledge of the mechanisms of history and social evolution.[3]

ţărănist [The History of the National, Peasant's Party and the National-Peasant's Party], 1st and 2nd parts, 2nd edition, edition, notes, afterword by Victor Frunză (Bucharest: Editura Victor Frunză, 2000), 230).

[2] The expression of "foreign country" obviously imitates David Lowenthal's concept of the *Trecutul e o ţară străină* [The Past is a Foreign Country], translated by Eugen Radu Stan (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2002).

[3] A propagandistic text from 1923 assessed the role of the National Liberal Party: "When a party has given Independence and a Kingdom to the country, it has extended the border from Dniester to the Tisa, it gave the universal suffrage and made the peasants owners of two and a half million hectares of land, such a party is entitled to be proud of its past, and can be sure of the durability of the future" (*Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal dela 1848 şi până astăzi* [The History of the National- Liberal Party since 1848 until today] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independenţa", 1923), 224. For the mythical figure of Ion I. C. Brătianu, of the Brătianu family in general, see my book, Ovidiu Buruiană, *Liberalii. Structuri şi sociabilităţi politice liberale în România interbelică* [The Liberals. Political

The extent to which their expectations were actually justified is not one of the concerns of a historian who aims rather to understand and not to give verdicts on the former role of a person or a particular entity. An important fact for showing a certain inadequacy of the Liberal Party to Romania's immediate post-war reality is the astonishment of the Liberals themselves when they faced the new public affairs. They blamed the newcomers' "misunderstanding" of the Kingdom's politics, their primary targets being the Transylvanian Nationals and Iuliu Maniu, but also the "ingratitude" shown by some people towards the moderation manifested by the winners (particularly by Constantin Stere, but also by Alexandru Marghiloman and others), and the "betrayals" committed by some members of the party's second echelon, who went on to become members of the newly established Labour Party, the People's League or the Peasants' Party. Greater Romania obviously represented a country that was different from the Old Kingdom, in the sense that it alluded to another society. Beyond the presence of Transylvanians, people of Bukovina, Bessarabians in the community, who arrived with political cultures and experiences that were specific to Central Europe or to the Russian conditions, the emergence of the rural question at the forefront of public policy completely subverted the political sociability that had existed before 1914, and transformed the old solidarities. The peasant "had invaded" the community, at least at the level of the public discourse of those times, a tradition that could have been previously observed particularly from a cultural point of view, but which was exacerbated after the war for obvious political reasons.

The challenging of the policies and practices of the Liberal government, but also of liberalism as an ideology of modernity in general, was now made explicitly on the behalf of the rural world. The Romanian peasant had become an effigy of the nation, the aim of the society's renewal. The legend "manufactured" by the opponents of the Liberals was that of a political and economic domination exerted by one group through the State. The Liberal Party was presented as the political structure of the upper middle class, owning banks, industries and trades, which had formed, by creating the new Western institutions, the political clientele that was much needed in order to exert public domination: officials

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Structures and Liberal Socialbilities in Interwar Romania] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013), 482-493. Also, Ovidiu Buruiană, *Construind opoziţia. Istoria politică a Partidului Naţional Liberal între anii 1927 şi 1933* [Building the Opposition. The Political History of the National Liberal Party between 1927 and 1933] (Iaşi, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013), 118-125.

depending on the party through the budget, merchants close to the Liberals because of their trading needs, urban and rural owners tied by mortgages. "The credit disciplined everything", said Andrei Corteanu, one of the most influential journalists of the 1920s.[4] Even Ştefan Zeletin confessed that, when he dealt with the Romanian bourgeoisie from a scientific point of view, he was still vibrating because of the wild hatred against the National Liberal Party that the war had instilled to all. He wished for his sociological work to be an "execution of the role played by the party in shaping the present-day Romania", a work directed against the "caste of Phanariots with no historical roots in our soil, forming a layer of parasites and budget eaters, as the Liberal National Party[5] was formerly known".

The National Liberal Party was thus asked to leave the public sphere invaded by the rural masses. It was blamed for the losses during the war and for the hardships of the post-war restoration and unification. It was also charged with organizing itself on the material foundations of self-interest, accused of industrial or financial oligarchism, and blamed for the imposition of a new economic feudalism disguised as the political forms of the Western capitalist bourgeoisie, subordinating both the State and the Crown.[6] I. G. Duca recalled the hostility towards the Liberals in the first Parliament of the unified Romania, when everyone avoided them like a plague, having only words of contempt and hostility, although some had praised them earlier. "Nothing else was discussed, wrote the Liberal leader, except for the liberal oligarchy, the old world embodied by Brătianu and the new world which was indeed represented by the National-Peasant coalition."[7] The radical interpretations of the national and social ideal, offered by the new political movements (nationalist, agrarian etc.), within the meaning of the transfiguration of the society,

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[4] Andrei Corteanu, „Noua Constituţie" [The New Constitution], *Revista Vremii*, Bucharest, 10 December 1922, *apud* Andrei Corteanu, *Schiţe politice şi economice. Extrase din Revista Vremii* [Political and Economical Outlines. Excerpts from Revista Vremii] (Bucharest: Colecţia Actualităţi, Cultura Naţională, f.a. [1924]), 7-9.

[5] See in Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Liberalism şi democraţie* [Liberalism and Democracy], excerpt from the magazine *Libertatea* (Bucharest: Tipografia de Artă and Editură Leopold Geller, 1935), 13.

[6] Mihail Manoilescu, *Memorii* [Memoirs], edited, preface, notes and index by Valeriu Dinu, vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1993), 28; seee also Andrei Corteanu, „Criza Partidului Liberal," [The Crisis of the Liberal Party] *Revista Vremii*, 8 April 1923, *apud* Corteanu, *Schiţe politice şi economice*, 50-51.

[7] Duca, *Memorii*, 235-238.

have bound even more the image of the National Liberal Party, and Romanian liberalism therefore, to the *old Romania*.

For the most observers of the political space, within the framework of the universal suffrage the Liberals did not have a program and a credible organization linked to social and national progress, despite their attempts to appear as a dynamic and open national force for social change. Pamfil Şeicaru said that the historical mission of the National Liberal Party had been concluded with the post-war laws, their survival being only due to the systematic alteration of the public life.[8] In an era of the popular masses, the liberal ideal had reached the twilight, deprived of the national idea, monopolized by traditionalist movements, and of its reformist appearance, now claimed by the members of the Peasants' Party. From a propagandistic point of view, the Liberal Party attempted to establish an equivalency between liberalism and the Romanian modernity: "because no important act for the organization of the Romanian state was made without the participation of the National Liberal Party", stated a liberal brochure of that time. But the echoes of these identity assertions were low in various political and administrative environments.[9] The liberal's

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[8] Pamfil Şeicaru, *Dinu Brătianu şi Partidul Liberal în 1944 (1866-1950)* [Dinu Bratianu and the Liberal Party in 1944 (1866-1950)], in Pamfil Şeicaru, *Scrieri din exil* [Writungs from the Exile], vol. II, *Portrete politice* [Political Portaits], edition and preface by I. Oprişan (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum I.O., 2002), 101. But this conclusion did not belong only to the opponents. The professor of sociology, ethics and aesthetics at the University of Bucharest, Dimitrie Drăghicescu, young liberal from the postwar period, considered that "the Liberal Party fulfilled the glorious mission that had been handed to it by adopting the ideals of freedom and finished the program that came out from this ideal" through its achievements (the entire liberation of the nation, the successive liberation of all the Romanian provinces, the universal suffrage, the agrarian reform). Cf. D. Drăghicescu, *Evoluţia ideilor liberale şi Un apel Către tinerul liberal, către tinerimea cultă şi către socialiştii şi lucrătorii din România Mare* [The Evolution of the Liberal Ideas and An Appeal to the Young Liberal, to the Enlightened Youth and to the Socialists and Workers in Great Romania] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independenţa", 1921), 16.

[9] The Liberals were aware, after the war, of the weakness of their doctrinal positions. Asra I. Berkowitz presents I.G. Duca stating the need, after the war, "to put ourselves to work and all together to form a history of the party and to specify liberal ideology and doctrine"; although, given his arrest by communists, the former leader of the liberal media considered that nothing was done except the "anemic conference held at the Romanian Social Institute" (Arhiva Consiliului Naţional pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securităţii [The Arhive of National Council for Study the Securitate Archives, hereafter: ACNSAS)], fond Penal [Penal Fund] 456, vol. 2, File Berkowitz B. Israel, f. 230), the effort was huge, beyond the electoral programs of the party; see, for example, appeal to villagers in Bessarabia,

subsequent insistence on the term *national* of the party's title, with the establishment of a hierarchy between nationalism and liberalism, shows the extent of the aggression to which the Liberal National Party was subjected in a society dominated by the values and the symbols of the mainly rural nation. During those years, few were willing to give public credit to the Liberals for the modern development of Romania. The opposition was widespread, most of the new structures legitimising themselves through the criticism of liberalism, as it appeared in the practices of Brătianu's Party. The victory of the new groups at the expense of the Liberal Party was considered unavoidable, the quarrel between the political parties being of an "intolerant acerbity", as noted in that period by a liberal from Constanţa.[10]

1919 (in Serviciul Arhivelor Naţionale Istorice Centrale Bucureşti [Central Historical National Archives Service Bucharest], hereafter: SANIC), fond I. G. Duca [I. G. Duca Fund], File 93, ff. 1-15 etc.); *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal* [The History of the National Liberal Party] (Chişinău: Tipografia „România Nouă", 1918); *Partidul Naţional-Liberal către săteni* [The National Liberal Party to the Villagers] (Bucharest: Tip. „Independenţa", f. a. [1919]); *Partidul Naţional-Liberal către muncitorime. Prin democratism la desrobirea neamului* [The National Liberal Party to the Workers. Through Democracy to the Liberation of the Nation] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independenţa", 1919); *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal...*; Corvin M. Petrescu, *Opera Partidului Naţional-Liberal* [The Work of the National Liberal Party] (Bucharest: „Tipografiile Române Unite" S.A., f.a. [1925]); *Ce-a făcut Partidul Naţional-Liberal dela întemeierea lui şi până astăzi. 1848-1927* [What Has the National Liberal Party done from its Founding until Today. 1848-1927] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile "Independenţa", f.a. [1927]); *De ce sunt Naţional-Liberal? Crezul meu* [Why Am I a National-Liberal? My Belief] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile "Independenţa", f.a.): Virgil P. Andronescu, *Spre reînoirea liberalismului românesc. Conferinţă* [To the Renewal of the Romanian Liberalism. Conference] (Constanţa: Institutul de Arte Grafice al ziarului „Dobrogea Jună", 1932); C. Rădulescu-Furtună, *Ţara Românească, noile partide şi marele partid naţional-liberal* [Ţara Românească, the New Parties and the Great National-Liberal Party] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile "Independenţa", 1933); C. Achim, *Liberalismul. Broşură de propagare a acestei idei în masa poporului* [The Liberalism. A Brochure of Propaganda of this Idea to the People] (Bucharest, 1934) etc.
[10] Andronescu, *Spre reînoirea liberalismului românesc*, 5. Having an interest to weaken the Liberal Party, the opponents have discussed the issue of identity of the Romanian liberals as part of the contestation of the progressive and modernizing nature of Romanian liberalism in general. The contestation began before 1918, and it continued in a more structured way after the war; the National Peasants and Iorga have denied the liberalism of the National Liberal Party, considering it "a name without any content", a tradition in which the liberals stood still, because it

The designation by Henri L. Roberts, and by most of the Romanian historians, of the decade between 1918-1928 as "liberal" or as the "Brătianu's decade"[11] is based on the criteria of the mechanism of political authority and the preeminence of the liberals within the state, but not on the reception of the liberal ideas within the society. For the opponents, the return of the Liberal Party in power, in 1922, was associated with the "resurrection of the human beast" or the "German invasion".[12] The Brătianu government that lasted until 1928, with Averescu's intermezzo between 1926 and 1927, important for its measures for the unification of Greater Romania, and for the economic recovery and the subsequent take-off, has emphasized the political tensions through the exercise of authority. Many politicians and intellectuals remembered the 19th century

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was their source of legitimacy (*Politica realităţilor. Unde suntem şi încotro mergem. Discursul d-lui Prof. N. Iorga. Rostit la adunarea comitetului executiv al partidului naţional în ziua de 21 Septembrie 1930. După note stenografice* [Politics of Realities. Where Do We Stand and Where Are We Going. The discourse of prof. N. Iorga given at the gathering of the executive committee of the National Party on 21st of September 1930. After stenographic notes] (Bucharest: „Tiparul Românesc" Institut de arte grafice, f.a. [1930]), 28-29); Petre Andrei considered the liberal doctrine as an altered form, because while in government the party learned to use administrative abuses, corruption and the ignorance of the people, "the liberal party has neglected precisely what was essential to liberalism, the idea of freedom" (Petre Andrei, discussion to the message, „Monitorul Oficial", no. 14, 16 January 1930, part III, Debates of the Representatives' Assembly, meeting from 14 decembre 1929, 317-330, *apud* Petre Andrei, *Discursuri parlamentare (1929-1933)* [Parliamentary Speeches (1929-1933)], edited by Doru Tompea and V.F. Dobrinescu (Iaşi: Ankarom, 1996), 283); Andrei Corteanu expressed himself in similar terms. For him the "Romanian liberalism not only that is not a liberal Western idea, but under the national banner and the lies of the hypocritical democracy, it is required to prevent the creation of a bourgeoisie in the true sense of the word" (Corteanu, „Criza Partidului Liberal," 51).
[11] Henri L. Roberts, *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press; London, Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1951), 93. In the realm of Romanian liberalism, the authoritarian political practices of the Liberals, the lack of reflections on the major liberal values (freedom and individual, the problem of totalitarianism) and the moral alibis which the liberals put forth as a justification for their own nationalism show an non-liberal culture; the success of the National Liberal Party can be explained rather through the rigorous organization of the party and through its liberal government elites.
[12] *Cartea neagră. Sub domnia pumnului. Alegerile de pomină, din martie 1922* [The Black Book. Under the Domination of the Fist. The Memorable Elections from March 1922] (Bârlad, f.a. [1922]), 5-6.

practices of the liberals and the rushing of a predominantly agrarian society set to evolve in an improper way.

Facing the accusations and adversities of the new political competitors, the Liberals had to amend their forms of political association and offer their own solutions to the challenges generated by the war. What was needed was "an ideal related and equivalent to the one from 1848 (...) if we want this party to have a future", was highlighting Dimitrie Drăghicescu in 1921.[13] Meanwhile, regarding the political integration of the rural world, the reform of the liberal party was permanently reiterated, as a form of adaptation to the new electoral reality and the subsequent democratization.

2. The aim of this study. The methodology used in studying the National Liberal Party's policies of political integration of the rural world

As a historical subject, integrating the village and its inhabitants in the national political community between the two world wars concerns several fields of knowledge in the social sciences and thereby involves a multidisciplinary approach. The sociology of the interwar rural life, the psychology of the Romanian peasant of that time, the social history of public parties or its cultural approach, in relation with the movement of the political ideas, may all be assembled, along with Romania's political history, to describe and analyse the specific process of modernity in general. Given that 80% of the population after 1918 lived in rural areas, the social transformation of the Romanian village in the Western sense was, in the context of the universal suffrage, a common element of the pre-war and post-war discourse and political actions, as a goal or as a structuring endeavour of the public policies. The multitude of issues that can be approached in connection with the inclusion of peasants in the political nation paradoxically entails the fact that this study is also definable by the things we do not aim at this level.

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[13] Drăghicescu, *Evoluţia ideilor liberale*, 18. The question of the new political ideal has remained constant in the period. In September 1929, Gheorghe Tătărescu remitted a memoir to the party leadership of I. G. Duca in particular, requesting the change of vision in the program. The young liberal leader thought it was necessary to find a formula equivalent to "land and vote", the one which had determined an entire generation to prefer the Liberals (*Memoriu referitor la acţiunea şi reorganizarea Partidului Naţional Liberal* [A Statement Regarding the Action and Reorganization of the National Liberal Party], in SANIC, fond I. G. Duca, file 76 / f.d. [1929], f. 4).

The social realities of the Romanian village are not a primary concern of this text, although we are aware that they normatively structure the political policies pursued by the political parties. Also, in relation to the introduction of this study, we do not intend to analyse the way the Romanian Liberals have organized their legitimative arguments in the public sphere while undergoing a political and ideological aggression after 1918. A way of political survival, their doctrinal and also propagandistic effort to present themselves as a progressive and national force was probably the most coherent in the history of the National Liberal Party.[14] Their discursive construction of the first interwar decade, justifying Romania's progress through the historical development of liberalism[15], was accompanied by an articulation of the liberal identity that was closely related to the Romanian peasant, seen as the beneficiary of modernity. Although the National Liberal Party was closely attached to the urban values through the socio-professional structure of its membership[16], and

[14] See the chapter „Liberalii români şi propaganda politică," [The Romanian Liberals and the Political Propaganda] from my book, Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 385-499.

[15] From a political point of view, I.G. Duca and Vintilă Brătianu, or Ştefan Zeletin, Mihail Manoilescu and Eugen Lovinescu, on a scientific and cultural level, have criticised Romania's rural identity and the country's agrarian destiny. They wanted to show the indissoluble link between the historical evolution of the 19th century and liberalism, as well as the organic structure of the process of modern development in close relation with the economic facts (via trade) or with the penetration of ideas coming from the West. See, for example, I. G. Duca, „Doctrina liberală" [The Liberal Doctrine], in *Doctrinele partidelor politice* [The Doctrines of the Political Parties], edition and notes by Petre Dan, Bucharest, Editura Garamond, f. a., 144-154; for a general view, Z. Ornea, *Tradiţionalism şi modernitate în deceniul al treilea* [Traditionalism and Modernity in the Third Decade] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1980), 301-361; Keith Hitchins, *România. 1866-1947* [Romania. 1866-1947], 2nd edition, translated by George G. Potra and Delia Răzdolescu (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1998), 292-332 etc.

[16] See „Liberalul ca *burghez*. Încercare de descriere socială" [The Liberal as a *bourgeois*. An Attempt to a Social Description"] from Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 251-330; The National Liberal Party was an urban and administrative party, addressing in particular to socio-professional categories capable of supporting the state modernization. They recruited their adherents from the urban bureaucratic background and from the industrial, commercial and financial environment, the best equiped from the point of view of the modern world; the process facilitated the designation of the party as one of "bourgeois and bankers" in the eyes of the opposition (André Tibal, *La Roumanie*, préface de M. Augustin Gauvain, membre de l' Institut, avec huit planches hors textes et culs-de-lampe de Mlle Magada Iorga (Paris: Les Éditions Rieder, 1930), 69). But, as Joseph Rothschild observed, the

maintained a certain social misanthropy towards the rural traditional
space, the universal suffrage made the party's orientation towards the
Romanian village to be unavoidable. However, they rather reacted to a
rural reality of which they were largely responsible, through the reforms
undertaken until then, but which they could not favourably manage
anymore.

I assume a historical perspective in this study, in the sense of
presenting facts and building an explanation. My analysis is circumscribed
to the National Liberal Party and its attempts to adapt to the electoral
reality of the peasant-voters after 1918. A commonplace of the public
discussions of that time, the rural problem was also a political, economic,
educational and cultural matter for the Liberals. The peasant's integration
in the political community involved a vast amount of speeches and public
events, it generated Liberals' policies regarding propaganda, with the
consolidation of a rural press, but it also led to the development of
political practices within the party. Therefore, beyond the statutory post-
war expansion, the political inclusion of the village in the public sphere
involved the Liberal Party in its entirety, as a party structure and through
open action. What interests me here is this level of the organization, in

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class in power in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was not the
bourgeoisie, but the bureaucracy (Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between
Two World Wars* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974, 17).
See also Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe* (New
York, London: Routledge, 1998), 426-427, which states that political reforms and
neo-mercantilism motivated by economic nationalism created in this space a
bureaucracy rather than a bourgeoisie. Although the social liberals considered
themselves to be as such, as a bourgeois party of social progress (George Popovici,
„Burghezia oraşelor," [The Bourgeoisie of the Cities] *Democraţia* [Democracy]
XVII / 12 (December 1929), 29-34; Mihail Berceanu, „Rolul cultural al oraşelor,"
[The Cultural Role of the Cities] *Democraţia* [Democracy] XV / 5 (May 1927), 11-
16, there is no exclusive social structure to turn to the Liberal Party. In their case, a
structural refusal towards the rural world cannot be accepted, despite the urban-
rural distinction that would characterize modernity, according the Norwegian
comparatist Stein Rokkan (according to Rokkan, the parties are the expression of a
central conflict of a society, church-state, centre- periphery, employers-workers,
rural-urban, and contribute to their progressive pacification; in Stein Rokkan,
Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Party Systems and Voters Alignments* (New York:
The Free Press, 1967). The Liberal Party was "bourgeois" just because its message
was addressing a mainly urban modernity, the modernity being largely equivalent
with the city. In a rural society, the Liberals continued to build on the impressive
urban elite, of an intellectual and economic kind.

which the party was seen as the primary national political body in which the peasant could be found.

Approaching the political integration of the rural world from the perspective of the National Liberal Party entails certain difficulties, other than the aforementioned methodological limitations; in the Romanian historiography, there is no serious analysis of the actual participation of the peasants in the political life within parties or through direct manifestations.[17]

For different reasons, recalling here merely the absence of the primary documents of the Liberal Party, the historians concerned with interwar developments showed a low interest for the political sociology of the Romanian village. The Liberals' connection to the political and social realities after 1918, which were dominated by rural issues, was often framed within the general commentary about the Liberal governments and the doctrine of neoliberalism. Moreover, by obscuring the structure of the party, including the Liberals' intrusion into the rural world, Romanian liberalism is restricted, from a historiographical point of view, to a mainly economic perspective and, on the other hand, it is connected exclusively to the matters regarding the modernization and development of the nation.[18] Consistent with the concern to build „a usable political past" about the role of the party in bringing social changes, the history of the

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[17] An exception, however, coming from the field of political sciences, is the work of Stelu Şerban, *Elite, partide şi spectru politic în România interbelică* [Elites, Parties and the Political Spectrum in Interwar Romania] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006).

[18] Showing affinities with the liberal nationalism, historians have generally given credit to what the Liberals wanted to approve in the public space as a form of political legitimacy regarding the evolution of Romania after 1848. I will not insist in this study on the identity of the liberal discourse or the historiographical one; see, for example, Gheorghe Platon who writes that "liberal ideas were manifested at all levels, they expressed, explained and justified all the trends of modernization, of renewal"; even more, "the history of Romanian liberalism merges with the history of modern Romania", the liberal doctrine has represented "a bridge for the integration of the Romanian society into the European world" („Liberalismul românesc în secolul XIX: emergenţă, etape, forme de expresie," [Romanian Liberalism in the 19th Century: Emergence, Stages, Forms of Expression] in *Cultură şi societate. Studii privitoare la trecutul românesc* [Culture and Society. Studies Regarding the Romanian Past], ed. Al. Zub (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1991), 84, 95). A discussion on the issues raised by the approach of Romanian liberalism în Florea Ioncioaia, „Liberalismul sălbatic. Note metodologice asupra istoriografiei liberalismului românesc," *Xenopoliana. Buletinul Fundaţiei Academice „A. D. Xenopol"* XIII / 1-4 (2005), 25-34.

National Liberal Party is reduced to a series of declarations of principles, incomplete programmatic approaches or syncopated presentations of the government's actions, which are outlining, in a factual and ideologized manner, an evolution of the party which is superimposed on the Romanian state's history. Regarding the rural world, the historical reconstructions put an emphasis on the agrarian measures of the Liberal governments, describing the land reform and several other measures in this area (the law of agricultural debt conversion etc.), coupled with the educational program (similar with Spiru Haret's program) of Dr. Constantin Angelescu, Minister of Public Education in most of the liberal Cabinets.[19]

The positive character conferred by historians to the political and governmental actions of the National Liberal Party, vaguely linking them ideologically to liberalism in general, is accompanied by a social reductionism of a Marxist type, which designates the Liberals as the "representatives of the financial bourgeoisie". This ideological pejorative equivalence underlines the ambiguity of the concept of a liberal party in Romania's social sciences[20] and impairs the research of the subject of the integration of the village in the political sphere during the interwar period.

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[19] Historiographically, even the collective volume coordinated by Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, issued in the early 2000s, with the declared intention to study the history of over a century of the National Liberal Party fails to convince when it comes to the evolution of the Liberal Party after the First World War; that chapter, written by Dumitru Șandru, a significant historian of the agrarian reforms of the 20th century and of the Romanian village after 1918, deals with the period of liberal governments, not with the party itself. Dumitru Șandru, „Partidul Naţional Liberal în perioada interbelică şi a celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial," [The National Liberal Party during the Interwar Period and World War II], in *Istoria Partidul Naţional Liberal* [The History of the National Liberal Party], ed. Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, foreword by Constantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici (Bucharest: Editura ALL, in collaboration with the Institute of Liberal Studies, 2000), 201-252. See also Ștefan Păun, *Evoluţia Partidului Naţional-Liberal în perioada 1918-1928* [The Evolution of the National Liberal Party between 1918-1928] (Bucharest: Editura Fundaţiei Culturale „D. Bolintineanu", 2000); Gigel Sorinel Știrbu, *Liberalismul românesc în anii 1930-1940* [Romanian Liberalism between 1930-1940] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2011); Aurelian Chistol, *România în anii guvernării liberale Gheorghe Tătărescu (1934-1937)* [Romania during the Liberal Government of Gheorghe Tătărescu (1934-1937)] (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2007) ș.a. For a discussion about the Historiography of the National Liberal Party, Buruiană, *Construind opoziţia…*, 18-26.

[20] I will not discuss here the identity of the European and Romanian liberalism. The mechanical overlapping of the Romanian political formula of liberalism with what was happening in Western Europe was rejected by the Liberals themselves. Dr. G. N. Leon, professor of finance and statistics at the Faculty of Law in

3. The Romanian Liberals and the realities of a rural society. Brief introductory statement. The rural question in the National Liberal Party's perspective until World War I

In the parliamentary meeting of January 1895, Petre S. Aurelian declared that "the great issue, the most vital issue for Romania, to which the fate and our future as a nation and as a state is linked, is the rural one."[21] The statement of the Liberal leader was part of the official party line. There are many positions taken up by the Romanian Liberals in this period of time, which converge towards an awareness of the deep-rooted backwardness of the rural world, but also towards the description of the National Liberal Party as being concerned about the rural issues, the modern social transformation of the village, economically, culturally or politically.[22]

Bucharest, stated that "Those who want to explain the Liberal Party's activity and work from the angle of the liberal ideas in their doctrinal sense of the word, will suffer great disappointment" (Gh. N. Leon, *Politica Economică a Partidului Naţional Liberal* [The Economic Policies of the National Liberal Party] (Bucharest: „Cartea Românească", 1932), 29). The political systems, as well as the politics as a whole, are different in Eastern and Western Europe, the parties being based on sperations which differ to some extent from those which structure the partisan system in France, England, etc. The economic or social axis play a minor role in relation to the cultural one, regarding the struggle between "Occidentalists" and "traditionalists" (Christian Vandermotten, Pablo Medina Lockhart, Danuta Freyer Macola, „Geografia electorală a Europei Centrale şi de Est," [The Electoral Geography of Central and Eastern Europe], in *Partide politice în Europa centrală şi de est* [Political Parties in Central and Eastern Europe], ed. Jean Michel de Waele, translated from the French language by Ramona Coman, Ana Maria Dobre, Dorina Iuga and Ninucia Pilat, afterword by Cristian Preda (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2003), 17-18).
[21] P. S. Aurelian, „Discurs în şedinţa Camerei din 20 ianuarie 1895," [Speech during the Meeting of the Chamber from 20th of January 1895] *Drapelul*, II / 568, 10 February 1899, 1.
[22] In the Party's program from 1906, D. A. Sturdza asserted that "poverty reigns in rural areas, the peasantry is eating poorly and insufficiently, allowing the spreading of the pellagra, the «disease of misery»" (D.A. Sturdza, *Programul P.N.L* [The N.L.P. Programme], 1906, 7); another leader, Alexandru Djuvara, admitted, in the context of the 1907 revolt, that "we left the peasants without any justice under the weight of an abusive administration, without taking care of his health, of his living, his sorrows and his hopes, but mostly we left the peasant prey to an economic system that has exhausted his strength, enslaving him and nailing him in the misery

The Romanian liberalism was rather a project for an accelerated transformation of a society situated at the periphery of modern Europe and, inevitably, it favoured industrialization and urbanization rather than policies aimed towards the rural areas. The Romanian rural approach was invoked as their own tradition by the Liberals after 1918, in the context of radical challenges. The propagandistic literature and the subservient press competed one against the other in order to offer arguments, having a desire to point out the preeminence of the Liberal Party's public policies regarding the issues of the Romanian peasants. In a text addressed to the villagers after the war, the liberals claimed their primacy in enacting the land reforms and granting the universal suffrage. The ideal of a peasantry able to choose those representatives "whom they would believe to be worthy of this honour and who will be able to defend their rights and to work for the wellbeing of the people"[23] underlined the struggles of the party until then and it legitimized its post-war political aspirations.

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from which he can no longer rise" (*DAD*, 1907-1908, nr. 22, session of December 14th 1907, 328, *apud* Apostol Stan, Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România De la origini până la 1918* [The Political Liberalism in Romania. From its Origins to 1918] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclope-dică, 1996), 348). In reply, the National Liberal Party claimed proposals to help the economic emancipation and social development of the rural areas: placed "as the basis of the household, which is the foundation on which stands the national edifice of the state" in the 1892 party program, the peasant had – according to the liberals - to hold an independent material position and to rise economically and morally, realizing thus a "cessation of his material and moral slavery". They proposed the creation of institutions that could facilitate the peasants' purchase of properties by agreement or by public auction, by issuing land bonds guaranteed by the state or paid through long term amortization; also, the villagers had to receive incentives to build houses, purchase seeds, agricultural tools and livestock; but the peasants had to get insurance against damage from fires, hail, cattle mortality and poor harvests. (Biblioteca Naţională, Colecţii Speciale, fond Saint-Georges, pachet XLV, File 4, f. 34. See also *Programul Partidului Naţional-Liberal din 1892, Iaşi 8/20 noiembrie şi Discursurile Preşedintelui Consiliului de Miniştri, D.A. Sturdza din 1895* [The Programme of the National Liberal Party from 1892, Iasi 8/20 November and Speeches of the President of the Minister Council, D.A. Sturdza from 1895] (Bucharest, 1896) or *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal...* (1923), 156 and following).
[23] "The National Liberal Party will stand proud in front of the people in the next elections, which will be organized after the introduction of the universal suffrage, which weas inscribed in our Constitution by the party itself and established after difficult struggles, which were eventually crowned with success," it was said in a the 1919 brochure (*Partidul Naţional-Liberal către săteni...*, 10). See also *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal* (1918), 20-24. In the programme of 27 November

Economically, politically or educationally, the Liberals were identifying themselves with all the rural measures taken after 1848: the 1878 land allotments for the young married couples[24], the establishment of the Banks for Agricultural Credits (in 1881), the agricultural agreements law[25], The Rural Bank (*Casa Rurală*), which was due to buy land from private owners and sell them to peasants in allotments[26], organizing popular banks, Spiru Haret's village communities, which were led by priests and village teachers, which aimed to remove intermediaries and provide the associated peasants access to the estates in more favourable conditions[27] etc.; all these measures were intended to support the farm owners and the agriculture in general.

The political integration of the peasants was only explored within the Party until the First World War. Although C. A. Rosetti and the radical group around him hailed, at various times, the universal suffrage, the historian A.D. Xenopol synthesized in 1910 the Liberals' beliefs on this issue: the principle of universal suffrage "was not required by the cultural

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1921 it was presented in a performative way the evolution and future of the party. "The National Liberal Party which tied its name forever with the rebirth of Romania, through the unification of the principalities, through the independence, the kingdom, through the development of education, by the popular banks, the universal vote, the expropriations and by unifying the nation, will also be respected in the future" (*Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal…* (1923), 229-230); see also Petrescu, *Opera Partidului Naţional-Liberal*, 14-15; Rădulescu-Furtună, *Ţara Românească, noile partide şi marele partid naţional-liberal*, 3, 30. In *De ce sunt Naţional-Liberal...*, 8-9, the idea of the political emancipation of the peasantry was essential. This role of the party, "to which Romania owes its democratic organization... the honest civic education of the masses", was recalled at various solemn times. (The National Liberal Party, *Statutele şi manifestul program al Partidul Naţional-Liberal votate în Congresul general din Bucureşti în zilele de 1, 2, 3 şi 4 Mai 1930* [The Statutes and the Programm-Manifesto of the National Liberal Party voted at the General Congress in Bucharest on the days of 1,2,3 and 4 of may 1930] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile Independenţa, 1930), 22).

[24] *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal…* (1923), 110-113.

[25] See more in Stan, Iosa, *Liberalismul românesc*, 212-214.

[26] Stan, Iosa, *Liberalismul românesc*, 297.

[27] Spiru Haret was, from the liberals' perspective, the most articulate politician when it came to think about and solve the rural question. His program for the moral and material evolution of the villages would have been guided by teachers and priests, seen as the natural defenders and preachers of the interests of the peasantry. In the Haretist program, the property was supposed to become a social service and the broadest sections of society were supposed to get involved in the country's leadership (Spiru Haret, *Chestia ţărănească* [The Rural Issue] (Bucharest: Editura Carol Göbl, 1905).

stage in which the Romanian society[28] was at that time". Specific to the 19th century liberal thought, the Party program from 1892 mentioned the general vote with proportional representation, but which was to be introduced gradually, spreading in advance, within all the social categories, "the enlightenment of a solid and healthy education". For the liberals, education was meant to put people in a position to know, appreciate and use the civil rights written in the Constitution.[29]

The social and economic deadlock of 1907[30] and the otherness of the Bulgarian peasant, in the context of the military campaign of 1913[31], led the new liberal leadership of the Brătianu brothers to rethink the problem of the rural world as a way of re-establishing the national community, based on social solidarity and political involvement. Ionel and Vintilă Brătianu understood the need of a party adapted to new realities, much larger and capable, in terms of their own liberal discourse, to "speed up

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[28] A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice din România. De la origini până la 1866* [The History of the Political Parties in Romania], edition, introductory study and notes by Constantin Schifirneţ (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2005), 523; more trenchantly in *O părere asupra votului universal, de un liberal bătrân* [An Opinion about the Universal Suffrage from an Old Liberal] (Piteşti: Tipografia Mihail Lazar fiu, 1906). Historiographically, Sorin Radu, *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866-1937)* [The Modernization of the Electoral System in Romania (1866-1937)] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2005), 34. The large number of voters yet unprepared for political life was mentioned also afterwards (*Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal…*(1923), 224).

[29] National Library, Special Collections, fond Saint-Georges, pachet XLV, File 4, ff. 33 and 37

[30] Liberals considered the year 1907 as decisive for the reforms directly undertaken six years later (see „Discursul dlui Ion I. C. Brătianu la Congresul Partidului Naţional-Liberal" din 21 noiembrie din sala *Eforie*," *Democraţia* IX / 11-12 (november-december 1921), 594-597, and „Programul Partidului Naţional Liberal," [The Programme of the National Liberal Party], in *Democraţia* IX / 11-12 (november-december 1921), 597-603).

[31] In this context, Vintilă Bratianu concisely expressed the delicate situation of the political elite in relation to Romanian rural world: „the soldiers and, therefore, our peasants, see in Bulgaria a villager in an economic and social state generally better than ours, with extensive pastures, with many cattle, larger crofts, all available exclusively to them. I do not see peasants working for landlords or tenants, but solely for their benefit." From the talks he had with the peasants, he concluded that they had big expectation at their return to their homes. (Vintilă Brătianu, „Note din expediţia în Bulgaria," [Notes from the Bulgarian Expedition] in *Scrieri şi cuvântari* [Writings and Speeches], eds. G. Marinescu and C. Grecescu, vol. III, January 1922 - December 1914 (Bucharest, 1940), 274-275).

the progress of society."[32] The idea to broaden the social base of the party required an orientation towards the rural world on the footsteps of Spiru Haret, whose politics brought the teachers, the priests and the public servants of the Romanian villages closer to the party. The universal suffrage remained only a dream, the political involvement of the peasants needing to be preceded, according to Ionel Brătianu, by their economic and social emancipation.[33] The Liberal leader had stated the need for agrarian and electoral reforms, in the form of expropriation and creating a single electoral college, even since the program-manifesto published on January 25, 1911.[34] Taken from the newly established Study Circle of the party, which was created in the same year, the modernization of the census electoral system by extending the right to vote was meant, in the enlightened and liberal vision of the Romanian 19th century, to contribute to the political education of the citizens.[35]

But both the *Scrisoarea program* [Program Letter] of Ion I.C. Brătianu, presented before the liberal congress or the motion adopted in October 1913, which consecrated the political line regarding the political participation only of literate peasants[36], and the subsequent projects during

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[32] Once more, the liberal party had to be the "preacher of great ideas, watchful and well-armed defender of the interests of the state and of the many" (Vintilă Brătianu, *Menirea Partidului Național-Liberal. Din nevoile noastre* [The Purpose of the National Liberal Party. From Our Needs] (Bucharest: Tipografia „Voința Națională", 1906), 28).

[33] *Discursurile lui Ion I. C. Brătianu publicate de George Fotino* [Speeches of Ion I. C. Brătianu published by George Fotino], vol. IV (25 February 1913 – 1 noiember 1918) (Bucharest: Editura „Cartea Românească", 1940), 318.

[34] Stan, Iosa, *Liberalismul românesc*, 357. See also *Istoricul Partidului Național-Liberal...* (1923), 202: for liberals, the constitutional reform, in the electoral sense, represented a form of achieving social harmony; the solidarity of all forces of the nation was imperiled unless they did not give the opportunity of expression in a legal manner to the popular claims.

[35] G. G. Danielopol circumscribed the political integration of the peasants to a unique college of voters and a single ballot list. In 1912, he wished to make voting compulsory, turning the election into a school of political participation (G. G. Danielopol, *Nevoia unei reforme electorale* [The Need of an Election Reform] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independența", 1912), 5-37).

[36] In a letter from September 1913, included in most subsequent propaganda brochures (*Partidul Național-Liberal către săteni...*, 24-25), the universal suffrage remained a goal attainable by increasing school education in villages. In the political manifesto was mentioned, along with the agrarian reform (carried through state interference with the right of expropriation, where necessary, to increase the peasants' crofts) and the establishment of the unique college, the "hasty multiplication of the means of instruction and education"; the reform was seen as a

wartime, including those of the Parliament in Iaşi, became obsolete at the
end of the world war. The sacrifices of the peasant-soldiers, the
establishment of Greater Romania after the union of the Old Kingdom and
Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania, with the multiplication of forces
and political options, as well as the radicalization of European societies as
a result of the war, imposed the universal suffrage as a primary and
undisputed reality for the National Liberal Party.[37] However, the post-war
circumstances of the expansion of the political participation generated
fears among Liberals.

   The National Liberal Party had dominated the political society in
Romania's Old Kingdom, setting the public agenda. The administrative
reflexes acquired in government, the more generous liberal ideas from the
social point of view and the inclusive practices for the social categories
below the elites (teachers, priests, officials from the Rural Bank) allowed
them to control the rural world. But the party's attempt to control the
public sphere was not based on a coherent liberal doctrine that delivered
effective programs for the rural area and encouraged the political
integration of the peasants in the modern community. Liberalism was a
recepted ideology in the Romanian space, linked to the need of the state to
catch up with the West and it was accepted by traditionalists and
conservatives because of the upward trajectory that the liberal political
formula had in Western Europe.[38] In an effort to reduce the gaps with the

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"favorable working tool", an "instrument for education", necessary for the
solidarity of the masses with the state (*Discursurile lui I. I. C. Brătianu...*, vol. IV,
155; see also N. Bănescu, *Ion I. C. Brătianu. 1864-1927* (Craiova: Editura Ramuri,
f. a. [1927]), 117). At the congress, the motion read by Mihail Pherekyde claimed
the strengthening of the peasantry and solidarity of all classes with the state as a
condition for Romania's prosperity. In terms of integrating the peasants, the act
was restricting political rights to the unique college of educated men, the others
voting indirectly in the same college (Bănescu, *Ion I. C. Brătianu. 1864-1927*, 121;
Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal… (1923), 205-206).

[37] About the changes of the Romanian electoral system, see Vasile Budrigă,
Sistemul electoral din România în anii 1918-1940 [The Election System in
Romania betweeb 1918-1940] (Bucharest: Planeta, 1997); Cristian Preda, *România
postcomunistă şi România interbelică* [Postcommunist and Interwar Romania]
(Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 2002); Sorin Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii
democraţiei parlamentare (19191937)* [Electorate in Romania during the Years of
Parliamentary Democracy (1919-1937)] (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2004), etc.

[38] For the idea of the recepted liberalism, see Victor Leontovich's analysis in
Histoire du liberalisme en Russie, traduit de l'allemand par Ole Hansen-Lóve,
Préface d'Alexandre Soljénitsyne (the foreword of the Russian edition of the book
appeared in the United States of America, YMCA Press, 1979, translated from the

Western civilization, the Liberals turned to an institutional design, marked by voluntarism, which privileged the state and the city to the detriment of the village, through the financial and human resources allocated. The approach to the peasant issue was desultory, syncopated or circumstantial and did not produce the desired effects of political and social transformation of the community as a whole. The unfolded modernization, which had to include the rural areas, remained a task for the elites of Greater Romania. But the realities of a triumphant political liberalism, in accordance with its predominance in the"powerful and civilized West", could not continue after the war in its old undemocratic ways. The reform regarding the universal suffrage, which broadened the civic life, would necessarily bring a change regarding the composition of the political parties. "New energies were summoned to take a leading role in the life of the country", as the Liberals themselves were admitting.[39]

Russian language by Geneviève Johannet), Paris, Fayard, 1986. Lothar Mayer shows that the skillful leaders of the National Liberal Party justified the survival of the Romanian Principalities as separate political units by taking and adapting the ideological and organizational idiom of the great powers of that period (especially France and Britain), making them to be "understood" (in „Stadii de modernizare a României. Între pacea de la Adrianopole şi urcarea pe tron a lui Carol II (1829-1930)," [Stages of Modernization of Romania. Between Adrianopole Peace and the Enthronement of Carol II (1829-1930)] in *România în obiectiv. Limbă şi Politică. Identitate şi ideologie în transformare* [Romania in Focus. Language and Politics. Identity and Ideology in Transformation], ed. Krista Zach (München: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1998), 14). This process of social construction, closely linked to the national idea, involved the state as the main instrument of modernization; many Western authors consider the liberalism practiced by the Liberal Party as a mere travesty (Carlton Hayes in Victoria F. Brown, "The Adaptation of Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State. The Case of Romanian Liberalism," in *Romania between East and West. Historical Essays in Memory of Constantine Giurescu*, eds. Stephen Fischer Galati, R. R. Florescu and George Ursul (New York, 1982), 271). The idea is too exaggerated in relation with the Romanian liberals. They certainly have taken the language of Western modernity, using the language of liberalism in the revolutionary movements and in the processes of social change. Even if the National Liberal Party represented a more administrative and political formula, the new trend represented, with specific adaptations, the ideological support of a conscious action undertaken by a part of the Romanian elite in order to reduce the gap with the Western world.

[39] *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal…* (1923), 224-225.

4. Romanian Liberals and peasants' participation in post-war politics. The elections of the 1920s and the urgency of an organizational design by integrating the rural world

In Romania's political sphere of 1918, the structural segregation between the urban and the rural spaces[40] reached a turning point. Gheorghe Tătărescu, a young liberal at that time, published a brochure that described the Romanian political life before the war, marked by limited participation, by civil rights reserved for an electoral body reduced to big landowners, the rural and urban bourgeoisie, lawyers, doctors, intellectuals and traders. The political society did not go beyond the city limits. "Beyond this there lie, boundless, the borders of apathy and difference, which put pressure on our peasantry, deaf to the even most powerful echoes of the struggles taking place in the city", concluded Tătărescu, who obtained his doctorate in Paris, with a thesis on the electoral and parliamentary system of the Old Kingdom.[41]

A specific feature of the developing societies, as pointed out by Samuel Huntington, the difference between rural and urban was not only political, but also referred to a series of representations and social or economic conditions. Because the parties were largely a creation of the people from urban areas, the leaders arose from Westernized intelligentsia and the recruitment of activists was mostly done among public servants,

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[40] The term belongs to the Norwegian comparatist Stein Rokkan. See Stein Rokkan, Derek Urwin, Franck H. Aarebrot, Pamela Malaba, Terje Sande, *Centre-Periphery Structures in Europe. An ISSC Workbook in Comparative Analysis* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus Verlag, 1987).

[41] Gheorghe Tătărescu, "Răspunderile," [The Responsabilities], Botoşani: Tipografia „Reînvierea", 1918, in Gheorghe Tătărescu, *Mărturii pentru istorie* [Confessions for History], ed. Sanda Tătărescu-Negropontes, foreword by Nicolae-Şerban Tanaşoca (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996)*,* 31. According to statistics compiled by Leonida Colescu, in the elections of 1911 voted 15 301 people in the College I, for the Chamber, 33 270 in College II and 52 768 in College III (direct voters and delegates) and for the Senate, 11.164 in College I and 12 747 in College II. In relation to the number of male residents aged over 21, the percentage of voters for the Chamber was 6.1% and 1.5% for the Senate (Leonida Colescu, *Statistica electorală. Alegerile generale pentru corpurile legiuitoare în 1907 şi 1911. Cu un studiu analitic de L. Colescu* [Election Statistics. General Elections for the Legislative Bodies in 1907 and 1911. An Analytical Study by L. Colescu] (Bucharest: Stabiliment Grafic Albert Baer, 1912), 7). Meanwhile, the number of indirect voters was 976 638, representing about 35% of all voters. The degree of political participation was considered one of the lowest in Europe at that time (Colescu, *Statistica electorală,* 11).

owners and specialists, the organizing of the rural world, as a precondition for the inclusion and the involvement of the peasants, was mandatory for the success of the modernization process as a whole. Unlike the city, which was the dynamic space of political modernity, the village represented the main source of social stability. The modern party's strength involves the ability to organize the traditional population, concludes the American political scientist.[42]

After the Union, the extended right to vote transformed the Romanian village into the main electoral stage of the political process, forcing Liberals to rethink their message and their strategies for gaining authority. Addressing to the peasant-voter, the Liberals assumed Spiru Haret's legacy regarding the social, economic and cultural emancipation of the villager.[43] The failure of the first elections organized after the electoral reform (in 1919 and 1920) has revealed to the Liberal leaders the landmarks of the new political field: the regional vote and the preeminence of the peasant. They were aware of the immediate difficulties of winning elections in the communities of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina, which were endorsing the politicians who had led the national movements. At the same time, given their existing pre-war organizations and the national and social actions which they had undertaken, the Liberals considered the Old Kingdom to be their own fiefdom, decisive for their claim to run the government. The elections and their results have boosted the Liberals' reluctance towards the universal suffrage and have strengthened their belief in the inability of the traditional rural world to understand politics. During the 1920s, the National Liberal Party's policies pursued the administrative control of the villages and not the political integration of the peasant. At the end of the first post-war decade, the Liberal's actions until then came to a halt.

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[42] Samuel P. Huntington, *Ordinea politică a societăţilor în schimbare* [Political Order of Changing Societies], translated by Horaţiu Stamatin (Iaşi: Polirom, 1999), 372.

[43] Speech of Mr. Alexandru Lapedatu, in *Partidul Naţional-Liberal şi situaţiunea ţării. Cuvântările rostite de dnii: I.G. Duca, Const. I.C. Brătianu, Alex. Lapedatu, Ioan Botez şi Victor Iamandi – la Discuţiunea Mesajului în sesiunea extra-ordinară din iulie-august 1932* [The National Liberal Party and the State of the Country. The Speeches given by: I.G. Duca, Const. I.C. Brătianu, Alex. Lapedatu, Ioan Botez and Victor Iamandi - at the Discussion of the Message in the Extraordinary Session from July-August 1932] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile Independenţa, 1932), 48-50.

4.1. The elections of 1928 as the moment of truth for the National Liberal Party regarding the relation with Romanian rural world

In December 1928, after the resignation of Vintilă Brătianu's cabinet and the government takeover by the National-Peasants led by Iuliu Maniu, parliamentary elections were held in Romania. The National Peasants' Party won the elections in the most categorical fashion of the interwar period: 77.76%, representing 2,208,922 votes from a total of 2,840,680 million cast votes; the 348 deputy seats (out of 387) showed the extent of the political domination which the National Peasants were to exert upon the Chamber.[44] From the perspective of the leaders of the National Peasants' Party, Romania became "for the first time a civilized parliamentary state, worthy to move from the East to the West". In the Manichean simplification of the public space, which is specific to the elections, the winners stated the beginning of a *new era*, marked by the real intentions of the voter-citizens to move the balance of the political life out of the National Liberal Party's club and to enthrone a "people's regime" of freedom, justice, "of Western humanity, culture and civilization".[45] In contradiction with the changed society, the Liberals signified the old Romania, the Asian spirit, the discretionary abuse, censorship, curfews, the administratively rigged elections.[46]

The Liberals seemed crushed by the electoral popularity of the National Peasants. In retrospect, the percentage that they obtained is the

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[44] The victory was truly overwhelming; the National Liberal Party, with the second electoral result, obtained 6. 55% of the votes and 13 seats; the Hungarian Party had 6.08% of the votes and 16 seats (more seats obtained because of the absolute majority in the three counties of Ciuc, Odorhei and Trei Scaunne), the Peasants' Party – N. Lupu got 2.48% of the votes and five seats, the same as the alliance between the People's Party and the National Party of N. Iorga; other political parties did not exceed the threshold of 2% and did not get into Parliament; see Ioan Scurtu, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918-1948)* [The History of the Romanians in the 20th Century (1918-1948)] (Bucharest: Editura Paideia, 1999), 195.

[45] M. Sevastos, "Era nouă," [The New Era] *Dreptatea* II/325, 10 November 1928, 1.

[46] *Dreptatea* II/358, 19 December 1928, 1; "Votul universal şi colegiile restrânse," [The Universal Suffrage and the Restricted Colleges] *Dreptatea* II/362, 23 December 1928, 1. "The times when the Romanian people's freedoms and rights enshrined in the laws of the country stopped being worthless has arrived", exclaimed an editor of the National Peasants' newspaper paper, *Dreptatea* ("Isbânda naţiunii," [The Victory of the Nation] *Dreptatea* II/326, 11 November 1928, 1).

lowest interwar figure for the Party.[47] Although the defeat in the elections had been anticipated, after the party's attrition produced by the long governance and after the disappearance of some prominent liberal personalities (Ionel Brătianu, first of all), the magnitude and the manner of the National Peasants' Party's victory shattered the party led by Vintilă Brătianu. The political situation at that end of the year was not comparable to their previous oppositions. The democratic game, the National-Peasants' support within the society and the adversity of the other political players made their previous power stances to appear outdated.[48]

The elections had been "free", in the accepted sense of the interwar period, meaning that the state apparatus did not interfere.[49] There were

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[47] Cf. Marcel Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice în cifre şi grafice. 1919-1932. Studiu comparativ al rezultatelor oficiale ale alegerilor pentru Camera Deputaţilor din anii 1919-1932* [The Evolution of Our Political Parties in Numbers and Graphs. 1919-1932. A Comparative Study of the Official Results of the Elections for the Representatives Chamber. 1919-1932] (Sibiu: Krafft & Drotleff s.a., f.a.), table Va, 14.

[48] The development of the events according to past scenarios – when in December 1910, at the end of the stay in power, Ionel Bratianu summoned the Liberal representatives to suggest them that the withdrawal of the Liberal Party must be done "in such a way that even our opponents to observe it not only with a diffuse feeling of respect, but also with fear (...). They may take the government, but *power* remains with us" – was no longer possible. Aşezământul Cultural Ion I. C. Brătianu, *Discursurile lui Ion I. C. Brătianu...* [Speeches of Ion I.C.Bratianu...], vol. III: *1st January 1909-19 December 1912* (1935), 361. About the adversity of others in the Executive Committee of his own party from 23rd of December 1928, N. Iorga considered the Liberals "permanent enemies". N. Iorga, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vol. V: *Agonia regală şi Regenţa* [Royal Agony and the Regency] (Bucharest: Editura „Naţionala" S. Ciornei, 1935, 323); also Grigore Trancu- Iaşi noted, after Vintilă Brătianu's government's resignation that "Liberals have died. Do not forget the stake to put in their grave!" Grigore Trancu-Iaşi, *Memorii politice (1921-1938)* [Political Memoirs (1921-1938)], ed. Fabian Anton (Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2001), 65.

[49] The gendarmerie did not take part in the electoral process. It was replaced by the army on election day, being considered more objective (SANIC, Fond Ministerul Justiţiei – Comisia Centrală Electorală, File 3 / 1928, vol. I, f. 12). "Elections without gendarmes, yes. But this does not mean free elections", Nicolae Iorga characterized the elections of 1928 (Nicolae Iorga, „Alegeri libere," [Free Elections] *Neamul românesc* [The Romanian Nation] XXIII/280, 18 December 1928, 1). The passivity of gendarmes who had been ordered not to interfere in the elections and "to respect the freedom of the elections", according to the malicious approach of the subject by I. G. Duca in the Chamber, was condemned as the inability to appeal to public power (*Viitorul* XXI/6240, 1 December 1928, 3; see

irregularities and involvements of the authorities on the side of new powers, and the National Liberal Party rushed to highlight them officially as a way to delegitimize the National Peasants' Party and to suggest the continuity of the political practices from the old regime to the new one.[50] Like many other representatives of the pre-war sociability, the Liberals were deeply impressed by the mobilization of the rural society in the campaign. In fact, the ebullience of the rural world was compared by Ion I. Pillat with a "Bolshevik campaign". Radicalized by the promises of the National-Peasants' Party regarding a new expropriation, tax cuts, the abolition of the military service etc., the peasants were often violently involved against those who competed against Iuliu Maniu's followers. Organized in "civic guards" they "no longer bore to hear promises made by the Liberals and by Averescu's people", prohibiting the candidates of these parties to enter in their localities. The National Liberal Party was singled out as the "enemy", the representative of old world. "Down with Brătianu!" along with "Long live Maniu!" and "Long live Mihalache!" were the most often heard manifestations.[51] At a different level, given that the social and political representations of the peasants seemed capable of triggering violence, with some specific characteristics in Transylvania, the Liberals relived the moment of 1919, of the peasant psychosis.[52]

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also the meeting of the legislative bodies from 22 December 1928, in *Viitorul* XXI/6260, 25 december 1928, 3).

[50] See more about the elections of 1928 in my book, Buruiană, *Construind opoziția…*, 237-259.

[51] Ion Pillat observed this polarization from the National Peasants' Party, whose battle "is not heading but against liberals". Ion Pillat, *Scrisori (1898-1944)* [Letters (1898-1944)], edition, dating of letters, notes, cronology, afterword, bio-bibliographical outline by Cornelia Pillat (Bucharest: Editura Du Style, 1998), 237-238. See also the reports of Police Inspectorates from Iași, Buzău and other places (SANIC, Fond General Direcorate of Police, File 14 / 1928, ff. 12-34) or of some prosecutors (report of the prime prosecutor I. N. Lungulescu to the Minister of Justice from 21 december 1928, regarding the election events of the commune of Lădești, județul Vâlcea, in SANIC, Fond Ministerul de Justiție – Comisia Electorală Centrală [Ministry of Justice – Central Election Committee], File 17 / 1928, ff. 8-10) about fights, assaults, gunshots or sometimes fledged wars, the camps arranged from one end to the other of the village, nocturnal attacks, a status that required gendarmes and soldiers as interposition forces.

[52] In unison, they expressed the unlawfulness built according another pattern, that of the "civil beatings", of the "National Peasant gangs" who "dispossessed and hit the «enemy» on orders, enemy who in Transylvania was called «regățeanul (man from the Old Kingdom)», good to have his head smashed, the priests were

Trying to understand the "enthusiasm of the peasants" which he encountered in the winter of that year, Constantin Argetoianu maintained the terms of the conflict. Without any government intervention, rural elections were "more or less wild". The partisanship of the peasants prevented any manifestations of opposition towards "their" party, the Liberal politician noting that during the eight days he spent in Giurgiu he could not get out in the county even once. "The bludgeon reigned everywhere", he concluded.[53] The description of the peasant-voter by the traditional political players, which seemed to be taken from the medieval bestiaries[54], denotes the political distance between the National Liberal Party and the Romanian village. In the winter of 1928, the peasants' political imaginary was dominated by the identification of the Liberals with the evil in society, as well as by the major hope of transforming their own material condition.

The popularity of the National-Peasants has forced the Liberals to engage in a limited campaign. Their meetings were not spectacular either by attendance, or by the speeches of the central leaders (who have not travelled very much during that period) or those of the local leaders of the party.[55] A staple in the urban areas, the Liberal political events were

shouting "that's what everyone who does not support Maniu deserves". The events were taking place according to the same pattern in the Bessarabia of the revolutionary Stere, closed to any "stranger", noted N. Iorga. N. Iorga, *România contemporană de la 1904 la 1930. Supt trei regi. Istorie a unei lupte pentru un ideal moral şi naţional* [Contemporary Romania from 1904 to 1930. Under Three Kings. The History of a Battle for a Moral and National Ideal], edited, notes and commments by Valeriu Râpeanu and Sanda Râpeanu, introductory study by Valeriu Râpeanu (Bucharest: Editura Pro, 1999), 365.

[53] Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri* [Memoirs. For the Future Ones. Memories from the Times of Yesterday]*,* vol. VIII, part VII (1926-1930), edition and index by Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 1997), 258-259.

[54] "With their bats raised ... gangs beyond the barriers dressed in black, as if they were flocks of crows ... very ugly ... bestial faces lacking any Romanian nature ... what we got in this election was the physical horror of the cattle raisers in Vlăsceni" (Argetoianu, *Memorii*, 259).

[55] Often local and restricted to the county committees and permanent delegations, the manifestations were not highlighted even in the pages of the officious newspaper *Viitorul,* which inserted a few lines. The meeting in Cluj was not an exception. Taking place on the 2nd of December 1928, it combined electoral and symbolic facets; the 10th anniversary of the Unification resulted the arrival of Vintilă Bratianu, of dr. C. Angelescu and Alexandru Lapedatu in the capital of Transylvania, („Roadele unei politici sănătoase," [The Results of a Healthy Politics] *Viitorul* XXI/6241, 3 december 1928, 1; „Dl Vintilă Brătianu la Cluj,"

designed to offer a minimum visibility for the party and to mobilize the supporters against the opposition.

The approach towards the rural voters resorted mainly to discourse, and the stereotypes of their language presented the Liberals as blocked in self-referential representations. In a manifesto addressed to the villagers, *Bunii Români. Eu votez lista Partidului Naţional-Liberal cu semnul I. Pentru că acest Partid m-a dezrobit, mă îndrumează şi mă luminează* [Good Romanians. I vote for the National Liberal Party's list, marked with the I sign. Because this party emancipated me, and it directs me and enlightens me][56], the text placing the Liberal Party in the position of the saviour of the nation, liberator of the peasants in a social and political sense, their supporter from the economic and cultural point of view (peasant liberation from "the inhospitable power of the darkness of the mind, in order to lift our children"). The National-Peasants accused the Liberal's "dirty" campaign in the countryside, which spread rumours concerning the "Catholicism" of the Maniu cabinet, leading the people to believe that they were going "to change the state religion according to the indications of the papists" and "to replace the official orthodox holidays with catholic ones"; at the same time, liberals suggested that the National Peasants' Party was allied with the Communists and planned the division of wealth after the elections etc.[57] According to the National Peasants' Party, it was a campaign that exposed a system of government by exalting nationalism and the social or religious fears of the Romanian village.

Wishing to dismantle the quasi-unanimous political preferences for the National Peasants' Party in the rural world, the Liberals also made use of the material strength of the local party members. The officious National-Peasant newspaper *Dreptatea* often accused the constraints faced by peasants in the banks dominated by the Liberals near the elections.[58]

[Mr. Vintila Bratianu in Cluj] *Glasul Ardealului* II/49, 9 december 1928, 1). The editors from *Dreptatea* (II/349, 8 December 1928), with the title „Consultările d-lui Vintilă Brătianu," [The Consultations of Mr. Vintila Bratianu], they believed that this event was a failure, the former head of the Cabinet being received with whistles.

[56] In *Viitorul* XXI/6241, 3 December 1928, 1.

[57] "Electoral campaign or agitation campaign," *Dreptatea* II/340, 28 November 1928, 1; "Mr. Vintilă Brătianu's patriotism," *Dreptatea* II/341, 29 November 1928, 1.

[58] "How will the Liberals get votes in the elections," in *Dreptatea*, II/349, 8 december 1928, 3; In a debate in the Chamber of Deputies on how the elections went in Vaslui, the National Peasants' representative Petre Andrei gave a taste of the liberal's action: based on the links they had with the Bank of Credit for Farmers in Fălciu County, a peasant was requested, by letter, to provide all the

The elections of December 1928 showed the limits of the Liberals as a political structure in the context of the universal suffrage and also the failure of their policy up to that date to integrate the peasants in the national political community. After the immediate post-war shock, in which they were faced with the peasant's psychosis and with the myth of General Averescu, the Liberals were back in the political game of power and to the power practices of the old Romania, in which Ionel Brătianu's elevation above the constitutional factors was essential. The much claimed expansion after 1918 had been formal, manifested horizontally, and with ambiguous results regarding the integration of the rural world. The cultural policy formulated in 1927 by Ionel Brătianu as a new aim of the party regarding the lifting of the peasantry and their political inclusion, demonstrated the fact that the Liberals had remained stuck to the terms of the 19th century. Moreover, they invested more resources in propaganda during the 1920s and less in organization.

4.2. Beyond organization. Poşta Ţăranului *and the attempt to seduce the rural world in the 1920s*

In the first decade after the war, the Liberals have primed a wide-ranging journalistic effort as a response to their political contestation and the organizational inadequacy of the rural world. Because it was not completed by the structuring of the party according to the peasants' needs, this project had to involve the administrative resources of the National Liberal Party and the "conquest" of the village through propaganda. This persuasive approach would mark the transition from the calendars of the immediate post-war period to the individualization of a permanent *rural*

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support among "his friends" ("and among our borrowers") to vote the liberal list. Liberals "hoped" that the peasants would not neglect that request (on the counterpage of the letter are written the names of the people he had to consider), "for we shall also take into account the done favours" [*Monitorul Oficial* (hereafter MO) 78, 3 july 1929, part III, DAD, Meeting from 13 June 1929, 2882-2889, *apud* Andrei, *Discursuri parlamentare (1929-1933)*, 105-106]; this relationship with the banks, using the practice of the blank bills, due before the elections, ideologically valued by Petre Andrei, by showing the high political consciousness of the peasants: "What shall we do, we have to go to the meetings of the national-liberals, say that we will vote with them. But what will we do then? This is different. But, gritting our teeth and clutching our fists, we tell them in their faces that we vote for them." MO, 11, february 1929, part III, Parliamentary debates, Representatives' Assembly, meeting from 16 January 1929, 400-407, *apud* Andrei, *Discursuri parlamentare (1929-1933)*, 23.

press of the party, which was set to replace the rural publications which appeared in the conjuncture of the electoral battles.

    a. The calendars were the traditional channel for spreading the culture in the context of a low level of education. Until the war, they were the preferred means used by the political actors in an effort to create a political initiation of the villages. The large circulation, 30 000 copies for the 1913 calendar, shows the important place that these papers had in the Liberal thought about the rural phenomenon. The information provided, different after 1918 from the ones of the pre-war period, suggests the trend of adjusting the discourse according to a society of the universal vote; if in the National Liberal Party's Calendar from 1913 the space given to politics is prevailing, the liberals being interested to broadcast a message to those people that were involved in the political life of the village (owners, priests, teachers, rural public servants etc.) regarding the proposed reforms of that year and the activity of the National Liberal Party's leaders[59], the calendars subsequently published by the party show significant changes in terms of intentionality. The informing of a limited public before the war was replaced by the persuasive message directed towards the rural world in general. *The National Liberal Party to the villagers. The 1919 Calendar of the villager voter* makes an explicit reference to the rural world through its title, but also through the monthly practical advice given to farmers.[60] The Romanian peasant was not only seen as a worker of the land, but as a majority voter, and the publication had to persuade him of the role of the National Liberal Party in the recent history of the Romanians. From the political point of view, through the

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[59] There were also information that interested the Romanian religious world (not necessarily the Orthodox one), *the legal and Princely holidays, religious holidays within the Orthodox Church, the Catholic and the Jewish calendar, the fasts*; also there were included religious cautionary tales, legends, information from the field of natural sciences, poems by George Cosbuc etc. See *Calendarul Partidului Naţional-Liberal. 1913* [Calendar of the National Liberal Party. 1913].

[60] With weather forecasts and beliefs about the weather, some elements of astronomy (sunrise-sunset) and astrology (signs), but also with economic information for the peasants; there were also pieces moral literature, poems with religious tint, fragments of the life of Jesus, patriotic poems, information of general knowledge, jokes etc. *Partidul Naţional-Liberal către săteni. Calendarul alegătorului sătean pe anul 1919* [The National Liberal Party to the Villagers. The Calendar of the Villager Voter in the year 1919] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independenţa", 1919). For the drift towards religion, see the National Liberal Party, *Calendarul organizaţiei judeţului Mureş pe anul mântuirii 1938* [The Calendar of the Organization of County of Mures in the Year of Salvation 1938] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărţilor Bisericeşti, 1938).

triumphant war nimbed by the Unification of the Romanians, with the association of the monarchical figures with those of the party, and also in terms of social transformations (land reform, voting etc.), the Liberal was shown as a "friend of the people".

The purpose of these books of liberal precepts, which was explicitly formulated in the 1930s, was to construct a path for the "true meaning of politics", conceived as a "patriotic and civic guide, offering guidance on the peasant's rights and duties towards the country and towards themselves."[61] In the 1930s, the county organizations generally issued these rural calendars; the issuer determined the practical aspects of the texts, and often also the religious references which were more emphasized, but also the propagandistic highlighting of the administrative achievements of the National Liberal Party and its local political figures.[62]

b. Wishing to approach politically the main Romanian electorate of the universal suffrage, by continuously connecting to its issues, the Liberals have developed a true **rural press**. With its beginnings dating back to 1924, the weekly newspaper *Poşta Ţăranului* (*The Peasant's Post*) was, from the Liberals' perspective, the most significant newspaper from both the journalistic and the political points of view[63], intended "namely for the people from the countryside". The programmatic declaration contained the direct accusation that some rural newspapers were published using the affected urban language, barely understood by the villagers; moreover, the topics aiming the sensational facts of these newspapers were considered to be "nonsense" from the Romanian rural perspective. In a Rousseau-like manner, the editorial of the first issue of *Poşta Ţăranului* invoked the simplicity, elevated to the level of truth, the ones who published the newspaper being "prompted by the Holy Spirit and their love for the villages", thus proposing only true facts and useful advice; officially, it was a newspaper written by peasants for peasants.

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[61] *Calendarul Partidului Naţional-Liberal pe anul 1935* [The Calendar of the National Liberal Party in the Year 1935], 31. The calendar was edited by Dr. Octavian Buzea, the direcot of the newspaper *Glasul Ardealului* from Cluj.

[62] *Calendarul organizaţiei judeţului Mureş* [The Calendar of the Organization of County of Mures]: "How villages were helped in the county. Mureş during the four years of liberal rule. Why do we ask you to vote for the National Liberal Party", 25-50; "What was done under the liberal government in Targu Mures. After four years (presentation made by Mr. Emil him Dandea to the Interim Commission of the City)", 93-103.

[63] The 1927 advertisements for the Letea factory, led by Constantin, showed the central financial support to the publication. Liberals always placed it at the center of their propaganda system in relation with the rural world.

The names under which the editors signed suggested their membership to the rural world or the sharing of its values (the appreciation of work, faith, but also the respect that the written word sometimes induced in a traditional society): "Nae Ispravnicu", "Alecu Gramaticu" "Ion Cepeleac", "Ion Plăeşu" etc.[64]

   Poşta Ţăranului was clearly a publication for the Romanian village, addressing its own issues and mentalities, favouring labour and the Christian tradition, with quasi-religious cautionary tales, with its anecdotes and songs, but also with its reluctance towards strangers or with the disparaging attitude against Jews and Gypsies etc. The newspaper however combined the practical aspects of the village's spiritual or material space with political aspects of general or particular liberal interest.[65] The political information, presented even as "political advice" given by an "old peasant voter" (who considered politics to be "a difficult science ... that teaches people how to rule the country, a county, or a commune"[66]), lost their neutrality, the presentation of the Romanian realities being done from the perspective of the Liberal Party. If initially Vintilă Brătianu's fiscal policy was praised, under the guise of the struggle for savings and against waste, and provided information about the government or about the Romanians from the liberated lands (in the interpretative key of the liberal measures taken by a minister or another[67]) subsequently the radicalism of the impugnment of the National Liberal Party led to an open pro-liberal approach. By laying out the assemblies

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[64] Alecu Poştaşu, „De ce tipărim *Poşta Ţăranului*," [Why We Publish *Poşta Ţăranului*] *Poşta Ţăranului* I/1, 1-7 January 1924, 1.

[65] The weekly paper contained folklore, poetry and cartoons, moral stories, advice on agricultural labor, prices "of food and cattle in several cities", calendar predictions, and incentives to create in the villages workshops of blacksmithing, carpentry, tailoring, as part of the modernization; Christian habits and customs, presentations of places of worship or articles about the place of women in society joined the information from the world of culture, medical and veterinarian advice, "things known and unknown".

[66] An old voter, „Lămuriri despre politică. Ce este politica?," [Explainings Regarding Politics. What Is Politics?] *Poşta Ţăranului* I/1, 1-7 January 1924, 1.

[67] „Ce aduce risipa şi ce aduce economia," [What Waste Brings and What Economy Brings] *Poşta Ţăranului* I/1, 1-7 January 1924, 1; „Ce se lucrează la Ministere," [What Do They Work in the Ministries] *Poşta Ţăranului* I/1, 1-7 January 1924, 2; „De la fraţii din ţinuturile desrobite. Ardealul. Inspecţiile d-lui prim-ministru," [From the Brothers from the Eliberated Regions. Transylvania. The Inspections of the Prime-Minister]; Vasile Suceveanu, cultivated ploughman, „Bucovina. Măsurile luate de d-l ministru Nistor," [Bukovina. The Measures Taken by the Prime-Minister Nistor] *Poşta Ţăranului* I/1, 1-7 January 1924, 3.

and party's discourse, the publication was part of the fight against the National-Peasants, who were called the "third nuisance for peasants" after the drought and the locusts etc., "our own Bolsheviks" who had become "upstarts" and had forgotten their home villages speeding in their cars, those who had connections with the Jews, Adventists etc.[68] On the eve of the elections of June 1927, the gazette removed any dissimulation of the message: peasants had to put their trust in the Liberals and in Ion I. C. Brătianu.[69] The frontal message accompanied a much more subtle exposure, in a historical restorative manner: many articles evoked "the faces of the Romanians who worked for the good of the country", those presented being the Liberals and their loved ones, or the meanings of the

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[68] „Ce urmăresc bolşevicii noştri," [What Do Our Bolsheviks Aim] *Poşta Ţăranului* II/60, 15 february 1925, 1; „Pârâtorii gazetei noastre," [The Snitches of Our Gazette] *Poşta Ţăranului* II/62, 1 March 1925, 1, With direct references to a peasant deputy "placed by the foreign banker Blank and by that charmed doctor named after that beast which eats sheep" (dr. N. Lupu – my note), but also to Stere, "the man of the Germans"; but references are made especially to nationals in Transylvania, presented as being intermarred with the Hungarians/landowners from Transylvania: "We received a letter from our brothers from Transylvania, who complain that Mr. Ghiulea Maniu, having lived between Hungarian landowners, has forgotten his duty to the Transylvanian Romanians", there was written in an article; Maniu was depicted as opposing to the spiritual union of the Romanians (he was not present at the coronation, he refused to vote the law on the allotment for the peasants and sent his spies in Transylvanian villages to say that the peasants from Moldavia and Wallachia are gypsies, etc.). In an article from February 1927, the National Peasants were presented allegorically, through the story told by an old man about their "careerist" boy who was living a good life since the so called peasant's party fraternized with Jewish bankers to fight in elections against Christians from other parties. „Bătrânii noştri," [Our Elderly], *Poşta Ţăranului* IV/168, 13 February 1927, 1.

[69] Gh. D. Grigorescu-Maia, „În cine să-şi pună ţăranii încrederea. Îndemnul unui învăţător din Ilfov," [Whom Should the Peasants Trust. The Impulse of a Teacher in Ilfov] *Poşta Ţăranului* IV/186, 18 July 1927, 1. It is a known construction, linked to the cult of Ionel Brătianu, the savior of the nation, based on the relationship with his father, the family relationship having a big impact in the rural world: "born, raised and lives solely for the fate of the country. his father Ion C. Brătianu, who ruled the country with such skill and understanding, left his son the legacy of the necessary skills to lead this country ... his father, Ion Brătianu showed the path he need to follow in life, taught him how to lead the country, just as Stephen the Great taught his son Bogdan (...). When the need is greater for the people, the thought goes to Ionel Brătianu (...) his party, the Liberal Party, big, powerful, with skilled people, with fondness and love of country, wise, but not hasty ... the only ones who think about the peasantry".

important dates from the calendar of national identity were explained the meanings through the role held by the Liberal Party.[70] But the *Poşta Ţăranilor* managed to become a force also by through its dynamic mode of relating to the peasants. The impersonal text from the beginning, with more or less rhetoric questions addressed in the newspaper, regarding the love for the country and the love for the family, gave way, later on, to the correspondence with the villagers (who were asking the leadership of the newspaper various explanations for their actual problems), a way of making them to get interested in reading the paper. The epistolary dialogue gives us indirect information about the circulation of the newspaper, which was restricted to the counties south of the Carpathians.[71]

The prevailing orientation of *Poşta Ţăranului* towards the village in the Old Kingdom has led the liberal leaders, in the attempt to fill the propaganda gap in Bukovina and Transylvania, to transform two regional publications in the grand stands of the Romanian peasants from there. *Glasul Bucovinei* (*The Voice of Bukovina*) and *Glasul Ardealului* (*The Voice of Transylvania*) also suggested through their names an approach of the issues of these provinces on behalf of those "who cannot speak". The publications were addressing not only to the rural world, but the peasants were the ones targeted by the message (sometimes there were special editions for them) and also from the perspective of the administrative practices of differentiating the cost of subscriptions between the urban and rural areas.[72]

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[70] See, for example, „Ce ne învaţă ziua de 10 Mai," [What Do We Learn from the Day of 10th of May] *Poşta Ţăranului* IV/180, 8 may 1927, 1, 10th of May, with the story of the War of Independence and highlighting the role played by Ion C. Bratianu, next to King Carol in this act.

[71] The letters arrived mainly from Dambovita, Prahova, Olt, Constanta, Valcea, Ialomita, Tulcea, Roman, Romanati, Mehedinti, Arges and Buzau. Asra Berkowitz notes the large impact of the newspaper in the counties of Oltenia and Muntenia, penetrating part of Moldova, but not so much across the Carpathians (ACNSAS, Fund Penal 456, vol. 2, File Berkowitz B. Israel, ff. 321-322).

[72] The designation of the rural world as an audience of the liberal newspaper is proven by the fact that the annual subscription for *Glasul Bucovinei* cost 500 lei, but the peasants had to pay only 300 lei. The Transylvanian publication that appeared every week, especially on Sunday, cost, in turn, only half the regular price for the villagers, priests and teachers (in *Glasul Ardealului*, anul I, nr. 1, duminică, 16 ianuarie 1927, 1). Also, those who sold in rural areas more than 10 copies retained their 30% gain, targeting "the educated people from the villages" (priests, teachers, merchants) Cf. „Gazeta noastră," in *Glasul Ardealului* I/16, 1 May 1927, 4. There were some mercantile tax strategies on the market, such as facilities for the vendors of newspaper in villages or for hose who paid the full

Launched in Cernăuţi, in the context of the unification with the Old Kingdom, *Glasul Bucovinei* became a liberal publication after the adhesion to the National Liberal Party of the group around Ion Nistor.[73] It was a cosmopolitan and cultural newspaper, but which also included legends, with a section entitled "the people's issues", cultural or economic information of general interest, news of the country or the world etc. The expression of politics, beyond the description of the Liberal Party's actions, was made in the range of attempting to include the Romanian liberalism in the national patrimony, by presenting figures of high ranking politicians (such as Spiru Haret, Alexandru Constantinescu and Ionel Brătianu), associated with Bukovina to a greater or lesser extent.

In accordance with the standard set in Bukovina, the Liberals established in Cluj the *Glasul Ardealului*, also subtitled as *Foaie săptămânală pentru popor* [Weekly Paper for the People]. The first issue appeared in January 16, 1927, the reasons for introducing the new mouthpiece being the fact that the Liberals had just went into opposition (against the Averescu government), but mainly because of the attempted modern organization of the National Liberal Party over the Carpathians, in the sense of participatory and persuasive democracy.

Glasul Ardealului did not openly declare itself as a political publication of the Liberals; in the same euphemistic and metaphoric terms of the *Poşta ţăranului* or the namesake weekly newspaper from Bukovina, the editorial team assumed the purpose to spread, "with the purest of thoughts", enlightenment, knowledge, advice and useful directions for the readers; the idea of giving people "food for the soul" was clearly a part of the cultural offensive proposed by Ionel Brătianu after 1927, as a new stage of the National Liberal Party's development. The secondary political message described the political quest of approaching the Transylvanians in the last 7 years, their wandering in the "dark", "dispelling on the rough paths", "hitting into each other" without a "wise guidance". The simple language and the quasi-religious pervasive tone were indicating the rural addressability of the newspaper. The discourse of Romanian solidarity in Transylvania was intertwined with the image of the new beginning in the life of the nation, but also with the memory of the deeds from another past, the one of the Romanians from across the Carpathians, where the Liberal personalities had held the main role.[74]

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amount of subscription up to February 1st, who were getting a book for free. „Către cititori," [To the Readers] *Glasul Ardealului* II/7, 19 February 1928, 3.

[73] See more in Buruiană, *Liberalii…*, 428-433.

[74] In the editorial of the first issue, the newspaper stood as a friend of the Transylvanian peasant, benevolent advisor and companion of doctrine, through the

The peasant who was targeted by *Glasul Ardealului* was the Romanian Orthodox. The equivalence established between the majority religion and Romanianism, with the explicit exclusion of others, of the Greek-Catholics National-Peasants in particular (but also Hungarians and Jews), acknowledged the political militancy determined by Alexandru Lapedatu, the political leader of Transylvania and Minister of Religious Affairs in several liberal governments.[75] Unlike *Glasul Bucovinei,* the Transylvanian newspaper was more politicized, aiming to restrict the National-Peasant "regionalists" and to create a discursive identification of the Liberals with the "true voice of Transylvania". *Glasul Ardealului* wanted to build, in connection with the Transylvanian village, mainly Romanian, the National Liberal Party's organization from across the Carpathians. Most articles were about the daily life of the Transylvanian peasant, but the reflection of the political life was presented from the perspective of the Romanian Liberals. Although run by professionals like Alexandru Cazaban[76], Gavril

helpful advice that it gave with regard to economic affairs and by favouring the knowledge of other nations, in order to "befriend with progress" and to ease his work („Batem la uşă," [We Knock on the Door] *Glasul Ardealului* I/1, 16 January 1927, 1). The permanent editorials circumscribed the identity of this publication: „Predici şi îndemnuri pentru creştini," [Sermons and Advice for Christians], „The Paper *Glasului Ardealului*", with the evocation of great Romanian historical figures (Mihai Viteazul, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Tudor Vladimirescu, Carol I, etc.) or of the decisive moments of national development (the union from 1859) „Ştiri politice din lume" [World Political News], „Ştiri şi fapte din lumea întreagă" [News and Facts from all over the World], „Din minunile ştiinţei" [Wonders of Science], „Sfaturi şi îndemnuri pentru plugari" [Advice and Instructions for Ploughmen] (regarding the works of the field), „Sfaturi şi îndrumări doftoriceşti" [Advice and Medical Instructions]. The parables included in the pages of the publication, having moral and civic themes, and the folk songs supported the cultural character the publication. It was also an Orthodox religious discourse, aggressive at the same time. More information in Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 433-438.

[75] Reflecting the events from Oradea in December 1927, in a story of the newspaper it was concluded that "the Jewish people in this country are a hindrance to our national prosperity"; Jews were presented as "staring across the borders, sparing no means to blaspheme the country"; the outburst of the youth was thus entitled spiritually, but the forms of action were not good, because they were harming the country („Volbura studenţească," [The Students' Whirl] *Glasul Ardealului* I/49, 18 December 1927, 1); In another issue, the Hungarian Jews were being denigrated („Cum ne iubesc străinii," [How Do the Foreigners Love Us] *Glasul Ardealului* II/12, 12 March 1928, 1).

[76] Alexandru Cazaban, talented popular writer, was the editor of *Universul* and *Viitorul* before becoming director at *Poşta Ţăranului*. See Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 426-427.

Rotică[77] and Octavian Buzea[78], the success of these publications in that period is questionable in terms of political impact. The Liberals have always been concerned with rethinking the approach of the press in the Romanian countryside.[79] In the fourth decade of the century, the rural newspapers became relays of the discourse issued from the centre and had the role of building a stronger loyalty of the party members, rather than attracting new adherents.

c. propaganda brochures. If the rural press and the calendars experienced periods of greater or lesser importance, in terms of how the Liberal leaders imagined the ways of imposing their power in the rural world after 1918, the "popular" brochures were a constant effort of the Romanian liberals in order to persuade the majority voters. The approach of the Centre was materialized, through the election committee and the general secretariat of the party, both in the context of elections, but also in everyday life, as a way of spreading the liberal doctrine and of structuring the political adversities. Publishing numerous brochures, pamphlets, posters or snapshots of political leaders was specific to the Romanian space, dominated by orality and imagery; the personalization of politics transformed the leader into vehicle for gaining the primacy in the society, and the image had a privileged role in public communication and in the construction of the partisan identity of the individual.

Often unsigned or having "generic" figures as their authors, the brochures offered the peasants the party's perspective on social reality and exposed "those guilty" for the hardships of the rural world. They took their arguments from the serious studies published by the Centre regarding taxes (now called "tributes"), the expensive living (obviously, meaning that the "National Peasants' Party had made living expensive"), the increasing interest rates ("more expensive money"), public spending ("the community's money") etc., but they were adapted for the rural areas through simple language and exposure, often accompanied by caricatures. Thus conceived, the small publications held a privileged place as propaganda tools, the liberals being presented, in a comparative manner, as those who had led the country from destruction to flourishing, while the

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[77] It is Gavriil Rotariu, but his pen name was G. Rotica. The recognition and influence which he enjoyed brought him the position of chairman of the Journalists' Syndicate in Bukovina. See more in Buruiană, *Liberalii…*, 186.

[78] Dr. Octavian Buzea was a well known journalist from Cluj. He published a monograph of the city in 1939, from the Romanian perspective, *Clujul. 1919-1939*, Cluj, Tipografia „Ardealul", 1939.

[79] Mircea Pârvulescu, „Presa liberal," [The Liberal Press] *Democraţia* XXIII/12, December 1935, 45-47.

National-Peasants had ruined it.[80] Having no way to measure their efficiency, I can only say that, through their detailed persuasive techniques, these brochures illustrated the politically reactive way in which the Liberals were facing the rural world in the interwar Romania[81].

The elections of December 1928 showed the short term effectiveness of the practices of persuasion and have emphasized the need of an organizational presence in the rural world.

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[80] The Liberals tried to project, by mirroring the Liberal governments and the National Peasants' Party's government, the significant role of their party in raising the Romanian village. See Ion Florescu, *1930. Situaţiunea politică văzută de un ţăran. Demisiunea din Partidul Naţional-Ţărănesc. Scurtă comparaţie a partidelor politice. Prietenul fals. „Negustorul Politic". Credinţa în starea politică viitoare. Răspuns unei grave ofense* [The Political Situation Seen by a Peasant. The Resignation from the National Peasants' Party. Short Comparison of the Political Parties. The False Friend. *The Political Trader*] (f.l., [1930]). The author, a peasant from Călineşti-Muscel who presented himself as a war disabled, greatly mutilated, says in the text that he had resigned from the National Peasants' Party.

[81] During the stay in power, the spreading of brochures was often made through an administrative mechanism. For example the brochure *De ce sunt Naţional Liberal. Crezul meu* [Why am I a National Liberal. My Belief] was spread by those named by the government, like the county prefect (ANDJ Iaşi, Fund Prefectura Judeţului Iaşi, File 38 / 1927, ff. 16-17). The situation changed when the party was in opposition. On the cover page of a brochure released in 1929, *După nouă luni de guvernare naţional-ţărănistă. Cum a fost înşelată lumea. – Făgădueli mincinoase. – Nădejdi deşarte* [After Nine Month of National-Peasant Governance. How the World Was Deceived – False Promises – Vain Hopes] (Cernăuţi: Institutul de Arte grafice şi Editură „Glasul Bucovinei", 1929), there was an urge for mobilization: "reader, after you read this pamphlet, pass it on to a relative or a friend, for him to read it." A practice developed while in opposition, the formula aimed to give value to a truth. Similarly, in 1932, it was published a brochure titled *Prăpădul cârmuirii naţional-ţărăniste. După doi ani de guvernare naţional-ţărănistă. Cum a fost înşelată lumea. Făgădueli mincinoase. – Nădejdi deşarte. – Pungăşii şi hoţii* [The Destructions of the National Peasant Government. After Two Years of National Peasant Governance. How the World Was Deceived - False Promises - Vain Hopes - Villains and Thieves], edited also in Cernăuţi, at Institutul de Arte Grafice şi Editură [the Institute of Graphic Arts and Publisher] by „Glasul Bucovinei", with the frontispiece: "Readers, pass on the brochure from one to another, from house to house."

4.3. The organizational construction of the NLP after 1928 and the ways of political integration of the peasant

In one of the most systematic interwar analyses applied upon the electoral phenomenon, Marcel Ivan characterized the Liberal Party mainly as the "ruling party". Going through the large fluctuations of the number of votes cast in successive elections, depending if it was in power or in opposition, the party of the Brătianu family was dependent on what the engineer delicately defines as the "governmental dowry": "a mass of voters which is either not part of any party, or does not manifest a permanent political sympathy for one party, and always votes with the government."[82] The few "actual votes" (those obtained during the opposition years and that came as a result of the perennial electoral force of the organizations) that the Liberal Party secured in the countryside expressed, according to the author, the fragile political structure of the Romanian Liberals after 1918. Unlike the National Peasants' Party, the Liberal Party had insufficient staff members. In a text addressed to the Liberal leadership in September 1929, Gheorghe Tătărescu remarked that the permanent "army" of party in the rural areas was made up exclusively of local leaders, "the rural bourgeoisie followed by its clientele". The leader from Gorj was aware of the splinter that existed in rural areas, the dissonance between leaders and most of the peasants being caused by different material interests or local passions. Characterized in the *memorandum* as "lazy people, lacking any propagandistic punch and militant traits [...] apathetic and immobile", the leaders appeared to be easy to neutralize by their opponents. Dependent on the administration, they had the ability to provide majorities only under the conditions of elections that were organized by Liberals.[83]

The National Liberal Party therefore represented not only the association of the dedicated individuals, who shared the same discourse about freedom, individual and state boundaries, but a "club" of the "notables", bound by actual interests, often financial ones. An urban party, as Dimitrie Drăghicescu noted, because that's where it selected its

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[82] Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice în cifre şi grafice. 1919-1932*, 28. In percentages, the government dowry was approximately 50%, lower in Transylvania and Banat, and higher in Bessarabia. In terms of numbers, the "dowry" tended to get lower towards 1932.

[83] *Memoriu referitor la acţiunea şi reorganizarea Partidului Naţional Liberal* [Memorandum regarding the Actions and Reorganization of the National Liberal Party], in SANIC, Fund I. G. Duca, File 76 / f.a., f. 9.

activists from.[84] In the new political society, winning the rural areas was an important test for the institutionalization of the Liberal Party's leadership and its capacity. The expanding and strengthening of the organization was the main objective of the liberal leadership in the aftermath of December 1928. The democratic sociability established by the National Peasants' Party compelled the Liberals to "modernize" the party in terms of mobilization and the participation of the party members, appearing as the only ways to regain political power.

In fact, the year of 1928 inaugurated the Liberals' practice of the political inclusion of the rural world. Widely circulated in historiography[85], the decision in November 1919 of the Liberal president Ion Brătianu, "the only one who has not lost his cold bloodedness" after the electoral defeat, to "step into the masses", rather reflects the Liberals' awareness for the need to democratically reorganize the party, rather than implementing full changes.[86] Having a desire to "combat the Averescu psychosis" and the "dangerous National-Peasants' demagogy", the party started to structure itself, under the supervision of I. G. Duca, throughout the country, based on the criteria required by the universal suffrage. The urgency of the action was influenced not only by the rural electorate,

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[84] D. Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale* [Political Parties and Social Classes] (Bucharest, 1922), 33-36 and 77.

[85] When approaching the issue of the integration of the National Liberal Party in the new political and electoral reality after the Great Union, most of the historians who study the interwar fixate on the moment of November 1919, when the Liberals were defeated in the first elections based on universal suffrage. Scurtu, Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918-1948)*, 132; Şandru, „Partidul Naţional-Liberal în perioada interbelică şi a celui de-al doilea război mondial," 204; Păun, *Evoluţia Partidului Naţional-Liberal în perioada 1918-1928*, 74-92 etc.

[86] There were many interested analysis during this period regarding the structural crisis of the Liberal Party. According to A. Papacostea, the deficiencies were caused by the inability of the Liberals to leave behind the mentality influenced by the prewar electoral colleges, and the incapacity to win different quasi-bourgeois interest groups, such as the members of the Conservative Party, of the National Party of Transylvania or of the Jewish bourgeois circles in the country. Alexandru Papacostea, *Criza Partidului Liberal* [The Crisis of the Liberal Party], in Alexandru Papacostea, *România Politică. Doctrină – Idei – Figuri. 1907-1925*, with portraits and two facsimiles (Bucharest: Tipografia „Bucovina" I. E. Torouţiu, f.a.), 214-216; Tancred Constantinescu, *Efectele legii electorale şi învăţămintele ce decurg din alegerile făcute după război* [The Effects of the Election Law and the Lessons that Derive from the Elections after the War], Bucharest, 1927, 109-111 ş.a.; see also Hans-Cristian Maner, *Parlamentarismul în România (1930-1940)* [Parliamentarism in Romania (1930-1940)], translated by Adela Motoc, foreword by Florin Constantiniu (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 39.

which was heading towards the new parties, but especially by the need to stop the departure of many Liberal members who became the new armour for Ion Mihalache's Peasants' Party after the war.[87] Party statutes and programs were developed speedily, the study circle has resumed its activity in Bucharest with conference cycles, the theoretical magazine *Democraţia* reappeared and the propaganda was intensified in villages, through the press, political brochures and other political materials.

Organizing the party with action committees in the villages or communes, according to the new constituencies, showed the Liberals' openness regarding their desire to approach the popular bases of the universal suffrage and to make contact with the inhabitants of towns and villages. The congress in November 27, 1921, was desired by Liberal leaders to be the effigy of the party's reformation and, implicitly, the preamble of taking over the government. Along with the programmatic statement, by which "the Liberal Party is of the opinion that the generations which created the national Unity now have the duty to strengthen and to perfect it through a national and democratic policy of order, progress, justice and social brotherhood", the adoption of the Statute designated the major act of renewing the Liberal Party, which had to define the identity and conduct of the internal party life.[88] The communal structure was formally designated as the first and most important link in the Liberal organization, as a way to induce the orientation of the formation towards the rural voters. Starting from the village level, it included all Liberals from that administrative unit, who democratically elected a *committee*, with the guiding purpose of the local policy of the party. The committees had the role of the symbolic integration of the members and also performed propaganda tasks by organizing clubs, popular libraries, reading houses etc., by supporting institutions or public works (schools, churches, popular banks, cooperatives, public baths, roads or local bridges); under the authority of the party, the essential function of the committee was the nomination of

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[87] D. Drăghicescu noticed this tendency of recruiting leaders of the Peasants' Party from the petty bourgeoisie, which until then had been with the Liberal Party. Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale*, 93.

[88] The statute is based on an earlier text (*Proiectul de statut pentru organizarea Partidului Naţional-Liberal* [The Statute Project for Organizing the National Liberal Party], Bucharest, 1920). Regarding the Congress of 1921, see *Istoricul Partidului Naţional-Liberal...* (1923), 229-230; Mircea Muşat, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire* [Romania after the Great Union], vol. II, part I: 1918-1933 (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1986), 68-69; Păun, *Evoluţia Partidului Naţional-Liberal în perioada 1918-1928*, 84-88.

the Liberal candidates for the local elections. In relation with the county centre, these were structures of local control, communicating the names of the party members (all having a membership card issued by the chairman of the county organization), but also being the leading source of information for the leadership, helping to articulate a political position by denouncing the abuses and injustices committed in the communes by the political opponents.[89]

„The statute had no value whatsoever", accused Asra Berkowitz at a time when he was trying to negotiate his personal escape, being incarcerated by the communist Securitate.[90] But the failures of the Liberals were numerous in the 1920s, their political and administrative culture generating the demotivation of the members and the departure of many teachers and priests attracted by the radical discourse of the Peasants' Party, A.C. Cuza's party, and Nicolae Iorga's groups etc. The Liberals have established "political clubs" in villages, but signed up entire villages in these clubs, without building any connections between the Liberal Party and these "members", with the exception "of some booklets that the Liberals were distributing"; the scripted nature of adhesion, based on electoral propaganda and reporting to the Centre, a fact that was denounced by Dimitrie Drăghicescu, who observed, during the elections, how the owners of these booklets often became committed and enthusiastic "propagandists of the Peasants' Party's cause."[91]

Several factors contributed to the failure of the Liberals during the first interwar decade of integrating the rural world. First, the inability of the other political forces to build themselves as viable alternatives to the National Liberal Party for governing Greater Romania; the attainment of

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[89] Incidentally, this organization could be found in the Statutes of 1930 or 1936. See Partidul Naţional Liberal, *Statutele Partidului Naţional-Liberal votate de Congresul general din Bucureşti în zilele de 1, 2, 3 şi 4 Mai 1930, complectat cu modificările făcute art. 41, 42, 50 şi 53 şi votate în Congresul general din 9 Iulie 1936 ţinut în sala „ARO"* [The Statutes of the National Liberal Party Voted by the General Congress of Bucharest in the days of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of May 1930, filled in with the Modifications made to art. 41, 42, 50 and 53 and voted in the General Congress from the 9th of July 1936 at the „ARO" Hall] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independenţa", 1944).

[90] ACNSAS, Fund Penal 456, vol. 7, Berkowitz B. Israel, f. 318. The important coordinator of the liberal press refers to the Statute of May 1930. But his statement fits all liberal documents of that period.

[91] Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale*, 86 and 90-91, about the organizational deficiency and the reduced impact of the Liberal program in rural areas. He does not hesitate to consider that "the Peasants' Party is the love child of the Liberal Party" (Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale*, 91).

the governmental power in January 1922 convinced the Liberals that power was "conquered" at the Royal Palace and not as a result of the electoral confrontations; later, during Ionel Brătianu's Cabinet (1922-1926), the focusing of the important leaders of the party on issues concerning restoration and unification have slowed the internal reform. The principle of decentralizing the decision-making process, with the "organization of the party from the bottom to the top", considered by Vintilă Brătianu as decisive from the democratic point of view[92], as well as the political inclusion of the peasantry remained only desiderata.[93] The Liberals have defined their party as "the governing body par excellence"[94] and, given the low impact that their political ideas had in the Romanian public sphere, they returned to the administrative practices of rural control.[95] In turn, Ionel Brătianu was not interested, as president of the

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[92] Vintilă Brătianu, *Politica şi votul obştesc* [Politics and the Universal Suffrage] (Bucharest: Imprimeriile „Independenţa", 1920), 16.

[93] Asra Berkowitz said that, in the new provinces, the Liberal political organizations were feeble and weak; even in the Old Kingdom, Liberal members in villages and towns lacked ideals, had no urge to fight, and were incompatible with any effort. He explains this reality through the certainty of getting back in power whenever "the boss wants"; the dependence on the central leader was a handicap for the liberal organizations that functioned only artificially, without initiative, auxiliary and benefiting from the central power. Called to govern, the party was bound to the elite and to administrative means (ACNSAS, Fund Penal 456, vol. 2, File Berkowitz B. Israel, f. 282-283). Regarding the formal re-organization, see also Virgil Andronescu, former Liberal (Georgist after 1930), even beyond the partisan manner in which he describes a reality that he knew directly (Andronescu, *Spre reînoirea liberalismului românesc*, 5-8).

[94] Petrescu, *Opera Partidului Naţional-Liberal*, 10.

[95] In the new electoral configuration, the Liberals thought that the fundamental thing was to attract leaders from the rural world and use tehm in order to obtain votes. Sent by I. Gh. Duca in the county's municipalities to organize the electoral propaganda in Valcea, M. Mihalescu described to the Liberal minister the situation of the party in the village Pesceanca: "Marin Popescu is managing the situation there (...) and the teacher Traian Stefanescu has a good image. Both are our men, so that, unlike in the past, Pesceanca is entirely with us" (SANIC, Fund I. Gh. Duca, File 217, f. 2). Similar testimonies were collected also by people close to Nicolae Iorga. At the same elections in 1919, also in Valcea, in the village L., various leaders from Bucharest spoke to the villagers. Opinions of the villagers were divided – some were on Bratianu's side, some on *Avelescu*'s, some on Marghiloman's side, but in the end, after the departure of the candidates, the landlord has "advised" them: "Why are you so influenced by all these wanderers? I will show you with whom you should vote, because you'll be stuck with me, I will give you land, I have domains", and the villagers went and voted as they were

party, in the political struggle of "agitation", in getting in contact with the voters. For the Liberal leader, a statesman oriented towards governance, the party was just one *element of expression* in the democratic regime. In retrospect, Petre I. Ghiață said that as a mere "framework", stretched across the country, without a single content of enthusiasm, without solid adherence from the masses, the Liberal Party was inspired by the prestige of its leader, which was "solidified and crystallized by an unbroken series of successes".[96] Moreover, the expansion of the party in the provinces that were united in 1918 was done in the context of Ionel Brătianu's position as the depository of power in the Romanian political imaginary. The Liberal leader's ability to exploit disagreements arising between leading figures from Bessarabia, Transylvania, Bukovina and Banat[97] mattered

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indicated, with the Liberals (Adria B., „Cum se înșeală oamenii. Ce zice lumea de d-voastră când nu știți să votați," [How the People are Deceived. What Do the People Say about You When You Don't Know How to Vote] *Neamul Românesc pentru Popor* VIII/1, 2/16 February 1920, 14-16). Dividing the communities and the various local rivalries - priest, teacher, innkeeper, or wealthy farmers – were important for the parties in their concern to get members and votes. In a letter from Ion Ciorănescu to Ion Mihalache about the elections of 1920 in Dambovita county, in the district of Pietroșița he reported the differences based on political parties: the mayor from Runcu, the teacher and one of the two priests were on Averescu's side, the second priest and the landlord were Liberals; in Moroeni, the mayor was with the Peasants' Party and the teacher with Averescu, and in Pietroșița the big landlords were Liberals, the priest was with Averescu and during sermons he urged parishioners in the church to vote for the People's Party, while the teacher was with the Peasants' Party. SANIC, Fund Ion Mihalache, 1, ff. 59-60.

[96] In the time of Ionel Bratianu, the Liberal Party was a "mere fiction, only formally fulfilling the role demanded by the constitutional game for the parties" (Petre I. Ghiață, *Oameni și fapte* [People and Deeds] (Bucharest: „Ideia", f.a.), 26-27). For the way in which Ionel Brătianu harmed the normal development of the Liberal Party, see also Sterie Diamandi, *Galeria oamenilor politici* [The Gallery of Political Men] (Bucharest: Editura Gesa, 1991) [it reproduces the edition of 1935], 90-93. Similarly, over the years, Aurelian Bentoiu considered that Ionel Bratianu, being the heir of a power system, did not achieve, after the introduction of the universal suffrage, an adaptation of the party's organization to the new state of affairs (ACNSAS, Fund Penal 204, vol. 3, File Bentoiu Aurelian, f. 228).

[97] From the perspective of social recognition, Ion Inculeț in Bessarabia, Ioan Nistor in Bukovina, Dr. Avram Imbroane in Banat, G. Cipaianu in Transylvania were attracted by various means (the prestige of Ionel Bratianu, their national beliefs, financial interests etc.) in the Liberal structure. The expansion of the organizations in Bessarabia was achieved when they were in power, between 1922-1926, by attracting intellectuals orbiting around Ion Inculeț, merging their political group in January 1923, when in Chișinau was created a circle of studies focused on

decisively for the expansion of the organization, doubling the much hated financial strength of the party.[98]

Getting real popularity through a judicious organization, clean propaganda and through staying in a continuous contact with the masses, to use the typical terminology of the liberal discourse, became the perpetual target during opposition times. In a 1926 analysis on the effects of the electoral law and on the lessons deriving from the choices made after the war, Tancred Constantinescu noticed that the National Liberal Party lived for a long time from the deeds committed in the past, from the high qualities of the leader, from the skills of the leaders and the ability to govern. The conclusions of the Liberal politician aimed especially the organization of the party in the new regions; the National Liberal Party had obtained good election results in the counties of the Old Kingdom, where they had many people engaged in grassroots politics, "serious" structures "where work is getting done". The problem of renewing the

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Bessarabian issues (Ioan Scurtu, *Ion I. C. Brătianu. Activitatea politică* [The Political Activity] (Bucharest: Editura Museion, 1992), 66; *Viitorul* XVI/4641, 24 January 1923, 1; Biblioteca Naţională, Aşezămintele Brătianu, Fund St. Georges, Arhiva P.N.L., pachet XLV); Also in 1923, the Democratic Union Party in Bucovina, led by Ion Nistor, merged with the Liberals (*Viitorul* XVI/4648, 31 january 1923, 1); in 1925, a group of politicians from Banat, led by Avram Imbroane, split off from the People's Party and joined the National Liberal Party (*Viitorul* XVII/4702, 31 March 1925, 1).

[98] The Liberal financial predominance, in the form of banks, administration boards, "nationalizations" of Austrian or German-owned enterprises, played an important role, no doubts about it; but not as big as pictured by the opponents, as a way of denigrating those who had joined the National Liberal Party in these regions, but also as a way of rejecting their own declines. The reorganization started from the "high finance". One of Iorga's followers noticed the practice of attracting adherents using as a central element in each rural center, in every city, the Romanian Bank's local branch, the Liberals' citadel. Around the bank, shortly after that, was launched "a club" "with its own newspaper" (Scarlat Băluţă, „Partidul liberal se *reorganizează*," [The Liberal Party is Reorganizing] *Neamul Românesc* XV/220, 7 October 1920, 1); see also Păun, *Evoluţia Partidului Naţional-Liberal în perioada 1918-1928*, 83. Gh. Gh. Mârzescu, in *Note din călătoria mea în Ardeal cu Ion I. C. Brătianu* [Notes from my Trip in Transylvania with I.C. Bratianu], presents the journey across the Carpahians, in the summer of 1921, of some Liberal leaders (Vintilă and Ionel Brătianu, I. G. Duca, Dr. C. Angelescu, N. N. Săveanu, Jean Th. Florescu etc.), in the campaign to impose the party. The main goal was the opening of the Circle of Studies of the National Liberal Party in Cluj, but they also visited other cities: Oradea, Târgu Mureş, Braşov, in the last one being opened a Romanian Bank branch (in SANIC, Fund Gh. Mârzescu, File 147 / 1921).

staff seemed very important for the author, even if when it came to the relationship with the Romanian village, he preferred the administrative approach of the party, the intense propaganda for "enlightening the masses", using priests and teachers.[99]

Besides the organizational framework, there were also the Liberals' doubts, after the granting of the civil rights, regarding the peasants' ability to rationally discern between different competitors for power.[100] Discursively, the party members embraced the organization of the Romanian political community after the Great Union on democratic bases. Dimitrie Drăghicescu subordinated the universal suffrage to the general process of transforming every citizen into a cultural, moral and at the same time economical asset.[101] But in the immediate post-war period and also from the angle of analysis of the government elite, which was in the position of losing its legitimacy, the liberal leaders were surprised by the invasion of the public arena, on an unprecedented scale, of dynamic political forces, attractive from an electoral point of view, who often used populism and demagogy.[102] Nostalgic for the more predictable pre-war

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[99] Constantinescu, *Efectele legii electorale şi învăţămintele ce decurg din alegerile făcute după război*, 109-111.

[100] Vintilă I. Brătianu, „Din învăţămintele votului obştesc," [From the Lessons of the Universal Suffrage] *Ideea Europeană* II/43, 13-20 June 1920, 1-2. Liberals intersected here with the conservatives. Alexandru Marghiloman noted that the majority was ignorant regarding candidates during elections, they did not know how to vote, many peasants coming to vote only for fear of fines, only the Jews being better informed. There was an "absolute ignorance", he concluded, some came to vote without even knowing the lists of candidates. Alexandru Marghiloman, *Note politice* [Political Notes], vol. III, *România şi primul război mondial (1914-1919). Războiul (1918-1919). România politică după întregire (1920-1924). Adenda (1897-1911)*[Romania and World War I (1914-1919). The War (1918-1919). Political Romania after the Union (1920-1924). Addenda (1897-1911)], edition and introduction by Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 1995), 330-331. In a similar way, Dimitrie Drăghicescu wrote: "If you would have done a plebiscite, an absolutely free plebiscite, without any pressures or propaganda, I am convinced that the majority of the peasantry would have voted against" (regarding the right to vote – my note, Ovidiu Buruiană). Drăghicescu, *Partidele politice şi clasele sociale*, 38.

[101] Drăghicescu, *Partidele politice şi clasele sociale*, 86.

[102] Mircea Djuvara, „Doctrina Partidului Naţional-Liberal: spiritul său," [The Doctrine of the National Liberal Party: Its Spirit] *Democraţia* XVII/7-8, July-August 1929, 12. The Peasants' Party has overwhelmed the Liberals with their radical and utopian promises: in Dambovita, for example, before the elections of 1920, Vasile Bendic, a propagandist of the Peasants' Party wandered through villages and urged people to vote the list of the Peasants' Party because his party

political life, some liberals thought of limiting the universal suffrage, believing that the representation of the nation had to be, according to them, "the wise reflection of all professional competences."[103] Officially, the party could not support such a project. But the liberal discourse was built around the need to civically and politically educate the majority voter, as a way of achieving - by lowering the elite among the masses – a responsible democracy. The issue had, once again for the liberals, a character of necessity, the peasants' illiteracy representing a disability for the contribution which Romania wanted to bring in the European civilization.[104] With no "education", the universal suffrage became a danger for the country, claimed Drăghicescu.[105] Through Ionel Brătianu's speech, in 1927, the Liberal Party set the "cultural work" as a priority for Romania. "Strong democratization through culture, the existence of a powerful and harmonic civic civilization" led by the intellectual elite[106], represented the new policy objective which had to be achieved, all the administrative associations, cultural or of any other nature (youth organizations, clergy, military, railway, health services etc.) needing to cooperate with the state in this new battle.[107]

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would have given them each 30 acres from landowners, without compensations, and pasture for cattle on the state lands. SANIC, Fund Direcţia Generală a Poliţiei, 9/1920, f. 1.

[103] The distribution by professions of the votes for the Liberals was theorized in the most coherent way by Drăghicescu, *Evoluţia ideilor liberale…*, 57-75; Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale*, 19; but it is not the only one: in an article from *Democraţia* (with the significant title, but without being signed, „Asupra formei de guvernământ," [Regarding the Form of Government] VIII/7-8, July-August 1920, 178-179) it is presented a parliament in which 50% of the elected people are professionals, with an established hierarchy within the professional branches, based on fundamental attributes of social life: work and skill.

[104] Horia Furtună*,* „Criza morală a timpului de faţă," [The Moral Crisis of the Present Day] *Democraţia* IX/5, May 1921, 131

[105] Drăghicescu, *Partide politice şi clase sociale*, 86.

[106] G. Bogdan-Duică, „Discursul cultural al D-lui I. I. C. Brătianu", [The Speech of Mr. I.C. Brătianu] in *Democraţia* XV/4, April 1927, 10.

[107] The enlightenment of the masses implied the functioning of the state as a pivot; in 1933, Gh. Beiu Paladi suggested a pyramidal organization, using the Cultural Council of the people's culture (with representatives of the Ministry, Academy etc.) as an instrument of coordination and management, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education; in the counties there were to be established Cultural Councils (which had to comprise in terms of authorities also the delegates of private companies), such structures being designed up to the communal level; the moral elevation of the people, its enlightenment for the formation of a national

The structuring of the party in the relationship with the rural world was thus kept informal. Despite the attempts during the opposition years (1920-21 or 1926-27), the National Liberal Party was not prepared for elections, the permanent framework necessary for the new participatory politics being deficient. The results of the elections organized by non-Liberal governments (the ones organized by General Alexandru Averescu in 1920 and 1926 or by Iuliu Maniu in 1928) show the prominent political weakness of the Romanian Liberals. Vintilă Brătianu started the process of reorganizing the party in order to "put down roots in the political reality of the masses," noted Petre I. Ghiaţă, the secretary of the Liberal organization of Ilfov County.[108] For many observers of the political sphere, the opposition period which began in 1928 was decisive for the survival of the Liberal Party.[109] And from a social perspective, the Liberals were becoming aware that they had to engage with the rural areas in order to mobilize the Romanian peasants under the banner of the party.

5. The forms of political reorganization. The relative success of the National Liberal Party towards the rural world during the years of opposition (1928-1933)

In a letter dated September 6, 1929, sent from his parent's home of Miorcani (Dorohoi), Ion I. Pillat, the Liberal leader of the county and grandson of the Brătianu family, but not a man too passionate about politics, confessed about the fatigue generated by the political trips around the territory and declared his high hopes for the reconstruction; the nice

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consciousness and of social solidarity were supposed to be put in practice by organizing celebrations, sittings, courses for adults, circles, weekly conferences, newspapers etc.; the mobilizing moments were represented as *weeks*: of *Divinity*, *Mother*, *Child, Unification,* of *Eminescu*, *wheat* etc. „Ofensiva cultural," [The Cultural Offensive] *Democraţia* XXI/2 (February 1933), 32-38.

[108] Ghiaţă, *Oameni şi fapte*, 36-37.

[109] Dr. N. Lupu, an ally of the ruling Liberals (under Vintilă Bratianu), believed that "in opposition, the Liberal Party has many things to do. Firstly, it must create a mass organization which it does not have and did not ever have" (Mihail Polihroniade, „De vorbă cu d-l Doctor Lupu," [Talking to Mr. Doctor Lupu] *Vremea. Politică Socială-Culturală* [The Times. Social-Cultural Politics] I/40, 22 November 1928, 4); Constantin Garoflid also had faith that the move of the Liberals to the opposition was good for the future of the Liberal Party, in the sense of refreshing their own methods. (Mihail Polihroniade, „De vorbă cu d-l Constantin Garoflid," [Talking to Mr. Constantin Garoflid] *Vremea. Politică-Socială-Culturală* II/51, 14 February 1929, 6.

environment in the organization had led to the creation of Liberal committees in all municipalities.[110] The party's reorganization started after 1928, in each branch, and the activity was fervid in the villages. But there was no coherent project of the Centre regarding the reformation of the National Liberal Party. The encouragements sent from Bucharest for a mobilization while stating in the opposition contained the same beliefs exposed during the previous years.[111] As was later the case, the principles for the party's internal redefinition, presented by I. G. Duca, did not innovate; they signalled the integration of the locals and the need to let them manage the organizations, the ability of the Liberal branches to genuinely prepare for the future political struggles and the subsequent governmental actions, the need to attract the youth and the intellectuals to fight under the banner of the party, to represent the local interests, the campaign for "the enlightenment of the masses" etc.[112]

One of the Liberals' concerns during those years was to rethink their message, wishing to have a more impactful message in the rural areas. In September 1929, Gheorghe Tătărescu suggested to I.G. Duca that the concept of "social harmony", although stemming from a grand political principle and suited for the issues of Greater Romania, was not a "rallying cry", it lacked expressiveness and it did not stir any echoes among the masses. Competing with the National Peasants' Party, who accused them of sacrificing the interests of agriculture at the expense of the industrial and banking interests, the Liberals had to insert in their program some useful reforms that had the land issue in their focus. Tătărescu proposed rallying slogans for the new program, such as "the land first of all", "profound expropriations" etc., formulas which had to be accompanied by the practical solution of an effective agricultural code (with the organization of agricultural credit, of agricultural education, of methods to

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[110] These structures remained to be composed "only" in 4-5 villages. Pillat, *Scrisori (1898-1944)*, 248. In Ilfov, at the permanent delegation, was formed a committee to reorganize the party, led by Petre I. Ghiață, and the county leader I. Niculescu Dorobanțu highlighted, for the sector leaders, the need for political action in villages. „Întrunirea organizației național-liberale din județul Ilfov," [The Gathering of the National-Liberal Organization of Ilfov unty] *Viitorul* XXII/6325, 15 march 1929, 2.

[111] Read more about this action of organizing the party in opposition in Buruiană, *Construind opoziția…*, 261-306.

[112] „Partidul Liberal și Ardealul. Îndrumări date de dl Ion G. Duca, președintele Partidului Național Liberal, în consfătuirea ținută la Cluj cu fruntașii ardeleni," [The National Liberal Party and Transylvania. Advice Given by Mr. Ion Gh. Duca, the President of the National Liberal Party at the meeting in Cluj with the Transylvanian leaders] *Glasul Ardealului*, V/30, 26 July 1931, 3.

produce and distribute on a community level, agricultural mechanization, supporting the agricultural export etc.). The discursive renewal also represented, according to the Liberal leader, the way to get rid of the label that designated them as the "bourgeois capitalist party", "the leitmotif of any National-Peasant propaganda and incitements" against the Liberal Party.[113]

The organizational inadequacy at the level of the Romanian village was however problematic, according to Gheorghe Tătărescu. If in the new provinces everything needed to be built from scratch, for the Old Kingdom he suggested the creation of a mass party, which was to replace the structures that were specific to the pre-war censitary vote. The fact that the recruitment of the members favoured certain professional groups was viewed, under the conditions of the universal suffrage, as a weakness by the politician from Gorj. The mentalities shaped according to the limited political needs had to be overcome by gearing the party towards the bottom of the social pyramid in the rural communities and by transforming the Liberals into a majority party, reaffirmed Tătărescu.[114]

For many Liberals, the integration of the rural world had thus become a matter of political survival. Increasingly relevant as a leader towards the end of the first decade after 1918 and the actual president of the party since December 1930, I. G. Duca was the one who assumed, passionately according to his biographer[115], the reformation of the party. Duca went on to restore the territorial organizations, county by county, taking an interest in every details regarding the leaders, vice-leaders and even ordinary members of the party, from the village cell to the composition of the central committee. He personally observed the local propaganda as well as the recruitment and propagation of the party's adherents, as a form of the party's adaptation to the new conditions of political struggle. His presidency meant, as noted by Petre I. Ghiață, the "beginning of an era of internal democratization and the regeneration of the membership."[116]

Geographically, the organizational offensive of liberals concentrated, predictably after the failures of the past, on areas outside the Old Kingdom, particularly in Transylvania. The structural weakness of the Liberal Party

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[113] *Memoriu referitor la acţiunea şi reorganizarea Partidului Naţional Liberal* [Memorandum Regarding the Action and Reorganization of the National Liberal Party], in SANIC, Fund I. G. Duca, 76 / f.d. [1929], f. 6.

[114] *Memoriu referitor la acţiunea şi reorganizarea Partidului Naţional Liberal*, 10.

[115] Gheorghe Selten, *Viaţa şi opera lui I. G. Duca. Omul politic ca erou* [The Life and Work of I.G.Duca. The Politician as a Hero] (Bucharest: Atelierele „Curierul Judiciar" S.A., 1935), 65.

[116] Ghiață, *Oameni şi fapte*, 43-45.

in Transylvania was a vulnerability with regard to the public and political expression on a national level.[117] The local branches across the Carpathians had a high degree of formalism, being active only during elections. According to an opponent of the liberals, the party leaders from Transylvania did not represent anyone and meant nothing in terms of electoral gains.[118] The low penetration of the National Liberal Party across the Carpathians had two explanations: firstly, they ignored the local mentalities, and secondly, the fact that the Liberals had hastily included in their organizations only the *opportunists.*[119]

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[117] Even since 1920, in a speech in the Chamber of Deputies (the session of 5 February 1920), Gheorghe Tătărescu emphasized the need of the Liberal Party to strengthen through the contribution of the locals; "In our cooperation and our union, and in the amount of force which you had to bring in our policy, the entire country saw in Transylvanians the distant oasis in which its greatest hopes blossomed", said the liberal politician Gh. Tătărescu, *Fragmente* [Fragments](f.l., f.a. [1929?]), 7. More details regarding the political opposition campaign in Transylvania can be found in Buruiană, *Construind opoziţia…*, 288-291.

[118] L. Adrian, „Lupta politică în Ardeal," [The Political Battle in Transylvania] *Opoziţia* II/17, 3 February 1929, 12-13; To illustrate the "lack of of organization", the Someş County Committee of the National Liberal Party decided, in the meeting of February 7, 1922 (the letter to the other Liberal organizations was submitted only on September 24, 1922), to organize the party in the villages of the county, with enrollment lists of adherents, village by village, then with the creation of National Liberal clubs, then the subsequent election, for a period of 4 years, of the National Liberal clubs (with 7-11 members in the urban areas and 7 to 9 members in the rural clubs, with a membership "tax, which will subsequently come to a moderate sum, if there will be no need for it, a fact they will not know for now"); the Committee elected its own office, a president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary (SANIC, Fund A. C. Cuza, File 5/1922-1927, f. 1); 5 years later, in February-March 1927, when receiving new members, the discussion about local structures was in the same enthusiastic terms of the beginning of organization (SANIC, Fund A. C. Cuza, File 5/1922-1927, ff. 2-4). In relation with the Banat, a report of the Special Service of Security from Lugoj noted that the National Liberal organizations in this region hardly mattered, the Liberals existed there due to the power of the Center from the Old Kingdom, and because it was ostly in power, managed to give weight to unknown politicians that lacked local significance. *Raportul din 27 mai 1928 a Serviciului Special de Siguranţă Lugoj, către Inspectoratul General de Siguranţă Timişoara* [Report from 27th of May 1928 of the Special Service Security from Lugoj, to the General Inspectorate of Security from Timisoara], in SANIC, Fund General Directorate of Police, 3/1928, f. 222.

[119] Victor Costea, „Partidul liberal din Ardeal în reorganizare," [The Liberal Party in Transylvania in Reorganization] *Cronica Politică şi Parlamentară* [The Political and Parliamentary Chronicle] I/11, 3 May 1929, 4. The author believed,

In order to exert a political attraction for the Romanians from the regions that were unified after 1918, especially regarding the Orthodox peasants, the Liberal leaders "wandered" through all the provinces as if taking part in a ritual, organizing annual public meetings and frequent conferences in several organizations. Aiming to overcome the previous failure, the party leaders sought to gain the cooperation of the local factors. The discursive adaptation to local realities, by approaching subjects which had an impact in Transylvania, such as the religious question, the issue of the Concordat, the Romanian schools as part of the cultural effort of lifting the nation etc., demonstrate the change of the political methods employed by the Liberals.

In a 19th century manner, I. G. Duca continued to request from the delegates coming to meetings a solemn commitment that each and every one of them was going to act as an apostle, to gather all good Romanians and all conscious citizens, from villages and communes, around the Liberal banner.[120] But the differences from the past political approaches of

moreover, that the Liberal Party could not be organized in Transylvania in an ideal form, without moving the center of gravity from the sterile class of bankers to the other interest groups of the manufacturers.

[120] „Mare manifestaţie politică la Cernăuţi," [Great Political Manifestation in Cernăuţi] *Viitorul* XXII/6413, 3 July 1929, 1. See also the press release issued during the journey across the Carpathians from 1931, which highlighted the key themes that the propaganda of the liberals should have promoted in Transylvania: legal unification, the locals, magyarized Romanians, the culture and confessions of Transylvania („Ce are de făcut Ardealul," [What Transylvania Has to Do] *Glasul Ardealului* V/30, 26 july 1931, 1; „Partidul Naţional-Liberal şi Ardealul. Importante declaraţiuni făcute de d-l Duca, preşedintele partidului, în consfătuirea de astăzi dela Cluj," [The National Liberal Party and Transylvania. Important statements made by Mr. Duca, President of the party, in the today's conference in Cluj] *Viitorul* XXIII/7038, 21 July 1931, 2. Regarding the regular visits undertaken see the trips made by Duca in Transylvania in October 1931 („Partidul Naţional Liberal şi problemele la ordinea zilei. Declaraţiile d-lui I. G. Duca la Alba-Iulia," [The National Liberal Party and the Current Problems] *Viitorul* XXIII/7102, 4 october 1931, 1; „Manifestaţia Partidului Naţional-Liberal la Cluj," [The Manifestation of the National Liberal Party in Cluj] *Viitorul* XXIII/7109, 13 october 1931, 2 ş.a.), also in May and December next year („Strălucita manifestaţie a Partidul Naţional-Liberal la Cluj. Consfătuirea preşedinţilor P.N.L. din Transilvania," [The Extraordinary Manifestation of the National Liberal Party in Cluj. The Meeting of the Presidents of the NLP in Transylvania] *Viitorul* XXIV/7472, 20 December 1932, 2). In August-September 1931 he went to Bessarabia, meeting with local Liberals in Cahul, Ismail, Cetatea Alba, Tighina, Chisinau and Hotin („Declaraţiile d-lui Duca la Chişinău," [The Declarations of Mr. Duca in Chisinau] *Viitorul* XXIII/7075, 3 september 1931, 1; see also „Vizita

the party were considerable. The evaluation of the progress regarding the formation of the local structures was done during the political campaign that took place during the spring of 1932 and during the electoral struggles of July, in the same year. Three large public demonstrations were held in Cernăuţi, Cluj and Chişinău. For the meeting in Cluj, that took place on the 22nd of May 1932, the organizations from across the Carpathians had to prove the strong and numerous membership that the party had at its disposal "at that time".[121]

6. A quantitative analysis of the National Liberal Party's orientation towards the rural world in the early 1930s

In the absence of the party's own documents, the social history attempt from below is supported by data provided by the Liberals themselves in their central or local media. *Viitorul*, *Glasul Ardealului* and other publications frequently presented those who had signed to become members of the various county organizations, noting with accuracy the new member's professions. I do not know if the names or professions listed in the newspapers are real; the propaganda effort is obvious and it goes beyond the attempt to attract adherents by mimicking the enthusiasm and the unanimity existing around the liberal ideals: concerned to reject the opponents' insinuations and accusations regarding the bourgeois and oligarchic nature of the party, offering representation to all professional categories afforded the National Liberal Party a favourable public image, and it built confidence among the Liberals and allowed them to identify with the nation as a political association of all social classes.

In terms of analysis, I have consistent information regarding the organizations from Transylvania, which do not accurately describe the social composition of the party in its entirety. At the same time, my references only pertain to individuals who identified themselves as

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d-lui I. G. Duca în Basarabia," [The Visit of Mr. I.G. Duca in Bessarabia] *Glasul Bucovinei* XIV/3589, 29 august 1931, 1.
[121] Duca alerted Al. Lapedatu, the unofficial president of the Transylvanian Liberal, to take action for a representative participation, along with the members of the permanent delegations of the county organizations, the presence of large number of intellectuals being desirable. The aim was to show the public that the party united the most important people in this part of the country, the Liberals having thus the confidence of the people and being able to legitimately claim the government (SANIC, Fund Alexandru Lapedatu, File 190, f. 7); vezi şi „Pentru răsturnarea guvernului şi mântuirea ţării," [For the Overthrow of the Government and the Salvation of the Country], in *Glasul Ardealului* VI/18, 1 May 1932, 2.

permanent Liberal members, who took part in the electoral struggle and could be found as party delegates at the political conventions that were held in order to gain the power, to strengthen the internal cohesion or to socialize. A last methodological remark circumscribes this text: aiming to be comprehensive of the whole problematic, the study allows mainly the conclusions and not a detailing of the issues under discussion. Therefore, as a factual support of the interpretation I refer to my previous research on the subject.[122]

In the first decade after the Union, the Liberals' formal or actual proclivity to open themselves to all classes was accompanied by the organizational realities of a government party of cadres. After 1927, the National Liberal Party's leaders tried to integrate those that they had omitted until then in their attempts at political domination: the peasants of the Old Kingdom and especially those from Transylvania. The actual measurement of the party's force was possible in the parliamentary elections organized by the National Peasants' Party government led by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod (July 1932).[123] The election campaign was an occasion for the Liberals' exemplary mobilization within the democratic paradigm of power. The Cluj Assembly in May 1932 had to offer the Liberal Party's leaders the eloquent proof of the reorganization of the party in that part of the country. The number of participants itself does not matter; each of the 22 Transylvanian county organizations of the party (excepting the one in Cluj, whose members do not appear listed because the assembly took place in their city)[124] sent large delegations in the symbolic capital of the region to attend this regional "congress", which was meant to support the idea of representativeness and the power of the county structures. The professions of those delegates mentioned in the party press[125], presented quantitatively and not proportionally, enable a visualization of the party's orientation towards the rural world. The raw numbers show that from a total of 605 delegates, most of them were

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[122] The Chapter „Liberalul ca burghez" [The Liberal as a Bourgeois], from Buruiană, *Liberalii…*, 251-329 and annexes at the end of the book.

[123] The significance of these elections in Buruiană, *Construind opoziţia...*, 496-509.

[124] For Cluj, see the analysis of Ioan Ciupea and Virgiliu Ţârău, *Liberalii clujeni. Destine în Marea Istorie* [The Liberals from Cluj. Destinies in the Great History], vol. I-II (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2007 and 2009), especially the 2nd volume, *Medalioane* [Medallions], including biographies of the Liberal members.

[125] Lists of delegations participating at the congress in „Delegaţii Congresului Naţional-Liberal din Ardeal şi Banat," [Delegates of the National Liberal Congress in Transylvania and Banat] *Viitorul* XXIV/7295, 7297, 7298, 25 May 1932, 27 May 1932, 28 May 1932, 2-3.

lawyers (124), landlords (94), instructors, teachers and priests (each category with 77 representatives), merchants (44), doctors (21), financiers (20) etc. The ploughmen were represented by only two delegates. The territorial distribution of these professions is not relevant here, although several party members that were teachers and priests came from Mureş and Turda, while the landlords came from the counties of Târnava Mare, Sălaj or Turda.[126]

The data regarding the Transylvanian Liberal organizations at the moment of the Congress of May 1932 can be compared with those given by the electoral lists used in the county elections in February 1930[127]: out of 319 candidates, most have specified that they were ploughmen (80), followed by priests (74), financiers (46), lawyers (34) and teachers (29). Most of the "ploughmen" were from Satu Mare, Sălaj, Cluj and Hunedoara. In the analysis of this *ad hoc* census, Mureş and Sălaj are on the first places regarding the priests.

The presented figures require different reflections on method. I have no control over the information written by editors, meaning that I cannot verify it using other historical sources.[128] I do not know if there are presented all the delegates who participated or all the mentioned candidates and how representative are they for the county organization. Also, the declared professions are most likely subjective, the participants aiming for a favourable projection in the public opinion; even at his level, not only when the parliamentary stage is involved, there is a "risk" of dealing with career politicians, individuals who had a profession before politics fully captured their preoccupations, some Liberals indicating as their primary occupation positions such as *mayor, town councillor* etc. Another issue of the research is the accuracy of the terminology of professions which are associated with a name; *landlord* or *ploughman*, for example, do not clarify anything from the practical point of view, which is why I superimposed the two terms; also the profession of *financier* is a generic one, the Liberals being presented as bank managers, higher bank clerks etc.; the ecclesial roles of *dean* or *archdeacon* were assimilated with the position of *priest*; I did the same thing whenever I stumbled upon

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[126] See the chart from Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 304.

[127] See *Ibidem*, 305-306; "Alegerile judeţene," [The County Elections] *Glasul Ardealului* IV/5, 2 February 1930, 3-4. Also SANIC, Fund Alexandru Lapedatu, 190, ff. 3-4.

[128] It is possible, however, based on the obligation to declare their profession when entering into the party, that there are documents (which, unfortunately, I did not find yet) that accurately indicate the occupation of each member of the Liberal Party.

professions like *teacher* or *professor*, which are sometimes registered next to the administrative position of *school director*; in addition, there is a perpetuated confusion between the position of a university professor and that of a teacher, the social distinction being significant for a discussion about the quality of the local elite. But the reports are not innocent in the electoral context, the party and local organizations trying to maximize the impact of the message of a broad national and professional inclusion; even if rural occupations on these lists appear in lower positions in terms of choice, the tendency of positive self-representation determining an embellishment when it came to declaring the occupations, so that the *ploughman* or the *householder* may be placed in the category of *landlords*, the *treasurer* in the category of *financiers* etc.

The quantitative analysis regarding the social orientation of the Liberal members from Transylvania supports the idea of the cadre structure of the party. Mentioned in the context of a direct public contest, but missing from the lists of delegates, the *ploughmen* or the *farmers* are part of the ideological construct regarding social harmony. Pragmatically, the Liberal leaders were oriented towards attracting Transylvanian village notables (landlords, priests, teachers, doctors, financiers, etc.), persons capable of exerting local influence and negotiating with the authorities on behalf of the community.

From a methodological (and historiographical) point of view, admitting the organizational fragility of the party across the Carpathians and the fact that such branches are not representative at the national level, there are congruences between the professions of the Transylvanian Liberals and their counterparts from the Old Kingdom. The "election" structure of the Wallachian organizations indicates a large number of "farmers" and lucrative professions among Liberals; the mentioned occupations of the Liberal candidates from the organization in Teleorman included 3 lawyers, 6 merchants, 2 industrialists and 19 farmers. The electoral aspect of the distribution of the professions within the organization is clear in Râmnicu Sărat, where 3 lawyers, a teacher, 5 traders, a craftsman, a pensioner, a financier and 3 farmers were on the party's list for the municipal council.[129]

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[129] See Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 307-311. The occupational composition of the National Liberal Party's County Committee of Fălciu and of town of Huşi, gathered to show solidarity with the attitude promoted by Vintilă Bratianu regarding the law of "alarmism" from March 1930 and for establishing the delegation of the county organization which had to attend the general Liberal Congress in May of that year, presents a symmetrical situation: 9 lawyers, 13 ploughmen, 8 farmers, 1 vineyard owner, 2 millers, 1 industrialist, 3 merchants, 10

Once again, the measurements are not equivalent, the basis of the analysis being constituted differently, with members of the county delegation and with members of some municipal committees. Meanwhile, with the absence of National Liberal Party's specific documents, making a social radiography of the local organizations, in order to show the adaptation of the Liberal association to the economic, social and cultural realities of each county, but also the differences in recruitment according to professions, remains a difficult task.[130] But by assuming also after 1918 the position of the party of modern change, the Liberal Party was traditionally oriented towards certain socio-professional categories of the Romanian society, those that were dynamic from a cultural and political point of view and capable of mobilization; in the context of an overblown universal suffrage, predominantly rural, the Liberals recruited their local members from officials and traders, and secondary from teachers and priests. The electoral political reaction was symmetrical. The vote for the Liberals was correlated with the population that lived in small villages by total area, population size, but high level literacy and a high degree of cooperative credit. The National Liberal Party obtained high scores in areas with more non-agricultural occupations, regarded as belonging to

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teachers, 2 instructors, 1 retired military, 3 pensioners, 1 financier, 2 engineers, 5 landowners, 1 priest (cf. „Adunarea Comitetului judeţean P. N.L. din Fălciu," *Viitorul* XXII/6657, 19 April 1930, 3). The "democratic" logic, aiming to impress the public opinion, dominates in the professional description of the permanent delegation in the organizations from Buzau (in 1927) or from Ilfov (1936), although in the latter case the occupations correspond rather to a logic of power: 20 lawyers, 10 teachers, 18 landowners, plus 3 agronomists, 4 engineers, 4 priests, 1 doctor and 1 merchant.

[130] Unlike Transylvania, it is surprising, regarding the organizations from Moldova and Wallachia, the relatively low inclusion of priests in the Liberal structures. The reduced public influence of the orthodoxy when compared with the Church from across the Carpathians, that had held a crucial role in preserving the national identity of the Romanians from Transylvania in the 19th century, can be explained by the type of politics of the Old Kingdom, where many rural people opposed the involvement of priests in secular activities. See G. Zane, „Anchetele monografice asupra economiei familiare ţărăneşti ale Seminarului de Economie Politică a Universităţii din Iaşi" [Monographic Investigations Regarding the Economy of the Rural Families, Made by the Seminar of Political Economy of the University of Iasi] *Sociologie Românească* III/1-3, January-March 1938, Bucharest, 549-555; Mirel Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română: stat şi societate în anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church: State and Society in the 1930s] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2007), 157.

the petty bourgeoisie, counties like Romanaţi, Buzău, Ilfov, Prahova, Constanţa, Brăila, Vrancea, Iaşi, Lăpuşna, Bacău, Fălciu etc.[131]

From the perspective of the policies designed for rural areas, neither teachers nor priests[132], although valued from the discursive point of view and essential as agents of influence, did not have a significant role at the Centre. Their humble political position was pointed out by the small proportion in Parliament of the teachers, only 5.5% of Liberal representatives and 4% of Senators, and of the priests, only 3.6% in the Chamber and 6% in the Senate.[133] There was a propensity to push forward the representatives of the peasantry only when the Liberals organized the elections. The notables of the villages or those designated as peasants

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[131] Şerban, *Elite, partide şi spectru politic în România interbelică*, 96-100.

[132] In the interwar period, an important role in attracting teachers, strengthening the administrative aspect embodied by Minister Dr. Constantin Angelescu, was held by Petre Gârboviceanu. A Haretist, influential in the church circles (he did reports on the religion law, was editor of the magazine *Romanian Orthodox Church*, and senior manager of the Administration of the Church House), playing a big role in the professional organizations of the teachers before the war, he controlled the *Teacher's Union of Romania*, the professional structure of the teachers, created in 1912, after the death of Spiru Haret and and the takeover of the old *General Associations of the Teachers* through the efforts of Ion Mihalache, by Iorga's followers and, between the two world wars, by the National Peasants. Discursively, the Liberals always claimed that teachers were coming to them, as enlightened elements of the village world, in contrast to the masses who were heading for the National Peasants' Party, showing the demagogy of this party. Constant Georgescu, „Activitatea politică şi parlamentară a D-lui P. Gârboviceanu," [The Political and Parliamentary Activity of Mr. P. Garboviceanu], in *Omagiu lui P. Gârboviceanu. După 41 de ani de servire în Şcoală şi Biserică. Oferit, la Seminarul Central, cu prilejul sărbătorirei sale, de la 30 ianuarie 1929* [Tribute to P. Garboviceanu. After 41 Years of Work in School and Church. Offered at the Central Seminar, on his celebration, on the 30th of January 1929] (Bucharest: Tipografia C. Văcărescu, 1929), 319-324. See more in Buruiană, *Liberalii...*, 318-319.. In relation with the priests, Alexandru Lapedatu, Minister of Religious Affairs, but also historian, academician and member of the Historical Monuments Commission, had a great administrative and symbolic influence. The privileged relationship of the Patriarch Miron Cristea with the Brătianu family was also notorious.

[133] Cf. Mattei Dogan, "Piramida răsturnată. Despre originea socială a parlamentarilor din România dintr-o perspectivă comparativă," [The Upside-down Pyramid. About the Social Origins of the Parliament Memebers in Romania from a Comparative Perspective], in Dogan, *Sociologie politică. Opere alese* [Political Sociology. Selected Works], translated by Laura Lotreanu, Nicolae Lotreanu (Bucharest: Alternative, 1999, 177-179 and 181.

could mostly be found during the mobilization campaigns, in the position of supporting a leading figure of the Liberal Party.

7. The resumption of governance in the 1930s and the Liberals' return to the old organizational practices in the rural world

Through the efforts of I.G. Duca, in 1933 the Liberal structure nearly approached the democratic pattern of the 20th century. In November of that year, the leader was appointed chairman of the Council of Ministers, and the National Liberal Party legitimately regained the management of the public affairs after the electoral victory in December 1933. But the stable liberal government, the only one which served a full term during the 1930s, and with important economic results after the previous crisis, did not mean the strengthening of the power of the party. On the contrary, the period that followed until the end of 1937 was a difficult one from a political point of view, marked by the assassination of I.G. Duca, by the rise of the Iron Guard and, generally, by the multiplication of the radical projects concerning the state, the individuals and society. Internally, the competition between the formal president Constantin I.C. Brătianu and Gheorghe Tătărescu, the prime minister, has paralyzed the party as a coherent association and in its public expression. The head of government compensated the traditional power group's influence in the party, which was outlined around the Brătianu family, through public positions and financial favours to supporters.[134] The partisan dispute favoured the return of the liberal policies regarding the rural world on the government's horizon. In those times, the Liberals stood out in the territory rather as administrators, as representatives of the dominant political party. The brochures and calendars addressing the rural areas, which I previously discussed, insisted passively on the government's achievements. Also, the political instructions of the Centre towards the presidents of municipal committees, chiefs of sectors and polling stations regarding the general elections for the Chamber and Senate, testified the formalism of these bodies in the rural areas. The Bucharest leadership wanted the intensify-cation of political propaganda in villages, the verification and completion of the communal committees where needed, the creation of nominal lists containing all the voters, as found in the register of voters, the political education of the rural electors at the level of entire communes or group by

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[134] Regarding the competition within the National Liberal Party during the 1930, see Buruiană, *Construind opoziţia....*, 589-628.

group, etc. It was specified even the uselessness of the great assemblies during the first phase of propaganda, the need for them being related to preparing voters for mass events. The decisive fact, from the Centre's point of view, was that the party members had to emphasize the accomplishments of the Tătărescu government and to combat the opponents, described as "blind and of bad faith, whose past was the proof of their weakness and of the dangers that they represented to the country and nation."[135] Once again, the integration of the new voters moved into the realm of political discursivity.

In lieu of conclusions. Liberals and the political integration of the rural world as a failure

Together with the public discourse and the cultural beliefs, the broadened political participation enacted after World War I shifted the centre of gravity of the society towards the Romanian village. At least from the electoral point of view, in order to attract supporters and votes, the political parties had to reformulate their message and to undertake specific actions. For the "historical" actors, such as the Liberals, adapting to the political transformations represented a difficult process. In 1919, the electoral defeat in the Old Kingdom, the political space in which the National Liberal Party had hopes for a big majority, based on the gratitude of the people for their past actions and former reforms, showed Liberals both their inadequacy as a democratic structure and the political immaturity of the rural world. The shock of rejection and the organizational attempts of 1919-1922 were not followed, during the governmental rule, by practical steps of political integration of the rural world. During the third decade of the 20th century, the Liberal's determi-nation towards the political inclusion of the peasants was diminished, given the other public actors' lack of performance within the power system in Romania. In the absence

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[135] The document was signed in Ilfov, by George Nazarie, deputy and secretary general of the Liberal organization in this county (*Liberalul* [The Liberal], Ilfov VII/17, 10 October 1937, 2). But in general, the activity within the organizations involved a small number of rural political actions. For example, in the second decade of interwar period, the organization in Fălciu County, in addition to statutory meetings and those related to the electoral campaign, has organized a congress in 1935, intermittently edited the newspaper *Poporul* and organized a series of cultural activities in the city of Huşi (National Library. Special Collections, Fund Saint Georges, pachet XLVI, File 13, ff. 1-21). Very few events were specifically oriented towards the Romanian village.

of a coherent rural policy of the state[136], the chronic underdevelopment of the Romanian village generated political populism and the idea of electoral efficiency, which replaced the direct action.[137] The administrative compensation of the problems of the rural world (through the cooperative credit, the agricultural debt conversion) has propelled, at the political level, the patronage system. From the point of view of organizing the village, the liberals were trapped in the period of the restricted electoral colleges, when those who participated pursued a personal interest in the state budget, as the opponents remarked. The National Liberal Party has set up clubs in every rural commune, signing up entire villages and regions, but their only link with the party were the tricoloured membership booklets which were distributed to them: their owners were often devoted propagandists of other political causes. The ruling Liberal leaders were satisfied with this symbolic integration and primary political socialization, reduced to brochures and timid cultural events. The project of the political emanci-pation of the peasants through education was in itself specific to the 19th century, and failed in discursive clichés and administrative provisions. The catastrophic defeat in the elections that took place in December 1928 demonstrated to the Liberals the need for another approach regarding the Romanian village.

In the early 1920s, the National Liberal Party adapted pragmatically to the realities of a Romanian rural society which stepped out late from the medieval era and in which the premodern elements of status were dominant. With a low control over the conditions that governed their lives, transitioning from dependency to statism, the peasants offered the image of a parochial behaviour, understanding very little of political partici-pation.[138] The practices of the Romanian Liberals regarding the rural

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[136] David Mitrany, *The Land & the Peasant in Rumania. The War and Agrarian Reform* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1968 [Gale University Press, 1930]), chapter "Social and Political Effects of the Reform", 460-566. See also David Mitrany, "The Agrarian Question in Eastern Europe. Not Capitalism, not Socialism," in *Man, State, and Society in East European History*, ed. Stephen Fischer-Galati (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), 293-307.

[137] Kurt W. Treptow, "Populism and Twentieth Century Romania Politics," în *Populism in Eastern Europe. Racism, Nationalism, and Society*, ed. Joseph Held (New York, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[138] According to the classical approach of Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, the parochial societies were those communities where political information was limited and the contact with the political structures (parties, government's institutions) was low and most often conducted through a mediator (Gabriel A. Almond, Sidney Verba, *Cultura civică. Atitudini politice şi democraţie în cinci naţiuni* [The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations],

world were organized in relation to this majority of "communities of tacit consensus"[139]; for them, the captivation of locally "visible" people, such as notaries, teachers, priests, wealthy peasants, big landowners, officers, and innkeepers, was fundamental from a political point of view. Having authority and exerting a legitimate influence in the rural world, these "notables"[140] were indispensable intermediaries from the perspective of

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translation and introductory study by Dan Pavel and forewords of the authors for the 1963 and 1989 editions (Bucharest: Du Style, 1996, 47-48). The described realities were far from being strictly Romanian. See George H. Hodos, *The East-Central European Region. An Historical Outline* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger Publishers, 1999, 49); *Political Development in Eastern Europe*, eds. Jan F. Triska and Paul M. Cocks, foreword by Gabriel Almond (New York, London: Praeger Publishers, 1977). Ian D. Armour, *A History of Eastern Europe. 1740-1918* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), 193 and next, about the political modernization preceding the modernization of social relations and realizing therefore a precarious integration. For the *Westernization* process overlaying a traditional society, see Dinko Tomasic, "The Structure of Balkan Society," in *Class, Status and Power. A Reader in Social Stratification*, eds. Reinhard Bendix, Seymour Martin Lipset, (New York: Free Press, 1965), 622.

[139] According to Ferdinand Toennies' concept, "Estates and Classes," in *Class, Status and Power. A Reader in Social Stratification*, 49. In these small groups, the pressure towards conformism is high, achieving an alignment of the votes according to the community leaders. Sidney Verba, *Small Groups and Political Behavior. A Study of Leadership* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), 22-23. It was often isolated communities with limited local rivalries, in which the political differentiation was limited and the penetrating ability of the political parties had been reduced. In the monograph dedicated to the Ghigherea commune from the Valcea County, the author summarizes the interwar political phenomenon: "Militant politics was never done in the village. Having consideration for the lawyer Al. B. Iliescu, son of the village and founder of public establishments, the residents gave the most votes to the National Liberal Party, but it was not a strong organization. (...) Political hatred and crimes were unheard of, although the mood during elections was - as elsewhere - boiling. Our village was never divided and politics never created chasms between the people. Florian Stănescu Gigherea, *Monografia comunei Gigherea* [The Monography of the Commune Gigherea] (Râmnicu Vâlcea: Tipografia „Unirea", 1946), 54. See the concept of collective vote, more important than the individual vote for the Romanian village, in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Gérard Althabe, *Secera şi buldozerul. Scorniceşti şi Nucşoara. Mecanisme de aservire a ţăranului român* [The Sickle and the Buldozer. Scornicesti and Nucsoara. Mechanisms of Enslaving the Romanian Peasant] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2002), 11-12.

[140] I would also include in this category of rural mediators other individuals with public professions, such as preceptors, railway employees, surveyors, health workers, known in the jargon of that time as the "blueness of the villages", simply

the Liberals, who could legitimately negotiate with the power benefits for the community in exchange for the votes of those whom they controlled and to whom they interpreted, using their language, the political phenomenon. The strengthening of the ties of loyalty and their co-optation has circumscribed the actions of the Liberals towards the political integration of the peasants in the first decade of the interwar period, especially during opposition (1928-1933).

The association, voluntary or with the purpose of pursuing material interest, of these mediators of the village transformed the Liberal Party, the force of the rural networks being important for the political success. Although they found themselves in the background, the notables have acquired a significant social capital in relation to the central politicians, becoming indispensable, "maîtres de granit", to use Yves Pourcher's phrase.[141] In the informal Romanian politics, built around a leader, existing through him and having few ideological features, the relations between the politicians from the centre and the local players formed a network of patronage, with patrons and clients. Like the community they represented, the client viewed the politician as someone capable to offer help and not as someone who was supposed to be a legislator of the nation or a manager of public affairs.[142]

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because they were largely linked to the state budget and their promotions were decided by the government, and they could get involved in the electoral process. It is the "rural bourgeoisie" mentioned by Stefan Antim, „Burghezie...Rurală," [Rural....Bourgeoisie] in Ştefan Antim, *Scrieri politice* [Political Writings], edition and foreword by de Victor Rizescu, second edition (Bucharest: Editura Do-MinoR, 2005), 242-247.

[141] Yves Pourcher, *Les maîtres de granit. Les notables de Lozère du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, nouvelle édition mise à jour (Paris: Plon, 1987).

[142] See Marios Castambeys' political patronage model *Power and Patronage in Early Medieval Italy. Local Society, Italian Politics and Abbey of Farfa. C. 700-900* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paolo: Cambridge University Press, 2007. The concepts of "personalization of politics" and "clientelism", in Gerd Meyer, "Formal and Informal Politics: Questions, Concepts and Subjects," in *Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Gerd Meyer (Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2006), 36, 45-48. Evidence of the way in which they represented their role, these notables had sometimes the conviction of their impunity due to the political services performed for their patron. In a letter from January 1927, addressed to Victor Slăvescu, head of the county organization in Râmnicu Sărat, R. Banciu, teacher in Budesti and chairman of the communal Liberal structure, wrote about two electoral agents who requested not to be investigated by the gendarmes, since they were Liberals and the party was in power (SANIC, Fond Victor Slăvescu, File 214, ff. 22-24).

Tătărescu's government in the 1930s and the National Liberal Party's return to the previous tactics employed in relation to the rural world has transformed these notables into effigies of "shrewd politicking"; the contemporaries described them as a group of families associated with the clubs, who left their actual jobs or no longer did housework, and were doing politics in the taverns and / or at the town hall, giving abstract speeches on "freedom", "justice" and "democracy", cursing the opponents etc.[143]

But in the fourth decade, the parochial elements of the rural communities' representations began to recede, being replaced by other elements, of a dependent and civic type. The disappointment of the peasants, who regarded politics as an opportunity to illegitimately satisfy their purely economic interests[144], ultimately led to the debilitation of the entire democratic system.

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[143] N. Davidescu, „Dilema tineretului liberal," [The Dilemma of the Liberal Youth] *Cronica Politică şi Parlamentară* I/10, 26 April 1929, 3. In a reply to the assertion of Ion Mihalache, who regarded the mid-level owners as village rulers, speculators and means of oppressing the peasants, Gheorghe Tătărescu had designated those who have come to thrive through their work as "freeholders and yeomen from which had derived families of priests, teachers and small officials and a large part of the officers who had led the nation's army in the Great War"; they were the "large reserve of energy, power and continuous refreshment of our ruling classes", concluded the Liberal politician (Gh. Tătărescu, in the discussion at the Message of the Throne from the 14th of december 1922), Tătărescu, *Mărturii pentru istorie*, 13-14.

[144] Constantin V. Micu, „Viaţa politică a unui sat din Năsăud," [The Political Life of a Village in Nasaud] in *Sociologie Românească* [Romanian Sociology] II/9-10, September-October 1937, 459-465 (research on the village of Şanţ in Năsăud County).

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT WAS THE NATIONAL PEASANT PARTY?
INTERNAL DIVISION AND ORGANIZATIONAL
CONFLICT, 1900-1947

DANIEL BRETT

Introduction

The end of the First World War brought about the expansion of universal male suffrage across Europe in both the old states as well as the newly created or unified states. This process finally allowed the rural population a decisive voice in the new democratic politics of the post-war era. The expansion of the franchise had been taking place across Europe from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards; however, the end of the war brought about revolutions, the collapse of the old dynastic empires, the fear of Bolshevikism and the ideas of Wilsonian Liberal Democracy, all resulting in elites grudgingly extending the franchise.

Many believed that now that the peasantry would be able to participate in electoral politics, their own representatives would assume political office by virtue of the numerical dominance of the rural population in much of Europe. As a result, politics, economics and society would be reshaped to meet the demands and interests of the people. With this in mind, new political parties emerged and older organizations expanded, seeking to represent the peasantry and to influence the new democratic politics. With one or two notable exceptions, this did not happen. Democracy across Europe collapsed by the end of the 1930s due to the shock of the Great Depression and the inability of states to deal with the economic and political challenges they faced. Moreover, parties that had purported to represent the peasantry and rural populations failed to meet these groups' demands, and by the end of the Second World War these parties were moribund. In Eastern Europe the parties were swept away by the Communists, and in Western Europe they were relegated to the

political fringes as remnants of a bygone era. The question then becomes, why did parties that drew upon rural communities for their support fail to become dominant? Why did they burn brightly for a short while only to collapse as quickly as they had risen? There are four main views about why purely agrarian parties failed[1] or were not as successful as we might expect. The first claims that other national parties successfully represented the interests of the rural population, and that as competitors they were stronger and more successful than the agrarians. The second states that the peasant question was not as significant as we may think; there was a land question, but not so much a peasant question. The third suggests that internal class tensions within a rural society with conflicting interests made it impossible for the parties to espouse a unified programme. The final argument is that the parties were disorganized, amateurish and inept. I argue that each of these four issues played into one another. The disorganization resulted from the failure to reform, which was caused by the internal divisions within rural society, a function of the nature of rural society being in transition. As a result, the parties were weaker than they might have otherwise been and hence were vulnerable to external threats.

In part because the political map of East-Central Europe was redrawn following the dissolution of the Habsburg, German, Ottoman and Russian Empires, the newly created states and their internal politics are generally seen as separate and different from those of the rest of Europe, specifically Western and Northern Europe. However, the immediate aftermath of war resulted in a remaking of politics across the whole of Europe. Therefore, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of East European politics, it makes sense to compare and contrast the region with the rest of Europe in order to determine which features were locally specific and which were more general to the process of democratisation across Europe.

The literature on Romania and also Poland[2] has tended to examine the role of external factors, specifically authoritarian anti-democratic actors

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[1] See Tony Varley, "On the Road to Extinction: Agrarian Parties in Twentieth-Century Ireland," *Irish Political Studies* 25/4 (2010), 581-601.
[2] See Robert R. King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980); Ioan Scurtu, *Din viaţa politică României întemeierea şi activitatea Partidului Ţărănesc (1918-1926)* (Bucureşti: Litera, 1975); Ioan Scurtu, *Din viaţa politică a României, 1926-1947: studiu critic privind istoria Partidului Naţional-Ţărănesc* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1983) for a more recent revisiting of this approach see Eugen Mioc, *Comunismul în Banat (1944-1965) Dinamica structurilor de putere în Timişoara şi zonele adiacente* (Timişoara: Excelsior Art, 2007) and Anne Applebaum, *Iron*

who undermined and suppressed the agrarians. This paper seeks to explore the parties from within, looking at their practices to determine how efficiently the parties represented peasant interests in a period of profound economic, social and political transition. It asks: How were the represented able to make their voices heard, and how did their demands become policy and practice for these parties? Given the expansion of the franchise, how did the parties organize themselves on the ground? What was the attitude towards membership and agency for the represented, and how did the organization allow or suppress that agency? And what, therefore, were the implications for the parties when they faced external political challenges inside and outside of formal politics?

This paper will adopt a synoptic, macro level analysis and an asymmetrical approach[3] to compare and contrast several agrarian movements. The Romanian National Peasant Party (Partidul Naţional Ţărănesc – PNŢ) will form the core of study; however, evidence from Poland, Sweden and Ireland will be drawn on as a *mise-en-scene* and to help foreground responses to the questions outlined above. This study is not a 'pure' comparison but rather echoes Clifford Geertz's argument about Balinese villages that there is no such thing as a 'typical' or 'untypical' village, but rather they exist on a continuum. Every village comprises component parts, each one more prominent in some cases and less so in others.[4] The same is true of agrarian parties; however, only by comparing broadly can we identify those features that are more prominent in our central case.

This paper does not seek to re-write history or to minimise the impact that external political factors had on agrarian parties; rather it examines an under-explored element of an overlooked political family of parties, namely their internal organization and their relationship with the social group they purported to represent during a period of deep social, economic and political crisis and transformation.

In order to explore the internal workings and the issue of peasant agency, this paper draws upon the work of Angelo Panebianco and Maurice Duverger with regard to how parties organize themselves and how power is distributed and allocated within the institution. It will also

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Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956 (New York: Anchor Books, 2013).

[3] See Jürgen Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German Sonderweg," *History and Theory* 38/1 (1999), 40-50; Jürgen Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond," *History and Theory* 42/1 (2003), 39-44.

[4] Clifford Geertz, "Form and Variation in Balinese Village Structure," *American Anthropologist* 61/6 (1959), 991-1012, 991.

draw implicitly on the sociological work of the Gusti School, Max Weber, Clifford Geertz and James C Scott in explaining dynamics within rural society during periods of transformation and transition. Thus it explores the intersection between party politics and social transformation by synthesizing political science and rural sociology.

This paper argues that changes in power structures within rural society due to economic and social transformation were not matched by changes in the way in which power was distributed within the parties. Without such organizational reform, the parties withered away and died.

The Great Lost Family of Party Politics

LaPalombara and Wiener note that 'the historical graveyards are cluttered with parties which dominated the political scene but which subsequently failed to adapt to new circumstances and thus died'.[5] This is certainly true of the agrarian parties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A leitmotif of the literature on agrarian parties is the absence of a secondary bibliography.[6] Within the literature on party organization, the agrarian parties are largely missing, or limited to a brief discussion. Agrarian or peasant parties are viewed either as having 'archaic' organizational structures,[7] or as closely following the organizational patterns of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union.[8]

One Agrarian Party or Several?

One reason the agrarian movements are the great lost family of party politics is that they are so difficult to pin down ideologically. Movements varied between states, some embracing forms of socialism

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[5] *Political Parties and Political Development*, eds. Joseph LaPalombara, Myron Weiner (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1966), 7.

[6] See Robert O. Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgères's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture, 1929-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) for an account of the difficulties of writing on French peasant politics, or Anders Widfeldt, "The Swedish Centre Party: The Poor Relations of the Family," in *From the Farmyard to City Square? The Electoral Adaptation of the Nordic Agrarian Parties*, ed. David Arter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 2, for Sweden.

[7] Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Methuen, 1954), 20.

[8] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 237.

and communism,[9] others embracing fascism and nationalism,[10] and some embracing hybrid forms.[11] Some parties' approaches and attitudes shifted across time. Further complicating matters, within some parties a variety of factions existed, reflecting differing views. This resulted in the absence of ideological coherence and the inability to categorize the parties.

A brief analysis of the internal division of PNȚ after 1926 supports this argument. The party split along two fault lines, the first a regional division between those politicians from the former Habsburg lands and those from the Regat. It is commonly argued that this split was not just regional but also ideological. The former Habsburg politicians were more concerned with the democracy and national questions and were deeply social and economically conservative, while the politicians from the Regat were more socially and economically radical.

The question then becomes, why is there such diversity within parties representing the rural population compared to other party families such as the Christian Democrats? What is it within the nature of rural society and politics that brings about such heterogeneity? Does the apparent radical-conservative fault line simply mirror the regional division of Romania (an 'accident of politics'), or does it reflect something deeper about the nature of the parties and, significantly, the relationship between space and party organisation and ideology?

Moreover, how did parties that lacked a strong unified ideology both come together and survive? As noted earlier, the agrarian parties withered away and died, and this death is normally attributed to the changing nature of society as modernisation shifted people and power from the countryside to the towns, or to external agents such as the Communist and Fascist movements of Eastern Europe who targeted peasant radicals. However, such an approach denies the parties any agency over their own direction and assumes they embodied Barrington Moore's description of the peasantry as 'a class over whom the waves of progress roll'.[12] However, not all agrarian parties did die; some transformed themselves as society

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[9] The Bulgarian Agrarian Union under *Alexander Stamboliski* is the most prominent example. See John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian Union, 1899-1923* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

[10] Henry Dorgères's Greenshirts in France are one such example.

[11] Derek Urwin, *From Ploughshare to Ballotbox: The Politics of Agrarian Defence in Europe* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), 252.

[12] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 505.

transformed, with party leaderships changing to suit a new electoral base. Clearly, some were better able to reform than others, but why? Were some types of agrarian parties better able to reform than others? In order to answer this question, we must identify the nature of agrarian parties in terms of their ideology and organizational structures.

Party reform is defined as the restructuring of a party's programme to reflect the changing interests of the group the party purports to represent. This change in party programme can be seen as the direct result of the agency of supporters who want their economic, social and political demands represented. In order for this to happen, some mechanism within the party organization must allow agency to take place. For the purposes of this paper, agency is defined as the ability of people to change the institutions in which they live.[13] In the absence of such mechanisms, party organization must first be reformed to allow new voices both power and agency internally. Thus reform can either be a one or two-stage process, depending upon how much agency the party's supporters have.

Constructing a Theory

I argue that the nature of the agrarian or peasant movement in a given location depends upon two factors at the party's inception point: the nature of imperial/national or local politics, and the nature of social transformation and the dynamics of social power within rural society.

Regarding the second element, the ability of the party to reform itself depends upon when the party was formed in relation to the processes of social transformation taking place in rural society. The more entrenched the power structures of the party and the greater the threat of new actors challenging the power of old actors, the more resistant the internal structures of the party to reform.

Thus at the heart of our analysis of the agrarian parties is a need to understand how they were organized and why they were organized in that way. Then we can look at how the parties functioned in terms of allowing rural voters power and agency over the party, and we can explore the barriers to reform that existed within the party.

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[13] Barry Barnes, *Understanding Agency: Social theory and Responsible Action* (London: Sage, 2000).

Founding Moments Matter

A crucial point of analysis in explaining why parties representing the rural population were so divergent and varied in their political discourse and organization therefore has to be the foundation period. Angelo Panebianco's analysis of the development of party organization in Western Europe emphasizes the "fundamental intuition of classical sociology, in particular Weberian, concerning the importance of the founding moment of institutions. The way in which the cards are dealt out and the outcomes of the different rounds played out in the formative phase of an organiation, continue in many ways to condition the life of the organization even decades afterwards. […] [T]he crucial political choices made by its founding fathers, the first struggles for organizational control, and the way in which the organization was formed, will leave an indelible mark. Few aspects of an organization's functioning and current tensions appear comprehensible if not traced to its formative phase."[14]

It is therefore vital for us to explore the foundations of the parties. How were the cards dealt, and how did this affect the future development of the party? In particular, what impact did this have on how the party could respond to social change?

Does Timing Matter?

The relatively late formation of an agrarian party in Romania, with the creation of Partidul Țărănesc in 1918, has been cited as one reason an agrarian party was unable to succeed politically in the newly unified state. Romania stands in contrast to Bulgaria, Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak lands, all of which had active and functioning agrarian parties before the outbreak of World War One. However, broadening the comparison, agrarian parties were not established in Ireland, Sweden and France until after 1918. When considered in a wider context, some parties with an early foundation date failed while others succeeded; similarly, some with a later foundation failed and others succeeded.

Major variation between party success and party failure can be seen, however, in relation to the nature of party organization, specifically whether the party after the expansion of the franchise in 1918 granted the newly enfranchised electorate power and a voice within the party. Thus we

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[14] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xiii – xiv.

must ask, how were the parties organized and how and why did reform take place or not take place?

Changing Rural Society

The period starting in the middle of the nineteenth century was one of rapid political, economic and social change. However, as Frances Pine notes, the process of transition is not a matter of 'now and then', with cataclysmic revolutionary breaks, but instead a continuum of hybrid forms.[15] The interplay among these changes profoundly altered the dynamics of rural society and the structures of power. Rural society shifted from a largely pre-capitalist society with a vertical hierarchy structured around social status and prestige – drawn from charismatic and traditional sources of power and legitimacy, with social status thus providing actors the legitimacy to dominate those below them in the social hierarchy[16] – to a modern capitalist class order, with a hierarchy based upon the position of the individual towards the market.

Economically, rural society changed at both the micro and macro levels. In Eastern Europe the abolition of serfdom followed by land reforms that broke up the great estates changed the economic and political position of the mass of the peasantry, although not necessarily for the better. As Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea argued, they merely swapped their political bonds for economic ones.[17] To varying degrees these reforms resulted in sections of the peasantry engaging in market relations rather than existing on subsistence farming. This created a cleavage within rural society between those who remained subsistence farmers and had to purchase additional goods and those who were engaged primarily in selling produce. The first group naturally wanted low prices while the second (a smaller group numerically but a more powerful one economically and hence politically) wanted higher prices. However, at a macro-level, the period starting in 1850 saw declining agricultural prices as produce from the New World entered the market. Thus, at the same time as many in rural society entered market relations as producers,

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[15] Frances Pine, *Kinship, Marriage and Social Change in a Polish Highland Village* (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1988), 13.

[16] *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H.H. Gerth, C. Wright Mills, Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge, 1991), 186-195.

[17] Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Neoiobăgia. Studiu economico-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare [Neo-Serfdom. Economic and Sociological Study of our Agrarian Question] (Bucureşti: Editura Librăriei SOCEC & Comp, Societate Anonimă, 1910).

revenues from such production were falling. In conjunction with these economic changes, social changes were also influencing rural society and creating an increasing generational cleavage. As Eugene Weber[18] has shown, the spread of the state and specifically the spread of education also profoundly changed the dynamics of power within rural society. The increasing interaction between citizen and state required literacy; thus those with literacy (who tended to be younger) gained importance and power within the village. The expansion of the military and conscription resulted in peasants leaving the village, thereby breaking their social bonds and power positions.[19] The decline of the rural economy increased the appeal of migration to the city, especially for young people. Pine notes that as the young moved away from agriculture as their major source of subsistence with the growth of cities, the strength of the senior kin power base diminished as the younger peasants become less dependent upon them.[20]

Politically, the expansion of the franchise and the development of democratic politics brought about greater opportunities for the rural population to participate in electoral politics. Some states experienced a slow, incremental expansion, while others saw a single mass expansion of the franchise. In Eastern Europe and Ireland, the battle for self-determination also reshaped political life, as national independence brought about a restructuring of power relations and political geography. The mobilisation of the rural population for political purposes was only possible, however, because of the social changes induced by the spread of literacy. Jan Słomka, a Polish peasant politician, describes his own awakening as follows: "As for national consciousness, I have mentioned that the older peasants called themselves Masurians, their speech Masurian. They lived their own life, forming a wholly separate group, and caring nothing for the nation. I myself did not know I was a Pole till I began to read books and papers, and I fancy that other villagers came to be aware of their national attachment in much the same way."[21]

The political awakening to economic and ethnic situations was only possible for many once literacy had reached the villages. Although it was not a single revolutionary break, the process of transformation introduced an increasing necessity for rural representation. At the same time, these

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[18] Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[19] See Jan Słomka, *From Serfdom to Self-Government: Memoirs of a Polish Village Mayor, 1842-1927* (London: Minerva Publishing Co, 1941), 151-155.

[20] Pine, *Kinship, Marriage and Social Change in a Polish Highland Village*, 269.

[21] Słomka, *From Serfdom to Self-Government*, 171.

changes introduced new sources of division into rural society and politics, which in turn made the aggregation of interests and hence the development of a coherent and unified voice harder. Hence within the village we see what Scott calls 'small arms fire in the class war'[22] between increasingly differentiated members of rural society.

National Politics – Cleaving Society?

In addition to the transformation of rural society, the emergence of national cleavages adds a second dimension to the emergence of rural politics. The typology of cleavages clearly identified by Lipset and Rokkan[23] in the 1960s remains instructive. Their typology includes:

- Church – Secular
- Rural – Urban
- Worker – Owner
- Periphery – Core

This remains a useful way of framing the valence issues around which a polity pivots. While it is common to assume that agrarian parties reflect a rural-urban cleavage, the reality is often more complex. Cleavages can and do overlap, and depending upon the dynamics of power in a given society, the countryside can represent the political or economic core, or it can represent the periphery. Furthermore, one of Lipset and Rokkan's key arguments is the phenomenon of 'freezing', which says that these cleavages have to have become embedded and stable within society in order for parties to coalesce around them. However, I suggest that one of the key features of society from the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century is the absence of freezing in many societies. The nature of economic, social and political transition resulted in transient cleavages. Considering Irish politics, for example, prior to independence the politics cleaved around independence, while post independence economic cleavages predominated.[24] A party orientated around a declining

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[22] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985).

[23] *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, eds. Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967).

[24] Tony Varley, "Farmers against Nationalists: The rise of Clann na Talmhan in Galway," in *Galway: History and Society - Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, eds. Raymond Gillespie, Gerard P. Moran (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1996), 589-622, 591.

cleavage was therefore more likely to decline unless it changed to orientate itself around the valence issues of the day.

Thus it was against this backdrop of transformation and emergent tensions between rural society and the wider world, and also within rural society itself, that the agrarian movements were formed.

Rural Politics: Politics by the Periphery

The Triple Crisis of the Peasantry

Robert Paxton[25] has argued that between 1929 and 1939 rural society in France suffered a triple crisis: economic, cultural and political. It can be argued that this crisis was common to rural society across Europe and began earlier than the 1930s.[26] The Great Depression served to accelerate this process.

The economic crisis saw declining economic conditions for rural society caused by falling prices and declining markets at home and abroad. The cultural crisis involved the perception of an existential threat to rural society caused by the decline of the rural way of life as the power of the countryside and its status decreased, marked by the rural exodus of the young who moved willingly to the city.[27] Many blamed the crisis on the state's denigration of the countryside as backward. The third crisis was one of representation and the absence of a voice for rural society in politics.

Against this backdrop of crisis and absence of voice, agrarian parties began to form across Europe.[28] The absence of representation exacerbated the first two crises; adequate representation commensurate with the economic and cultural importance of rural society to the polity could have resolved the crises. This argument underpins all agrarian political action.

Depending on local conditions, various pressing issues played crucial roles in shaping demands for increased representation. The dynamics of

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[25] Robert O. Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgères's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture, 1929-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11-51

[26] See Varley "On the Road to Extinction" for an account of the crisis in Ireland and its impact on Irish rural politics

[27] See Henry Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), 167.

[28] For the formation of rural movements in Poland during the Nineteenth Century see Olga A. Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867-1970* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).

crisis meant that in areas with worse economic conditions, demands revolved around these issues, while in areas that felt the cultural threat most sharply, this issue dominated. The cultural threat often dominated where the principle cleavage involved ethnic politics and where the ethnicity of the peasantry differed from that of the dominant class. This created a different sense of existential threat from that identified by Paxton; in such cases residents experienced the loss not only of the rural way of life but also of the ethnic community itself.

Thus the dominant mobilising discourse and political orientation depended upon local socio-cultural and economic dynamics. This explains the considerable diversity within the agrarian political family between parties with a strong nationalist component and those with a strong economic focus.

Franchise, Social Structure and Party Organization

Maurice Duverger's work on party organization, although dating back to the 1960s, remains the starting point of our analysis, in part because Duverger was looking at the formation of political parties contemporary with the agrarian parties now under discussion. Duverger's key insight is that the nature of party organization is dependent upon the electoral system. There are two main forms of party organization: the cadre party and the mass party. The cadre party is most closely associated with a limited electoral franchise, while the mass party organization is more commonly found after the advent of universal male suffrage.

Maurice Duverger's analysis into the organizational structure of parties argues that different electoral conditions produce different forms of party organization. The structure of institutions within the party influences the way in which the party operates and behaves in its interactions with the wider political world. He offers a typology of different forms of party organization. For this study, the main distinction of interest is between a cadre party with its caucus organization, and a mass party with its branch organization.[29]

A cadre party operates within a limited electoral franchise in which there are relatively few voters and gaining power is dependent upon obtaining the votes of key individuals. The organizational structure and strategy are designed to maximise the party's potential to do this. A mass party, in contrast, is associated with an expanded electoral franchise where the number of voters is higher and maximising turnout is the main

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[29] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 63.

objective of the party. Duverger notes that: "this distinction between cadre and mass parties is not based on their dimensions, upon the number of their members: the difference involved is not one of size but of structure."[30]

The organization of a cadre party consists of: "[…] grouping of notabilities for the preparation of elections, conducting campaigns and maintaining contact with the candidates. Influential persons, in the first place, whose name, prestige, or connections can provide a backing for the candidate and secure him votes; experts, in the second place, who know how to handle the electors and how to organize and campaign; last of all financiers who can bring the sinews of war. Quality is the most important factor: extent of prestige, skill in technique, size of fortune."[31]

This can be contrasted with the mass party where recruiting members is a fundamental activity, both politically and financially. The central objective of the mass party is the political education of the class it represents, in order to develop an elite capable of governing and administering the country. The members are 'the very substance of the party.'[32] The second objective is financial; the branch organization and mass membership enables the party to collect subscriptions from the members, allowing the party to fund its daily activities and its education and election campaigns.

In terms of central control, cadre parties and their caucus organizations are decentralized and weakly knit, while mass parties with their branch type of organization are much more centralized and closely knit.[33] Duverger notes: "This distinction, though clear in theory, is not always easy to make in practice. […] [C]adre parties sometimes admit ordinary members in imitation of mass parties. In fact, this practice is fairly widespread: there are few purely cadre parties. The others are not in practice far removed from them, but their outward form is likely to mislead the observer who must look beyond the official clauses laid down in the constitution or the declarations of the leaders. The absence of any system of registration of members or of any regular collection of subscriptions is a fairly reliable criterion; no true membership is conceivable in their absence."[34]

The next step is to explain the development and evolution of party organizations, drawing on Panebianco and emphasizing the importance of

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[30] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 63.
[31] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 64.
[32] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 63.
[33] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 67.
[34] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 64.

founding periods. During such periods, the basic organizational structures of the party are laid out and the distribution of power and mechanisms for domination and legitimacy are established. It is, moreover, at this point that institutionalization takes place. Institutionalization is: "the consolidation of the organization, the passage from an initial, structurally fluid phase, when the new-born organization is still forming, to a phase in which the organization stabilizes, develops stable survival interests and just as stable organizational loyalties. Institutionalization is the process which marks this transition from one phase to the other."[35]

The combination of organizational factors in the first phase shapes the *degree* of institutionalization, as some parties become strong institutions while others hardly institutionalize at all, and the *forms* of this institutionalization.[36] Institutionalization is crucial in explaining why a party may or may not reform. If the power structures of a party are institutionalized, it is harder to reform the party, because vested and entrenched interests are threatened by reformation. Actors with vested interests can subvert reform in order to protect their own positions at the expense of the party as a whole.[37]

Charisma, Cadre Parties and Successional Crises

The personalised nature of the cadre party organization leads to the emergence of personal dominance. The party is a network of individuals united by personal loyalty. Due to the absence of legal-rational mechanisms for identifying and choosing the leader at both a local and national level, leaders rely upon charisma and later tradition in order to maintain their dominance. Charismatic domination gives rise to inherent problems for a political organization when it comes to replacing the old leader. Thus organizations with leadership predicated upon charisma are subject to serious successional crises due to the absence of mechanisms to replace the old leadership. Charismatic domination depends upon the 'unique gifts' of the leader involved; by their very nature they are not transferable to another leader. Charisma belongs to that person alone, so unless the party is able to routinize this into tradition and include a mechanism for anointing a successor, there will inevitably be periodic crises as the power of the incumbent declines, or rivals proclaim their own

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[35] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 18.
[36] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 19.
[37] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 27.

charisma.[38] These leadership crises – given the absence of party organization outside of personal networks and loyalty – are thus more severe and profound than in a party where loyalty is impersonal.

Implications for Agarian Party Reform

The parties faced two related problems connected to reform, the first being the issue of representation. The parties purported to represent the interests of rural society, and with the expansion of the electoral franchise the number of people represented increased. In order to represent this expanded mass of voters, the parties needed some mechanism to aggregate interests so as to allow the electors agency over their representatives, and to articulate those interests as policy. In a competitive political area, rivals will always try to take one's supporters. Therefore a party cannot take the support of a group for granted. If the party does not represent the interests of those it purports to represent, then the voters will simply support alternative parties and organizations inside and outside the electoral system. The second problem is that of succession. Charisma can only be passed from one leader to another with difficulty; it also depends upon the leader maintaining their unique skills. In order for the party to survive long term, it must develop a mechanism to replace aging or ineffective leaders.

Thus for the parties involved, one of two things must occur. Either the party needs to transform its organization from personal to impersonal, or the transfer of personal loyalty has to be routinized. The first can only occur if the party is uninstitutionalised; the second requires the institutionalisation of the mechanism of transferring leadership.

The idea of non-reform does not fit with the traditional image of a political party as a goal orientated rational movement that seeks office in order to achieve its goals. Panebianco responds, however, that this misunderstands the nature of a political party. He argues that we can look at parties as just 'organizations'. Organizations have their own lives and power dynamics, and actors have their own personal interests. These may not necessarily intersect with the expressed interests of the party.

Actors may subvert the party organization to further or defend their personal interests and positions within the party. This has implications for non-reform. Actors may resist organizational changes to the party in order to protect their position and power within it.[39]

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[38] See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 246-249.
[39] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 41.

Consequences of Failure to Reform: Loss of Support, Leadership Crises Losing support the case of Clann na Talmhan

In the case of Clann na Talmhan[40] in Ireland, the primary issue concerned representation within the party for all sections of rural society and the belief that the party leadership was only interested in the interests of the wealthy rural elite. Despite attempts by supporters from poorer areas of Ireland, the dominance of the larger farmers in the party meant that implemented policies benefitted this narrow section of rural society alone.[41] This was not the first attempt to establish a party to represent rural interests; in post independence Ireland, a cleavage had emerged out of frustration with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, which, despite promising much to the rural population, had failed to deliver.[42] This had driven the formation of both the Farmers Union (1922-32)[43] and then Clann na Talmhan in 1938 after the disintegration of the Farmers Union. Many members of the Farmers Union went on to form Clann na Talmhan; thus we can see it as a continuous movement. Irish rural politics had a tradition of radical direct action and strikes such as the milk strikes of 1936 and 1939. At the same time, it also included the more conservative but powerful interests of large farmers, especially the cattle producers. These differences in concerns and approach also mapped onto regional divisions of the movement, namely the tensions between east and west in the country. These reflected how the nature of agriculture produced different valence issues, discourses and approaches. For this reason, it is better to talk not of a single party, but rather of the amalgamation of several diverse rural movements with different economic interests.

The Irish agrarian movements thus faced a particular problem: the economic interests of the rural population were diverse and in conflict with one another, and the party needed to find a way to unify them. There were more poor, radical farmers than there were conservative landlords and ranchers; however, by virtue of wealth and power, the latter dominated the party.

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[40] Tony Varley, Peter Moser, "Clann na Talmhan: Ireland's Last Farmers' Party," *History Ireland* 3/2 (1995), 39-43, 39.

[41] See Eugene Duggan, *The Ploughman on the Pound Note: Farmer Politics in County Galway During the Twentieth Century* (Galway: Eugene Duggan, 2004).

[42] Varley, Moser, "Clann na Talmhan," 39.

[43] Farmers Union is also named as Farmer's Union in some texts – see Michael Gallagher, *Political Parties in Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

   Both the Farmers Union and Clann na Talmhan performed exceptionally well in their first elections; however, they failed to meet the expectations of the electorate. As a result, support for the party drained away after the high point of the 1944 elections. Where support remained, it was largely because of voters' personal loyalty to the local leader. Thus both in terms of policy and loyalty, the party remained cadre in form until the end.

Table 1: Electoral Performance by the Farmers Union (1922-1932) and Clann na Talmhan (1943-1965)

Election	Seats won	Position	First Preference votes	Percentage of vote	Government
1922	7 / 128	4th	48,718	7.8	Opposition
1923	15 / 153	3rd	127,184	12.1	Opposition
1927 (Jun)	11 / 153	4th	101,955	8.9	supported Minority Gov't
1927 (Sep)	6 / 153	4th	74,626	6.4	supported Minority Gov't
1932	3 / 153	4th	22,899	1.8	Opposition
1943	10 / 138	4th	130,452	9.8	Opposition
1944	9 / 138	3rd	122,745	10.1	Opposition
1948	7 / 147	5th	73,813	5.6	Coalition
1951	6 / 147	4th	38,872	2.9	Opposition
1954	5 / 147	4th	51,069	3.8	Coalition
1957	3 / 147	5th	28,905	2.4	Opposition
1961	2 / 144	4th	17,693	1.5	Opposition

   Varley highlights a number of problems that Clann na Talmhan faced due to disagreements about tactics. The party maintained a strong anti-political character, not wishing to engage with party politics, declaring in

1940: "No working farmer can afford to have political differences with his neighbour. Politics are not for us; they are no use to us."[44]

Continuing in 1942, leader Michael Donnellan declared: "You could take all the TDs, all the senators, all the ministers and members of the judiciary and all the other nice fellows and dump them off Clare Island into the broad Atlantic. Still, Ireland would succeed. But without the workers and producers the country would starve in twenty-four hours."[45]

Thus the party rejected politics and other parties, reflecting the voices and attitudes of the periphery and politically excluded that they represented. However, a debate existed about whether or not to engage with a corrupt system that would inevitably corrupt the party.

They also faced competition from the established parties, who recognised the threat that Clann na Talmhan posed and shifted their policies accordingly. The Farmers Union and later Clann na Talmham made no attempt to broaden their appeal beyond the rural community.[46] Thus it never developed a national profile, remaining instead a merger of regional groups; this in turn led to a failure to reform the party organization and the death of the party.

The key issue, however, was the divorce from the electorate. For the poor, the issue of rents was central; for the wealthy, it was the prices received for agricultural produce. While the party rhetoric espoused the interests of the common farmer, embraced populist discourses and gave the appearance of being a party for the rural poor, when it came to policy it supported the interests of the large commercial farmers.[47] Its 1943 programme emphasized minimum prices for agricultural produce, a tillage subsidy and a reduction of higher public sector salaries, despite the demands to lower the agricultural rents that had driven the creation of the party.[48]

Had the party reformed itself organizationally to give more power to the majority of the party's rural supporters, this would have weakened the power of the large farmers in the east of Ireland who dominated the farmers organizations out of which the party had formed.

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[44] Varley, Moser, "Clann na Talmhan," 41

[45] Varley, Moser, "Clann na Talmhan," 41.

[46] Maurice Manning, *Irish Political Parties: An Introduction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), 93-96, 99-101.

[47] Varley, "On the Road to Extinction: Agrarian Parties in Twentieth-Century Ireland," 592.

[48] Varley, Moser, "Clann na Talmhan," 41.

Successional Crises and Reform in Poland

In the case of PSL in Poland, a successional crisis as well as external forces weakened the party. By virtue of the early foundation of the party in 1895, after years of activity in Galicia there was a three-stage evolution[49] in the leadership. In the first stage the leadership was drawn from rural intellectuals, most prominently Boleslaw Wysłouch. As they aged and their influence waned, they were replaced by a second generation led by Jakub Bojko. Unlike the first wave, Bojko was a peasant whose parents had fled the Congress Kingdom to escape serfdom. He considered himself inferior to the gentry and had no desire to upset the social order. His radicalism was a reaction against reactionary landlords.[50] He cannot be considered to represent a change in approach from Wysłouch. However, he did represent a bridge from the non-radical elite leaders of the first generation to the more radical peasant leaders of the third generation. Wincenty Witos represented this third generation. Witos was also a peasant, but, unlike Bojko, he was radical in his opinions.[51]

What is perhaps most relevant to our analysis is how Witos came to assume such a dominant position within the Galician (and later the Polish) Agrarian movement. Such an analysis highlights many of the structural problems that agrarianism faced. Witos was the son of poor peasants and as a result was unable to attend the local *gymnasium*. However, under the patronage of the steward of the local estate, he managed to continue his education. This patronage enabled him to become familiar with historical, political and sociological literature. Through the steward, Witos became involved in agrarian politics. He was elected first to the local council and then in 1908 to the Galician Sejm. His elevation owed in part to his abilities, but also to the inherent instability of the leading elite of the party. This instability was due in part to the way in which the leadership was chosen; this is mostly clearly shown by Witos's predecessor Jan Stapiński.

An analysis of Stapiński's own political evolution helps to explain Witos's rise to power. Stapiński belonged to the third generation of peasant leaders. He used both his talent and the system of political patronage to rise within the party. His abilities drew him initially to Wysłouch, who gave him the editorship of a number of peasant journals,

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[49] Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867-1970*, 38-58.
[50] Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867-1970*, 50.
[51] Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867-1970*, 50-58.

enabling him to expand his powerbase.[52] In addition, when Stapinski's first son was born, he asked another prominent agrarian, Stanisław Stojałowski, to act as his godfather.[53] This highlights the importance of both patronage and familial links in assuring a position within the agrarian movement for those seeking advancement within the party. He is described as: "A pragmatic populist leader, without an ideology and perhaps without political principles, but he certainly filled a need of the time: the need for a politician who understood the peasants, sympathised with the peasants, knew their needs, and knew how to speak to them in their own language. His role in awakening the peasants [...] cannot be underestimated."[54]

By virtue of this, following his election to the Reichsrat in 1898, he came to be in charge of party policy and organization. The party organization at this time consisted of a small policy making executive. This executive was drawn from the Chief Council, which comprised a large number of members and met infrequently. Stapiński, the chief executive, thus became the party's main policy maker. His decisions were not, however, predicated on a solid and distinct ideological basis, but rather reflected personal choices. These were effectively transformed into party policy, owing to his charismatic leadership and the above-mentioned networks of patronage.

The electoral reform issue is a case in point. Between 1905 and 1913 the actions of Stapiński oscillated wildly. The party under Stapiński had been growing more nationalistic largely as a response to the growing strength of Ukrainian nationalism. Stapiński veered from a radical position on the issue of electoral reform in alliance with the Social Democrats, who supported reform, to opposing the reform in alliance with the Galician Conservatives. The actual reasons for this political deal were unmistakably mercenary and had a profound impact upon the future of the party.[55] The alliance with the Conservatives led, on the one hand, to a major fluctuation in the supporter base of the party, as landowners and members of the middle class joined the party at the expense of the poor peasantry. The exposure of the deal behind the alliance with the Conservatives, along with unhappiness at the active opposition to reform of the voting system by Stapiński, resulted in internal divisions, coming to a head in 1913. As a

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[52] Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village. The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 182-183

[53] Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867*-1970, 118

[54] Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867-1970*, 141.

[55] Narkiewicz, *The Green Flag Polish Populist Politics, 1867-1970*, 113-143.

consequence, the party split into two factions, PSL-Lewica under Stapiński and PSL-Piast under the leadership of Bojko and Witos. Stapiński continued to control the old party institutions, membership, journals and organization. The PSL-Piast group, although initially smaller than PSL-Lewica, was ultimately to become the main agrarian movement in Galicia and later Poland. Ironically, the Conservative landowners and wealthier peasants who had joined the party because of Stapiński's alliance after 1913 sided not with Stapiński but with Witos. As a result, PSL-Piast became a conservative agrarian movement, while PSL-Lewica served as a radical agrarian movement. In this sense, the developments within the original party, stemming from its particular power structure and promotion mechanisms, were instrumental in bringing about Witos's political advancement.

However, PSL-Piast became the dominant agrarian party in Galician Poland and then after 1918 in unified Poland. Although the PSL was led by a peasant and was more radical than PNȚ, it suffered from two problems. First, the domination of nationalists within the party meant that it never became a peasant party but remained a Polish peasant party. The hostility of Witos and the Galicians to Ukrainians meant that they did not support land reform after World War One, fearing that it would increase the power of the Ukrainians at the expense of the Poles. The second problem was more profound. Witos remained a charismatic leader; he dominated because of who he was. By the late 1930s, as he was aging, World War Two brought about the systematic targeting by the Nazis and the Soviets of younger and more radical peasant leaders such as Maciej Rataj who might have had the charisma to succeed Witos.

Although the wartime leader of the PSL in exile, Stanislaw Mikołajczyk, was officially named as the leader, following Witos' death in October 1945, many in the party did not accept him. This crisis of succession weakened the party but also the Polish opposition to the Communists.[56] The Communists took advantage of the dispute and created a front Peasant Party using the party name and Witos' brother as leader, thus attempting to confer legitimacy on the party by transferring the charismatic legitimacy from Witos to his brother.

The Polish case highlights the difficulty of maintaining communication and control of an organization within a war zone, especially one based on informal networks and social bonds. Freed from central control, many local peasant and agrarian organizations took it upon themselves to

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[56] Anita Prażmowska, *Civil War in Poland, 1942-1948* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1-68.

establish their own military and political directions and alliances at a local level. They produced their own often highly radical political programmes, which went against those of the party centre.[57] When Mikołajczyk returned from exile, he and his fellow party members faced an uphill struggle to re-assert their control and legitimacy over the party. Due to the deprivations of the wartime period, many local activists looked down upon those who had spent the war in 'comfort' in exile, and as a result they refused to accept the legitimacy of the returning leadership.[58] Stefan Korbonski's diaries from the period highlight these tensions. They mention a poorly received speech that Mikołajczyk gave in Warsaw to a PSL conference as well as rumours of tensions between Witos and Mikołajczyk.[59] Thus, Mikołajczyk, who had struggled to be recognized as the leader of the émigré community, had to re-establish, once he returned home, his claim to be the leader of the Polish Agrarians and their political representative.

Swedish Agrarianism: Late Start and Early Reform

The first Swedish agrarian parties were established in 1914-15. Although initially rivals, the *Bondeförbundet* (Farmers' League (BF)) and the *Jordbrukarnas Riksfördbund* (Agrarian League – JR) merged in 1921. The party rapidly expanded the representation of farmers in parliament, with between 89 and 97 MPs listing farming as their occupation returning to parliament from 1922 until 1949.[60] The new party kept the name *Bondeförbundet,* changing to *Landsbygdspariet Bondeförbundet* (Rural Party Farmers' League) in 1943 in an attempt to broaden its appeal to all of rural society and not just farmers. As a result, the number of farmers in parliament decreased. Finally in 1958 the party adopted the name *Centerpartiet*.[61] The changes in name reflect the movement's process of transformation from a narrow party to one attempting to become a catch-all party.[62]

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[57] Prażmowska, *Civil War in Poland*, 28-36.
[58] Prażmowska, *Civil War in Poland*, 137-142.
[59] Stefan Korbonski, *Warsaw in Chains* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), 59-61, 43.
[60] Michele Micheletti, *The Swedish Farmers Movement and Government Agricultural Policy* (New York: Praeger 1990), 32.
[61] Widfeldt, "The Swedish Centre Party: The Poor Relations of the Family," 4-7.
[62] See Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of Western European Party Systems," in *Political parties and political development*, 177-200. This is despite Kircheimer himself claiming that Agrarian parties could not become catch-all parties, writing: 'Neither a small, strictly regional party such as the South Tyrolean

The Swedish case shows that the parties adopted cadre forms of organization before 1921. However, after the merger and during the interwar period, the party underwent organizational reform, particularly in terms of power structures. This reform took place early, before the cadre structures had a chance to institutionalise themselves. As a result, the party shifted across time and the party membership changed, reflecting the success of the organizational structures in allowing supporters agency over party policy, which did not exist in PNȚ. Thus reforming and moving to new organization structures appears to be crucial in allowing the party to transform itself.

Significantly, in becoming a catch-all party, *Centerpartiet* abandoned its identity as a purely agrarian party, seeking to respond to the challenges from other parties and the changing socio-economic situation in the countryside. Unlike elsewhere, the division within rural society between rich farmers and peasants declined in the 1890s. Furthermore, migration to the cities and away from the countryside also changed the dynamics of rural society, forcing the party to change tack.[63] In the face of the declining power of the countryside, the party attempted to expand the appeal of the party. This was only possible because of the early reform of the party. By opening up its power structures to mass membership and institutionalizing this form of party, *Centerpartiet* managed to move with Swedish society and thus survive.

Romania: Leadership Crisis, Divided Peasantry

PNȚ had a double problem: they had a leadership crisis and were increasingly divorced from their electorate. Although they achieved the

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People's party, nor a party built around the espousal of harsh and limited ideological claims, like the Dutch Calvinists; or transitory group claims, such as the German refugees; or a specific professional category's claims, such as the Swedish Agrarians; or a limited action program, such as the Danish single-tax Justice Party, can aspire to a catch-all performance.' Otto Kircheimer, "The Catch-All Party," in *The West European Party System*, ed. Peter Mair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 52-60, 55. This view has been challenged by David Arter. See David Arter, "From Class Party to Catchall Party? The Adaptation of the Finnish Agrarian-Center Party," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 22/2 (1999), 157-190

[63] Micheletti, *The Swedish Farmers Movement and Government Agricultural Policy*, 32-35.

largest number of votes in the 1946 elections,[64] the campaign was beset
with problems that betrayed the party's weakness and fragility.

In Sweden, the party moved with the times and reflected the changing
nature of Swedish society in its policies. This did not occur in Romania.
The PNŢ programme highlights of 1944[65] reveal not a new programme but
a revival of their 1936 programme. This shows a remarkable lack of
intellectual development, as well as a failure to recognize the desire for
alternative solutions rather than a repeat of the failed policies of the
interwar period. The programme itself caused internal friction, as
Mihalache in particular sought a more radical programme, which Maniu
and the Transylvanian members of the party resisted.[66] The policies
espoused by the party benefitted the wealthy peasants and the village elite,
the same strata of rural society who dominated the party.

This lack of political innovation can be seen as a function of stagnation
within the party. PNŢ, like the PSL, faced a leadership crisis. It needed to
address the problem of succession, as Maniu had dominated PNR and later
PNŢ since before the First World War. He was aging and ineffective but
unwilling to give up power. The Communist leaders and politically active
members were on average ten years younger than their PNŢ rivals. The
average age for a Communist or Communist-supporting politician in 1946-
47 was 50.32 years old, while the average age of PNL politicians was 60.8
years old and for PNŢ, 59.63. The leadership of PNŢ, including Maniu
(74), Mihalache (65), Haţieganu (68), Mihail Popovici (69) and Sever Boc
(73), can be contrasted with that of PCR, comprising Gheorghiu-Dej (46),
Luca (49), Pauker (54), Teohari Georgescu (39), Bodnăraş (43), Pătrăşcanu
(46) and Petru Groza (63).[67] The figure for the Communists includes
members of the Ploughman's Front, Dissident National Liberals, Dissident
PNŢ members and Dissident socialists as well as members of the
Communist Party. The same analysis noted that Popovici was unable to

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[64] Virgiliu Ţârău, *Alegeri fără opţiune. Primele scrutinuri parlamentare din
Centrul şi Estul Europei după cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial* [Elections without
Options. The First Parliamentary Votes from the Central and Eastern Europe after
World War II] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Eikon, 2005).
[65] "PNŢ Programme-Manifesto," *Dreptatea*, 16 October 1944, 3.
[66] *România. Viaţa politică în documente, 1946* [Romania. Political Life in
Documents, 1946], ed. Ioan Scurtu (Bucureşti: Arhivele Statului din România,
1996), 209.
[67] These figures are drawn from an analysis of the age of politicians listed drawn
up in a British 'Who's Who in Romanian politics' analysis quoted in Gheorghe
Buzatu, *România şi Marile Puteri, 1939-1947* (Bucureşti: Editura Enciclopedică,
2003), 493-590.

participate due to being 'stone deaf', Boc was 'too old' to be anything more than a figurehead in the Banat and Maniu suffered from health problems which prevented him from taking an active role in the 1946 election campaign. Of the 'younger generation' of Agrarians, Ghiţă Popp (63), Ionel Pop (Maniu's nephew) (58) and Nicolae Penescu (the Party Secretary since 1944) (51) were for the most part older than their younger but more politically senior Communist opponents. In simple terms, the Communist leaders were younger and fitter than the elderly PNŢ leadership and thus better able to take an active role in the mobilization of supporters.

That the PNŢ leadership was aware of this generational shortcoming becomes evident in a letter dated 22 January 1946 from Popovici, the president of the PNŢ organization in Transylvania and the Banat, to Maniu, in which the former urged that those who did not feel capable to fully contribute to the electoral effort should step down and be replaced with younger and more active elements.[68] It is ironic that a man accused of being 'stone deaf' and too old demanded that the party clear out its elderly members.[69] While Popovici and Maniu may have agreed on weeding out the elderly and ineffective members of the party, this only extended so far and did not apply to themselves.

Henry Roberts argued that the dilution of political power of the Liberal and Agrarian Parties was proportional to the region's distance from the political centre: "The farther I went from Bucharest the less organized were the local branches of the historical parties. In many cases the local Liberal and National Peasant Party leader had received no word whatsoever from his party's headquarters."[70]

A 1946 Secret Police report testifies to the PNŢ effort to regroup and their attempts to re-establish the links between the centre and the rural areas.[71] When Mihalache attended a party meeting in Suceava during the run-up to the 1946 elections, it was noted that this was the first party meeting for eight years.[72] During his trip through Northern Moldavia and

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[68] *România. Viaţa politică în documente 1946*, 81: 'Îndată după deschiderea campaniei electorale vă rog să dispuneţi ca toţi membrii partidului să-şi dea pe deplin contribuţia, precizând că acei oameni care nu se simt în stare să depună tot efortul cerut să-şi cedeze locurile lor unor elemente mai tinere şi active.'

[69] Buzatu, *România şi Marile Puteri, 1939-1947*, 567-568.

[70] Henry Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), 261.

[71] *România. Viaţa politică în documente 1946*, 156.

[72] Reuben H. Markham, *Rumania under the Soviet Yoke* (Boston: Meador, 1949), 281.

Bucovina, Mihalache expended considerable energy in seeking to re-
organize and reactive the party at a local level.[73]

PNŢ, with its informal but socially rigid networks and hierarchies,
depended upon its local networks and traditional methods to mobilize
voters: the presence of a regional or national leader at a meeting, repeating
well-practiced speeches, the use of charisma and personal networks.[74] The
activity of PNŢ was often based on individual action rather than part of a
coherent party direction or electoral strategy. The dependence of PNŢ on
personal contacts and networks is highlighted in a *Siguranţă* report from
1946:

> "Oil centre / Note
> The situation of the political parties in Moreni
> […] The National Peasant Party – Maniu wing: They continue to have
> the same weak influence as before, they don't gather at the organization
> headquarters and they don't do propaganda. The interaction between its
> members is made on a person-to-person basis. They are on bad terms with
> the B.P.D. parties, and on good terms with the Brătianu liberals."[75]
> To understand the problems of the party we can take one example of
> their behaviour in the interwar period, when the party rejected the attempts
> of local younger and more radical members of the party to get themselves
> selected to stand. The response of the local party was as follows:
> "regarding the ten candidates running for the commune council, the local
> council [*sfatul*] is of the opinion that the struggle should be waged with the
> fervour of the past and asks the committee to *aim at* victory in the elections
> and to choose as candidates the *leading men* [*fruntaşii*]* seasoned in
> battle."[76]

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[73] Markham, *Rumania under the Soviet Yoke*, 273.

[74] Markham, *Rumania under the Soviet Yoke*, 273.

[75] Arhivele Naţionale Istorice Centrale [The Central National Historical Archives],
Bucharest, Fond Preşendinţia Consiliului de Miniştri [The Presidency of the
Council of Ministers Fund], S.S.I., 97/1945, 32: 'Centrul petrolifer – Notă -
Situaţia partidelor politice în regiunea Moreni: [...] Partidul Naţ. Ţărănesc-Maniu-:
Se bucură de aceiaşi influenţă slabă ca şi până acum, nu se adună la sediul
organizaţiei şi nu fac nici o propagandă.- Legătura între membrii se face de la om
la om.- Sunt în raporturi rele cu partidele din B.P.D., bune cu liberalii Brătianu.'

* In Romanian the term '*fruntaş*' (plural '*fruntaşi*') refers to the well-off
inhabitants of the village, with the implication that they achieved their wealth
through hard work and skilfulness and, by virtue of this, that they are prominent
members of their community. This term is used often in the Berlişte reports when
describing who should lead party activity in the village.

[76] Serviciul Judeţean Caraş Severin al Arhivelor Naţionale ale României
[Romanian National Archives Service of Caraş Severin County], Organizaţia

The upshot of this was mass defections from the party at the grassroots, mid and upper-levels of the party by the younger generation. They left because there was no mechanism to allow them either to progress in the party or to exert agency over the party. The party retained until the end its old cadre structures, as those with entrenched institutionalised power held onto it until the very end. The result was a party whose organization was divided, weak and ripe to be picked off by political competitors.

Conclusions

In addition to the external challenges the agrarians faced, ranging from rival democratic parties seeking to attract the rural voter, to authoritarian movements that had no time for alternative voices, to the existential threats to life itself by political activity during World War II, they also faced challenges from within. The expansion of the franchise profoundly changed the political landscape of European party politics; however, these changes were brought into sharper focus by the socio-economic changes in rural society. These changes introduced stark economic divisions within rural society between those who benefitted from changes and those who continued to lose out. The partial nature of reform, and the fact that the majority of the rural population suffered, brought out tensions within the parties. While the powerful, richer interests dominated local party organization, the enfranchised but still politically excluded poorer peasants demanded increasingly radical solutions. These tensions appeared across Europe; in the cases of Romania and Poland, generational conflict masked that this was predominantly a conflict between wealthier and poorer sections of the population. As the fate of Clann na Talmhan in Ireland shows, the demands of poor sections of rural society were ignored by the richer elements. Although external threats to the parties in Eastern Europe had significantly weakened them, this cannot hide that they were organizationally and intellectually moribund by 1945. Centerpartiet in Sweden owed its success to organizational reform; by reforming from a cadre to a mass party it created mechanisms through which the voice of the majority of rural society could be heard. The PSL, PNȚ and Clann na Talmhan parties all died, and while the mechanics of their deaths vary, the common thread which rendered them vulnerable was the absence of reform to create mechanisms for changes of leadership. In the case of PSL,

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Partidului Naţional-Ţărănesc, Comuna Berlişte, Berlişte Fund Reports dated 7th May 1934.

although the party had reformed and become more peasant-centric during the crisis of 1910-13, the need to replace the dying Witos at the end of World War Two prompted a new successional crisis. This was made worse by the consequences of Nazi and Soviet occupation, as both had systematically targeted and murdered younger agrarian leaders, and the dislocation of the socio-familial networks that the party depended upon. In the case of Romania, an aging leadership at all levels of the party was unwilling to give up power; this resistance pre-dates World War II and was an on-going issue leading to defections and splits. The failure to reform resulted in a party that was a decaying shell of itself. In the case of Clann na Talmhan, the failure to reform reflected a similar level of internal resistance; however, in this case they were not threatened by authoritarian rivals, nor were they subject to the deprivations of war. Rather, their vote simply withered away and died with the party as supporters, especially those in the poorer areas of Ireland, realised that the party leadership did not represent their interests.

So, why was Centerpartiet able to reform while PSL, PNŢ and Clann na Talmhan were not? As Panebianco shows, parties are organizations and have their own internal power dynamics. Actors often place their own interests above those of the wider party and seek to protect their powerbase. The ability of actors to protect their interests depends upon the level of institutionalisation of the party. PNŢ and PSL were dominated post-merger by the longest-established and hence most strongly institu-tionalised wings of the party. These factions were organized along the lines of cadre parties, and hence power was distributed through personal networks. Those in positions of power came from the rural elite, and reform would have eroded these networks and the power of individual actors; thus there was an incentive to resist change. Secondly, challenges came from below, from those who were excluded; thus it was not just a political challenge to their authority but also a social challenge. This social challenge, which manifested itself as a political challenge, was common in all four countries and all four movements. In the case of Sweden, the absence of an established, institutionalised, dominant wing allowed the party to reform itself internally and to move with the interests of the rural population they purported to represent. Therefore their electoral support did not wither away, nor were they left moribund and hence vulnerable to external challenges. Reform was necessary for survival, but reform was only possible due to the power structures within the party being soft enough to be reformed in the first place.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BESSARABIANS "BETWEEN" THE RUSSIANS AND THE ROMANIANS: THE CASE OF THE PEASANT PARTY DEPUTY VLADIMIR V. ȚÎGANKO (1917-1919)[*]

SVETLANA SUVEICA

The 1918 union of Bessarabia with Romania remains one of the central research themes of Moldovan historiography, approached equally by Moldovan historians and by those from outside the country who are interested in the history of the region between the Pruth and Dniester rivers. With few exceptions, this event is presented through the lens of "occupation vs liberation" – an exclusivist approach that leaves little room for alternative interpretations. Thus, the act of the union is argued as being either a "culmination point" of the national struggle of the Romanians from the region, or the result of the Romanian "occupation" of the territory. This "occupation" occurred during a period of relative Russian decline due to the disintegration of the Russian Empire and the installation there of the Bolshevik regime. Those who ruled Bessarabia at this crucial turning point were either perceived as "heroes" or "traitors". Indeed, whether an individual was ranked among the "remarkable personalities" of the time depended exclusively on the attitude of the representatives of the Bessarabian elite towards the union. According to this cliché, a former deputy and president of the Peasant Faction in the national council of "Sfatul Țării", Vladimir V. Țîganko, is included as part of the latter group.

Țîganko abstained from voting on April 9, 1918[1], but later expressed his position against the union. His activity was automatically classified as "anti-national" and "destructive", even though not a single study that sheds light on his personality and work during the period of transition from the Russian Empire to Greater Romania was published.

The current study proposes to alter the perception of these events by analysing them through the lens of the local Bessarabian elite itself, including its experiences, judgements, and feelings. The approach develops from the idea that the transition from empire to nation-state – a direct result of the World War One – created in Eastern Europe, as well as Bessarabia, a temporal and geographic *liminal* space. Such a space generated radical social transformations and individual metamorphoses that led to further political, social and cultural changes. Introduced in the 1960s by Arnold von Gennep and Victor W. Turner,[2] and recently re-introduced into scientific discussion,[3] the concept of *liminality* "captures in-between situations and conditions characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty about the continuity of tradition and future outcomes."[4] Liminal stages are characterized by wars and revolutions that simultaneously destroy and create new structures and symbols. Human and social experiences that are analysed using this concept extend and deepen the understanding of changes that occurred during crises, as well as of their consequences.

World War One and the Russian revolutions of February and November 1917 had a major impact on Bessarabia, marking the transition of the region from the imperial regime to the nation-state. The power structures of the region were radically affected and significant changes took place in the economic, political, social and judicial domains. The perriphery that lost contact with the imperial power centre of St. Petersburg and did not enter definitively into the Romanian sphere of influence, transformed into own centres of power.[5] The political forces –

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[1] Here and throughout, N.S., otherwise noted.

[2] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rise of Passage* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Harmondworth: Penguin Books, 1969).

[3] See the magazine *International Political Anthropology* 2/1 (2009), entirely dedicated to the concept.

[4] *Breaking Boundaries. Varieties of Liminality*, eds. Agnes Horvath, Bjorn Thomassen, Harald Wydra (New York: Berghann Books, 2015), 2.

[5] See, in this regard, Arpad Szacolczay, "Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events," *International Political Anthropology* 2/1 (2009), 152.

some older, others in development – began the process of assembling new institutional structures. The inhabitants of the region, regardless of their social and ethnic status, underwent psychological transformations, characterized by feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. Identity and membership were drawn into question. Thus, an individual found himself in a physical and temporal state that was difficult to define - with reference to the past, but also to the very uncertain future. This was an *in-between* state that meant living between two "homelands" – Russia and Romania – which at that time were two vaguely defined geographical spaces. It meant carrying out one's existence between two economic realities, neither capable of guaranteeing stability. One had to attempt to define – sometimes to justify – one's identity as "Bessarabian", an identity which was not related to ethnicity, neither the Russian nor the Romanian. In creating such a definition, one had to not allow the past to vanish for the sake of justifying the present.

The concept of *liminality*, with human experience at its core, allows for the consideration of transition as both destructive and formative. The experiences of the Bessarabian elite during this deep crisis were marked by separation from a geographical location and a power reference point that offered security and protection. It also meant a detachment from symbols and customs, changes of social status, dispossession, detachment from the rigid structures imposed by the centre, confronting power resignations and external political pressure aimed at forcing certain political decisions, as well as living under a major security risk. Simultaneously, the power vacuum created in this moment was exploited. Almost overnight, new economic, social and administrative institutions were created, new alliances and interest groups were bound, and new social groups that demanded compromise were constructed. New work practices were modelled and tested; for these, prior experience was more a hindrance than an advantage. Political options were largely confusing, the most urgent being the actions directed towards guaranteeing individual and community security. At that time, one's ethnic origin was not seen as important; rather, interpersonal connections, new associations, the capacity to apply survival and adaptation strategies to new conditions, as well as the ability to react promptly to the challenges of the time were of greater significance.

The aim of this study is to remove anonymity from the personality of Vladimir V. Țîganko, a Bessarabian deputy of Russian origin who was present during crucial moments for Bessarabia. Under which circumstances did Țîganko become a member of "Sfatul Țării"? How was his position regarding the problems of the region shaped? What personal or group

interests were behind his actions? What relationships did he build and
what alliances did he form? What visions and political projects regarding
Bessarabia's future did he support, and why? Finally, what actions did he
take in this regard? These are the main questions I will attempt to answer
in this study. The previously unknown official and private documents
written in several languages, kept in various archives, provide interesting
details about Vladimir V. Țîganko's experiences. The reconstruction of the
profile of the Bessarabian deputy will serve as a point of reference for the
understanding of the complexity of factors and the interconnectedness
between the central characters of Bessarabian history during this time of
crisis. I believe that in this way, rigid and exclusivist clichés that hold the
region's historiography static can be challenged. Additionally, alternative
perspectives regarding the political future of the region – although with
little support – can be acknowledged as a natural part of the region's social
and political development.

A Deputy in "Sfatul Țării"

    Vladimir V. Țîganko[6] was born in 1886 in Chișinău to the family of
the Bessarabian architect Vladimir N. Tîganko.[7] He went to high school in
his home town after which he attended the Polytechnic University in Riga.
Following his graduation from university, Tîganko returned to Bessarabia
with a degree in engineering technology and was hired in 1908 as an
engineer – later working as the chief-engineer – for Orhei county (judeţ).
During the February 1917 Revolution, Țîganko served as the chief-
technician of Chișinău Mayoralty.[8] At 31 years of age, he was elected as a
deputy in the first Bessarabian legislative body "Sfatul Țării". Tîganko
was a deputy from the moment the Moldovan Democratic Republic
declared its independence (January 24, 2918) until the unconditional union
of Bessarabia with Romania (December 10, 1918).

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[6] In contemporary documents we find different versions of his name: Țiganco,
Țiganko, Tsyganko, Tzyganko, Tsiganko.
[7] Vladimir N. Țîganko was the author of a series of architectural projects which
contributed to the shaping of the urban profile of Chișinău, such as: the building of
the Real School, the Zoological-Agricultural and Craftsmen Museum, High School
for boys Nr. 3, the "Reznikov" synagogue, as well as the St. Nicholas church in
Chișinău.
[8] According to a note by Ioan Adam about Nikolai Vladimirovici (erorr!) Țîganko.
Describing him as "the Ruthenian architect," he thus confused him with his father.
See, Duiliu Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia* [In Bessarabia] (București: Editura
Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2012), 87.

Țîganko's political profile took shape during Bessarabia's political and social upheaval throughout the summer of 1917. At that time, the Russian Empire started to disintegrate and the Russian troops were withdrawn from the Romanian front, which was close to the Bessarabian border. The February Democratic Revolution echoed in the western Russian gubernias, as well as in the Caucasus: the newly-formed national-revolutionary bodies, named "councils", as well as "local parliaments", called for greater social, political, civil and national rights for citizens. In Bessarabia, "Sfatul Țării" was created, which took over the duties of the regional legislative body, as well as established the Council of Directors, the first provincial executive body. Following Ukraine's example, on December 15, 1917, "Sfatul Țării" announced the creation of the Autonomous Moldovan Democratic Republic within the Russian Federation.

Țîganko was an active sympathizer of the Moldovan Socialist Revolutionary Party, an Esser party, whose program called for national-cultural autonomy, as well as for socialization of land – an aspect that appealed to the Bessarabian peasants.[9] On December 3, 1917, the Peasants' Congress of Hotin county took the decision "to enforce its right for autonomy together with the whole gubernia, on the condition that this right will be enforced together in all of Russia."[10] At the 3rd Congress of the Bessarabian Peasants (January 31 – February 4, 1918), Țîganko was elected as deputy in "Sfatul Țării" on behalf of the Hotin county.[11] According to his personal record, Țîganko fulfilled his term as deputy from February 8 until December 10, 1918.[12] As a honorary president of the

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[9] See the detailed program of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, in Manfred Hildermeier, *Die Sozialrevolutionäre Partei Russlands. Agrarsozialismus und Modernizierung im Zarenreich (1900-1914)* (Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1978).

[10] A telegram from a group of peasants from Hotin county to Sfatul Țării, in Ștefan Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei. Studiu și documente cu privire la mișcarea națională din Basarabia în anii 1917-1918* [Union of Bessarabia. Study and Documents about the National Movement in Bessarabia during 1917-1918] (București: Cartea Românească, 1929), 135.

[11] See the list of Sfatul Țării deputies, elected by the Peasants Congress of January 1918, whose mandates were proposed for approval in the session of February 8, 1918. Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei*, 135.

[12] Iurie Colesnic, *Generația Unirii* [The Unification Generation] (Chișinău: Editura Muzeum, 2004), 313. A. Chiriac indicates the period of Jarnuary 22 – November 27 (O.S.), in: A. Chiriac, *Membrii Sfatului Țării (1917-1918). Dictionar* [Members of the Country's Council/Sfatul Țării (1917-1918). Dictionary] (București: Editura Fundația Culturală Română), 2001, 42. W. van Meurs, who cites a document from the personal archive of a Bessarabian activist Pan. Halippa, gives different dates

Central Committee of the Soviet of Peasant Deputies of Bessarabia, he
was later elected as president of the Peasant Faction of "Sfatul Țării". As
deputy, he was elected as president of the Agrarian Commission, as well
as member of the Budget Commission and the 2nd Drafting Commission.

The reconstruction of Țîganko's personality and his activity during
Bessarabia's transition from empire to nation-state is not exactly a simple
task, as very few sources from the time describe his personality and
occupation. One of the few testimonies available was left by Duiliu
Zamfirescu, the Military Commissioner of Bessarabia from April to June
1918.[13] He reported: "After the Moldovan bloc, the most important group
in the Chamber (i.e., Sfatul Țării) is that of the Moldovan Peasants, whose
leader, a certain Mr. Țîganko, does not know a word of Romanian, just as
the peasants do not know a word of Russian. This bizarre connection
between people is a characteristic of the place and suggests a troubling
situation." Zamfirescu wondered: "Could it be that the very heart of our
people, the Moldovan peasant, is so ignorant of his own nationality as to
make himself the instrument of such an instigator as Mr. Țîganko, who
systematically opposes to the Bessarabian government and Romanian
politics, working thus towards the union with Ukraine? This is
unbelievable!"[14] For the public officials coming from the Old Kingdom of
Romania, the Bessarabians' lack of knowledge of Romanian was instantly
associated with a lack of patriotism as well as with the rejection of the new
administration, which attempted to "romanianize" the region. Indeed,
Țîganko did not speak Romanian; in the "Sfatul Țării" session of February
18, 1918, he opposed, along with the representatives of other minorities,

for Țîganko's term: April 2 – October 12, 1918 (O.S.) (W. van Meurs, *Chestiunea
Basarabiei în istoriografia comunistă* [The Bessarabian Question in Communist
Historiography] (Chișinău: Editura ARC, 1996), 442). Since Țîganko was not a
member of Sfatul Țării during the first term, Ion Pelivan's testimony about his
participation in the dispute over the election of the Sfatul Țării president seems less
credible. See, in this regard, Ion Constantin, Ion Negrei, Gheorghe Negru, *Ioan
Pelivan, părinte al mișcării naționale din Basarabia* [Ion Pelivan, Father of the
National Movement in Bessarabia] (Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor,
2011), 387.
[13] Zamfirescu's activity in Bessarabia is analyzed by Ioan Adam in the preface to
his edition, Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 5-48. See, also, Ion Țurcanu, "Duiliu
Zamfirescu despre realitățile basarabene din anul 1918," [Duiliu Zamfirescu about
Bessarabian Realities of the Year 1918] in *Bessarabiana. Teritoriul dintre Prut și
Nistru în câteva ipostaze istorice și reflecții istoriografice* [Bessarabiana. The
Territory between Prut and Nistru in several Historical and Historiographical
Reflections], ed. Ion Țurcanu (Chișinău: Tipografia "Reclama" S.A., 2012), 95-99.
[14] Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 57.

the adoption of the draft law declaring Romanian (named Moldovan in contemporary sources) as the official state language.[15]

There appears to have been a special relationship between Zamfirescu and Țîganko. Zamfirescu supposedly saved the life of the latter – "I saved him from a great peril without knowing him"[16] – and when he later had health problems, he thought to invite Țîganko to his home for a talk. They spoke in French; he described the deputy as "a young man, barely emerged from childhood, tall and skinny, a character from Dostoyevsky, straight from the pages of *The House of the Dead* [underl. in text], with the most fantastic socialist ideas, applicable to the realities of life, as the current Russian revolution has produced a large and wretched elite class, about which the genius Gorky says that they treat people as material for their experiments. Death, oblivion, military destruction, poverty, degeneration – nothing frightens them."[17]

According to Ioan Adam, the editor of Zamfirescu's memoirs, Țîganko was "the type of the 'professional revolutionary,' of the communist fanatic, with readings unprocessed, capable of destroying his fellows in the name of a bloody utopia."[18] Zamfirescu described the way in which the "destruction" was about to occur as follows: "Within one month, this man attempted to put the government into minority three times: 1) on the occasion of the vote on the agrarian directives; 2) on sending the peace delegates;[19] 3) on the occasion of the Convention of the railroads – and only by the grace of the harmonious wisdom of Messrs. Inculeț și Ciugureanu and the patriotism of the young deputies of the bloc could we avoid a ministerial crisis, which would have been disastrous." The personality of Țîganko was described in contrast with that of the deputy of the Moldovan Bloc, Vasile Țanțu. Whereas the latter was a "border guard of Ștefan cel Mare", the former was "a deviation from normal, an excess, a

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[15] Ion Țurcanu, "Sfatul Țării și problema limbii române," [The Country's Council/ Sfatul Țării and Romanian Language Issue] *Transilvania* 3-4 (2008), 57-58; Ion Țurcanu, *Unirea Basarabiei cu România: preludii, premise, realizari. 1918* [Union of Bessarabia with Romania: Preludes, Premises, Achievements] (Chișinău: Tipografia Centrală, 1998), 113.

[16] Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 58.

[17] Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 58.

[18] Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 57.

[19] On the eve of his election in "Sfatul Țării", V.V. Țîganko was coopted into the Bessarabian delegation for the negotiation of the peace treaty with Germany in Brest-Litovsk. The departure of the delegation was problematic, and finally deliberately thwarted. See Chiriac, *Membrii Sfatului Țării*, 153: Țurcanu, *Unirea Basarabiei cu România*, 147-148.

criminal fanaticism that 'sees ideas', but destroys people."[20] This "normality", i.e., the point of reference for the assessment of the behaviour and the actions taken by the Bessarabian deputies, was the union of Bessarabia with Romania. Those who, for one reason or another, abstained from the vote or voted against the union, were considered downright extremists and fanatics by the representatives of the new government.

Țîganko's Position on the Union

"The Peasant faction, acknowledging the importance of the question of the union of the independent Moldovan Republic with the Romanian Kingdom, in this extraordinarily important moment for the history of its precious people, and not being empowered by this people to solve this matter, believes it is necessary to turn it over to the will of the entire population (referendum) or of a constituent assembly, as the exponent of the sovereign will of the people, provided that it will be [expressed] in the free independent Moldovan Republic. The Peasant faction, which alone expresses the will of the people and represents the true majority of the population, declares that, whereas defending the independence of the Moldovan Republic, considers the union of the fraternized Moldovan and Romanian peoples in a tight federative alliance as a possible format."[21] The declaration was read by Țîganko in the "Sfatul Țării" session of April 9, 1918, during which the Declaration of the union of Bessarabia with Romania was voted on. In his position as the head of the Peasant Faction, Țîganko justified his abstention from voting by arguing that he lacked a mandate from the peasants he represented. Additionally, he highlighted his disagreement with the political format of the union as another reason for abstaining from the vote. He had previously requested a secret vote regarding the union, the proposal being rejected by the majority of deputies.[22] At that moment, Țîganko did not exclude the format of a federation on equal footing between Romania and Bessarabia; according to Zamfirescu, a possible union of Bessarabia with Ukraine was not taken into consideration.

The fact that Țîganko hesitated to support the unionist project was known in Romanian governmental circles long before April 9. In his brochure, *La question de la Bessarabie devant la Conference de la Paix*,

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[20] Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 47.
[21] Minutes of Sfatul Țării session of March 27, 1918, Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei*, 232.
[22] Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei*, 245.

published in Paris in 1919,[23] he emphasized that the "Romanophobic attitude" of the delegates to the 3rd Peasants Congress of Bessarabia, who choose to protest before the Allied Powers on the arrival of Romanian troops in the region, led directly to "the repressions of the Romanian regime". The delegates decided to request information from the Romanian government regarding its position on the agrarian question in the region, particularly regarding the exclusion of any form of land ownership, the nationalization of land and its free allotment. A delegation that comprised Țîganko, V. Vranov and I. Panțîr was to bring to the attention of the new authorities the attitude of the inhabitants regarding the arrival of the Romanian troops in Bessarabia.[24]

The Bessarabian landowners were confronted by similar concerns. Unlike the Peasants deputies, they blamed the Romanian authorities for tacitly supporting the radical decisions of the 3rd Peasants Congress. Thus, in a letter to the Romanian Prime Minister, Alexandru Marghiloman, the head of the Union of Great Landowners, Panteleimon V. Sinadino, requested that the Romanian government make public its position on the agrarian question. In the case of an unsatisfactory response, the Allied Powers were to be alerted "to take into consideration especially how the Romanian government had chosen to run the local life in Bessarabia via the Bessarabian congresses."[25]

The events that unfolded immediately following the Peasants Congress remain shrouded in mystery. In a letter dated October 1919, addressed by Țîganko to the former Marshal of Bessarabian Nobility, Alexandr N. Krupenskii,[26] certain details about a suspicious disappearance of a group

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[23] V. Tzyganko, *La Question de Bessarabie devant la Conference de la Paix* (Paris: Imprimerie Lahure, 1919). The publication was a response to the article written by the Bessarabian landowner, Vasile Stroescu, in the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* of May 4, 1919. A version of brochure, sent to the Union – bureau de presse russe in Geneva (founded by V. Burtsev), is kept in Alexandr N. Krupenskii's personal archive: Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 3 Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California (further, HIA).

[24] V.V. Țîganko – A. N. Krupenskii, Paris, 30 October 1919. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 17 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Correspondence – Krupenskii, 1919, HIA.

[25] Gospodinu Predsedateliu Soveta Ministrov, 24 January 1919. V.A. Maklakov Papers, 1881-1956, Box 18, Subject file, Folder 18.8 Bessarabia. Report – Soiuz Zemel'nykh Sobstvennikov, f. 23, HIA.

[26] During the Paris Peace conference, Alexandr N. Krupenskii was the head of the "Bessarabian delegation" that was pleading, together with the Russian political emigrants, for the return of Bessarabia to Russia.

of Peasants deputies were given – "the dark story of their murder being not hidden from us."[27] According to Țîganko, the facts demonstrated certain "dark business of our brothers across the Pruth during the early days of their presence in Bessarabia".[28] A military report later indicated that in a "Sfatul Țării" session Țîganko raised the question of providing subsidies for "the families left behind after the disappearance of their heads without trace". He referred implicitly to the families of the deputies T. Cotoros, V. Rudiev, V. Prahnițkii and P. Ciumacenko who were presumably murdered by the Romanian authorities in the immediate evening after the Peasants Congress. According to a document that referred to Țîganko's speech, the former Director of Internal Affairs, Gherman Pântea, publicly insisted that Țîganko, as well as the former mayor of Chișinău Alexandr K. Schmidt, both "Russophiles", be shot.[29] It seems that Duiliu Zamfirescu's intervention to save Țîganko from his death occurred exactly at this time.

The representative of the Romanian government, Constantin Stere, who took over the mission to convince the Bessarabian deputies to vote for the union, reported to Marghiloman that "kilometers of talk" with deputies, including Țîganko, before the decisive "Sfatul Țării" session were held.[30] The members of the Moldovan Bloc of "Sfatul Țării", which would finally vote for the union, also hesitated. Thus, in January 1918, the deputy Dimitrie Bogos assured a British traveller that "a good part of our population opposed the entry of the Romanian troops, in the east or the

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[27] The representative of the Gubernial Executive Committee of the Soviet of Deputies of Soldiers and Workers, T. Cotoros, the vice-minister in the Directorate of Agriculture of Bessarabia, Pavel Chiumachenko, the former president of the 3rd Peasants Congress, Vasile Rudiev, as well as the deputies V. Vranov, I. Panzîr, D. Prakhnitskii and Litvinov were shot. V. Țîganko was the last to see V. Rudiev alive. Rudiev's body was recognized by P. Erhan at the scene of the crime – in one of the offices of the Theological Seminary of Chișinău, where, in fact, V. Rudiev studied. Several details of the murder of these deputies are to be found in: Iurie Colesnic, *Chișinăul și chișinăuenii* [Chisinau and Chisinau Residents] (Chișinău: Editura Ulisse, 2012), 131.

[28] According to the letter, the president of the Gubernial Executive committee of Peasants of Bessarabia, Panteleimon Erhan, saw Rudiev's body at the scene of the crime and described the murder to the Peasants deputies. V.V. Țîganko – A. N. Krupenskii, Paris, 30 October 1919. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 17 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Correspondence – Krupenskii, 1919, HIA.

[29] Praporshcik Mihail Kleshchiari, Doklad Polkovniku Ukraintsevu, 16 August 1919, g. Tulcea. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box VIII Cuttings, Envelope "Tsyganko", HIA.

[30] Alexandru Marghiloman, *Note politice 1917-1918* [Political Notes 1917-1918], vol. III (București: Editura de Arte Grafice "Eminescu" S.A., 1927), 456.

west, as they were still enamoured of the idea of a Moldovan state in the Russian Federative Republic;"[31] in March 1918, they appeared already convinced of the necessity to unite with Romania. In his monograph, Ion Constantin also noted Gherman Pântea's hesitation: in a letter of Pântea to Captain Popa from Bălți, he assured the latter that, "I, as an honourable worker in the party of the republic that is politically on the side of Russia, am convinced that a republican Bessarabia can only be with Russia, [therefore, I] find it criminal to continue my service. I promise that I will defend Bessarabia as a republic together with Russia even at the cost of my life ... I gave the order for the entire Moldovan army to move to the front; when I saw that the Romanians were too strong, I changed the order. The Romanians are powerful ... I am very much afraid they may take Bessarabia from us. It is getting hard, but we will not give up easily. If I see that someone is leaning across the Pruth, I will notify you immediately."[32] Romanian Prime Minister Marghiloman noted in his journal that Ion Inculeț, President of "Sfatul Țării" and "*ex-agent* [underl. in text] of Kerensky, who is only for the union with complete autonomy," hesitated up to the final moment. He observed that during the negotiations for the union "Inculeț defends himself like a Slav, wily and calm. I do not know how to approach him."[33]

According to the memoirs of the deputy Dimitrie Bogos, at the reception in honour of the Bessarabian deputies held before the union, "with a firm, decisive voice, with iron logic, Mr. Stere explained to Țîganko the necessity of the act of the Union. I do not think Mr. Stere was ever so strong and convincing as he was on the evening of March 24 (O.S.). [...] At the end of the banquet, Țîganko and his comrades appeared ready to listen and obey the great professor, who had explained so many beautiful, objective and convincing theories."[34] The former president of "Sfatul Țării", Pan. Halippa, likewise, testified to the fact that Stere "was able to convert many Moldovan Peasants to the true path, who until then had been led by lying prophets like Țîganko and others."[35] Țîganko

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[31] Henry Barlein, *Bessarabia and Beyond* (London: Methnen and Co., 1935), 168.

[32] Ion Constantin, *Gherman Pântea între mit și realitate* [Gherman Pântea between Myth and Reality] (Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2010), 70-71, *apud* Cristian Troncotă, "Primarul Odessei povestește," [Odessa Mayor tells] in *Magazin Istoric*, XXIX/3 (1995), 45.

[33] Marghiloman, *Note politice 1917-1918*, 444, 448-449.

[34] D. Bogos, *La răspântie. Moldova de la Nistru 1917-1918* [At the Crossroads. Moldova on the Dniester 1917-1918] (Chișinău: 1924), 168.

[35] This refers to a part of the Peasant Faction that voted for the union of Bessarabia with Romania during the session of April 9, 1918. Pan. Halippa, Anatolie Moraru,

remained, however, committed to his prior position. On the day of unification, Marghiloman noted in his journal: "Inculeț has made up his mind, he assured me, but Țîganko counters his influence and divides the Peasants, whose leader he has been until now."[36]

In a brochure published afterwards, Țîganko maintained that "Sfatul Țării" did not represent all nationalities and social classes, and did not include great landowners as well as representatives of zemstvos[37] and municipal councils.[38] "If Mr. Stroescu had attended the reunion of the *Peasant group*[39] of March 25-26 (O.S.), for which I have the minutes in front of me, he would have been certain that the *group vehemently opposed* to the union."[40] Whereas witnessing the circumstances surrounding the vote, he mentioned: "I must emphasize that, despite the request for a secret vote made by 40 deputies, an *oral vote* was chosen. The room was full of Romanian *government agents* and Sfatul Țării premises were surrounded by the *Romanian troops*."[41] Thirty deputies that formed the Peasant faction of "Sfatul Țării" reportedly "declared on March 27, 1918 (O.S.) that they do not recognize Sfatul Țării – an incomplete and unqualified body – as having the right to decide on the union with Romania. They requested that the Romanian government acknowledge that only the Bessarabian Constituent Assembly has full power in the matter and, since they do not wish to take responsibility for the whole country, they abstained in the vote." After specifying – although not very exactly – how the deputies voted,[42] Țîganko concluded that "the Bessarabian Peasants did not approve the unification of their country with Romania," despite the fact that they would have been forced to vote for the Romanian position.

Testament pentru urmași [Testament for the Descendants] (Chișinău: Hiperion Press, 1991), 98; Colesnic, *Chișinăul și chișinăuenii*, 146-147.

[36] Marghiloman, *Note politice 1917-1918*, 456.

[37] Zemstvo – a form of local self-administration, instituted in Bessarabia in 1869, to which members were elected based on indirect franchise.

[38] V. Stroescu, "Bessarabie et Roumanie," *Le Temps*, 4 May 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box VII Cuttings, HIA.

[39] Here and elsewhere, underligned in text. The underlining is from Ion Pelivan, who translated V.V. Țîganko's brochure from French, *Chestiunea Basarabiei în fața Conferinței de Pace* [The Issue of Bessarabia to the Peace Conference], Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (further, ANIC), Fond 1449 Ion Pelivan, d. 428, f. 1-12.

[40] ANIC, Fond 1449 Ion Pelivan, d. 428, f. 8.

[41] ANIC, Fond 1449 Ion Pelivan, d. 428, f. 4.

[42] According to the "Sfatul Țării" minutes, from a total of 135 deputies 86 voted pro, 3 – against and 36 –abstained; 13 deputies were absent from the session.

At the time the union was *fait accompli*, its supporters interpreted the position of the head of the Peasant faction as one of hesitation. Thus, Pan. Halippa noted that "the leader of the Peasants opposition, made up of minorities brought to Bessarabia by the Russian administration, that Cossack of the Don River [sic!], Vladimir Țîganko, openly stated that, in his opinion and in that of the minorities he represents, now it is not the right time for the Union, and that, according to him, the vote for the Union should be delayed to a later date, that he must consult the Gagauz, Bulgarian and Russian people, whose leader he was. The Russians would have been amazed to hear how openly Mr. Țîganko spoke and how democratically the discussions in our parliament unfolded!"[43] The opponents of the union held an opinion contrary to Țîganko's vote, considering it an act of patriotism and faithfulness to his own political views. According to Pavel Crușevan, an extreme-right wing politician who played a role in the 1903 Chișinău pogrom, Țîganko' position was an example for the Germans, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Jews in Bessarabia who would have preferred that the Democratic Moldovan Republic maintained its independence.[44]

Later, during the Paris Peace conference, both the active supporters of a return of Bessarabia to a democratic Russia, as well as those who supported its reintegration into a tsarist Russia, attempted to demonstrate to the European public that "atrocities" against the Bessarabians were taking place. In order to make their case they referred to the deaths of the deputies, as described by Țîganko, which had taken place under unclear circumstances. Thus, Mihail Șlonim, a supporter of Bessarabia's return to Russia – who was also active in Paris, addressed a letter to the Secretary General of the Human Rights League of France regarding the murder of the Bessarabian deputies in a "regime of violence and terror", instituted there by Romania.[45]

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[43] Halippa, Moraru, *Testament pentru urmași*, 151.

[44] Otkrytoe pis'mo rumynskomu koroliu (Ne posiaga'te na Bessarabiiu), by V. Purishchevich (s.a.). Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box VI Miscellany, Folder Notes, Handbill, Open letters, Form, List, HIA.

[45] À monsieur le Secrétaire Général de la Ligue Français pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoiens (s.a.). (Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 1 Correspondence, 1918-1935, Folder General, HIA). A text with the same content was sent to Leon Bourgeois, the French representative in the League of Nations, who published it in *La France Libre. Journal Socialiste*, Paris, 242, 9 June 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box V Printed Matter. Newspaper Issues, Folder La France Libre, HIA.

In his publication, issued at a time when propaganda regarding the status of Bessarabia pursued by the Bessarabians in Paris was at its peak, Țîganko presented counter-arguments to the position that the vote for the union was presented as a "bottom-up" decision and not a political one. "Mr. Stroescu should know that the perspective of the Bessarabian zemstvos regarding unification is radically different from that of the Romanian government and of its agents," he wrote, citing the position of the Bălți zemstvo.[46] According to him, such a position was nothing other than "a willing and dishonest mistake, as the assembly that issued this document was *illegally made up of elements entirely foreign to the Bălți zemstvo, of great landowners*."[47] Several documents from Alexandr N. Krupenskii's personal archive, held at the Hoover Institution Archives, confirm Țîganko's claim. According to these, the petition was signed during a local assembly of great landowners at the residence of the landowner D.D. Ciolac. The landowners were allegedly forced by the Romanian representatives to sign the act "Unirea" [Union]. They agreed, on the condition that "Sfatul Țării" will be dissolved; according to the source, those who tried desperately to save their lands behaved "like a drowning man grabbing for a straw". The decision "to send a petition to the King, emphasizing their definitive rejection of the authority of «Sfatul Țării»" was then taken.[48] To give the petition the character of a "reciprocal expression of shared feelings," other zemstvo members[49] were also invited to Ciolac's home to sign it. The next day, the Romanian General M. Schina organized a feast, to which all of zemstvo delegates were invited.

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[46] "Cererea țăranilor, membri ai zemstvei județene din Bălți către adunarea zemstvei din acest județ, ținută la 2 martie 1918" ["The demand of peasants, members of Balti county Zemstvo in the county meeting, of, held on 2 March 1918"]; "Hotărârea adunărei zemstvei ținutate și a marilor proprietari din jud. Bălți în chestia unirii Basarabiei, votată în urma propunerii țăranilor cu unanimitate de voturi în ziua de 3 martie 1918", [The decision of Zemstvo county assembly and landowners of Balti county on the issue of the Union of Bessarabia, unanimously voted based on the peasants' proposal on the day of March 3, 1918] Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei*, 213-216.

[47] V.V. Țîganko, Chestiunea Basarabiei în fața Conferinței de Pace [The Question of Bessarabia to the Peace Conference], ANIC, Fond 1449 Ion Pelivan, File 428, f. 5.

[48] V.A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18 Subject file, Folder 18.7 Bessarabia. Agriculture. General, HIA.

[49] According to another document, on March 3, 1918, the composition of zemstvo underwent some changes, so that, "27 peasants, 2 Peasant Party representatives and 3 Jews" became part of the assembly. V.A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18 Subject file, Folder 18.7 Bessarabia. Agriculture. General, HIA.

The landowners were outraged by the fact that they had to sit at the table with "our former thieves and murderers."[50]

Țîganko also confronted the statistical argument published by V. Stroescu in *Le Temps*, saying that "the erroneous affirmation that *the majority of the population is Moldovan*, i.e. Romanian" was based on "completely fabricated numbers", which were likely suggested by the Romanian government.[51] Țîganko maintained that "to be Moldovan does not mean to be Romanian", and that the Moldovan population was decreasing, comprising 47.58 % out of the total.[52] He argued that "an investigation among the population would have unmistakably cleared up the situation, as I firmly believe that 95 % of the Moldovans would have answered "No" to the question: "Do you want to unite with Romania?"[53]

Many pointed to the union as an act of "redressing" the violence of more than a century following Bessarabia's separation from Romania in 1812. According to this argument, the inhabitants of Bessarabia were Romanian. Țîganko, however, considered such a position "a dangerous path". Whereas countering Stroescu's arguments, he insisted that in 1812 Bessarabia "was nothing but a semi-barbaric country" where the "Turkish element" was predominant. After 1812, Bessarabia "was wholly inspired by the economic and intellectual life of Russia." The Russian regime had a long-lasting impact, so much so that "the Romanian propaganda newspapers, funded by the money of the Bucharest government, had to be printed with Russian characters, otherwise these would not have been understood by the peasants."[54]

Țîganko's position on the union was only clarified in Paris (a year and a half after the event took place) when a group of Bessarabians joined the Russian political émigrés in order to persuade the Great Powers that Bessarabia should be returned to Russia. Whether Țîganko would have maintained similar arguments against the union back in 1918, given public

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[50] V.A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18 Subject file, Folder 18.7 Bessarabia. Agriculture. General, HIA.

[51] Stroescu claimed that from the total of 2,604,800 Bessarabian inhabitants 1,897,800 were Romanians. According to the Romanian statistics, the percentage was around 64 %. Constantin Murgoci, *La population de la Bessarabie* (Paris, 1920), 19.

[52] The percentage coincides with the numbers given by Alexandr N. Krupenskii, which was based on the 1897 Russian census, which gave the lowest number of Romanians. *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiisko' imperii 1897 g.*, Tom III, Bessarabskaia guberniia (St.-Peterburg, 1905), XXI.

[53] V.V. Țîganko, Chestiunea Basarabiei în fața Conferinței de Pace, ANIC, Fond 1449 Ioan Pelivan, File 428, f. 6.

[54] V.V. Țîganko, Chestiunea Basarabiei, f. 8.

assurances of freedom of expression, remains in doubt. It seems that the changing circumstances of 1918 persuaded Țîganko to move from the camp of the undecided to that of the opponents of the union, a group that was comprised of people with completely different political visions. Țîganko's alliance with the representatives of the former economic and social elite, a group who lost their privileges obtained during the Tsarist regime, would have been inconceivable immediately after the union. This is especially the case considering that Bessarabia had been granted provisional autonomy and Sfatul Țării set about solving the agrarian question in the region. Yet Țîganko changed camps in the autumn of 1918.

The President of the Agrarian Commission of Sfatul Țării

One of the conditions stipulated in the Declaration of the Union of Bessarabia with Romania was that the agrarian question be solved by the Bessarabian parliament "Sfatul Țării". As an honorary president of the Central Committee of the Soviet of Bessarabian Peasants Deputies, as well as a deputy himself, Țîganko took over the duties of the president of the Agrarian Commission of "Sfatul Țării", which lasted for three months (May 30 – August 29, 1918). Comprised of 27 deputies, the commission was responsible for the drafting of the Agrarian Reform Law for Bessarabia. Țîganko pushed for the socialization of land, upheld by the deputies from other factions.[55]

The debates regarding the necessity and the means of implementation of agrarian reform in the Eastern province of Romania, which will not be approached in depth here, shaped not only the work of the Agrarian Commission, but also that of "Sfatul Țării". Moreover, the way in which the agrarian question was approached reflected the on-going social changes in the region. During Țîganko's chairmanship of the commission, the Union of Great Landowners of Bessarabia, led by Panteleimon V. Sinadino, expressed interest in participating in the drafting of the agrarian

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[55] Duiliu Zamfirescu, who acknowledged Stere's crucial contribution to the vote regarding the union, wrote that the latter supported the above-mentioned position of Țîganko: "I am not familiar with Mr. Stere's opinion in this matter. Nevertheless, based on the new orientation of the Moldovan Bloc, it appears that he leans towards Mr. Țiganko –, which would be a mistake and a guilt. If that is how the things stand, Mr. Stere, who was, perhaps, useful for the act of the union, becomes thus dangerous." Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 61.

law. This idea was widely promoted by Constantin Stere, who met privately with Sinadino several times on the matter.[56]

In the plenum of the two sessions of the commission, which took place on June 18 and 20, 1918, the landowners called for the implementation of agrarian reform, including the legalization of land sales, on a basis similar to that of the Old Kingdom of Romania. Acknowledging an unfriendly attitude from the "irresponsible and demagogic majority of commission members," the landowners chose to abandon this pursuit. The Union members were later informed that in the commission "a thinly veiled spirit of Bolshevism dominates, the seeds of a new anarchy are hidden and the spirit which brought our region to ruin, poverty and misery continues."[57] This opinion coincided with the position of the Bessarabian landowners towards "Sfatul Ţării" in general. It was an opinion that was expressed on different occasions in addresses made toward the King and the Romanian government.[58] The landowners eventually abandoned the idea of offering their loyalty to the union in exchange for promises made by Prime Minister Marghiloman regarding the maintenance of their economic and social privileges. They expressed their stance during a secret meeting the evening previous to the vote for the union.[59] Later on, Sinadino and other

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[56] After a long debate, the Union of landowners decided that "the interests in solving the most important issues of our country not only are not unfamiliar to it, but are perceived in the most serious and respectable way, by all members of the Union, as serving as a base for the progress and the subsequent well-being of the region." Five members were delegated to take part in the works of the Agrarian Commission, "connoisseurs of the agrarian relations of Bessarabia and well-informed regarding the importance of agriculture in the region", including: P.V. Sinadino – as an expert, S.F. Kavallioti, V.I. Scherrer, I.G. Kirkorov, I.G. Ţanko-Kîlcik, A.V. Sinadino – as members. Beseda P.V. Sinadino. Marghiloman IV. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18, Folder 18.10 Bessarabia. Soiuz Zemel'nykh Sobstvennikov, HIA.

[57] Another reason for the withdrawal of the landowners from the Agrarian Commission was the participation of the Romanian governmental representative, Constantin Filipescu, in the sessions. June 5, 1918. Motivy ot otkaza ot uchastiia v Agrarno' Komissii Sfatul Ţării. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18 Subject file, Folder 18.11 Bessarabia. Soiuz Zemelnykh Sobstvennikov, HIA.

[58] Address to the King of Romania, March 8, 1918 (o.s.); Zasedanie Soveta Tsentral'nogo Soiuza Zemel'nykh sobstvennikov v Bessarabii ot 18/31 ianvaria 1918. Mikhail Girs Papers, Box 39, Folder 39.8 Bessarabia, conditions & events, 1917-1918, HIA.

[59] On the evening of April 8, a group of landowners met with Marghiloman at Sinadino's house. According to the notes left by the latter, the Romanian prime minister made promises to restore the economic and social privileges of landowners in exchange for their support of the Romanian authorities which

landowners became active supporters of the return of Bessarabia to Russia's realm.[60]

Within the commission, Țîganko argued for the confiscation of all but 50 hectares of land; the proposed draft of the Agrarian Reform Law, passed in the final session of Sfatul Țării, allowed for a maximum of 100 hectares of private property.[61] As soon as the question of the abolition of Bessarabian autonomy was on the agenda, the differences of opinion on property, as acute as they were during the discussions of the agrarian law, suddenly seemed far less important. Țîganko forged a common front with the great landowners against the abolition of Bessarabian autonomy. Thus, his opponents from the Agrarian Commission came to praise his stance as an example of determined and constructive opposition to Romania's forcefully imposed rule in Bessarabia.

In Support of Autonomy

The "Sfatul Țării" decision of December 10, 1918, to give up Bessarabia's autonomy and unconditionally unite the region with Romania was taken during a period of major internal and international tension. Previously published research has focused on the historical context and the immediate circumstances surrounding the April 9, 1918, vote for the union, whereas the conditions surrounding the December 10 vote for the abolishment of the autonomy have been left aside.[62] The details of Țîganko's activity in

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sought the successful integration of Bessarabia into Romania. Sfatul Țării was to be dissolved as soon as it voted for the union. Beseda P.V. Sinadino. Marghiloman IV. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18, Folder 18.10 Bessarabia. Soiuz Zemel'nykh Sobstvennikov, HIA.

[60] On the intense collaboration between the Bessarabians and the Russian émigrés in Paris and other European capitals for the support of the "Bessarabian cause," see, at large, Svetlana Suveica, *"Russkoe Delo" and "the Bessarabian Cause": the Russian Political Émigrés and the Bessarabians in Paris (1919-1920)*, Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS), Mitteilungen. Arbeitsbereich Geschichte, no. 64, February 2014.

[61] The text of the Agrarian Reform Law for Bessarabia was first published in the newspaper "Sfatul Țării" on November 30, 1918. The document served as basis for the text of the Decree-law regarding the expropriation of the cultivated lands of Bessarabia of December 22, 1918 (*Monitorul Oficial al României* [The Official Gazette of Romania], no. 220, December 22, 1918) and, finally, for the Agrarian Reform Law for Bessarabia, adopted by the Romanian Parliament on March 13, 1920. *Monitorul Oficial al României*, no. 258, March 13, 1920.

[62] Only recently, the minutes of "Sfatul Țării" were published: *Sfatul Țării: Documente (I). Procesele-verbale ale ședințelor în plen* [Sfatul Țării: Documents

the immediate period before the vote, reconstructed here for the first time, portray extremely complex circumstances regarding the political nature of the decision, which was far from an unanimous one. A significant number of deputies, including Țîganko, were against the unconditional union, arguing for the autonomy of Bessarabia within Romania.

According to a *Compte-rendu*, drafted by Țîganko on December 6, 1918,[63] the General Commissioner of Bessarabia, Arthur Văitoianu, together with three other ministers arrived in Chișinău, offering a reception for the Bessarabian deputies at the "Pronin" Hotel. Although the reason for the invitation was not mentioned, Țîganko sensed it: "I have drawn a connection between the arrival of the ministers and the spread rumours about the abolition of the Bessarabian autonomy. The subsequent events have confirmed my suspicions." The excessive luxury of the reception which lasted four hours, produced "a profound and a stupefying impression on the modest deputies"; it seemed that "everything possible was done to influence the invitees toward the desired direction and to produce the impression that everything was planned."[64] Văitoianu, who asked the deputies to remain discrete regarding what had been discussed at the reception, emphasized that the union of Bessarabia with Romania that granted autonomy to the region was only a "halfway solution". Instead he argued that it was time to abandon the idea of autonomy, so that Bessarabia could become "one and the same with the Romanian people. [...] To what end should we preserve the autonomy? Are Romanian laws bad? I do not quite understand what autonomy is. You should abandon it for the simple reason that Bessarabia does not have good public servants –

(I). Minutes of Plenary Sessions], ed. Ion Țurcanu (Chișinău: Editura Știința, 2016).

[63] The document was drafted in French, most likely, with the aim to be distributed as a propaganda material among the delegates of the Peace conference.

[64] Compte-rendu par le Député V. Tziganko, chef du parti paysan, d'un entrevue qu'il eut en compagnie d'autres députés avec le Commissaire General de la Bessarabie – General Vaitoianu, le vendredi 23 novembre 1918. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 2 Subject file, Folder Romania – (Relations with Bessarabie), HIA. There is also a Russian version of the document, V gostiakh u General'nogo Komissara Vaitoianu v piatnitsu 23 noiabria 1919 g. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 3 Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), HIA. The English version of the document was published in: *The Roumanian Occupation of Bessarabia. Documents* (Paris: Imprimerie Lahure, 1920), Appendix No. 25, Report by M.V. Tziganko, Leader of the Peasant's Party, of an interview which he had, accompanied by several other Deputies, with general Voitoiano [Văitoianu], Roumanian Commissioner-General in Bessarabia, on Friday, November 23, 1918, 99-103.

in other words, good Romanian nationalists." In abandoning autonomy, the abolition of the position of General Commissioner in exchange for the position of chargé d'affaires for Bessarabia would also occur – "someone from your entourage, appointed by the central authority", and who would remain in office until the Romanian Parliament convened. The abolishment of autonomy was "called for by all Romanians. And also by your national ideal," insisted Vătoianu before the Bessarabian deputies.[65]

Another motive for the immediate abolishment of autonomy was invoked: the necessity of creating a common front of all Romanians in order "to resist external pressures". Văitoianu continued: "Let me be frank: We need the abrogation of autonomy before the Peace conference. We must go there united so as to leave no room for criticism" from the conference delegates who would decide the fate of the province. The commissioner described the relationship between Bessarabia and Romania as fragile, assured by "a thin thread". According to Văitoianu, the only reason for the hesitation of some deputies, including those from Țîganko's entourage, was "the Russification challenge". An eventual decision in favour of autonomy would only isolate Bessarabia from the rest of the country. "Do you really want to break this thread by remaining stubborn?" concluded the Romanian prime minister. When the deputies were offered a glass of wine, the deputy Vasile Țanțu (who had been highly praised by Zamfirescu in order to create an impression of contrast when compared to Țîganko) commented that "It appears they want to buy us with a glass of wine."[66]

Văitoianu's intervention did not end here. The next day, Țîganko was invited to his residence for a private meeting. In the hall, he ran into the Mayor of Chișinău, Vladimir de Hertza, who insisted on the idea of abandoning "political" autonomy in favour of accepting a form of "administrative" autonomy. Țîganko did not have time to clarify what the formula would imply, but agreed to allow de Hertza to attend his conversation with Văitoianu: "This would allow me to forever refer to a witness, whom no one would ever accuse of being a passionate Romanophile." Țîganko was expecting to be pressured; he saw the president of the Moldovan Bloc leaving the Commissioner's residence, who "probably received instructions from Văitoianu on how the Moldovan Bloc should behave at the next Sfatul Țării session."[67]

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[65] Roumanian Commissioner-General in Bessarabia, on Friday, November 23, 1918, 99-103.
[66] Roumanian Commissioner-General in Bessarabia.
[67] A.N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), HIA. This document, as well as the one about the banquet on

Alluding to the delay of the decision on the recognition of the status of Bessarabia at the Peace conference, Văitoianu began the discussion by emphasizing that the country was at a turning point. "You know very well that Bessarabia, through its regional authority "Sfatul Țării" first began the process of accomplishment of the grand ideal of the union of all Romanians, and now, when Bucovina, Transylvania and Banat have followed its example and united with us unconditionally, will Bessarabia lag behind them in this general national movement and insist on some form of autonomy [?]", he addressed his interlocutor.[68] "It is possible, and probable, that the Bessarabian question will be solved through a plebiscite," he said, suggesting that the U.S. could insist on this. Instead, "the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania is upheld by France and we cannot waste this fortunate situation". Văitoianu seemed convinced that "the support of France will help us to win the game if Bessarabia, through its regional body, will show once again its earnest desire to merge with Romania and will do this with no hassle, by abolishing the autonomy on which it insisted on March 27." The head of the Romanian Cabinet considered it of crucial importance that the issue be solved before the Romanian representatives left for Paris, where "Bessarabia's fate would be decided around the green table". Once in Paris, they should "hold all the cards and aces in their hands."[69]

According to Văitoianu, the abolition of autonomy would mean the union of Bessarabia with Romania as well as its definitive separation from Russia. Văitoianu insisted that in order to convince the deciding powers in Paris of the need for a union, it would be necessary to point out that the Bessarabian population was "satisfied" with the Romanian administration, as suggested by Romania's "friends" at the Conference. According to Țîganko, the general showed him two royal decrees: one – for the closing session of Sfatul Țării, and the other – for the reopening of it. It became clear to him that the abolition of Bessarabian autonomy would be subject to an open vote the next day in Sfatul Țării. "As a good Romanian I still consider that you must understand the full seriousness of this moment, and you must contribute by all means towards the union of Bessarabia with

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December 6, 1918, was drafted by V.V. Țîganko to the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia. Petre Cazacu calls these as "reports" of V.V. Țîganko. Petre Cazacu, *Moldova dintre Prut şi Nistru, 1812-1918* [Moldova between Prut and Nistru, 1812-1918] (Iaşi: "Viața Românească", s.a.), 338.

[68] A.N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), f. 3.

[69] A.N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), f. 3.

Romania, which can only occur through the vote for unconditional union and the abolition of any autonomy," concluded Văitoianu.[70]

Vladimir de Herza also entered into the discussion between the two, wishing to clarify whether it was stipulated that after the union local administrative bodies will be preserved. Văitoianu replied that at the moment the unification must be fulfilled "without any conditions," nevertheless, he admitted that the problem could later be brought up in the country's parliament. He then mentioned that during the Conference in Iaşi, that had taken place several days earlier, "certain public persons submitted to the Allies a memorandum and many other documents gathered by Mr. Miliukov and that do much harm to our cause."[71] Here he alluded to Alexandr N. Krupenskii and other representatives of the former Bessarabian elite who planned to organize a common front with the Russian émigrés in Paris against Romania's interests.

To lend greater weight to his arguments, Văitoianu assured Ţîganko that his service to Romania would be rewarded: "Helping us in this matter, Mr. Ţîganko, you, Sir, can also remain confident that in the future the fate of Bessarabia and its the administration will not be solved without your direct participation, and that a bright and enviable future awaits you within it." Ţîganko, in turn, replied that he was never a great Russian patriot, and thus, there was no chance for him to become a Romanian patriot. "In the name of any political principles or diplomatic games, I cannot betray my democratic ideals and my belief in their righteousness and truth. Under the condition of any combination of Bessarabia with another state, I will always advocate for the largest possible autonomy for Bessarabia. It is possible that for some of my colleagues the national ideals prevail over the others, but not for me, and thus tomorrow, in a direct and open vote I will

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[70] A.N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), f. 4.

[71] A.N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches & Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), f. 5. The Iaşi Conference (November 30 – December 1, 1918) was the first gathering of the White forces, which representatives planned to seek military support from the Allies against the Bolsheviks. Although it was originally agreed that Alexandr N. Krupenskii would accompany to the conference the Russian delegation, led by the former Russian deputy, P.V. Miliukov, this idea was given up by the Russians in order to avoid a discussion of Bessarabia's status. Instead, Krupenskii went to Iaşi as the representative of the Odessa authorities during the negotiations with the Romanian government and the Allied Powers regarding food supply for the city. See, *Dnevnik P.N. Miliukova. 1918-1921* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2005), 195-196. The original of Miliukov's diary is kept in the Bakhmeteff Archive: Columbia University NY, Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, Bakhmeteff Archive, Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov Papers, 1879-1970.

respond to all the questions covered in today's discussion with the general [Văitoianu] for the fact that I will vote against the abolition of autonomy."[72] Țîganko promised not to pressure his colleagues, allowing each the right "to proceed as his conscience dictates, without being subject to the disciplinary sanction of the faction." Văitoianu replied: "I am an old soldier and I am glad to find among my opponents honest and upright men. I see that this really is your honest belief, against which I can have no effect. Proceed as you consider correct, knowing that I will not hold your actions against you."

On the eve of the last session of Sfatul Țării, held on December 10, 1918, Țîganko, along with 39 other Bessarabian deputies, issued a memorandum to the Romanian government regarding the political situation in Bessarabia.[73] The reason given for the complaint was the failure of the Romanian government to respect the conditions of the union, which resulted in the loss of regional autonomy. According to the signatories, civil liberties – among these the right to inviolability - of the inhabitants were violated, the government's agents who replaced local public servants abused their powers, the rights of minorities were violated, and ethnic conflicts were artificially stirred up between groups who had previously enjoyed peaceful relationships. The document emphasized the necessity to "assure peace, relieve nervous emotions and angry and bitter

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[72] A.N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches &Writings, 1919, Folder Tziganko, Vladimir (Tsyganko), f. 5-6.

[73] Several photocopies of the original document are kept in Alexandr N. Krupenskii's personal archive. A note on the back of a copy specified the date the document was signed by the deputies (December 3, 1918), the hesitations regarding the appropriate formula of certain requests, as well as the measures taken in order to attract as many signatures as possible. The document was to be signed by 55 deputies, all "honest people". The names of the deputies who had signed the act of the union of April 9 were underlined, regardless of their later political choices: N. Alexandri, Ivan T. Pascaluță, Vl. Țîganko, Gavril Ion Buciuscan, V. Cijevschi, Stefan Balamez, Donica Iordachescu, F. Moldovanu, M. Russev, V. Ghenzul, N. Budilenko, Ivan Garbuz and O. Nikitiuk (Memorandum (undated)., Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box II Subject file, 1918-1934, Folder Romania – (Relations with Bessarabia), HIA). The English version of the document was first published in 1920, in a collection of documents edited by Alexandr N. Krupenskii, *The Roumanian Occupation of Bessarabia. Documents* (Paris: Imprimerie Lahure, 1920), Appendix No. 28, Memoir sent to the Roumanian Government on November 20, 1918, by fourty Bessarabian Deputies, 107-111). See, also, Țurcanu, *Unirea Basarabiei cu România*, 291-293. Vasile Stati published a slightly different version from the photocopy we had access to [Vasile Stati, *Istoriia Moldovy* (Kishinev: 2003), 312-313].

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mood among all society segments of our Bessarabia," as well as the
intention to prevent any "coup d'état,"[74] – in other words, to avoid any
change to the status of the region that became part of Romania. The
signatories of the memorandum asked the Romanian government to enact
several proposals, such as: abolition of censorship and respect for freedom
of opinion, personal inviolability of deputies and citizens, cancellation of
the state of siege, re-election of the presidium of "Sfatul Ţării", new
appointments in the Directorates, liquidation of the General Commissioner,
limitation of powers of gendarmes in rural areas, restoration of zemstvo
and city administration, restoration of minorities rights, as well as an
immediate vote on the Electoral Law for the elections in "Sfatul Ţării" and
the setting of a date for the elections in the legislative body. The final
point of the memorandum was the election of a special commission for the
investigation of all breaches committed by the civil and the military
authorities in Bessarabia. An immediate implementation of the proposals
was requested; otherwise, "the deputies disavow any moral responsibility
for the consequences, as refusing these requests would violate the act of
March 27, 1918 [O.S.]."[75]

It is well-known that the "Sfatul Ţării" deputies were not of a single
opinion regarding the abolition of Bessarabian autonomy. The signatories
of the memorandum were deputies from all of the parliament factions who
were trying – one final time - to delay the ultimate decision on the union
of Bessarabia with Romania. Without promoting, at least at that moment,
the change of Bessarabia's status, but conscious of the consequences of the
dissolution of Sfatul Ţării upon the finalization of its mission in solving
the agrarian question, they forwarded a proposal for the reconstruction of
the legislative body. The proposal sought to rebuild the body on a
democratic basis and the re-election of all members through universal
vote, as well as the re-establishment of local administrative bodies in the
region.

On December 10, 1918, the conditions of the union from April 9 were
cancelled, and "Sfatul Ţării" voted for the definite union of Bessarabia
with Romania. Ţîganko, who found out about the forthcoming decisive
session from Văitoianu, apparently, did not manage – or did not wish – to
inform the members of the Peasant faction on the matter. In the name of a
group of Peasant deputies, minorities, and some others members of the

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[74] *Gosudarstvennoe potreasenie* – Rus.
[75] The response to the complaint, which, *inter alia*, never came, was expected
"before the dissolution of Parliament, in any case before 5 December 1918 Old
Style" [Memorandum. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box II Subject file, 1918-
1934, Folder Romania – (Relations with Bessarabia), HIA].

Moldovan Bloc, he forwarded a protest against the opening of the session in the absence of a majority of deputies to the President of "Sfatul Țării", Pan. Halippa. In spite of the protest, the session was opened and the presidium of the assembly was elected. Following this, a protest against the recognition of the elected presidium was issued.[76] According to Țîganko, the moment the proposal to vote for the unconditional union was put forward, only 46 deputies were present. The procedure of the open vote, which occurred long after midnight, was violated. After the union was "unanimously accepted," protests from the tribune were no longer permitted.[77]

December 10, 1918, was a turning point for the deputies who opted for the preservation of autonomy, with Țîganko among them. It appears that he had already considered leaving Bessarabia before that date. During a meeting on November 20, 1918 at the Russian legation in Iași, the Russian delegates Pavel N. Miliukov and A.V. Krivoshein exchanged opinions on Bessarabia with the representatives of the former elites of the region, A.N. Krupenskii, and brothers Ioan V. and Penteleimon V. Sinadino. Both Miliukov and Krivoshein had arrived in Iași to take part in the conference of the Russian émigrés. The meeting took place in the presence of the Russian Ambassador S.A. Poklevskii-Kozel. In relation to these discussions, Miliukov wrote in his diary: "Sinadino is asking for money to transfer tsyganka [Țîganko] to Russia, together with the Peasants [deputies of Peasant faction] of the Sfatul Țării who voted for the union. A.V. Krivoshein promises to insist on this before the hetman (aim: to organize a motion in Odessa)."[78] The note hints towards the fact that an alliance

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[76] The Peasant faction considered the document "acceptable, in principle, in the form provided by the Agrarian Commission, and is ready in the future to participate in the discussions on this draft law, and also firmly rejects the validity of the presidium ..." The Protest against the resolutions of the "Sfatul Tsarii" by a group of Delegates, IV, *The Case for Bessarabia*, 51-52.

[77] *Delegates, IV, The Case for Bessarabia*, 53. The claims need to be confronted with the minutes of the final session of "Sfatul Țării".

[78] The same morning, the Sinadino brothers expressed their concerns before Miliukov on the impossibility of boycotting the future parliamentary elections in the region, as well as on the lack of control over the implementation of agrarian reform. The Minister Plenipotentiary of the U.S. in Bucharest, Charles Vopicka, who previously seemed to support the union of Bessarabia with Romania, was also present during the conversation. (see: Charles J. Vopicka, *Secrets of the Balkans. Seven Years of a Diplomatist's Life in the storm Centre of Europe* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1921), 196-197), suggested that the Bessarabians "make noise in Europe and send a large delegation to the conference." *Dnevnik P.N. Miliukova. 1918-1921*, Sost. N.I. Kanishcheva (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), 218.

between Țîganko and those who would later form the "Bessarabian delegation" at the Paris Peace conference was about to be created or already existed.

Most likely, V.V. Țîganko left Chișinău after December 10, 1918, moving to Odessa. The following events found him in the French capital.

A Member of the "Bessarabian Delegation" in Paris?!

On February 10, 1919, Țîganko, together with three other persons, signed an agreement in Odessa establishing a "common commission," later known as the "Bessarabian delegation" at the Paris Peace conference. The document reads as follows: "We, the undersigned, the natives of Bessarabia, Alexandr Krupenskii, Vladimir Vladimirovich Țîganko, Alexandr Karlovich Schmidt, Alexandr Dmitrievich Krupenskii, the representatives of various community organizations and groups of Bessarabia, holding the mandate as follows: 1) former Marshal of Bessarabian nobility, Alexandr Krupenskii – on behalf of the Executive body (Uprava) of Gubernial Zemstvo of Bessarabia, the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia and the Bessarabia Union of great landowners, 2) Vladimir Vladimirovich Țîganko – on behalf of the Committee of Peasant Deputies of Bessarabia, the Southern Bessarabia Union of Cooperatives and the Trade unions of governmental and public and servants of Bessarabia, 3) Alexandr Karlovich Schmidt – the former mayor of Chișinău, the President of the Assembly of Gubernial Zemstvo and the President of the Towns Union of the Region – on behalf of the (Uprava) of Gubernial Zemstvo of Bessarabia and the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia, 4) Alexandr Dmitrievich Krupenskii – on behalf of the Bessarabia Union of great landowners, organize a common commission with Alexandr Nicolaevich Krupenskii as president, with the goal of achieving during the International Peace Conference the liberation of Bessarabia from the Romanian occupation and the fulfillment of the desires of the Bessarabian population."[79] Thus, the goal of the commission, which is commonly known as the "Bessarabian delegation", was defined as follows: The "liberation" of the region from the Romanian "occupation" and the attainment of the desires of the local inhabitants. According to the document, the list of delegates remained open to other representatives of various social-political organizations and ethnic groups: "Regardless of the fact that the declaration has four signatures, others may join the commission of four

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[79] Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 2 Subject File, Folder Bessarabian commission of the Paris Peace Conference, HIA.

members, on the condition that they sign the present agreement, and namely: 1) Panteleimon V. Sinadino, who has a mandate from the Bessarabian Union of great landowners; 2) a representative of the Jews of Bessarabia, upon presenting a mandate; 3) a representative of the Moldovan nationality with a mandate from the Uprava of the Gubernial Zemstvo of Bessarabia and the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia; 4) a representative of the leftist parties, upon presenting a proper mandate from the respective organizations, as well as a mandate from the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia."[80]

The idea of creating a "Bessarabian delegation" that was to become the nucleus of opposition to the Romanian delegation at the Paris Peace conference was formed within the Committee for Saving Bessarabia. The committee was founded in Odessa in April 1918, with the Bessarabian professor Vladimir N. Tverdokhlebov as its president. This group represented both a response to the call from the Russian political émigrés in Paris for the restoration of Greater Russia and the solidification of the idea of an active opposition to the transformation of Bessarabia into a Romanian province. The Russian émigrés in Paris, who also facilitated the trip of Krupenskii and Schmidt to the city,[81] planned to eliminate the Bolsheviks with the help of the Allied Powers. They sought to finally restore Russia to its pre-1914 borders, which also encompassed Bessarabia.

At the beginning of 1919, the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia addressed a memorandum to the representatives of the Allied Powers: "The representatives of Bessarabia, that is, of all classes of a population of two and a half million, i.e.: the Archbishop of Bessarabia Anastasii, the former Marshall of Nobility Krupenskii, the Mayor of Chișinău Schmidt, the Honorary President of the Peasant Committee of Bessarabia Țîganko, and many others authorized in this sense, having the moral and legal right to speak in the name of the population of Bessarabia and on behalf of all organizations, through all available means, through writings, speeches,

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[80] Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 2 Subject File, Folder Bessarabian commission of the Paris Peace Conference, HIA.

[81] According to a certificate, issued on January 27, 1919 by the Military Governor of Odessa, General A.N. Grishin-Almazov, the two were "sent to Paris as couriers who transport documents and letters for the Russian representative at the Peace Conference - the Minister Sergei Sazonov." Attached was a list of 110 documents, all containing information on the state of affairs in Bessarabia, the establishment of the "Romanian occupation," and the "suffering" of the Bessarabians under the new regime, their content being "verified and counted by the French commandant in Odessa." Certificat, Odessa, Janvier 27 1919. A.N. Krupenskii papers, Box 2 Subject file, Folder Krupenskii, A.N., HIA.

meetings and numerous documents, intend to demonstrate before the Allied Powers all of the injustice and all of the horror of Romania's occupation of Bessarabia."[82] The document, as well as a note by Petre Cazacu, suggest that Țîganko was a member of the above-named committee.[83] When he joined the organization is not precisely known, though most likely it occurred after the abolition of Bessarabian autonomy and his renouncement of his mandate as a deputy of "Sfatul Țării". In a larger study on the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia, I argue on the basis of new archival sources that the common goal of returning Bessarabia to Russia interconnected people of different social and ethnic backgrounds. The confusion over the political regime that was to be instituted in Russia did not prove a major obstacle to the plan. The main strategy was to denigrate through various means the Romanian regime in the region, which, upon being "saved," would choose to return to "Mother Russia". To this end, a plebiscite would be organized in Bessarabia.[84]

The four "delegates" who signed the document establishing the "Bessarabian delegation" embraced different political perspectives regarding the development of the region. Whereas the two Krupenskii,[85] alongside Schmidt, supported the return of the region to Greater Russia under a monarch, Țîganko opted for the construction of a democratic Russia, in which Bessarabia could preserve its status as an autonomous region. This contradiction is essential to the understanding of the activities of the "Bessarabian delegation," and of Țîganko's subsequent actions. In fact, the political visions of the Bessarabians who went to Paris to defend Russia's position with regard to the issue of Bessarabia reflected entirely the conflicts within the community of Russian political emigrants. Towards

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[82] The text of the complaint was published in *Russkii Kur'er*, 36, 18 August 1919). Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box IV Printed Matter. Journals & Bulletins, Folder Russkii Kur'er, HIA.

[83] Cazacu, *Moldova dintre Prut și Nistru*, 334.

[84] On the Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia in 1918-1920, see, at large, Svetlana Suveica, "For the 'Bessarabian Cause': The Activity of Odessa Committee for Saving Bessarabia (1918-1920)," *Archiva Moldaviae* VI (2014), 139-171.

[85] Alexandr N. Krupenskii and Alexandr D. Krupenskii were distant relatives. Regarding the Krupenskii family and its role in the history of Bessarabia, see: "Familia Krupenski și elita istorică a Basarabiei. Dialog cu Petre Guran, realizat de Svetlana Suveica" [The Krupenski Family and the Bessarabian Historical Elite. A Dialogue with Petre Guran, conducted by Svetlana Suveica], in *Mihai Dim. Sturdza la 80 de ani. Omagiu* [Mihai Dim. Sturdza at 80 Years. A Tribute], eds. Mircea Ciubotaru, Lucian-Valeriu Lefter (Iași: Editura Universității "Al.I. Cuza", 2014), 333-361.

the French capital, where the post-war East European borders were debated, rushed both those who associated change with the past, hoping for the restoration of Greater Russia, and those who argued for a federative Russia built on democratic principles. Saving Russia from Bolshevism was considered crucial by both camps. During the initial period of the conference, several attempts to join forces in order to obtain the support of the Great Powers were made.

By signing the agreement in Odessa, Țîganko joined the "Bessarabian delegation" which was created one month earlier by Krupenskii and Schmidt.[86] Țîganko promised to respect the two directives of the Committee for Saving Bessarabia, which regulated the activity of the "Bessarabian delegation" in Paris. The first directive, of January 16, 1919, specified that the members of the "delegation" could act in ensemble as well as individually, with the condition that, "in discussions and negotiations with representatives of allied states and all other cases, in which the delegate's actions are presented as official, the delegate must emphasize the fact that he is only one of the members of the delegation representing the population or a group of the population of Bessarabia." The document specified that "the liberation of Bessarabia from the Romanian occupation" was the only subject, around which discussions were to take place. "With relation to general political aspects regarding Russia, as well as Bessarabia, and the relations between the two, the delegation is not authorized to solve these issues."[87]

The second directive, of January 24, 1919, contained more detailed instructions about how the "Bessarabian delegation" was to carry out its activities in the French capital: "1) All public addresses and negotiations, whether with official state representatives or members of the press or other circles of society, shall be accomplished by the delegation, or by individual delegates, only after previous discussion within the delegation and in accordance with its decisions; 2) All decisions within the delegation are based on a simple majority vote; 3) The delegation elects a president from among its members; 4) The delegation maintains a daily agenda for all negotiations with diplomatic officials, mass media and various circles of society, as well as for all measures taken by the delegation, its activity being entirely recorded."[88] The available documents suggest that the

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[86] Vypiska iz protokola Nr. 5 zasedaniia Komiteta Osvobozhdeniia Bessarabii ot 24 ianvaria 1919 g. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box II Subject file, Folder Committee to Save Bessarabia, Odessa, HIA.

[87] Vypiska iz protokola Nr. 4 zasedaniia Komiteta Osvobozhdeniia Bessarabii ot 16 ianvaria 1919 g. Alexander N. Krupenskii Papers.

[88] Vypiska iz protokola Nr. 5.

delegation had no agenda, and that contact among its members, as well as between its members and the committee, was kept mainly through written correspondence.

If Țîganko was a member of the "Bessarabian delegation" in Paris, why then his signature does not appear in the addresses of the "delegation," nor in the propaganda brochures published during the Peace Conference by Krupenskii and Schmidt?! The mystery is clarified by a note from the President of the Committee for Saving Bessarabia, Vladimir N. Tverdokhlebov, addressed to Krupenskii, which indicates that the agreement, signed by the four in Odessa, was cancelled before it was enacted. At that time, A.N. Krupenskii and A.K. Schmidt were already in Paris, whereas Țîganko and A.D. Krupenskii were still in Odessa awaiting visas for France. The cancellation of the agreement was proposed by Tverdokhlebov, "because of an extreme political instability regarding the union of Bessarabia with Romania, tracked by P.V. Sinadino." Simultaneously, "considering that, based on the agreement, the delegates A.D. Krupenskii and V.V. Țîganko received certificates to obtain permits to travel abroad, and considering that it would not be right to impede other delegates from leaving, the committee agrees with maintaining the certificates." A hand-written note later produced by Krupenskii mentions that "Țîganko himself refused the agreement. He requested the return of all of his documents. On 20 February 1919, Țîganko sent A.N. Krupenskii a note confirming the receipt of all documents "in accordance with my wishes."[89] Later, A.N. Krupenskii gathered in an envelope all the documents addressed to Țîganko in Paris. These were never returned to V.V. Țîganko; we can only assume that by the end of 1919 the two had lost contact.

The aforementioned document suggests that the positions of the "delegates" regarding the union of Bessarabia with Romania were not fully brought into line. We can assume that Țîganko was less categorical about the desire for the union to take the form of a large autonomous region within Romania. Furthermore, his mandate in Paris was in question. In a letter to Krupenskii in Paris, the former president of the Uprava of Gubernial zemstvo, V. Ianovskii, mentioned that the Romanian delegation to the Peace conference, which included the Bessarabian representative in the Romanian delegation to the Peace conference, Ion Pelivan, requested the group be completed with the attendance of the Bessarabians Sergiu Cujbă, Vasile Nastase and Ion Codreanu. Since the mandate of Cujbă was

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[89] The note was likely sent in December 1919. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 17 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Paris Peace Conference. Reports, resolutions. Bessarabian delegation (A. Krupenskii), HIA.

issued by the representatives of the Bessarabian cooperatives of the Department of Agriculture, V. Chorescu and V. Ghenzul, the author considered that "a conflict with the previously issued mandates for A.D.K [Alexandr D. Krupenskii] and V.V.Ț. [Vladimir V. Țîganko]" was imminent. Ianovskii's conclusion was that "this conflict once again reminds us that you and Sch. [Schmidt] are the only legal delegates."[90]

The Activity of V.V. Țîganko in Paris

In the French capital, Țîganko acted separately from A.N. Krupenskii and A.K. Schmidt.[91] He was not included among the signatories of the protests addressed to the president and delegates of the Peace conference or any other important political figures. His name, with the aforementioned exceptions, is missing from the propaganda materials published in the regional and the foreign press. Nevertheless, for the supporters of Romanian interests in Bessarabia, Țîganko was included on the list naming the "enemies" of the union. Thus, Ion Pelivan was convinced that Țîganko "supports the same cause as Mssrs. Krupenskii and Schmidt." In a letter addressed to the members of the Bessarabian Directorate, Ion Inculeț and Daniel Ciugureanu, in Chișinău, he wrote that he was fighting to discredit "the malevolent conspiracies of our enemies Krupenski, Schmidt, Țiganko et Co."[92]

Even though at the end of 1918 Țîganko did not stand against the union of Bessarabia with Romania, by the summer of 1919 his position was overtly anti-Romanian. In the brochure, *La question de la Bessarabie devant la Conference de la Paix*, he maintained that from the moment that Bessarabia became an arena for political battle, a military conflict was a real danger. As such, the delegates to the Peace conference were obliged to treat the issue with increased attention. In his opinion, finding a definitive solution would only be possible by consulting the local population and its

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[90] For reasons of maximum security, the letter was printed on white cloth. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18 Subject file, Folder 18.14 Bessarabia. Intelligence, HIA.

[91] Upon his arrival in Paris, Alexandr D. Krupenskii acted first as accountant to the "delegation," but soon withdrew and no longer kept any connection with other members. He continued to live in Paris, without further supporting the "Russian cause" of Bessarabia. In 1929, he worked as director of the Russian Private Opera, owned by M.N. Kuznetsova-Massne. *Rossiiskoe Zarubezh'e vo Frantsii, 1919-2000: Biograficheski' slovar' v 3 t.*, v. 1, eds. L. Mnukhin, M. Avril', V. Losskaia (Moskva: Nauka, 2008), 763.

[92] Constantin, Negrei, Negru, *Ioan Pelivan*, 614.

representatives, "qualified to say what they had to say."[93] He felt
responsible for the fate of the region; he considered that taking into
account only what the Romanians had to say on the "establishment of
incontestable Romanian rights over Bessarabia" was "dangerous", so that,
he became actively involved in different activities in order to show the
other side of the story. Another kind of approach "would lead to decisions
absolutely unacceptable for my country," he concluded. In 1918, he
emphasized that the question was not about the "historical rights, but on
the compensation to Romania for its losses in the World War, in the fight
for freedom and independence of peoples for the victory of international
rights for the salvation of civilization." Without belittling the sacrifice of
the Romanian people in the war, Țîganko protested "vigorously against the
idea to establish this compensation for Romania, at the expense of the
liberty and prosperity of Bessarabia. It is not possible that a population of
2,500,000 people could pay with their blood and their land for the losses
of a neighbour. And what a neighbour?" he complained. He maintained
that Romania "contained," "plundered," and "ruined" Bessarabia. Thus,
"the recognition of Bessarabia's right to freely choose its own fate" by the
means of a "plebiscite ensured by all international guarantees" in order to
assure the expression of the will of the Bessarabian people was requested.
Only then could the Bessarabian people "freely say if they wanted to be
Romanian or not." The former Bessarabian deputy expressed his
conviction that "any other decision regarding the Bessarabian question
would be nothing but a violation of the highest principles of national
independence proclaimed by the Peace Conference."[94]

  Țîganko's position was similar to that of the "Bessarabian delegation,"
which called, together with the representatives of the Russian political
émigrés, for a plebiscite in the region. It is not certain whether the above-
mentioned brochure was published before or after the hearings of July 2,
1919, that took place within the "Council of Five" of the Russian
Ambassador in Paris, Vasilii A. Maklakov, and the Romanian Prime
Minister, Ion I.C. Brătianu. They first insisted on a plebiscite in only four
central counties of Bessarabia as they were inhabited by a Romanian
majority. The rest of the counties, populated by a multi-ethnic majority,

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[93] Quoted from the Romanian version of the document, translated by Pelivan. V.V.
Țîganko, *Chestiunea Basarabiei în fața Conferinței de Pace*, ANIC, Fond 1449 Ion
Pelivan, File 428, f. 1-12.
[94] V.V. Țîganko, Chestiunea Basarabiei în fața Conferinței de Pace, ANIC, Fond
1449 Ion Pelivan, File 428, f. 11.

were automatically categorized as adherents to the "Russian cause".[95] Țîganko, however, called for a plebiscite over the entire territory of Bessarabia.

The available documents demonstrate that during his stay in Paris, Țîganko maintained permanent contact and actively collaborated with the members of the "Bessarabian delegation." They corresponded, exchanged papers, and informed each other of the content of the documents addressed to the decision-makers. Thus, in a letter to the President of the "Bessarabian delegation," A.N. Krupenskii, Țîganko thanked the former for the copies of the memoranda addressed by the delegation to the U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson, and to the President of the Peace conference, George Clemenceau.[96] In turn, Țîganko would provide copies of addresses sent "to various destinations." The moment diplomacy failed to yield results, he showed little optimism regarding the propaganda methods used by the members of the "Bessarabian delegation". He confessed: "To be honest, I pay little attention to this correspondence with "major personalities," but I was keeping it in order to use all that was prepared in Bessarabia, and I am thinking of sending what is left to the president of the Peace conference, whereas keeping the signed copies and photographs of the respective documents."[97]

During the period of the Peace conference, as well as after, Țîganko explained his position of abstaining from the vote on April 9, 1918, in a series of propagandistic publications. Thus, according to the collection of documents, edited by Paul A. Miliukov, *The Case for Bessarabia*, which underwent three editions (1919, 1920, and 1922), the abstention from the vote meant "a negative vote": "Only three brave deputies dared to vote against the union." In the preface to the 2nd edition of the book, Miliukov emphasized the efforts of the members of the "Bessarabian delegation," along with those of the Russian émigrés, to convince the representatives of

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[95] Exposé de M. Maklakov à la Commission de la Conference de la Paix. Paris, le 2 Juillet 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box II Subject file, Folder Maklakoff, at Peace Conference Commission, Paris, HIA.

[96] The copies of the memoranda are kept in the personal archive of Alexandr N. Krupenskii, donated in 1936 to the Hoover Institution Archives in Stanford, California. For the record of the session of the "Council of Five" see, *Secret. Notes of the Meeting of the Heads of Delegations of the Five Powers held in Mr. Pichon's Room at the Quai d'Orsay*, Paris, on Wednesday, July 2, 1919, at 3.30 p.m., F.M. Records 15-29, May 14 – July 2, 1919, vol. 2, American Commission to Negotiate Peace.

[97] V.V. Țîganko – A. N. Krupenskii, October 30, 1919, Paris. Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, Box 17 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Correspondence – Krupenskii, 1919, HIA.

the Great Powers of the necessity of a plebiscite in Bessarabia. At that time, the idea of a plebiscite in the region was, apparently, supported "by all classes and parties of the local population, being backed by the official and the unofficial Russian public opinion." Miliukov cited the French newspaper *L'Humanité* of July 5, 1919, according to which different Bessarabian political circles, including the Socialists and the Peasants, argued for a plebiscite. "Further, our friend Vladimir Țîganko, the president of the Peasant faction in the Bessarabian parliament, confirmed that a plebiscite is requested by the vast majority of the agricultural population of Bessarabia."[98] The volume *The Roumanian Occupation of Bessarabia*, edited by Alexandr N. Krupenskii in 1920, included the shorthand notes of Țîganko's meeting with Văitoianu on November 23, 1918 (O.S.), quoted above.

From Paris to … the Bolsheviks

"I have heard rumours that Schmidt and Țîganko are to leave Paris due to lack of funds – is that true? Is there no way to distribute the funds offered by the governments of Kolchak and Denikin?!" wrote Sinadino to Krupenskii in Paris on July, 20 1919.[99] Most likely, Țîganko left France in November 1919. A postcard from Schmidt to Krupenskii in Paris, dated November 17, says that the next day Schmidt was to take a ship from Marseilles to Constantinople, and from there – to Petrograd. "Țîganko likewise leaves tomorrow, but on a different ship," mentioned Schmidt.[100] Krupenskii who, apparently, lost contact with Țîganko, was informed by Sinadino that the latter was spotted in Odessa at the end of November; nothing of Schmidt was known on that date.[101]

In order to uncover the details of Țîganko's activities after 1919, further research is required. Duiliu Zamfirescu wrote that "after the Peace conference, Țîganko did not go to his Soviet "Great Motherland" torn apart by civil war, but returned to Bessarabia. The "Romanian occupiers" did not forbid him from practicing architecture in Chișinău between 1920 and 1929, and in fact employed him as chief of infrastructure developments

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[98] *The Case for Bessarabia*, 14-15.
[99] P.V. Sinadino – A.N. Krupenskii, July 20, 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box I Subject file, Folder, Sinadino, Panteleimon, HIA.
[100] A.K. Schmidt – A.N. Krupenskii, November 17, 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box I Correspondence, Folder Schmidt, Alexandre Ch. (Alexandr K.), HIA.
[101] P.V. Sinadino – A.N. Krupenskii, July 20, 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box I Subject files, Folder, Sinadino, Panteleimon, HIA.

of the city of the Ministry of Public Works (1929-1931) and as director of Technical service of Chișinău Mayoralty (1931-1934)."[102] According to a note left by Krupenskii, Țîganko went "to the Bolsheviks," an account which seems more plausible.[103] A short note from the Memory Book of the Tcheleabinsk region of the Russian Federation indicated that the former Chief of the Technical Control Section of the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine (MMK), Vladimir V. Țîganko, was arrested on November 29, 1937, and sentenced to death on December 2 that same year. Therefore, in the end Țîganko reached "the Bolsheviks," but his dream of seeing the rebirth of a democratic Russia was dashed. On January 26, 1938, the life of Vladimir V. Țîganko was tragically interrupted, he fell victim to the Stalinist repressions.[104]

Conclusions

At the end of World War One, Bessarabia transitioned into a *liminal stage* in its history: from the Western periphery of the Russian Empire it merged into the Eastern periphery of Greater Romania. At a time when St. Petersburg became Petrograd, and the authority of Bucharest in the region was only partially settled, a power vacuum was created. It was this vacuum that a group of local elites attempted to exploit. There was a break with the structures and the symbols of the past; nevertheless, taking place in a condition of vulnerable security as well as economic and social disaster, the attempts to plant the seeds of statehood proved ineffective.

During the Russian Civil War, the union of Bessarabia with Romania was perceived as the only logical way to save the region from the Bolshevik disaster. Those who hesitated to speak in support of or against the union – among them being the "Sfatul Țării" deputy, Vladimir V. Țîganko –, later seemed to accept the idea, either in the form of a federative union between Bessarabia and Romania on equal footing or an autonomous Bessarabia within Romania. At the moment when regional autonomy was abolished, Țîganko considered his usefulness to the region as outlived. Instead he took to Paris, where the new Eastern European borders were to be drawn. His adherence to the political project for the return of Bessarabia to Russia, designed by the Russian émigrés in close

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[102] Zamfirescu, *În Basarabia*, 89.

[103] The note was hand-written on an envelope, marked as "Dokumenty. Poslannye îz Kishineva V.V. Țîganko i emu prinadlezhashcie. Dekabr' 1919". Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box VIII Cuttings, HIA.

[104] Kniga pamiati Tcheleabinskoi obl. – podgotovitel'nye materialy, at: http://nekropole.info/ru/Vladimir-Ciganko (downloaded 20.07.2017).

cooperation with the "Bessarabian delegation" in Paris, occurred at a time when all hope for saving regional autonomy had been dispelled. Disappointed by the unfulfilled economic and political promises of the Romanian government, the representatives of both the "old" imperial and the "new" social-revolutionary elite looked "back" toward Russia. Given the Allies' anti-Bolshevik stance, the restoration of Russia's pre-war Western borders and the return of Bessarabia into the Russian realm seemed realistic, despite the confusion surrounding Russia's future political status.

Perceived through the "subjective" personal experiences of Vladimir V. Țîganko, the changes that occurred in the region show the little known – or deliberately ignored – aspects regarding the means by which political and social alliances between those who kept their finger on the pulse of history were formed. The "subjectivity" of these complex experiences, lived by local elites who later remained in the shadow of history, raise questions with regard to the "objectivity" of what was called the "1918 destiny of Bessarabia". Similar to the life trajectory of a person who lived through a *liminal* period, the trajectory of Bessarabian history was not a predestined one. Rather, the region's history was determined by a series of contingencies and unforeseen events, among these the complex decisions made by local actors.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ORTHODOX PRIESTS ON THE NECESSITY OF BUILDING A POLITICAL CULTURE IN INTERWAR TRANSYLVANIA

VALERIA SOROȘTINEANU

The aim of this research paper is to analyze the ways in which one of the most important Romanian institutions in the interwar period, namely the Orthodox Church from Transylvania, adapted to the context of Greater Romania by preserving a part of the structure that had ensured its viability during previous difficult times.

At a European level, two notable facts concerning the interwar period were the political involvement of Church representatives, especially on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the formation and activity of political parties whose members were also clergy, on the other. This situation occurred in countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia during the interwar period. Thus, Ignaz Seipel was invested as chancellor of Austria and Andrej Hlinka played an important role in the newly-formed Czech Republic, while Tito identified himself with the nationalist regime in Slovakia to the point in which he became an accomplice of the Third Reich.[1]

In Romania, the case of patriarch Miron Cristea, who officially got involved in politics, is a singular and emblematic one.[2] The activity of patriarch Miron Cristea was almost too voluntary. As a result, the Romanian intellectual elite, which was brilliant in the interwar period, dedicated a great part of the Romanian historiography to discussing the

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[1] Rene Remond, *Religie și societate în Europa. Secularizarea în secolele al XIX-lea și XX. 1780-2000* [Religion and Society in Modern Europe. Secularization in the 19th and the 20th Centuries.1780-2000] (Bucharest: Polirom, 2003), 206.
[2] Cristian Vasile Petcu, *Guvernarea Miron Cristea* [The Government of Miron Cristea] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2009), 215.

dangerous situation in which "the illusion or the temptations of caesaropapism have taken over the Orthodox Church."[3]

The desire to prevent the Orthodox Church in Transylvania from being interfered with by the government, as happened during the Romanian Old Kingdom, could have harmonized with the cautious political experience that the Church had had until 1918, thus ensuring that the hierarchies after the Unification were not involved in politics. It was desirable that the hierarchs adopt a neutral attitude towards administrative issues. Obviously, "the Church should not be governed by the secular state. The autonomy that politicians granted to the clergy was actually restricted, as the Church was under governmental tutelage."[4]

To be or not to be a politician

When considering our position in the debate regarding the relationship between the State and the Church, we are bound not to take into account the frustration that the Orthodox Church did not receive as many funds from the Ministry of Culture as other churches, even if Orthodoxy was the state religion. The fear that other confessions which had not been so important for the Romanian state would surpass Orthodoxy was highlighted in 1928, when the Roman Catholic bishop Mailath used the funds granted by the Ministry to support the Hungarian irredentist propaganda against the Romanian state.[5]

A key topic on which the social and religious elites started a debate during the interwar period was the role that priests had in the Romanian political environment of that time.

As George Enache acutely noticed, the dilemmas that the Orthodox Church was facing in the interwar period had accumulated due to a widely-accepted reality, namely that of the cherishing of the Church for having maintained the Romanian national specificity. Nonetheless, in

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[3] Constantin Mihai, *Biserica şi elitele intelectuale interbelice* [The Church and the Intellectual Elites of the Interwar Period], 2nd Edition, (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2014), 71.
[4] George Enache, *Conştiinţă creştină în modernitate. Chipuri şi fapte* [Christian Awareness in Modern Times. Manners and Facts] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Muzeului de Istorie Galaţi, Eikon, 2014), 87. See also Radu Preda, *Biserica în stat. O invitaţie la dezbatere* [The Church and the State – An Invitation to Debate] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Scripta, 1999).
[5] "Propaganda episcopului împotriva ţării," [The Bishop's Propaganda Against the Country] *Telegraful Român* [The Romanian Telegraph], Sibiu, 75/64-65, 12 September 1928, 3.

practice, the fears related to the new choices that had to be made in this new period by the Church were great in number. In his research paper, George Enache analyzed the relationship between the clergy and intellectuals, who believed in the renewal of the Romanian society and supported the projects regarding the evolution of the Romanian state.[6]

The improvement of religious education outside schools among the Romanians in Transylvania was possible through many associations and societies which were under the patronage of the Orthodox Church. Among them were the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood, the "Andrei Şaguna" Association, The Lord's Army, which was led by the charismatic priest Iosif Trifa, and the Light of the Village magazine. The promotion of religious education in that period of time can be explained through what Mitropolitan Nicolae Bălan considered to be the need of every society that had experienced the horrors of the First World War – "...spiritual healing, in whose absence everything else is built on sand."[7]

It is also worth mentioning that the Orthodox confessional schools turned into regular, public schools, even if Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan was initially determined to resist this change[8]. Public schools were eventually established in order to centralise the Romanian education system.

Political education, if we may so call it, remained a complex and sensitive topic, because the fundamental ideas expressed in political discourses changed significantly after 1918. The single national program was replaced by many such entities, which promised to meet both the local requirements and the national ones. A great number of votes were cancelled out by some individual preferences for certain political parties whose members were of different ethnicities, while most political parties had Romanian members.[9]

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[6] George Enache, *Ortodoxie şi putere politică în România contemporană* [Orthodoxy and Political Power in Contemporary Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 2005), 451-497.

[7] "Congresul catehetic al preoţimii ortodoxe române din Ardeal," [The Catechetical Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Priests in Transylvania] *Telegraful Român*, 69/87, 4/17 November 1922, 2.

[8] "Lupta pentru şcoale," [Fighting for Schools] *Telegraful Român*, 69/63, 12/25 August 1922, 1.

[9] "Marile serbări Ortodoxe şi Naţionale de la Sibiu, Congresul FOR şi al Asociaţiei «Andrei Şaguna»," [The Great Orthodox and National Celebrations at Sibiu – The FOR Congress and the Congress of the "Andrei Şaguna" Association] *Telegraful Român*, 81/46-47, 4 November 1934, 1; "*Telegraful Român* despre apariţia *Luminii Satelor*," ["The Romanian Telegraph" on the Launching of the "Light of the Villages" Magazine] *Telegraful Român*, 69/33, 26 April/9 May 1922, 3; "Congresul catehetic al preoţimii ortodoxe române din Ardeal," [The Catechetical

Priests fulfilled the role of "political consultants" before and after 1918. However, due to the complex situation in the first decade after the Unification, they started to make efforts to convince Christians of the necessity to raise their cultural level.

This research aims to analyze the political tendencies expressed through the articles published in *Telegraful Român* (The Romanian Telegraph), which was supported by the Romanian Orthodox Church. The newspaper was started in 1853 at the initiative of Andrei Şaguna, then bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church of Sibiu in Transylvania. *The Romanian Telegraph* was among the most important periodicals for the Romanians in Transylvania from a national and a political point of view until 1918.During the interwar period, the magazine influenced the entire metropolitan province, despite the fact that it was only supposed to be the official publication of the Orthodox Archbishopric of Sibiu; all the other bishoprics issued their own publications. The most relevant articles written during the interwar period belong to Dumitru Stăniloae, editor-in-chief of *the Romanian Telegraph* from 1934 to 1945. Some of the main topics that are dealt with in the articles are the necessity to protect the Orthodox Church, as well as the role that the Orthodox Church played in the Romanian state and society during the interwar period. Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan was equally engaged in supporting the Church, which he considered to be an inherent element in the fight for the well-being of the Romanian nation and the fulfillment of a great mission in Romanian history.[10]

The cited articles lead us to the conclusion that priests were directed to build and convey a set of political principles to the Orthodox people while taking note of the following aspects: the attitude of the people toward the political parties of that time, starting with the Romanian National Party led by Iuliu Maniu; the role of politicians or political advisors, which was fulfilled by priests during the interwar period; the ideological battle against

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Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Priests in Transylvania] *Telegraful Român*, 69/87, 4/17 November 1922, 2; "Cuvinte arhiereşti pentru Oastea Domnului," [The Words of the Hierarchs for the Lord's Army] *Telegraful Român*, 80/7-8, 21 January 1933, 1; "Rusaliile la Sibiu. O imposantă manifestaţiune religioasă. Pelerinajul Oştii Domnului la Catedrala din Sibiu," [The Pentecost at Sibiu. An Imposing Religious Manifestation. The Pilgrimage of the Lord's Army to the Cathedral in Sibiu] *Telegraful Român*, 79/42, 28 May 1932, 1.
[10] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Cultură şi duhovnicie. Articole publicate în Telegraful Român (1930-1993)* [Culture and Religiousness. Articles Published in The Romanian Telegraph (1930-1993)], Vol. III (Bucharest: Editura Basilica, 2012).

Soviet Russia and the endorsement of the Monarchy, both of which were seen as parts of the mission to support the Romanian state.

After the unification of Greater Romania in 1918, most members of the religious elite faced a new reality which they were called to consolidate. Their initial enthusiasm was obvious. However, because they considered themselves to be intermediaries between the state and the people, priests were equally fearful of the possibility of making any political mistake and failing those who had contributed to this difficult victory.

The role of priests in politics turned out to be difficult to explain from the very beginning of the interwar period. The role of priests was reconsidered altogether in this new circumstance that Romania was in. Nicolae Bălan, the Metropolitan of Transylvania, stated in 1919 that a priest's mission was not to deal with politics. The next year, he made a contradictory statement by admitting both that the role of a priest was conveniently complemented by his assignment as deputy or senator, and that priests make extremely good political advisors.[11] The Transylvanian Gazette criticized the Metropolitan for his lack of consistency.

To Metropolitan Bălan, the necessity of clarifying the program of the Romanian National Party after 1918 was mandatory. The Metropolitan was genuinely interested in maintaining the Resolution of the National Assembly in Alba Iulia and discussing the attitude of Iuliu Maniu, who thought that the unification process had to be gradual and supported the idea that "Transylvania belongs to the Transylvanian people". Nonetheless, according to *the Romanian Telegraph*, the establishment of the Romanian National Party in Bucharest led to the abandonment of the principle which involves the preservation of the common Romanian heritage. The instance cited by *the Romanian Telegraph* is that of the *moţi* (translator's note: residents of the central area of the Apuseni Mountains), who lost again to "the millionaire locusts of our forests." Unfortunately, the people who allowed this to happen belonged to the National Party in Alba-Iulia as well, but they did not attend the coronation at Alba-Iulia."[12]

However, at that time, many of Metropolitan Bălan's contemporaries thought that his attitude had been caused by the sensitivity of the Orthodox Church towards Iuliu Maniu's "political religiousness", which implied appointing mostly Greek Catholics as leaders of the National Romanian Party and bureaucrats in Bucharest. Although the accusation seems to belong to the 19th Century, it was extremely effective in a 20th Century setting – the debate around the Concordat with Rome is a similar example.

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[11] "Ce-ar zice... (apud Gazeta Transilvaniei)," [What Would They Say... apud the Transylvanian Gazette] *Telegraful Român*, 73/34, 3 April 1926, 3.

[12] "Ce-ar zice...," 3.

We can also mention a series of articles signed by A. Pavel, who deals
with the increasingly sensitive relationship between the ideology of the
Romanian National Party and that of the political parties in Greater
Romania. According to him, the Romanian National Party comprised
"supporters of regionality and of unified Catholic religiousness." The
situation was different compared to the period prior to 1918, when he had
"supported the party, not for its political ideology, but for representing an
ethnical unity that claims its rights from the foreigners."[13]

In 1922, the Romanian National Party started being criticized by more
and more people because it governed "without taking into account the
values of true democracy at all"; people were also aware of the fact that if
the fight for governmental power had needed to take place, the ideas of
religiousness and regionality would have had to be refuted.[14] We cannot
help but notice a straightforward reference to the political practices of
liberals, who were being accused of many culpabilities – firstly, they were
used to being the only leading party and did not make a joint effort along
with the Transylvanian leaders during the first decade after the
Unification; secondly, the administrative unification itself had been forced
upon them and had led to chaos in all social aspects, including the judicial
system.[15]

The Romanian Telegraph also suggested the idea of forming a
religious political party, but abandoned it soon afterwards. In March, 1919,
during the first Congress of Orthodox Priests, Metropolitan Bălan would
have supported the idea of the clergy´s political involvement at first, but
then he reached the conclusion that a priest cannot belong to a political
party because he is beyond everyone and has to fulfil everyone's
expectations.[16] Although the congress did not outcome in a permanent
solution and the Metropolitan would make more contradictory statements
afterwards, he settled on three guidelines according to which priests must
advise people. Since Orthodox priests had been political advisors before
the Unification, they could not give up that role now. According to ethical,

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[13] A. Pavel, "Telegraful Român şi partidul naţional," [The Romanian Telegraph
and the National Party] *Telegraful Român*, 69/4, 11/24 January 1922, 2.
[14] "Adunarea Partidului Naţional în Sibiu," [The Assembly of the National Party at
Sibiu] *Telegraful Român*, 69/83, 21 of October/3 November 1922, 3.
[15] Dr. Aurel Vlad, "Răspuns la articolul «Preoţimea ortodoxă şi partidul naţional»,"
[My Answer to the "Orthodox Priests and the National Party" Article] *Telegraful
Român*, 69/8, 25 January/7 February 1922,1-2; apud "Orthodox Priests and the
National Party," *Telegraful Român*, 69/6, 18 January/31 January 1922, 1.
[16] Nicolae Bălan, "Preoţimea în viaţa politică," [Priests and Politics] *Telegraful
Român*, 75/8, 28 January 1928,1.

democratic and nationalist principles, priests were to assign an appropriate number of representatives to the Senate and the Parliament, and support those who provided the moral conviction that they would look after the interests of the Church and of the Romanian nation. It was established that action could be taken within the current political parties according to election law. In 1930, the official political parties were the National Liberal Party, the National Peasants' Party, the National Democratic Party led by Nicolae Iorga and the People's Party founded by Marshal Alexandru Averescu. The Greek Catholic clergy agreed with these guidelines.[17]

The great number of political parties that were founded after 1919, when the universal vote was introduced, as well as the explosion in the instances of political journalism, which was characterized by ardor and employed a shocking vocabulary, according to the Transylvanian people, who had been used to certain limitations, clouded the meaning of what the Orthodox Church and society considered to be a "general renaissance".[18]

A special case that is often mentioned is that of the villagers in the Apuseni Mountains. Their problems had started while the Romanian state was still dual, and persisted after the Unification. Let us mention only the interventions of the secular senator Ion Clopoţel at the Synods of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Sibiu. Ever since 1910, he had been drawing a connection between the viability of religious schools and the possibility of the clergy to found a boarding school sui generis by building refectories and bedrooms.

Aware of the fact that they had to resume their efforts in this new situation, the archpriests of Abrud, Câmpeni and Lupşa organized a conference at Câmpeni in 1922. The initiator of the conference was Petru Sabău, who suggested that memoirs should be written with the purpose of improving the condition of the priests in that area, thus improving the condition of the villagers, too. One of the memoirs was targeted at Bishop Nicolae Ivan of Cluj, who later voiced discontent regarding some opinions according to which "the archbishops are not concerned with the faith of priests." Their criticism did not concern the lack of action taken by the state, but the lack of vision in the action that was taken. The methods that the state employed were to take effect in the long term, but this situation favored neither the Church nor the state. Thus, the Ministry allocated funds to the foundation of an elementary school in Câmpeni and a middle

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[17] "Din viaţa bisericească. Este bine sau nu să facă politică?," [From the Life of the Clergy – Is It a Good Idea to Get Involved in Politics?] *Telegraful Român*, 77/21, 15 March 1930, 1.

[18] Trandafir Scorobeţ, "Duhul renaşterii," [The Spirit of Rebirth] *Telegraful Român*, 79/56, 13 August 1932,1.

school in Baia de Criş, as well as several public libraries. A boarding school for children of clergy who were students at University of Cluj was supposed to be built, too. The priests of Cluj thought they were entitled to demand that the state defend them against neo-Protestant proselytism, especially given the fact that the merchants who sold cheaper products in that area also distributed Protestant bibles.[19]

"How can the villagers in the Apuseni Mountains get help in their fight against poverty?" was the question asked by the author of an article which was published in 1927. The article leads us to conclude that the situation had not changed. Several corn wagons, which were quite expensive, and the hurried visits of some government representatives to Cluj, Huedin, Abrud and Brad were not enough to solve the problems. Priests remained equally disappointed by the authorities, who lacked empathy and interest in their opinions. The structural observation that priests made was that the state had "cured some local wounds, but the greater wounds are still open." Moreover, the solutions concerning each local type of activity, such as gold mining, cooperatives, farming and raising cattle, were not enforced. The villages where landslides had been caused by massive deforestation were deliberately ignored by the authorities.[20]

A solution to this entire problem was eventually provided by Dumitru Gusti, who was invested as president of the Social Service during the reign of Carol II. According to him, several viable institutions had to be founded in the Apuseni Mountains to solve all the problems, which had existed prior to 1918 as well. Some initiatives were taken in the communes with the largest populations in the Apuseni Mountains – Bistra, which had 6,000 residents; Scărişoara, which had 5,500 residents; Avram Iancu, which had 4,500 residents; Arada lui Horea, which had 4,000 residents; Albac, which had 4,000 residents, as well as Vidra and Câmpeni, which had 3,000 residents each. The initiatives implied raising some multifunctional communal buildings that were adaptable to many purposes, depending on the necessities of the moment. Thus, each multifunctional building could fulfill the role of a boarding school, boarding house, carpenter's shop, pomiculture school, gardening school and medicine storage room. There were also a few nurses, in case the permanent doctors of the villages were missing. The multifunctional

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[19] "Conferinţa preoţilor din Munţii Apuseni," [The Confrontation between the Priests in the Apuseni Mountains] *Telegraful Român*, 69/91, 18 November/1 December 1922, 3.
[20] "Problemele moţilor," [The Problems of the Villagers in the Apuseni Mountains] *Telegraful Român*, 74/84-85, 18 November 1927, 1.

buildings could also serve as the headquarters of the Social Service and the Guards of Carol II.[21]

In order to solve some other similar issues and to instruct the intellectual elite on patriotism, Carol II enforced the "new law of social service", according to which young people who had graduated from university had to go on probation to the Culture House of a city or a village to learn more about Romanian society. According to an article on this topic written by Dimitrie Gusti, President of the Social Service, Astra was also involved in what he considered to be the formation of a *social personality* in the Romanian society. He found the social personality to be the only way of harmonizing individuals with society. Furthermore, the practical Orthodoxism of the Church stood for the revival of the village, which is the place where "the soul, the language and the entire spiritual heritage of the Romanian nation" lay.[22]

Since the politicians in the Romanian Old Kingdom were not used to the active role of clergy as spiritual and general advisors, they were vexed by the mentalities they were encountering in Transylvania. According to them, the priests there had already fulfilled their active role and they were consequently supposed to return to their usual practices, allowing the state to take over the political environment. There was only one exception – "priests could lend a hand" during the election campaigns. The official position of the clergy had been exposed in *the Romanian Telegraph* ever since 1919 in a brief, but clear article – "our mission is far from being over. The culturalization of the Romanian people is to be continued through apostleship; we have a lot of work to do. The period after the war is a lot worse than the one before it. Garbage turns up after a storm."[23]

The criticisms of those who were clergy and had functions in the Senate or the Parliament were great in number. There were also other important personalities, including Octavian Goga and Tudor Arghezi, who criticized the activity of all the Romanian priests in an article published in "Our Country". According to the article, all the priests lacked interest in the faith of the Orthodox people. "What do you do for the village or the outskirts you are living in? Do you ensure dowries for women and political instruction for men? Do you build banks, associations and anonymous

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[21] Dimitrie Gusti, "Personalitatea socială," [Social Personality] *Telegraful Român*, 86/6, 5 February 1939, 1.

[22] Gusti, "Personalitatea socială," 1; "Creştinismul practic," [Practical Orthodoxism] *Telegraful Român*, 86/6, 5 February 1939, 1.

[23] A. Ştefan, "Să ne cunoştem," [Knowing Ourselves] *Telegraful Român*, 69/69, 2/15 September 1922, 1.

societies? Do you exploit timber or petrol? There's 10,000 of you, and yet there's nobody to work on the land of our nation."[24]

In 1930, Priest I. V. Felea focused public attention on a project which implied founding an official periodical of the Romanian patriarchate. The magazine was intended to combat the set of ideas which were considered to promote corruption and the increasing public mistrust of the press, in general, by means of guiding public opinion towards "religious or moral ways". The ideal was to attain clergy in the service of the people.[25]

The most sensitive topic related to politics was the fear that the extremely numerous rural electorate had been strongly influenced by the news propaganda of political parties for a very simple reason: "Romanian peasants read all the newspapers humbly and trust every piece of information in them because they think that lies and malice cannot appear in print!" The situation was even worse than that, as the representatives of the Church feared that intellectuals might be attracted by "the inappropriate paper money that is to replace silver"[26] in spite of their good intentions, because they had not attained a proper knowledge of politics. The statement was related especially to the intellectuals in rural areas.

Before the senator and priest Sebastian Stanca directly provided an answer to Manea Popescu's article published in the *Faith* magazine in Bucharest, on 20th October, 1935, the topic had been dealt with in a few articles published in *the Romanian Telegraph*. The articles were centered on the state's lack of impartiality towards the Orthodox Church of the Romanian Old Kingdom, which was considered to be extremely "secularized and involved in political corruption."[27] These are the main ideas expressed by Sebastian Stanca in his article: 1. Transylvanism among us is supported by the Church. We only received state funds in the year 1896. 2. We did not originate the idea of regionalization; the people in Bucharest did. Let us consider the averages. In the 17 years since the Great Unification, we have received thousands of clerks. Some of them are honest, but others are greedy people who earn a lot of money, and whose sole purpose is to attain a good financial situation. In the meantime, our

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[24] "Atitudini vătămătoare împotriva clerului român," [Negative Attitute Toward the Romanian Clergy] *Telegraful Român*, 73/74, 23 October 1926, 1.
[25] "Presa ortodoxă," [The Orthodox Newspapers] *Telegraful Român*, 77/57, 2 August 1930, 1.
[26] Archpriest Vasile Gan, "Despre un articol din ziarul Voința din Cluj," [On an Article Published in the "Voința", "Willpower" Newspaper of Cluj] *Telegraful Român*, 69/23, 18/31 March 1922, 2.
[27] "Ardelenismul în biserică," [Transylvanism within the Church] *Telegraful Român*, 81/52, 9 December 1934, 3.

children who graduated from universities are unemployed because the positions within the Romanian institutions are already taken. 3. We were blamed for the fact that we did not allow priests from the Romanian Old Kingdom to come to Transylvania. That is not true; 70 priests came here from the Romanian Old Kingdom, 21 from Bessarabia and 9 from Bukovina. 4. How many Transylvanians were able to join the army, to work within Ministries or to gain access to magistracy within the territory of Romanian Old Kingdom? 5. There is no hatred towards those in the Romanian Old Kingdom, although the incidents that occurred during the war should not be forgotten. We are still not supported in any way by the clergy of the Romanian Old Kingdom. Brotherhood cannot be forced on anyone; instead, it can be earned through proof of honest and unconditional love."

Beyond our agreement or disagreement concerning this trenchant kind of approach, we can draw one certain conclusion, namely that such an honest and risky tone was not employed in the Romanian newspapers very often. To say that this tone expressed contriteness at the development of the Romanian state after 1918 would be an exaggeration. Rather, it was a genuine invitation to discussion.[28]

Out of the numerous articles that deal with politics, very few refer to the Legionary Movement. The reason is the attachment for the king and for Patriarch Miron Cristea, both of whom officially blamed it. Nonetheless, the articles in *the Romanian Telegraph* expressed sympathy for the attendance of Metropolitan Bălan at Moța and Marin's funeral, which was considered to be a state funeral even by the patriarch and future prime minister Miron Cristea. The answer to the reproach made by the philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru in *the Romanian Telegraph* with respect to this matter was that there were no reasons to suspect the existence of a political underlying in the action of Miron Cristea, and that all the priests would have been entitled and obliged to attend the funeral of Ioan Moța and Vasile Marin, who had died in Spain, fighting "against the declared enemy of Christ, regardless of their political affiliation." The prayer of Metropolitan Bălan at the Saint Ilie Gorgani Church on 13th February, 1937[29] had to be interpreted in the same way.

Worried about the discrepancy between the promises that were made by every politician and reality, the Orthodox clergy demanded the official opinion of the Holy Synod, which answered by sending an encyclical in

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[28] Priest Sebastian Stanca, "Ardeleni şi regăţeni," [Transylvanians and People from the Romanian Old Kingdom] *Telegraful Român*, 81/52, 9 December 1934, 3.

[29] "Biserica şi puterea," [The Church and Politics] *Telegraful Român*, 84/8, 21 February 1937, 1.

September, 1937. The encyclical urged priests to keep on fulfilling the
traditional role of political advisors, to support or join the parties that
"endorse the Romanian state and the teachings of the Orthodox Church."
An interesting aspect is that there was only one priest, namely Orthodox
Bishop Roman Ciorogariu of Oradea, who thought that the political
involvement of priests was increasingly less relevant. Ever since 1929, he
had imposed resignation from all political parties on the priests in his
eparchy.[30]

To be king in Transylvania

The connection of The Orthodox Church in Transylvania with the
institution of monarchy has oficially and doubtlessly been acknowledged
by the former institution, as opposed to its relation with the Imperial
family in Vienna before 1918. The fact that the Greek Catholic Church
had not attended the coronation at Alba-Iulia was not easily forgiven, but
the Romanian Telegraph cited Nicolae Iorga in respect to this matter[31],
in order not to be blamed of partiality. King Ferdinand and Queen Mary
genuinely answered the numerous manifestations of sympathy on behalf of
the Transylvanian people by learning about the history of the Romanians
in Transylvania, especially during the first decade after the Unification.
For instance, the royal family attended the commemoration of Metropo-
litan Andrei Şaguna and Prince Carol attended the commemoration of
Gheorghe Lazăr. Moreover, the royal family went on pilgrimage to Ţebea
and Baia-de-Arieş to attend the centenary of Avram Iancu's birth in 1924,
just as Emperor Franz Joseph visited the region in 1852.[32]

The occasions on which the royal family attended the commemorations
of those who had died in battle for the Unification of Romania were
presented in the same way. Some examples are the consecration of the
monument dedicated to infantry officers in Sibiu in 1926, the consecration
of the Mărăşeşti Church and the beginning of the construction of the
Mausoleum of Mărăşeşti in June, 1928.

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[30] *Telegraful Român*, 76/14, 16 Febuary 1929, 2.
[31] "Nicolae Iorga despre fapul că prelaţii greco-catolici nu au participat la
încoronarea de la Alba-Iulia," [Nicolae Iorga on the Fact that the Greek-Catholic
Representatives Did Not Attend the Coronation at Alba-Iulia] *Telegraful Român*,
69/80, 11/24 October 1922, 2.
[32] "Personalitatea lui Şaguna, Comemorarea lui Gheorghe Lazăr," [The Personality
of Şaguna. The Commemoration of Gheorghe Lazăr] *Telegraful Român*, 70/55-56,
7/20 July 1923, 1-2.

Since it was obvious from the very beginning of the reign of King Carol II that he thought himself to be the most important person in the state and even considered himself to be worthy of a personality cult, *the Romanian Telegraph* and other newspapers were very cautious when referring to him; he was always praised and portrayed as the savior of the country. King Carol II made great efforts to surpass the popularity of his parents among Transylvanians, especially that of his mother, Queen Mary. The King himself carefully devised his speeches in such a way as to highlight the connection between him and his predecessors. For example, on the occasion of his investment as Honorary President of Astra, he talked about "the Romanian substrate of his spirit, which was indirectly shaped by Astra, and Astra had been created by the Transylvanian intellectuals."[33]

We have to admit that many of his actions contributed not only to his impeccable reputation, but also to his appreciation by many of his contemporaries. For instance, he made financial contributions to Astra, endorsed the "Dacia Superior" University of Cluj and opened both a clinic and an orphanage named after himself in Sălişte, Sibiu County.

Metropolitan Bălan rightfully called the King "the main church builder in our Archbishopric" in 1937, when a bill proposed the abolishment of the Transylvanian community wealth center, which had been part of the Saxon University until its abolishment in 1876, when Sibiu became a county. The Romanian Orthodox people had received 16% of the income of the Saxon University as a contribution to the conservation of the Romanian cultural heritage. In 1918, the contribution was ended. After the Saxon University was reorganized and renamed as "Mihai Viteazu Cultural Settlement", its fortune, which consisted of buildings and agricultural fields in Sibiu and Mediaş, was to be shared between the previously mentioned association and the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession in Romania. Because Metropolitan Bălan expressed his genuine fear that an extensive administrative council such as that of the mentioned association was difficult to protect against political corruption, King Carol II issued a decree according to which the Orthodox Metropolitan Province was to receive the greatest part of the fortune that had belonged to the Saxon University, namely three quarters of it.[34]

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[33] "Majestatea Sa Regele şi Ardealul," [His Highness the King and Transylvania] *Telegraful Român*, 83/41, 4 October 1936, 1.

[34] "Desfiinţarea unei comunităţi de avere din Ardeal," [The Abolishment of a Community Wealth Center in Transylvania] *Telegraful Român*, 84/12, 21 March 1937, 3; "M. Sa. Regele Carol al II-lea, cel mai mare ctitor al Arhiepiscopiei

The next ambitious project of the king dates on the same year, 1937. Electricity was introduced in 15 communes in Sibiu County, namely Mohu, Bungard, Sadu, Avrig, Bradu, Porceşti, Orlat, Gura Râului, Sibiel, Vale, Săcel, Tilişca, Galeş, Apoldu de Jos, Ludoş and Slimnic.[35]

The next historical accomplishment of the king was the inauguration of a monument dedicated to the three martyrs of 1784, Horea, Cloşca and Crişan, at Alba-Iulia. In 1938, he inaugurated the Mausoleum of Mărăşeşti, which had been built through the efforts of the National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women. Through the speeches that the king gave at the inauguration of the Mausoleum of Mărăşeşti, and at the 500th anniversary of the death of Alexander I of Moldavia, he attempted to renew the royal message by alluding to the Church and the history of Romanians. As a consequence, the state church accepted to endorse the monarchy regardless of who its representatives might be, given Miron Cristea's position as prime minister and patriarch.[36]

Transylvanians associated the monarchy with the Gathering at Alba-Iulia, as the royal family visited the city every year to commemorate the Unification. Nonetheless, the articles in *the Romanian Telegraph* also reflect the King's desire to assert his power by any means and to surpass his parents, especially Queen Mary, whose role in politics had been ended by him. There was a great difference between the development of the commemorative ceremony in 1925, when the plaques in the Unity Hall were unveiled and a parade of the army and the Etnographic Cortege was held afterwards, and the interpretation of King Carol II, who stripped the ceremony of its meaning. King Carol II then celebrated the first Constitution Day as "the Father of the Romanian nation".[37]

The omnipresence of the king in Transylvania ends abruptly in the summer of 1940. The decision of the Second Vienna Award was announced on the front page of the official newspaper of the Metropolitan

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noastre," [His Royal Highness, King Carol II, the Greatest Church Builder in Our Archbishopric] *Telegraful Român*, 84/24, 13 June 1937, 1.

[35] *Telegraful Român*, 84/42, 13 June 1937, 2.

[36] "Cuvântarea regelui la Mărăşeşti," [The Speech of the King at Mărăşeşti] *Telegraful Român*, 85/30, 24 July 1938, 1; "Inaugurarea monumentului celor trei mucenici," [The Inauguration of the Monument of the Three Martyrs] *Telegraful Român*, 84/42, 17 October 1937, 1; "Cuvântul suveranului," [The Speech of the Sovereign] *Telegraful Român*, 79/70-71, 12 November 1932, 1.

[37] "Chemarea la participarea la Adunarea de la Alba-Iulia," [The Invitation to Participate at the Gathering of Alba-Iulia] *Telegraful Român*, 86/9, 26 February 1939,1. In order to make a good impression, the document was signed by the Romanian and the Greek Catholic bishops of Transylvania.

Province of Sibiu by Metropolitan Bălan, who urged Romanians to "believe in a better tomorrow" through the presidial encyclical no. 9906. King Carol II's manifesto, which was addressed to the people and announced his resignation, was rendered on the second page of the newspaper, along with the proclamation on the assignment of Ion Antonescu as prime minister. The final statement of the proclamation was this: "Let us support the young king, Michael I". The least exciting Unification anniversary was held at Alba Iulia in the presence of Ion Antonescu, Horia Sima and 100,000 legionnaires. The ceremony was initiated by a sermon at the Orthodox Unification Cathedral, as usual.[38]

About the other society

Soviet Russia was among the few topics agreed upon by both the Church and the state. At first, the danger that this new country which replaced Czarist Russia posed was the propagation of atheism internally and externally. Moreover, it was clear from the beginning that the new state had no intention of living peacefully alongside its neighbor, Greater Romania. Soviet Russia did not acknowledge Greater Romania and wanted to create the impression that it was an imperialist state by means of the Communist International.

In 1922, the future metropolitan Nicolae Colan expressed his hope that "the Orthodox Church will not be abolished in Russia too soon" in an article published in *the Romanian Telegraph*.[39] After the sermon on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, Metropolitan Bălan issued many encyclicals according to which special prayer sessions were to be held for the Christians who were being persecuted in Russia. He concluded that "not even the ancient pagan rituals can be compared to the practices of the Bolsheviks."[40]

The Orthodox priests were seen as a barrier that prevented the propagation of atheism. Romanian priests were facing a new mission – ensuring that the winner of the fight between nationalism and communism would not be "the red flag with fiery sickles".[41]

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[38] *Telegraful Român*, 87/37-38, 8 September 1940,1-2; "Manifestația de la Alba-Iulia," [The Manifestation at Alba Iulia] *Telegraful Român*, 87/48, 6 October 1940, 3.
[39] Nicolae Colan, "Sovietele şi religia," [The Soviet States and Religion] *Telegraful Român*, 69/28, 8/21 April 1922, 1.
[40] "Circulara mitropolitului Bălan," [The Encyclical of Metropolitan Bălan] *Telegraful Român*, 78/19, 8 March 1930, 2.
[41] "În fața ofensivei comuniste," [Facing the Communist Offensive] *Telegraful Român*, 83/35, 23 August 1936, 1.

The issue was also addressed by considering the Russian involvement in the Spanish war on the side of the republicans. The Spanish Civil War was seen as proof that "lack of faith is part of communism. In Spain, it led to the demolition of churches and the annihilation of priests." However, the dangers posed by the communism propagated by Jewish people in Romania was imminent, from the communist ideology of the "new citizens of Romania" to the threats of the emissaries of the "northern colossus" against the Romanian state. The opinion of Dumitru Stăniloae was that the true Romanian identity and values were deeply rooted in the rural areas. He sympathized with neither leftist nor rightist ideologies. In his articles on the topic of the threat of Soviet Russia published in *the Romanian Telegraph*, he stated his opinion that "extreme democracy and communism are very similar" and that the situation was worsened by the fact that "there is no room for God in communism. Lack of faith is considered to be a part of communism."[42]

In order to prevent this threat from affecting part of Romanian society, it was mandatory to win the support of the workers, whose mentalities were considered to be unadapted to the urban environment, and of the bourgeoisie, who were attracted to atheist materialism. Jesus could have become the friend and protector of the workers, not a pretext for hatred. The examples given to support this statement were of the "Nests of National-Christian Syndicates" organized by the legionnaire workers, which relied on the support of the Church.[43]

A lot of articles on the large number of Jewish people who were granted Romanian citizenship were written between 1919 and 1926. Their new identity as Romanian citizens caused mistrust among Romanians for a wide range of reasons. Firstly, the place they had originated from was problematic. Their arrival had augmented the number of minorities in Romania. Secondly, Romanians feared that the Israeli Alliance Foundation might create another Palestine in Romania. Thirdly, the Jewish people had entered Romania along with many Bolshevik agents. The ambience in Romania during the first decade after the Unification nurtured the tensions instead of easing them. According to the author of the article entitled *Defending Christianity*, the attack that had occurred at the Romanian

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[42] Dumitru Stăniloae, "Naţionalismul în cadrul spiritualităţii creştine," [Nationalism within the Orthodox Spirituality] *Telegraful Român*, 83/35, 23 August 1936, 1; "Biserica împotriva comunismului," [The Church against Communism] *Telegraful Român*, 83/42, 11 November 1936, 1.

[43] Pr. Il.V.Felea, "Prietenul şi patronul muncitorilor," [The Friend and Protector of the Workers] *Telegraful Român*, 83/31, 26 July 1936, 1.

Senate in 1920 and the assassination of Constantin Manciu, head of police in Iaşi, by C. Z. Codreanu were both "effects of Bolshevik propaganda".[44]

The campaign led by Patriarch Miron Cristea against alcoholism, which was caused by the large number of pubs owned by Jewish people, was endorsed by the Orthodox Church. The support of the younger generations was successfully sought by the legionnaires and officially claimed by King Carol II.

The explanations for the prohibition of Freemasonry by Patriarch Miron Cristea through pastoral letter no. 359, written in 1937, were the incompatibility between the two institutions, on the one hand, and the possibility of Jewish people getting involved in masonry and using their influence on the community to fulfill their individual goals, on the other. According to the previously mentioned document, intellectuals could not have caused any disagreement between the Church and the Freemasons; a proper Orthodox man respects his Christian religion.[45]

The desire to explain the reasons behind the great changes in the Romanian political environment after the Second Vienna award, such as those in Romanian diplomacy, caused Dumitru Stăniloaie to support "the transformation of Romania into a National Legionnaire State that fights the aggressive forces of evil", since "the Western societies have weakened us by taking away half of Transylvania, instead of supporting and increasing our capacity to resist the Slavic and Bolshevik terror."[46]

Conclusions

It is difficult to draw the conclusions of such a research paper, because all the issues that were presented raise some questions that are greater in number than the partial answers we managed to reach by conducting it. As an institution, the Orthodox Church was loyal to the state, according to the Organization Law in 1925 and orthodoxy was declared to be the state religion, according to the Constitution of 1923. The Orthodox Church made all efforts to fulfill these roles successfully and despite its occasional criticism, the intellectual elite supported the Church due to the importance that this institution had had throughout Romanian history and the role it

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[44] "În apărarea creştinismului," [Defending Christianity] *Telegraful Român*, 73/46, 15 June 1926, 1.

[45] "Sf. Noastră Biserică împotriva francmasoneriei," [Our Saint Church against Freemasonry] *Telegraful Român*, 83/12, 15 March 1936, 2.

[46] Dumitru Stăniloae, "Restaurea românismului şi destinul său istoric," [Restoring Romanianism and Its Historical Purpose] *Telegraful Român*, 87/39, 22 July 1940, 1.

could have fulfilled after the Unification. At a basic level, the political culture that Iosif Trifa wanted to impose through the Lord's Army led to a sort of Messianic Christianity which was fervently practiced by the regular people. The political involvement of priests and the evaluation of their actions in this field became increasingly delicate topics, as the political parties in the interwar period reached a critical state of disorder.

During the first decade after Unification, the Orthodox Church of Transylvania became increasingly worried about two aspects. Firstly, the representatives of the Church feared that they would not meet the expectations of the Orthodox people under the governance of the Romanian National Party led by Iuliu Maniu. Secondly, they were worried about the great responsibility that priests had, especially as political advisors. Since monarchy brought political stability, unlike the previous governments, both the metropolitan of Transylvania and patriarch Miron Cristea sympathized with the royal family. King Carol II's authoritarian regime was endorsed by them for a very pragmatic reason – the obvious failure of the system which involved supporting a certain political party.

When considering the political environment during the intricate reign of King Carol II from a practical point of view, the representatives of the Orthodox Church came upon some ideas that were not in accordance with its official perspective. Let us only mention the delicate position of Miron Cristea, who blamed the Legionary Movement, but knew that many priests were legionnaire sympathizers and some of them had even adhered to the movement. We can understand the point of view of those who noticed the failure of secular politicians and started a national debate on whether a National Christian State could be founded instead. Among them are Nichifor Crainic, Dumitru Stăniloae and the legionnaire priest Ilie Imbrescu.[47]

There is no doubt that both the Orthodox and Greek Catholic priests made constant efforts to build a political culture among their followers, but their good intentions were cancelled out by the intricate development of the political environment in Romania and Europe during the Second World War. Before 1919, most of the articles published in *the Romanian Telegraph* were intended to support the Romanian culture among Transylvanians. After the Unification, the process of building a political culture continued through the great efforts that priests made.

Priests assumed the mission of instructing people on politics through articles published in *the Romanian Telegraph*. The high expectations of

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[47] Ilie Imbrescu, *Biserica şi Mişcarea legionară* [The Church and the Legionnaire Movement], apud George Enache*, Ortodoxie şi putere politică în România contemporană*, 487.

politicians and Transylvanian people alike challenged the Transylvanian spiritual leaders, who eventually managed to overcome all impediments. The numerous articles in *the Romanian Telegraph* served as a guide to a proper attitude towards politics. Moreover, the purpose of the articles was to clarify the context in which priests were granted the right to get involved in politics. The articles focused especially on the debate about the rules that Church representatives should follow and the role of the Church in interwar Romania.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATES IN GENERAL ELECTIONS (1926-1937): CASE STUDY – AGRICULTURALIST CANDIDATES ON THE LISTS OF THE ASSEMBLY OF DEPUTIES

FLORIN-RĂZVAN MIHAI

After the First World War, a wave of reforms gradually changed the face of united Romania. One of the measures adopted, long awaited by the largest segment of Romanian society, was agrarian reform, which redistributed land among the peasants. Politics also underwent a fundamental change, through election reform, together with universal suffrage – equal, direct, secret and mandatory. Naturally, as a result, the role of the peasantry in the political skeleton – that is, the essential structures, legislature and party – could be expected to grow. Thus we realised a quantitave and qualitative measurement of the number and influence of peasants in Parliament and in the parties' lists of candidates for general elections. We intend to respond to a few essential questions: Is there a correlation between the doctrines of the parties concerned with peasant issues (Peasant, Agrarian, National Peasant Parties) and the promotion of peasants into the elite political class? Which political parties especially gave peasants priority on their lists of candidates? Did these peasants have real chances of being elected or were they marginalized in less desirable districts and lower positions? Did the parties nominate peasants in primarily rural districts? Were minority peasant candidates nominated in districts and counties with large minority populations, in annexed regions? How was political speech altered in these districts, in order to make the most of the peasants' campaigns? What was the rate of

peasants nominated/elected by party? The answers to these questions can clear up some important aspects of the theory and practice of interwar party politics and examine the place of peasants in the Romanian political elite and decision-making process.

In the west, the sociology of politicians was thought of as a serious subject for research as early as the first part of the 20th Century. Among others, J.F.S. Ross, author of a volume on the British Parliament, and Mattei Dogan, interested in the socio-professional configuration of the interwar Romanian Parliament and the stability of the administrative staff of the Third French Republic, stood out in particular. Researchers interested in the recruitment of the elites of Parliament in relation to the characteristics of the electorate and the parties found a more general conceptual framework in John C. Wahlke, Heinz Eulau, Austin Ranney, Dwaine Marvick, Lester Seligman and Keneth Prewitt. The study of candidates for Parliament[1] has made its way into the realm of research more recently, since the Second World War. Since then, the mechanisms behind the selection of candidates for Belgian Parliament (J. Obler), Galician Parliament (G. Marquez Cruz), the House of Commons of Canada (W. Mishler, A. Kornberg, H. Winsborough) and Great Britain

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[1] Starting in 2009, I have given several lectures and published a series of studies and articles: three studies in the volume coordinated by Florin Müller, *Elite parlamentare şi dinamică electorală (1919-1937)* [Parliament Elites and Electoral Dynamics (1919-1937] (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2009); *Candidaţi şi candidaturi la alegerile generale din România (1926-1928)* [Candidates and Candidacies in General Elections in Romania (1926-1928)], Annual symposium "Sub semnul lui Clio", IVth edition, organized by the Faculty of History and Heritage, Sibiu, 16 April 2010; "Dinamica electorală a candidaţilor minoritari din Bucovina la alegerile generale din România interbelică," [Electoral Dynamics of Minority Candidates in Bukovina in General Elections of Interwar Romania] in *Partide politice şi minorităţi naţionale din România în secolul XX* [Political Parties and National Minorities in Romania in the 20th Century], Vol. V, eds. Vasile Ciobanu, Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Editura Techno Media, 2010), 77-102; "L'Élite politique ukrainienne de Bucovine. La dynamique électorale des élections générales (1918-1937)," *Transylvanian Review* XX Supplement no. 1 (2011), 135-146; "Candidates and Candidacies During General Elections in Romania (1926-1928)," *Totalitarianism Archives* XIX/3-4 (2011), 59-79; *Mobilitatea candidaţilor la alegerile generale în perioada interbelică. Studiu de caz: Partidul Naţional Liberal* [Mobility of Candidates in General Elections in the Interwar Period. Case Study: Liberal National Party], in the conference "Perspective asupra istoriei Europei în secolul XX: continuitate şi revoluţie" [Perspectives on European History in the 20th Century: Continuity and Revolution], Bucharest, 16-17 June 2011, organized by the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism of the Romanian Academy.

(Ph. W. Buck), The National Assembly of France (A. Guédé, G. Fabre-Rosane, J.-C. Masclet, R. Le Mire, P. Broyer), the Bundestag (Karlheinz Kaufman) and the legislative assemblies of various Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Mexico and Uruguay (P. M. Siavelis, S. Morgenstern) have been subjected to analysis.

This new direction brings many advantages to the realm of research, as it extends analysis of politicians, formerly limited only to those elected, it illuminates the dynamics of each party's staff, it shows the patterns of political careers, it demonstrates the extent to which the parties are centralized and it numbers intermediate politicians between the militants and the elite. Likewise, it allows for important information about the stratification of society, the role of personality in politics and the process of modernization. One recent direction of research concerns the relative urbanisation and the communities' degrees of industrialisation, which affects recruitment methods.

We have to consider profession, gender, age, birthplace and level of education when we study the structure of a political elite.[2] With an utterly vast collection of documentation from archives, specialist literature, correspondence, memoires, press (national and local), official publications, biographies, monographs, encyclopaedias and biographical dictionaries[3], applying methods of inventory, a database has been gathered that contains information on candidates: name, district, political party at the time of the elections, party/bloc/cartel on whose roster he ran, position on the list and, naturally, profession. Certain difficulties affected the accuracy of our

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[2] Guillermo Márquez Cruz, "Sociologie des élites parlementaires de Galice: 1977-1997. Continuité et rénovation des candidats à la représentation politique territoriale," *Pôle Sud* 8 (1998), 165; Alain Guédé, Gilles Fabre-Rosane, "Sociologie des candidats aux élections législatives de mars 1978," *Revue française de science politique* 28 (1978), 840

[3] The names and professions of candidates were gleaned from collections of party press (*Apărarea Naţională*, *Aurora*, *Deşteptarea*, *Dreptatea*, *Epoca*, *Glasul Bucovinei*, *Îndreptarea*, *Mişcarea*, *Neamul Românesc*, *Patria*, *România*, *Ţara Noastră*, *Ţărănismul*, *Viitorul*, *Zările*) and of the independent press (*Adevărul*, *Curentul*, *Cuvântul*, *Dimineaţa*, *Lupta*, *Universul*), archives (Central National Historic Archives (A.N.I.C.), *Comisia Electorală Centrală* and *Parlament*), *Monitorul Oficial* (no. 122, 4 June 1926; no. 153, 14 July 1927; no. 283, 19 December 1928; no. 131, 10 June 1931; no. 173, 26 July 1932; no. 300, 29 December 1933; no. 301, 30 December 1937); *Politics and Political Parties in Roumania* (London: International Reference Library Publishing Co., 1936); *Anuarul Partidului Poporului pe anul 1925* [People's Party Yearbook on 1925] (Bucharest: Tipografia "Cartea de Aur", 1925); *Anuarul Parlamentar* [Parliamentary Yearbook] (Bucharest: s.e., 1931), as well as many other sources.

project. In order to show their elevated socio-economic status, some, instead of declaring their professions, declared their wealth (urban or rural landowner, renter, manufacturer, etc.), most prestigious public rank held (minister, senator, deputy, community councillor, county councillor, mayor, mayor's assistant, etc.) or function (school inspector, etc.). Others labeled themselves retirees or wounded veterans.

Regarding farmers, we decided to follow the example of sociologist Mattei Dogan, who included in this category "landowners who personally oversee their estates," and in the category of "ploughmen", "small-scale farmers of arable land." When a candidate was identified who had also declared another profession besides agriculture, we opted, of course, not to include him as "farmer," in order to restrict our sample as much as possible. We also included in our target category candidates described as "peasant," "householder," "villager," and "cooperativist." On the other hand, we omitted those described as "wine-grower," "viticulturist," or "owner."

We considered the following political parties: the National Liberal Party (PNL), the National Peasant Party (PNȚ), the People's Party (PP), the Peasant Party, N. Lupu Branch (PȚ), the National Democratic Party (PND), the National Christian Defense League (LANC), the Iron Guard (GF)[4], the National Agrarian Party (PNA), the National Liberal Party, Gh. Brătianu Branch (PNLGB), the Peasant Democratic Party (PȚD), the Radical Peasant Party (PȚR), the Agrarian Party (PA) and the Conservative Party[5] Gr. Filipescu Branch (PC).[6] We extended our research to parties of different parts of the political spectrum (centrist, centre-left, left, far-right), including parties with no representation in parliament, without considering minority parties (Hungarian, German, Jewish) or far-left (Socialist, Communist). We chose the slice of time from 1926 to 1937, as the electoral system based on the law from March 27, 1926 was applied

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[4] Legionnaires (far-right) participated in general elections under various names: Garda de Fier [The Iron Guard] (1931), Gruparea Corneliu Zelea Codreanu [The Corneliu Zelea Codreanu Group] (1932), Partidul "Totul pentru Țară" [The "All for Country" Party] (1937).

[5] We took into account the Conservative Party.

[6] We sometimes refer to "Iunianists," "Lupists," "Averescans," "Sterists," or "Iorgists," adherents to parties created around particular figures. This was a common practice in the interwar period reminiscent of the Prussian habit dating from the middle of the 19th Century. See Roberto Michels, "Some Reflections on the Sociological Character of Political Parties," *The American Political Science Review* XXI (1927), 753.

evenly, in all parts of the country, during that period. Of the 71 electoral districts, from all counties, 387 deputies were elected.[7]

Majority at the polls, minority on the lists

The modern reforms adopted at the beginning of the 1920's had important consequences in politics. Major parties and doctrines from before the explosion of the First World War disappeared, while others replaced them on the political scene. After the deaths of leaders Alexandru Marghiloman and Take Ionescu, conservatives of both flavors, democratic and progressive, joined other parties. The political organizations built by regional elites, tempered in the fight for Romanians' rights in Bessarabia, Bukovina, Banat and Transylvania, renounced "regionalism" and assimilated, according to ideological compatibility, into the major parties of the time. In the Old Kingdom, besides the liberals, the most solid parties were the People's League (Party), an organization dependent on General Averescu's popularity, and the Peasant Party, founded by groups of the lower middle classes and intellectual classes of the cities and villages. Priests, teachers, notaries and students who had returned home awoke the peasants, now the majority of voters, to their civic duty.

The political scene underwent a contraction after the electoral reform of 1926. Everywhere the representative regime was introduced, with lists and proportional representation by district. Independents were required to register in parties from whose lists they could be sent to Parliament. The threshold of admittance in the Assembly of Deputies at minimum 2% of the vote nationally obligated small, local, less financed parties to make agreements and cartels or to watch the political scene from the sidelines.

At the beginning of the 1930's, the political spectrum realigned itself due to the international economic crisis, which was also felt in Romania. A stirring of the political world was one of the consequences. The harmful social effects, evidenced by salary decreases and increases in unemployment, led to a state of deep dissatisfaction. The peasantry was so affected that, for their protection, a special law was passed regarding conversion of agricultural debt. The political spectrum, in its entirety, fragmented[8], through the appearance of many peasant and agrarian parties: PȚD (in 1931, on the inititiative of Constantin Stere, after leaving PNȚ),

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[7] The number of deputies varied thus during the period 1919-1937: 568 deputies (in the 1919 and 1920 elections), 367 deputies (in 1922) and 387 deputies (in 1926, 1927, 1928, 1931, 1932 and 1937).

[8] Seven parties participated in the general elections in 1926-1928; 12 participated in 1931, and 17 in 1932.

PȚR (built around lawyer Grigore Iunian in 1931, after he left PNȚ), PC (originally named the Vlad Țepeș League, led by Grigore Filipescu, son of Nicolae Filipescu, founded in 1931 after Grigore left the People's Party), PNA (founded by Octavian Goga in 1932 after many groups left the People's Party), PA (founded by Constantin Argetoianu, wealthy landowner in Breasta and politician, in 1932). The aforementioned organizations "tore away" locally and nationally known politicians from the big parties of the time, but not enough to have candidates in all electoral districts. In accordance with their stated socio-political objectives, the peasant and agrarian parties recruited from the villages and communities. The number of people with the right to vote had grown, so in the 1930's, many more peasants, ploughmen and agricultural workers appeared on the lists of candidates.

We have been trying to answer the question "Just how many, in fact?" After taking inventory of all of the candidates whose professions are currently known, from the party candidate lists, it turned out that 294 candidates had peasant backgrounds (from 458 total candidacies, as some campaigned more than once in successive elections). Grouping the parties by ideology, we have graphed the rate of identification of profession and the percentage of peasant candidates.

The PNL candidate lists were considered during the period 1926-1928, which saw three general elections. The candidates were identified by profession in acceptable proportions: 75.95%, 68.52% and 71.50%. The percentage of peasant candidates was consistently small: 3%, 0.58% and 0.83%. Each time, lawyers were the best represented (around 120 candidates), followed by priests and university faculty, professors.

The party of liberal dissidence, created by professor Gheorghe Brătianu, illegitimate son of Ion I.C. Brătianu, has somewhat different results than its "mother party". 77.32% of candidates' professions are known. On the 1937 list were 22 peasants, 6.01% of 366 candidates, the rest lawyers (112), teachers (25), reserve officers (19) and others. It seems that, in trying to defeat the big parties' monopoly in rural zones, PNLGB revitalized the political scene with both low-ranking people, promoted to play an important role, and previously apolitical people.

Peasants were also scarce on the "Averescan" lists. In 1926, of 344 People's Party candidates[9], only 5 were peasants (1.45%). Two years later, when Averescu and Nicolae Iorga established an electoral coalition, 8 of 313 candidates (2.55%) were peasants, and in this case lawyers were very

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[9] We excluded candidates of German and Hungarian parties who were accepted on the lists of Averescu's government.

numerous. For example, in 1926, 134 lawyers, 23 professors, university professors and priests (15 each), 14 officers, and so on, were candidates.[10] 73.25% of candidates' professions were identified.

We likewise studied the National Peasant lists submitted in the great victory of the 1928 general elections. Of 358 candidates[11], we could identify professions for 80.16%. Only 10 of these were peasants, 2.79%, obviously far fewer than there were lawyers (139), teachers (37), priests (21), or professors (19). Before the actual fusion, in the summer of 1926, for the first political activity of the combined "National" and "Peasant" parties, under the name of the "National Peasant Bloc," the percentage of peasant candidates was 3.9% (14 out of 353).

The peasantry is also poorly represented in the National Union, solidified in 1931 by Prime Minister Nicolae Iorga, who promoted a coalition of liberals, "Iorgists", the Agrarian League and the professional associations – viticulturists, university professors, sellers, industrialists, disabled veterans, reserve officers, doctors, lawyers, clergy, public and private workers, merchants and engineers.[12] The point of these associations was "to maintain political balance," with the goal of "a superior state politic". Although "rural workers" were mentioned on candidate lists, they are very difficult to identify.[13] We found only 4 among the 359 candidates of Iorga's government, that is, 1.11%. The lists, which present a higher rate of identification of profession (79.38%), include, aside from lawyers (123), university professors (29), then teachers and priests (23 each).

Regarding the Iron Guard, we analyzed the candidate lists submitted in 1937. Of a total of 303 candidates, we identified the professions of 79.86%. Of these, only 9 were peasants, i.e. 2.97%. The majority are lawyers (60), priests (42), professors (35), teachers (27) and so on. The

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[10] Interestingly, at the elite level of the PP, few are from among the peasantry. As of 19-21 December 1924, the 1,050 de participants (delegates) in the general congress were lawyers (246), graduates of commercial and agricultural trade schools (223), functionaries (112), teachers (71), landowners (63), priests (51), professors (46), reserve officers (41), physicians (36), architects and engineers (35) and others (pharmacists, ministers, institute directors). Peasants were included (probably) in the category "landowners," which means their numbers were, in reality, even lower. See *Îndreptarea*, VI/601, 24 December 1924.

[11] In this situation, there were fewer Social Democrat candidates, allowed on the list of Maniu's government.

[12] *Neamul Românesc*, XXVI/109, 19 May 1931.

[13] Emil Socec, "Rostul asociaţiilor profesionale," [The Point of Professional Associations] *Neamul Românesc*, XXVI/115, 27 May 1931.

high percentage of priests is not surprising, considering the sympathy of Orthodox clergy for the Legionnaire Movement.

The other influential anti-Semite organization of the 20s and 30s, LANC, formed around Iași university professor A.C. Cuza, submitted a somewhat more extensive list of peasant candidates. In the 1928 general elections, of 189 candidates, 13 were peasants (6.87%). 61.37% of candidates' professions are known. Finally, in 1937, on the candidate list of PNC, a result of the fusion of LANC and PNA, were 9 peasants (2.45%) out of 367 candidates. We were able to identify 68.66% of candidates' professions. The number of lawyers (100), priests (43), teachers (27) and professors (25) was overwhelming. Thus it seems that the original agrarian component, the base of Goga's organization, was diminished upon fusion with the Cuzist anti-Semite group. Unfortunately, with one exception, the accuracy of the known data of other parties drops even below 50%. What can be easily observed, however, is that the peasant and agrarian parties more often chose candidates from the peasantry than other political organizations.

Of the agrarian groups' lists, we know much better the socio-professional make-up of the "Gogists" (77.74% of candidates identified by profession in the 1932 elections). Among the 335 candidates were 31 peasants (8.73%). This is significant, but still exceeded by lawyers (103). Other well-represented categories were priests (29), teachers (27), professors (22) and doctors (11). In 1933, the Radical Peasant Party selected 337 candidates, but we know the professions of only 49.25% of them. Even so, 28 of them were peasants (8.30%), and it's likely there were more among the "unidentified". The rest were lawyers (47), teachers (20), professors (13), engineers and priests (10 each), etc. On the "Lupist" lists, continuing for the PȚ, peasants represented 7.08% in 1928, 4.42% in 1931 and 3.66% in 1933, but these percentages will doubtlessly increase as we discover the professions of other candidates. At this stage of research, of the peasant candidates, we know the professions of only 38.75% (1928), 38.05% (1931), and 36.61% (1933). The followers of university professor Constantin Stere, reunited in PȚD, ran on separate lists in the 1932 elections. Of 79 candidates, we know that 6 (7.59%) were peasants. Finally, on the Agrarian Party lists in 1933, of 361 candidates, 9 were farmers (2.49%), but we know the professions of a very small percentage (27.97%).

Party name	Election year	Percentage of candidates whose professions are known (%)	Percentage of peasant candidates (%)
PNL	1926/27/28	75.95/68.52/71.50	3.00/0.58/0.83
PNLGB	1937	77.32	6.01
PP	1926	73.25	1.45
PNȚ	1928	80.16	2.79
National Peasant Bloc	1926	75.07	3.9
National Union	1931	79.38	1.11
GF	1937	79.86	2.97
LANC	1928	61.37	6.87
PNC	1937	68.66	2.45
PNA	1932	77.74	8.73
PȚ - N. Lupu	1928/31/33	38.75/38.05 /36.61	7.08/4.42/3.66
PȚR	1937	49.25	8.30
PȚD	1932	34.17	7.59
PA	1933	27.97	2.49

Economic crisis: a turning point

Romanian political life was characterized by an accented dynamic, which convinced Mattei Dogan to coin the phrase "electoral dance". This refers to the tendency of politicians to change parties in the right political contexts in order to gain higher positions. Based on collected data, we may conclude that peasants were less politically mobile. We identified only 29 (9.86% of all candidates) who ran with two or more parties; as far as politicians who ran on several party lists, it turns out that there are 34 such situations.[14] Further, it is interesting to know whether these politicians changed to parties with different ideologies than those from which they left, if they moved towards larger parties, parties in power, more or less important parties, and whether the migrations were by group (through fusion and splitting) or individual.[15] The numbers point towards certain

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[14] There are three types of situations where politicians changed parties: splits (13), individual departure (13), mergers (8).

[15] Utilizing the above criteria, we divided the parties into several categories: major parties (PNL, PNȚ, PP), secondary parties (all of the other parties considered);

tendencies. Thus, the largest number of candidates (18) kept the same doctrinal orientation (15 among peasant/agrarian parties, 2 in right-oriented groups, 1 liberal). The percentage would be even higher if we consider that 12 cases were related to a reshaping of the political scene through the schism between PP and Goga's group (thus the appearance of an agrarian party) and, later, through the fusion of the "Gogists" with LANC, which was a significant movement towards the far right, anti-semitism and antidemocratic thought. Being group political "migrations", personal motivation disappears, melting into the interests of a group or around some personality. Looking at it this way, it turns out that only 4 politicians individually left groups they were registered in to join others with different doctrines (4 politicians from agrarian/peasant parties joined liberal parties, more precisely right/far-right).

Overwhelmingly, the movement of "migrating" politicians occurs from major parties towards others (15 cases), most often as a result of dissatisfaction with the selection of candidates for general elections or of joining a large dissident group, determined to create a distinct political party. For a lower-ranked politician, it was far easier to assert himself in a new group, as founding member, with a definite local influence, than to aspire to public prominence against dozens of experienced competitors which an existing party had in any county. In 14 other cases, politicians moved from one minor party to another. Much less common are situations in which politicians move from one major party to another (1 case) or are accepted into major parties and then granted a candidacy (4 cases). These exceptions are granted to politicians already popular in the districts in which they run.

But how important are peasant/farmer candidacies for political parties? Although, theoretically, county committees chose parliamentary candidates by secret vote, the lists were drawn up through negotiation between central and local authorities. They moved from higher positions toward lower positions[16], according to several criteria (age, experience, influence, existence of some condition at the time of joining the party). The make-up of the lists, in fact, reflected party heirarchy and can be understood thus: 1) leaders (at the top of the list); 2) other heads (from the Executive Committee); 3) heads of local chapters; 4) other respected/influential members of local chapters.

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center-right parties (PNL, PNLGB, PNA, PA, PC, PN Iorga), center-left (PNȚ, PP, PȚ Lupu, PȚD, PȚR), and far-right (LANC, GF, PNC).

[16] After the beginning of the campaign was announced, the parties would first establish "the heads of the list," then they submitted the lists at the tribunal, only to complete the lists afterward.

In being nominated successively in different elections, or many times in the same election cycle, a politician proved the solidity of his position in a local chapter. To measure how influential agriculturists were in party chapters, we analyzed the structures of candidate lists, starting from prominent positions and moving towards lesser ones. The size of the electorate in each district determined the number of deputies. For example, the Câmpulung district was allowed 2 deputies, while Ilfov chose 20. Keeping in mind the number of candidates to be elected in each county, we divided the candidates into two categories: with chances of winning (high on the list) and with little chance (low on the list). On lists with an even number of candidates, "high" was taken to mean the top half of the list, while on lists with an odd number, the top half was taken without the middle position. For example, on the Lăpuşna list, where 8 deputies were being elected, the first four are considered high positions and the last four are considered low positions. On the list from Alba, with 5 deputies being elected, "high" positions are 1 and 2. One more thing must be kept in mind: the practice of according "head of the list" to the party's most important politicians (whether dictated centrally, by local chapter heads, former ministers, deputies, senators, prefects, etc.). A clear difference can be seen between the major parties and the others.

The percentage of peasant candidates in high positions for major parties was: 16.98% for PNȚ, 29.09% for PP, 31.81% for PNL. The percentage for right-wing groups is even lower (10% for GF, 12.5% for PNC, 21.21% for LANC) and PNLGB (17.24 %). For peasant and agrarian paties, on the other hand, it was much higher: 37.5% for PC, 39.39% for PNA, 48.48% for PȚR, 50% for PȚD[17], 53.12% for PȚ Lupu, 71.42% for PA. Overall, in all groups, 111 peasant candidacies were in high positions (24.40%), compared to 344 (75.60%) in low positions. "Heads" of list held by peasants/farmers are exceptions; only 18 such situations were recorded. These results show the important role accorded to peasant candidates by peasant and agricultural parties, and also the influence of politicians in their county chapters.

The geographical distribution of peasant candidacies also provides interesting aspects. We counted all candidacies by province, and the results are: Bessarabia – 94; Transylvania – 93; Muntenia – 75; Moldavia – 63; Banat – 53; Bukovina – 47; Oltenia – 22; Dobruja (including Cadrilater) – 14. Correlating these numbers with the numbers of deputies

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[17] Among leading politicians, we recall Ion Codreanu and Costache Leancă, close to Stere, who also held important functions in PȚ, led by Mihalache, as members of the Central Executive Committee, in 1921-1922.

for the various provinces[18], Bessarabia, Banat and Bukovina turn out to have impressive numbers of peasant candidacies. Districts with more than average numbers of farmer candidacies include Timiş Torontal (24), Caraş (18), Lăpuşna (17), Soroca (16), Chernivtsi, Cetatea Albă (15 each), Arad (14), Fălticeni (Baia), Hotin, Ialomiţa (13 each), Dolj, Turda, Vlaşca (12 each), Bacău, Brăila, Suceava (11 each), Constanţa (10), Maramureş (9), Odorhei (8), Storojineţ (8). We can put forth several hypotheses regarding these numbers. The presence of farmers on lists in Bessarabia can be linked with the influence of the Bessarabian Peasant Party, which, in the 1920's, contributed its membership to the important parties of the Old Kingdom, into which it "melted." In the 1930's, PŢD had the strongest organizations across the Prut, benefitting from the popularity of Constantin Stere. It can also be observed that the peasants had greater chances of being "accepted" on the lists where the number of deputies to be elected was higher. We can intuit an undeclared desire of the parties to offer voters a range of candidates from different social backgrounds, which was only possible if the list was long enough to include peasants, besides lawyers, doctors, priests and teachers. It is not coincidence that the districts with the most peasant candidates were again Timiş Torontal (10 deputies), Dolj (10), Arad (9), Lăpuşna (8), Cetatea Albă (7), Caraş (6), Vlaşca (6), Ialomiţa (6), Chernivtsi (6), and so on. Other potential explanations are related to the obvious agrarian nature of certain counties. We cannot ignore the political cultural background of each region. For example, in Transylvania, the Romanian political elite formed in the years of dualist monarchy was mainly made up of lawyers, professors and clergy capable of upholding through spoken and written word the rights of a population long considered second class. In the Old Kingdom, in agricultural counties, even after the war, the major landowners and entrepreneurs still "survived", regrouped in conservative parties, later absorbed by other parties. Their presence impeded the progress of the smaller-scale farmers and peasants so respected in rural communities.

Cases where a farmer ran more than once in the same election are rather rare: two Radical Peasant Party leaders and one "Argetoianist." Also quite rare are situations where candidates were distributed among different districts, which indicates both a strong attachment on the part of

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[18] An artificial operation, of course, as deputies were elected by district, not by province, but genuinely useful for our purposes regarding the relationship between political party and political culture. In decreasing order, the historical provinces elected: 101 deputies in Transylvania (including Crişana, Sătmar, and Maramureş), 82 in Muntenia, 62 in Moldova, 51 in Bessarabia, 33 in Oltenia, 21 in Banat, 18 in Bukovina and 17 in Dobruja.

the farmers to specific regions and their voters, and that they are respected members of local chapters, not imposed by the "central powers".[19]

The collected data suggest not only a greater presence of farmers in peasant and agrarian parties, but also their political importance on a local level. Some farmer candidates were so well seen in their county chapters that they ran even for four consecutive terms in Parliament.[20] There were 16 politicians who ran multiple times in PNȚ, 11 in PNA, 9 in PȚ, 7 in PȚR, 4 in PȚD, and 3 in PA. Surprisingly, there were seven in PNLGB, which suggests that farmers were better integrated into the party than in the case of PNL. Likewise, this investigation reveals the solid presence of 12 farmers in PP, 5 of whom ran for 4 terms from 1926 to 1937. In LANC, 9 politicians ran for consecutive terms, one of them with even 5 such nominations. On the other side, in PNL (4), GF (1) and PN Iorga (1), this situation is reversed.

Candidates who successfully passed the "Caudine Forks" of the electoral process went on to the higher status, as members of Parliament. As deputies and senators were required to state their professions at the beginning of their mandates, we know today, besides other personal information, the socio-professional make-up of the interwar political elite. From this perspective, according to Mattei Dogan's calculations, the structure of Parliament remained relatively constant throughout those 20 years of democracy. In the Chamber of Deputies, lawyers represented the greatest portion (between 35% in 1922-1926 and 46% in 1927-1928), followed by farmers and landowners (tallied together), between 8% in 1922-1926 and 16% in 1934-1937. Other categories considered were university professors (6.5%), secondary professors (6.2%), school teachers (5%), priests (4.5%), high dignitaries (4.2%), doctors (3.7%), engineers and architects (3%), and publicists (2.9%). These numbers represent the average over all legislature, in both chambers of parliament.[21] According to Dogan, with the exception of socialists, already under-represented, there were not large differences between the parties in terms of socio-professional distribution,

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[19] There was one National Peasant member who ran in different districts in Transylvania; a "Cuzist" who ran in Muntenia and Moldova; a "Iunianist" ran in Bessarabia and Muntenia, another "Iunianist" in Oltenia and Transylvania; and one "Argetoianist" ran in Banat and Transylvania.

[20] Some "doubled" candidacies for the Assembly of Deputies with candidacies for the Senate, as in the case of Bukovinian householder Ştefan Cucereavei, National Peasant member.

[21] Mattei Dogan, *Analiza statistică a democraţiei parlamentare din România* [Statistical Analysis of Romanian Parliamentary Democracy] (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Social-Democrat, 1946), 57-58.

except for a large percentage of priests and teachers due to the affluence of the National Peasant parliamentarians when they dominated the legislature number-wise (1928-1931 and 1932-1933). By comparison, in the same period, in the French National Assembly, farmers managed to occupy 8.49% in 1919, 9.41% in 1924, 9.92% in 1928, 7.61% in 1932, and 9.90% in 1936.[22]

The numbers obtained by Dogan are inflated, since: 1) farmers and landowners were tallied together (even though landowners could be both rural and urban); 2) they included landowners who lived by exploiting the land but also had other professions (whom we removed from our calculations).

As shown, the explanation for the small percentage of peasant deputies is due to their positions on the candidate lists of major parties with chances of winning large numbers of terms. What is surprising is that, even in parties ideologically concerned with the fate of the peasantry, chosen officials have other occupations than agriculture. In the 1920-1922 legislature, from 25 Peasant deputies[23], only one was a farmer, the rest teachers and professors (13), lawyers (9) and priests (2).[24] Among the 38 Peasant deputies chosen for the lists of the National Peasant Bloc there were no farmers, and the number of teachers was reduced, compared to lawyers (6 compared to 13)[25], which means that there was a fundamental shift at the level of the party elite. Further, in the parliament elected in the 1928 general elections, won resoundingly by National Peasants, the winners sent only four ploughmen and one cooperative farmer.[26]

In the third decade of the 20th Century, agrarians and Peasants separated from the parties that dominated the political scene offered new faces to Romanian voters. The chances of these small parties, however, to obtain numerous terms were miniscule, so much so that they speculated publicly on the few obtained. PȚD, based on the success of the two

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[22] Mattei Dogan, "Les filières de la carrière politique en France," *Revue Francaise Sociologique* VIII (1967), 472-473. Agriculturists came most often from "moderate" parties (80), center-left parties (67) and "radical" parties (53).

[23] This pertains to PȚ led by Ion Mihalache, which later merged with the National Party in 1926.

[24] Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* [The History of the Peasant Party (1918-1926)] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2002), 71.

[25] Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului Țărănesc*, 219.

[26] Mattei Dogan, source of this information, remarked negatively on the situation. In his opinion, this was too little to justify the title of "peasant" party, then to send "31 landowners" to Parliament. But it must be kept in mind that this work appeared in 1946, and the young author, then 26 years old, had strong sympathies for the left, which he abandoned after moving to the west.

ploughman deputies of 617 parliamentarians of all professions ("professors, lawyers, priests, Orthodox and Catholic priests, engineers, doctors, journalists, agricultural engineers, bankers, landowners, retired military personnel, sellers, tradesmen, etc."), presented itself to voters as the only party able to represent the interests of the peasantry, through "trustworthy men".[27] But, despite these efforts, the socio-professional structure of parliament remained unchanged until the end of democracy in Romania.

"The robot portrait" of the farmer-candidate

Candidates, the elite from among whom the leadership was chosen, were those who publicly chose the platform and image of the party. This small contingent of politicians was chosen carefully and highly valued. Politicians from the farming class were presented with attributes intended to raise them in the esteem of voters; as such, those who were "book smart", "hospitable", "family men",[28] "community leaders" were well appreciated. Political and administrative experience counted for much, as candidates were presidents of libraries in villages and small communities, presidents of agricultural syndicates, presidents of ploughmen's associations, mayors of small communities, members of county councils, and former agricultural councillors. Their involvement throughout the electoral campaign was essential in rural areas. When they were not themselves proposed on the lists, community leaders provided assistance to candidates sent by the central powers. They served as local guides, electoral agents, hosts of local rallies and, as needed, protective forces against political adversaries.[29]

In election brochures and press articles, any affinity with peasantry was considered in the candidates' interest. The rise of peasantry became a trump in political competitions. In 1937, residents of Făgăraș were presented with "the peasant Ion Mihalache," fighter for "the emancipation of the peasants of the Old Kingdom," and Iuliu Maniu "the great national fighter from Ardeal who freed the peasants from Hungarian servitude." The brochure, distributed among followers in Făgăraș County praised the

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[27] "Înfăţişarea parlamentului," [The Aspect of Parliament] *Zările*, I/1, 27 March 1932, 4.

[28] See the succinct description of deputy Pavel Blidariu from Timiş Torontal and senator Ivan Iorgaciov from Cetatea Albă, in *Anuarul parlamentar din 1931* (Bucharest: s.e., 1931).

[29] For instance, forest engineer Mihail P. Florescu, Cuzist candidate in Bacău, tells of the assistance offered by Ghiţă Chiţigoi, a local delegate. See M. P. Florescu, *Lupta mea electorală* [My Electoral Struggle] (s.l.: s.e., 1926), 17.

National-Peasant elite, "sons of peasants and true peasants who, through their work to this point, have proved that they are truly fighting for the peasantry, against the lazy."[30] Cuzist propaganda cited the social origins of the Rădăuți teacher Nechifor Robu as "good manager" and "peasant's son," who spread his anti-Semitic agenda among peasants dressed in traditional national attire.[31] This same Nechifor Robu, "peasant's son from Volovăț," however, was "unmasked" by adversaries as an "imposter," foreign to the peasant class, as he had purchased "a house and land" in Baia County and owned an "aristocratic automobile."[32] Further, this traditional attire became the mark of other more well-known politicians, such as Ion Mihalache,[33] Corneliu and Ion Zelea Codreanu, Ion Modreanu, Ion Moga-Fileru and others. What some lauded as a virtue and a close connection to the national ethos, their opponents classified as downright Phariseeism. For example, in the view of the National Peasants, the "Lupist" candidate Ion Modreanu was "an unscrupulous fellow, cleanshaven like a Catholic priest," dressed in "peasant costume to impress villagers as much as possible. Another, Urian, from the Cuzdrioara community, senate candidate in the Someș district, was labeled a "carnival peasant".[34]

Political adversaries discredited each other through any means possible. The socio-professional make-up of the candidate lists was one of the brutal weapons used in electoral rhetoric. The lack of peasants on the lists was used often, against all parties, regardless of their ideological stances. In 1926, when the candidate list for Bukovina was constructed, PNL denounced the lack of peasants on the PP lists. Among the candidates chosen by Dori Popovici, General Averescu's right-hand man in this province, named "his groveling servants," there was "not a single peasant householder... as though the vast majority of voters weren't peasants." But who were their liberal counter-candidates? With a clear strategy for the five electoral districts in Bukovina,[35] the liberals recruited "three respected ploughmen, known in their villages and counties as the most accomplished householders." The other candidates, though university professors, lawyers,

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[30] Aurel Dobrescu, *Organizaţia PNŢ Făgăraş. Broşura împotriva Gărzii de fier* [PNȚ Făgăraș Chapter. Brochure against the Iron Guard] (s.l.: Tipografia Alba, 1937), 9.
[31] *Înfrăţirea Românească*, VII/16-20, 188.
[32] *Cuvântul Ţărănimii*, XI/332, 3 July 1932, 2.
[33] Originally from Topoloveni (Câmpulung Muscel), Ion Mihalache wore traditional pants, shirt and vest.
[34] L.P., "Ştii, domnule Lupu, ce candidaţi ai în Ardeal?," [Do You Know, Mr. Lupu, What Candidates You Have in Ardeal?] *Patria*, XIV/133, 10 July 1932.
[35] Câmpulung, Cernăuţi, Rădăuţi, Storojineţ and Suceava.

etc., were also presented together in a social context meant to show unmistakable connections to peasantry: "men tried in battle for the good of the peasantry", men with "origins in our healthy peasantry", "sons of peasants, with a deep love for the land".[36]

The Peasant Party (and its continuation, the National Peasant Party) was constantly exposed to criticism for the dichotomy between its title and peasant ideology and the backgrounds of its highest leaders. How could this organization proclaim itself representative of peasant interests, as long as there were no peasants in its leadership?! was their adversaries' reproach. One important member of PP, Cezar Papacostea, accused Ion Mihalache and the other leaders that they had strayed from their original mission ("It would have been much more appropriate for the Peasant Party if they had remained truly Peasant and not Peasantist"), while maintaining the same leadership ("with true peasants," "with a party with a clean background").[37] For National Peasants, it was a constant challenge to explain this change. The former Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ernest Ene, justified the large presence of intellectuals in the party – functionaries, lawyers, doctors, professors, engineers – through the necessity to bring "dynamic elements of society into the political fight," "distinguished members of society".[38]

The socio-professional heterogeneity of candidate lists was also brought up in electoral campaigns as a sign of this drawing together of "the best elements". In 1926, the newspaper "Libertatea," run by arch-priest Ion Moța from Orăștie, father of the leading Iron Guardist Ionel Moța, described the candidates in Hunedoara district as "good men of the nation: peasant alongside scholar, alongside hardworking tradesman, alongside priest, student, high officer, merchant, lawyer and journalist! And taken from all parts of the county and other regions where a new faith is growing!"[39]

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[36] "Candidaţii," [The Candidates] *Glasul Bucovinei*, IX/2102, 9 May 1926.

[37] Cezar Papacostea, *Între doctrinele şi practica politică a partidelor. Discurs rostit în şedinţele Adunării din 13 şi 14 decemvrie 1926 cu ocazia Răspunsului la Mesajul Tronului* [Between the Doctrines and Practice of Political Parties. Discourse Held in Sessions of the Assembly on 13-14 December 1926 on the Occasion of the Response to the Message of the Throne] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1926), 9.

[38] "Intelectualii faţă de Partidul Naţional-Ţărănesc," [Intellectuals Regarding the National Peasant Party] *Dreptatea*, V/1083, 20 May 1931.

[39] *Libertatea*, XXIV/20, 6 May 1926, 3.

A symbolic political contribution

Philosopher Dimitrie Drăghicescu announced in 1922 that the role of the peasant class in politics would be a modest, symbolic one. "The peasant class, lacking political consciousness, lacking concepts, culture and initiative, cannot be, alas, an active political element and, reduced to its own forces, could not realize any kind of reform nor any amelioration of its own situation." The peasantry remained but a "field for political maneuvers",[40] believed Drăghicescu, author of some admirable writings on the psychology of the Romanian people.

The unfolding of interwar political events confirmed his opinion. The political profession became the privilege of lawyers, doctors, priests, professors and teachers, and less so of peasants. Until 1940, the lawyer dominated public life, thanks to his specific rhetorical skills, as German sociologist Max Weber had announced even at the beginning of the century.[41] Politicians with higher socio-economic status put themselves at the heads of the political parties,[42] from which members of leadership, ministers and secretaries of state, and heads of regional and local party chapters were recruited. Into this elite, peasants entered timidly and with difficulty, starting off with the disadvantage of less schooling and limited financial resources.

Aware of the role of peasant-candidates, capable of attracting and mobilizing the vast electoral masses of the social background from which they came, parties did include some true peasants on their candidate lists. As we have seen, there were two strategies for this. Parties with national reach nominated peasants in small percentages, compared to other socio-professional categories, and in insignificant positions, almost ineligible. This is confirmed the theory of Maurice Duverger, author of an essential text on political parties, published in 1955. Following intense research on

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[40] Dimitrie Drăghicescu, *Partidele politice şi clase sociale* [Political Parties and Social Classes] (Bucharest: s.e., 1922), 42.

[41] Max Weber, *Politica, o vocaţie şi o profesie* [Politics, a Vocation and a Profession] (s.l.: Anima, 1992), 15. The German sociologist explained the preponderance of lawyers in politics by the free time they had at their disposal. Dependence on a workplace that provides a living prohibits physicians, workers, and entrepreneurs, for example, to be 100% dedicated to politics the same way. We can add that this applies especially to peasants.

[42] To measure socio-economic status of candidates, modern authors use a system developed by Otis Dudley Duncan, explained in Otis Dudley Duncan, Paul K. Hatt, Cecil C. North, *Occupations and Social Status* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

the French political system after the Second World War, the sociologist concluded that, in party leadership, the "bourgeoisie" represented liberal professionals, while the majority of members were made up of merchants, industrialists and peasants.[43] He also maintained that excessive centralization was a sign of the oligarchical structure of the parties, thus taking up the theory of Roberto Michels.[44] The research we have undertaken for the period 1926-1928, with its sample being the political parties involved in the electoral process, has shown that the most important Romanian political party, PNL, was also the most centralized, with little rotation with new members.[45] What is surprising is the situation of PNȚ, motivated by the transformation of Romanian society based on the principle of uplifting the rural element into a future "peasant state," but which borrowed from the electoral habits of the liberals. The decrease of the role of peasants and teachers in local PNȚ chapters occurred simultaneously with the reduction of the left-leaning ideological component, with peasant origins, that favored the "class struggle."

In the attempt to solidify the influence of "major parties" in rural areas, the emerging political powers in the fourth decade of the 20th Century promoted far more farmers to higher positions, both in party leadership and on candidate lists. But the modest results in general elections were still for the most part in the interests of the party leaders – lawyers – as in other parties. Political organizations emanating from the agitation of the "peasant problem," in the context of the economic crisis, profited the middle elite of the political class, intermediaries between national leadership and simple holders of party documents. The plan to put them into the Romanian Parliament, however, failed. In 1938, when Romanian democracy was ending its historical cycle of existence, the Romanian political elite had the same socio-professional structure as twenty years prior, and farmers still remained at its edges.

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[43] Maurice Duverger, *Les parties politiques* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1973), 185.

[44] Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig: W. Klinkhardt, 1911), translated into Romanian *Partidele politice: un studiu sociologic asupra tendinţelor oligarhice din democraţia modernă* [Political Parties: A Sociological Study on the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy] (Bucharest: Antet, 2011).

[45] See Mihai, *Mobilitatea candidaţilor la alegerile generale în perioada interbelică*.

Annexes

The districts with more than average numbers of
farmer candidacies (map created by the author).

Interwar politicians who wore traditional costumes: Ion Moga-Fileru, Gheorghe
Huţu, Nicolai Liutik, Ion Modreanu (top row), Nichifor Robu, Vasile Ungureanu,
Ioan Cândrea, Andrei Dumitraş (below). Library of Romanian Academy.

Poster campaign of Radical Peasant Party, 1933. *Deșteptarea* [Awakening], no. 27, 1933.

Drawing meant to illustrate the importance of peasants in the political and economic life of the country. *Aurora*, no. 51, 1932.

Peasants, members of The National Christian Party, participants at the congress of foundation, Oravita, 1935. Romanian National Archives.

Peasants participating in the election campaign of V.V. Tilea, in Transylvania, the years 1930-1931. Romanian National Archives.

The Ukrainian deputies, by peasant orientation: M M. Morgoci, Orest Scraba, Gora Humeniuc, Mikhailo Mateiciuc, V. Zemliuc (top); G. Andriasciuc, Dmitro Firciuc, Kost Krakalia, V. Kuceriavii, Dmitro Kniahiniţkii (below). Can be noticed a few agricultural politicians, 1929. *Khliborobs'ka Pravda*, no. 36, 1929.

Political cartoon published in "Peasantries", organ of the Peasant Party, after the general elections in 1926. *Țărănismul* no. 21, 1926

Popular gathering of PNȚ, in Iasi, attended by 40,000 people. Welcoming the crowd: Nicolae Lupu, Ion Mihalache (in traditional costume) and Virgil Madgearu (left to right). *Realitatea Ilustrată*, no. 441, 1935

CHAPTER NINE

THE ROAD OF TRANSYLVANIAN ROMANIAN
FARMERS[1] TO GREATER ROMANIA'S
POLITICAL ARENA

VALER MOGA

Introduction

A research approach like the one introduced by the title can not overlook statistical analysis, despite the inconvenience it entails. But the study that just starts responds to the intention to overcome the framework of this method, to give countenance and even name to the subjects they focus on. Taking account of all farmers in the province would have imprinted a vague and general nature of the investigation, limiting its relevance. The census of 1910, for Hungary, has identified 1,090,414 heads of families engaged in agriculture and 738,430 Romanian agricultural properties. The difference is formed of servants and agricultural workers deprived of property.[2] I chose, therefore, to study a representative sample, composed of people who knew the previous decade a process of political activation.[3]

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[1] The adjective 'Transylvanians' is understood her in its generic sense, making reference to all Transcarpathian provinces, Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş.

[2] Petru Suciu, "Clasele sociale ale Românilor din Ardeal," [Social Classes of Romanians in Transylvania Region] in *Transilvania*, *Banatul*, *Crişana*, *Maramureşul 1918-1928* [Transylvania, Banat, Crişana, Maramureş 1918-1928], vol. I (Bucharest: Cultura Naţională, 1929), 694.

[3] The official number, which enjoys a historical recognition of the members of the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia is 1228. But it is just those who were actually accredited as official delegates. The author of these lines has identified, through a documentary and bibliographic laborious investigation, a number of 1633 delegates designated by the electoral circles of 26 counties, by Romanian political, ecclesiastical, cultural, economic, etc. institutions. Of these, farmers

Some of them had participated in the National Conference in Sibiu, on January 10th 1905, in the one held also in Sibiu, on April 5th, 1910, in the great popular assemblies organized by the Romanian National Party since 1905, for the introduction of universal suffrage in Hungary, then in 1907, to combat draft legislation which would become the disputed laws on primary education, initiated by Count Albert Apponyi, Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education. They had already passed in November 1918, through an electoral process that amounted to a selection.

The elections for the Great National Assembly could not promote peasants with tiny properties, whose farms were always threatened by bankruptcy. Rural communities have promoted in their ranks those farmers who already acquired personal, economic, cultural or political prestige.

Yet it would be too much to claim that the starting level for setting the sample size was represented by the rural middle class. In fact, at the time and a little later, there were vague opinions on what was supposed to mean "medium property". Professor Petru Suciu, who studied history, philology and law at the universities of Cluj, Budapest, Berlin and Munich, formed as a sociologist after joining in 1924, the intellectual group from Cluj journal *Societatea de mâine*.[4] Suciu was noted for his articles of social and economic analysis. In this text, also citing the census data from 1910, he was referring to the Romanian "medium property" in Transylvania. The disadvantage of clustering such disparate cases in the same category, compelled him to establish two steps. The first, 20 to 100 acres (11.55 to 57.75 ha), located at a modest social level, of course, had a broader representation, namely, 69,062 incidences. The second, 100 to 1000 acres (57.75 to 577.50 ha), comprised only 1,455 farms.

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represented the largest category, 372 people, respectively 22.78% of the total. See also Valer Moga, "Social Mobility in Transylvania at the End of the First World War," in *Economy and Society in Central and Eastern Europe. Territory*, *Population*, *Consumption. Papers of the International Conference Held in Alba Iulia*, *April 25th-27th 2013* (Wien, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013), 323-342.

[4] Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualităţii româneşti din Transilvania şi Banat în epoca modernă* [The History of Romanian Intellectual Shaping in Transylvania and Banat in the Modern Era] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 483, no. 2348; 585, no. 4936; 713, no. 7583; László Szögi, *Studenţi români din Transilvania la universităţile din Europa în secolele XVI-XX* [Romanian Transylvanian Students at Universities in Europe in the 16th – 20th Century] (Târgu Mureş: Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior", 2011), 188, no. 1564; 200, no. 1629; *Societatea de mâine* [Tomorrow's Society], I, 10, 15 June 1924, 212-214; 26, of 19 October 1924, 530.

It is Petru Suciu's estimation. We agree to the point of view of those who believe that, at least for Transylvania, a tenure which brings together around 500 ha exceeds the medium property.

The two steps amount 70.517 heads of family owners, or 9,54% of all Romanian farmers in Transylvania, potential participants in local and parliamentary elections.[5] Some constituents of the present study sample would fall into this category, as confirmed by the few cases where sources have retained the surface of the land's ownership. This is not about the voting Romanian farmers, whose number should have been higher even under the electoral system regulated by the Hungarian electoral law in 1874, but about those with political power.

Consideration of heads of families, and not all family members, is more relevant given that male vote included only in the first in the electoral body.

Finally, using the same sources, Suciu defined extreme groups. At the lower end there was small property of, between five and 20 acres (2.88 to 11.55 ha) which included, in 1910, 393,643 farms. Added to these there were "minuscule property", "a true national calamity", he claimed, possessions under five acres, 274,244 households. The two groups totalled 666,877 incidences, or 90.31% of the total Romanian land properties in the province. At the other end there was the large land property, of over 1000 acres (577.50 ha), underrepresented among Romanian farmers from Transylvania, with only 26 exponents.[6]

Discrepancies in defining medium properties extend on the small properties as well. Previous to Petru Suciu's work, the Hungarian authorities had taken such assessment concerns. In 1904, an article entitled *Who is a small owner?* appeared in the Romanian press. The text reported that at the request of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Budapest, the Hungarian Minister of Commerce agreed with the Minister of Agriculture that "small owner" is one whose land area does not exceed 100 acres (57.75 ha).[7] There are differences of interests and criteria between the two centres of opinion.

After this statistical conduct, the natural question arises: what is their relevance to the topic above to the theme stated in the title of the study?

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[5] Suciu, "Clasele sociale ale Românilor din Ardeal," 694.
[6] Suciu, "Clasele sociale ale Românilor din Ardeal," 693-694; Petru Suciu, *Probleme ardelene. Reforma agrară în Ardeal. Problema oraşelor ardelene. Clasele sociale în Ardeal* [Transylvanian Problems. Agrarian Reform in Transylvania. Social Classes of the Romanians in Transylvania] (Cluj: „Societatea de mâine", 1924), 10-12.
[7] *Revista Economică*, [Economical Magazine] VI/2, 9 January 1904, 14.

The data invoked may lead us to believe the new citizens of the country, following the integration of Transylvania into the Romanian state, helped expand citizenship and electoral competence in Romania. ... Or the other way round, they have added to a mass which, however, lived until 1919 – the first elections based on universal suffrage – out of political life.

Adherence to one or other variant requires a comparative treatment. The second term of the comparison is the situation in the Old Kingdom in a period close to the census for Hungary, in 1910. The economist and historian Victor Axenciuc realized this, taking 1913 as the year of reference.[8] Suciu's and Axenciuc's criteria differ inevitably. After all, between the two analytical operations seven decades have passed. In the same way, the quantitative data from two areas differ: Transylvania respectively the Old Kingdom. Another difference arises from the fact that, given the sources used and the initial orientation of this study, in the case of Transylvania attention was focused on the ethnic Romanian farms. Could this criterion affect the accuracy of interpretation, meaning that rural property influence on the political ability of the subjects? To mitigate the risk impression, we emphasize that the other two major ethnic groups in the province, Hungarians and Germans, stood on better positions. In percentage terms, for them, small property had a lower weight than for Romanians, while the medium and the large property, they were superior to the latter.

The differences identified above are not so big as to compromise a parallel tracking approach. On the contrary, up a certain point, analogies actually characteristic of agrarian economies of all Central-Eastern Europe can be determined.

For the Old Kingdom, in 1913, Victor Axenciuc held a number of 1,133,202 farms, with a total area of 5,840,621 ha. Among them, those considered small properties (under 2-10 ha) represented 95.3% of the total, slightly more than the proportion of 90.31% of Transylvania, with the cultural, biological and negative rigor political consequences.[9]

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[8] *Agricultorii şi repartizarea pământului cultivat în 1913* [Farmers and Distribution of Land Cultivated in 1913] (Bucharest: Direcţiunea Statisticei Generale, 1915), 107 p., il.

[9] I have not considered, either for Transylvania, or for the Old Kingdom, people working in agriculture but without any property (the servants, agricultural workers, paid shepherds and so on). *Decree-Law on electoral reform* adopted in Bucharest on November 29th, 1918 has included them in the sphere of universal suffrage. This measure, however, did not resolve the situation in which the environment they belonged to was characterized by illiteracy, morbidity and increased civic passivity.

What we might consider (again with the risk of an exaggeration for the upper category) middle property in the Old Kingdom (10-500 ha), or 4.6% of the total, favours the equivalent class of the Romanian land ownership in Transylvania (11.55-577.50 ha), respectively, 9.54% of the total.

Finally, the real difference is provided by the large property, of over 500 hectares. The 1910 census identified in Transylvania and Hungary 26 Romanian properties over 1,000 acres (577.50 ha). Each of these men was a landmark of national public life, potentially political leader, donor, founder of associations. But as a group they formed a negligible amount, representing 0.003% of the total Romanian agricultural owners. In the Old Kingdom, in 1913, the big property, of over 500 hectares, represented only 0.30% of total farms. But this category stretched over 18.72% of the agricultural land in Romania, and the average size of a farm was 1.000 hectares.[10] Disparities in the distribution of rural property caused most of the crisis phenomena at the turn of the nineteenth and 20th centuries.

Closely related to the ownership regime was the rural class culture, at its elementary level, literacy, which ultimately influenced the voting behaviour. And in this plan without offering spectacular values, Transylvania presented an advantage over the Old Kingdom. The 1910 census recorded in counties with Romanian inhabitants of Hungary 51.10% of the literate population older than seven years. For the same demographic segment, the census of 1912 in Romania gave the proportion of 39.3%.[11] The gap has been perpetuated, being also found at the general census of Romania, in 1930. In evaluating these data, we should take into account some parameters: due to scarcity of schools and teachers, the Romanians in Transylvania were, until 1918, in terms of literacy, below the provincial average; generally, in this aspect, the rural population was delayed, negatively versus the urban population.[12]

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[10] Victor Axenciuc, *Evoluţia economică a României. Cercetări statistico-istorice 1859-1947*, Vol. II: *Agricultura* [Romanian Economic Evolution. Statistical-Historical Research 1859-1947, Vol. II: Agriculture] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1996), 144.

[11] S. Manuilă, D. C. Georgescu, *Populaţia României* [Romanian Population] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938), 35-36; Valer Moga, „*Astra*" *şi societatea 1918-1930* ["Astra" and the Society 1918-1930] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), 43-44.

[12] Ion Enescu, Iuliu Enescu, *Ardealul, Banatul, Crişana şi Maramurăşul din punct de vedere agricol, cultural şi economic* [Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş in Agricultural, Cultural and Economic Terms], the third edition (Bucharest, Editura Librăriei Socec & Co., 1920), 98-104.

Instead of conclusions to the statistical approach so far, Petre Suciu's words may be invoked, who refers in his studies to the cultural and political potential of the property. According to him, the properties under 10 acres (5.77 ha) are not only a source of misery, illiteracy and civic incapacity. Only a property of 30 acres (17.32 ha), he appreciated, can support through its production the educational training, health care, thus the independence of thought which can uplift the farmer to the condition of informed participant in the election process.[13]

Mentalities and social realities

Returning to the documentation underlying the study sample[14], we see the importance of collective mentality to prioritize community, reference to power, ultimately to politics.

In individual positioning on the social scale, the extent of the land property and its productivity are important. But in order for these physical realities to produce psychosocial effects, to confer prestige, they should be reflected in the terms of a discourse. In other words, just as important to the statute is the "name" of the status, which becomes a title for its bearer.

We notice a coincidence between the Assessment Commission's procedures of the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia, on the one hand, and the secretariats' of the Romanian Parliament, on the other. Applying the regulations of the Deputies' Assembly and the Senate's, the secretaries in Bucharest wrote at the beginning of each parliamentary session the tables of members' names of each of the two chambers. The content of these tables was based on forms completed by each parliamentary party. Political analyst Mattei Dogan, who held this procedure, noticed that some MPs declared their fortune instead of their profession. For example, a lawyer or a representative of other profession was listed in the table as "owner" or "farmer". "Farmer", stated Dogan, might have been the landlord, possibly a PhD in law, who personally administered the estate, unlike the "tiller", who was only living from his small country estate harvest.[15] Attitudes by members of the Great National Assembly of 1918 can be found in that of the interwar Romania's members of parliament.

We cannot say that the Romanian language spoken in Transylvania in the first two decades of the twentieth century lacked the words "peasant"

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[13] Suciu, *Probleme ardelene*, 12; Moga, „*Astra*" *şi societatea*, 36-38.

[14] See above, footnote 3.

[15] Mattei Dogan, *Analiza statistică a „democraţiei parlamentare" din România* [Statistical Analysis of „Parliamentary Democracy" in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Social-Democrat, 1946), 55-56.

or "tiller". However they were very little found in the sources of the period regarding the subjects of this research. The two terms are only the names of an occupation, without giving the bearer any upward meaning. Things are completely different over the name "economist" ("econom"). Its recurrence is impressive, 202 cases in a sample of 372 people, respectively, 54.30%.

I retained exclusively those attributes through which the study's subjects defined their condition or through which this was defined to them by Romanian officials in November 1918, the presidents and secretaries of electoral assemblies who would elect delegates to the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia. They included the historian Teodor V. Păcățian, who, as responsible editor, published in the *Official Gazette* of the Governing Council the delegates' list. In some cases, the quality of "economist", "owner" and so on of some of them it is known only from his list of Păcățian.[16] We are talking about attributes indicating each targeted person's place in the social hierarchy of communities of belonging.

Enciclopedia României, written and edited by "Astra" a few years before, is not a dictionary of the Romanian language in the strict sense. It helps us to know the content that the key terms of the research have had in that period. For example, the mentioned encyclopaedia does not have special articles devoted to "peasant" or "tiller", although the words as such appeared in articles with other themes. The situation is different for the term "economist".

> "Economist, self-contained thrifty, one with carriage, plough and own cattle. He is often confused with the farmer and economy with ploughing or exploitation of the land, either small or large. […]"

On the next page, the *rural economy* is defined as a science aimed at ensuring better conditions for crop cultivation, animal husbandry and practicing related industries in order to obtain the largest profits. A few pages further on, the word "householder", which also appears in quotation is defined simply as "master of the house".[17]

From all these elements of definition we can understand that the economist was no more than a farmer in the modern sense of the term, with a farm in the countryside which was at least within the medium property

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[16] *Gazeta Oficială* [Official Gazette], Sibiu, 1, 1/14 December 1918, 4; 15, 23 February/8 March 1919, 76.
[17] *Enciclopedia Română* [Romanian Encyclopedia], vol. II, ed. Cornel Diaconovich (Sibiu: Editura W. Krafft, 1900), 253-254, 584.

level, with an agricultural inventory able to ensure the independence of activity and production whose surplus may be intended to the market.[18]

From this data which introduces us into social realities, but also in the collective attitudes of the early twentieth century, we can understand that the attribute of "economist" was a factor of prestige which it distinguished the head of household in the community, having access to culture, medical services, legal assistance, and, not least, in politics through electoral rights.

Again, although it represented more than half of the composition of a sample resulting from a selection process, the category of "economists" did not exceed 10% of the total Romanian landowners from 1910. However, it was a dynamic group, which was in a continuous expansion due the process of transferring property from bankrupt Hungarian landlords to small and medium owners.

To exhaust the question of the necessity of personal prestige ensured by the name of social status, we mention here a more unusual situation, in the Sătmar County [n.t. Satu Mare]. Documents of 1918 recorded a number of farmers who appear under the title of "possessors". Could it be the influence coming from the Greek Catholic clergy, numerically dominant in the area, familiar with Latin?[19] Anyway, the sonority of the word could only satisfy those who attach it. However, as state of affairs, evidenced by the personal data of those involved, the name "possessor" did not cover a situation superior to that of "economist".[20]

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[18] In another train of thoughts, we have to do with a regionalism, the term not being found used beyond the Carpathians. For this reason, its use was gradually reduced in the interwar decades, almost to extinction. Historicity of concepts makes it that in current Romanian the term is used with other content. However, with the sense in focus for this study, the word remained in some dictionaries: "(*[old] reg[ionalism];* and *economist of field, economist of land*) Person possessing a household; wealthy peasant. [...] 5. *s. m. ([old] reg[ionalism] and shepherd «economist» administrator,* or *of sheep, cattle*) Cattle breeders and owner". *DEXI. Dicţionar explicativ ilustrat al limbii române* [Illustrated Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language] (Chişinău: ARC, GUNIVAS, 2007), 624.

[19] In Latin, *possessor* = owner, possessor.

[20] We refer to F. George Indre, „economist-possessor" and mayor in Vezendiu, Alexandru Mureşan, possessor in Jidani (today Sătmărel), Coriolan Cărbunar (Moftinu Mic), Grigorie Donca (Uifalău, today Csengerújfalu, Ungaria), Mihaiu Apai (Medieşu Aurit), Georgiu Rus (Potău), Tămaş Fane al lui Ioan (Călineşti-Oaş), Ioan Dobrean (Satu Mare). Union's National Museum, fond *Documente*, *Marea Adunare Naţională întrunită la Alba-Iulia în ziua de 1 Decembrie 1918* (MNU, *Documente*) [The Great National Assembly meeting in Alba-Iulia on the 1st of December 1918 (MNU, Documents)], vol. III, 202, 220, 246, 250.

Somewhat to the east and at the same time, farmers in Năsăud area presented themselves as "agronomists". It is not a question of confusion, as there were in Hungary from the late nineteenth century, university graduates, graduates of academies of agriculture, who were operating under the name of agronomists.[21] But the record in 1919, as members for life of "Astra" of seven "agronomists" in Năsăud, two in Salva, and one in Mocod and Telciu, strengthens our belief that we are in front of people looking for a term which could highlight the rural property, economic performance and social status[22]; they could have, as well, call themselves "economists" or "possessors".

Some examples could create a perception of boundaries between which agricultural land owned by economists stood. Stoiu Sârb, for example, from Cuvin, Arad County, owned 32 acres (18.48 ha).[23] We can assume that it was not the smallest farm owned by a man considered an economist in its environment. At the other limit there was Ioan Ciucurel, economist in Şoşdea[24], "wealthy peasant" ("paore înstărit") with a land property of 150 ha.[25] About Iulius Vodă of Hodoş, Caraş-Severin County[26], we have more imprecise information, but important in this context. "Economist" in the press and documents, he was mentioned because of his engagements in

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[21] Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualităţii româneşti din Transilvania şi Banat*, 675-683.

[22] *Transilvania* [Transylvania], L/1-12 (1919), 29-30.

[23] MNU, *Documente* [MNU, Documents], tom II, 143-153; Mircea Vaida-Voevod, Gelu Neamţu, *1 Decembrie 1918. Mărturii ale participanţilor. Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac de la Marea Unire* (*Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*) [1st of December 1918. Testimonies of Participants. Ioachim Crăciun: Documents after a Quarter of a Century since the Great Union. (Ioachim Crăciun: Documents after a Quarter of a Century)], vol. II (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), 257-258.

[24] In the county of Timiş, today in the county of Caraş-Severin.

[25] MNU, *Documente*, tom III, 612-616; Vasile Rămneanţu, Lucian Ciucurel, *Istoricul gazetei „Cuvântul Satelor" (scris de Ion Ciucurel)* [Historian of the Newspaper „Cuvântul Satelor" (written by Ioan Ciucurel)] (Timişoara: Mirton, 2005), 10-25; Vali Corduneanu, "Un manuscris inedit din 1953 reconstituie istoria longevivei mişcări de la gazeta 'Cuvântul Satelor'," ["An Unpublished Manuscript of 1953 Reconstructs the History of the Long-lasting Movement from the Newspaper 'Cuvântul Satelor',"] *Banaterra*, 30 December 2008. http://www.banaterra.eu/romana/un-manuscris-inedit-din-1953-reconstituie-istoria-longevivei-miscari-de-la-gazeta-„cuvantul, 3 February 2014. The word „paore" is a regionalism from Banat region which means „peasant".

[26] Today in Timiş county.

banking as "great proprietor".[27] In the same terms it could be discussed about Emmanuil Puta, young man of Pecica, Arad: "economist" in a 1916 issue of the newspaper *Românul* from Arad, he became "great proprietor" in a 1930 issue of the same publication.[28]

These details make the switch to another level of rural society, customized through title. We are talking about "owners". It has already been seen that between the group of "economists" and "owners" there was no clear demarcation. But for a farmer to have the presumption to appear in society as "owner" or to be recognized as such in his environment, it was necessary that his holding was at the high level of ownership or medium or, as we will see below, at the level of big property. As with the economists, to have the attribute of owner attached to your own name, was a matter of prestige, of emphasizing the higher positioning in the social hierarchy. Incidentally, in the sample, the number of owners is lower – 30.

Farmers and social mobility

As general conduct, we insist on farmers' conservatism to housing area. Long strings of generations of a family, landbound, worked there in the same village. Exceptions occurred when a young man, for example, migrated in a nearby village, being attracted by the wealth he had been inheriting from his future wife's parents.

But there are significant deviations from this rule. Individuals or families in Mărginimea Sibiului, long accustomed to celebrating the transhumance roads were not tributary to topographic immobility. Significant amounts accumulated from sheep farming gave them the impulse to become holders of more concrete assets – the land, little and unproductive in their places of origin. Their eyes were attracted by the abundance of arable land in Transylvanian Plain. This is the case of Coman Şogan, born in 1863 in Răşinari, Sibiu County. Sometime in the late century, he moved to Cerghidu Mare, Târnava Mică County, but became large landowner because of the land which he bought in Grebenişu de Câmpie, in Turda-

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[27] MNU, *Documente*, tom I, 305; *Tribuna Poporului* [Peoples' Tribune], II, 1, 1/13 January 1898, 3; Vasile Dobrescu, *Funcţii şi funcţionalităţi în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania până la Primul Război Mondial. Studiu de caz* [Features and Functionalities in the Romanian Credit System in Transylvania until the First World War. Case Study] (Târgu Mureş: Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior", 2006), 178, 240.

[28] *Românul*, [The Romanian] VI, 31, 11/24 February 1916, 4; XV, 1, 1 January 1930, 4.

Arieş County. His brothers, Petru, Bucur and Ilarie had a similar evolution. After 1918, Coman Şogan settled down in Târgu Mureş.[29]

Nicolae Vulcu, born in 1870 in Sălişte, Sibiu, bought after 1890, land in rural areas of Iclandu Mare (Turda-Arieş County) Râciu, Pogăceaua, Bandu de Câmpie, the last three in the Mureş-Turda County, acquiring the status of great owner and lessor. After living for a while in Iclandu Mare, he settled in Târgu Mureş.[30]

With a similar fate, Ion Buzea, born in 1888 in Zărneşti, Făgăraş, was subsequently established to Milaşu Mare, Cojocna County, becoming big landowner.[31]

The energies of the three and others like them were not entirely absorbed by the administration of their latifundia. On the lists of "Astra" members there can be found, in the auditors' committees or boards of Romanian banks, congregations of counties or, as lay deputies in the diocesan councils of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in the local structures of the Romanian National Party, or after 1918, other political parties, candidates for parliamentary seats, or even holders of such mandates.

Another particular situation is the one of graduate personalities, with a Ph.D., with professional or political careers, but who felt that their social identity was marked by the land ownership, which was usually consistent.

Lawyer and politician, Aurel Vlad appears in a paper from 1936, designed for the European public, with the status of *farmer*. The significance of this is brought to light by a note from the publisher, who underlined: "*The biographies published are based on authentic and authorised data.*"[32] Fatherless from the age of four years, deprived of the benefits of a family fortune, he managed to pursue law studies in Budapest thanks to a grant received from the Gojdu Foundation. After 1900, the promoter of Neo-Activism, completely absorbed by the political activity conducted in the Romanian National Party, Aurel Vlad began to feel the insufficient income that his job of director of Ardeleana Bank in Orăştie provided for him. As we learned from his biographer, exhortations and support of friends have guided towards the solution of marriage to save

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[29] Traian Bosoancă, *Mureşenii şi Marea Unire* [Inhabitants of Mureş and the Great Union] (Târgu Mureş: Ardealul, 2000), 225-226.

[30] Bosoancă, *Mureşenii şi Marea Unire*, 246-250.

[31] *Dicţionarul personalităţilor Unirii. Trimişii românilor transilvăneni la Marea Adunare Naţională de la Alba Iulia* [Dictionary of the Great Union's Personalities. Transylvanian Romanian Messengers to the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia], eds. Ioan I. Şerban, Nicolae Josan (Alba Iulia: Altip, 2003), 118.

[32] *Politics and Political Parties in Roumania* (London: International Reference Library Publishing Co., 1936), 6, 553.

him from the care of tomorrow. His wife, Ana, brought him as dowry a
large estate, in Bobâlna. Skilfully managing it and purchasing new land,
Aurel Vlad possessed in 1906 an area of 6727 acres (3885 ha). In the
opinion of the author quoted above, he then had that in terms of surface,
the second Romanian land property, after the one owned by the members
of Mocioni family.[33]

Next in this hierarchy was Ioan Mihu, who studied law at Graz and
Budapest, with a Ph.D. in law obtained at the Hungarian Royal University
of Budapest.[34] However, on the list of members of Romanian Great
National Council, elected in Alba Iulia, December 1st, 1918, his position
was as follows: "Dr. Ioan Mihu, great owner, Vinerea".[35] His agricultural
field stretched, also in early twentieth century, on 5213 acres (3010.50
ha).[36]

Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti attended the courses of Law Academy of
Oradea, but did not dedicate to a legal profession. He opted for a career as
a clerk and politician (founding member of PNR in 1881, then president of
the party since 1902). His father Petru Pop de Băseşti, from whom he
inherited the land area of 100 acres, had the occupation of "ploughman"
mentioned in the passport. By virtue of a vintage usual convenience –
Aurel Vlad benefited from the same solution – the first rounding of the
small father's estates was done from the dowry brought by his consort,
Maria Loşonţi, of noble origin, as his future spouse. Deeply concerned
about the administration of his estate, Gheorghe Pop Băseşti did not
confine to his own knowledge in the field, but appealed to the services of
titrated agronomists. Economic success ultimately resulted in the
accumulation of property in land area of over 3.000 acres (1732.50 ha).
Awareness of this social identity was reflected in the title of ownership
which he appeared in the Great National Assembly members' list with less
than two months before he died.[37]

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[33] Valentin Orga, *Aurel Vlad. Istorie şi destin* [Aurel Vlad. History and Destiny]
(Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2001), 18-20, 195-196.
[34] Silviu Dragomir, "Dr. Ioan Mihu. 1854-1927," in *Spicuiri din gândurile mele.
Politice, culturale, economice* [Synthesis of my own Thoughts. Political, Cultural,
Economic], ed. Ioan Mihu (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1938), V-
XLVII; Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualităţii româneşti din Transilvania şi
Banat*, no. 350, 358; Szögi, *Studenţi români din Transilvania la universităţile din
Europa în secolele XVI-XX*, no. 1138, 145.
[35] *Gazeta Oficială*, 13, 15/28 February 1919, 64.
[36] Orga, *Aurel Vlad*, 196.
[37] Ioan Georgescu, *George Pop de Băseşti. 60 de ani din luptele naţionale ale
Românilor transilvăneni* [George Pop de Băseşti. Sixty Years of the National

Alexandru Vaida-Voevod did not have, like those mentioned above, concerns about increasing or administering farms. Ever since his medical studies in Vienna (1891-1898), he was involved in political life with a passion and intensity that never left him until 1945 ... and then for reasons foreign to him. In his youth, around 1899, he had a brief interlude of medical practice as balneologist and generalist, at Karlsbad. The family fortune inherited by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod must have been substantial, at least close to those described above. We do not know the value but from a brief description contained in a chronicle of family Vaida, posted on the internet by his grandson Mircea Vaida-Voevod. The latter could only provide data about the remaining land after implementation of agrarian reform in 1921. To the part of the parental estate from Olpret[38], other surfaces were added, totalling, after expropriation, 1472 acres (850 ha).[39]

In fact, we must see all real estate fortunes shown above drastically reduced by the expropriation of 1921.

The owner condition was constantly assumed by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. He had it in 1918, on the list of members of the Great National Assembly, published in 1919, and in 1936, in the work on the Romanian political life, designed for foreign propaganda.[40]

Culture and credit system

It has been noted above that the sample which the quantitative analysis in this study applies to is already the result of a political selection, with inherent cultural implications, which consisted of the election of its members as delegates in the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia. Therefore, we cannot expect that in terms of literacy their structure reflects the one seen across provinces, namely 48.9% illiterate.

In this point of the research one specification is useful. The quantitative data presented and used in the study are marked by a certain degree of randomness. They depend on the extent to which information could reach up to the author when writing the text. It is, however, in some cases, the situation of incomplete references and not at about inaccuracies.

Struggles of Romanians in Transylvania] (Oradea: Editura Asociaţiei Culturale „Astra", 1935), 29, 335; *Gazeta Oficială*, 13, 15/28 February 1919, 64.

[38] Today Bobâlna, county of Cluj.

[39] Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii* [Memoirs], vol. I, ed. Alexandru Şerban (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, *passim*; www.vaidavoevod.ro/arbore/familiavaida.doc, 7 February 2015).

[40] *Gazeta Oficială*, 13, 15/28 February 1919, 64; *Politics and Political Parties in Roumania*, 547.

This opinion stems from the fact that the data are confirmed among each other and in the inner logic of the whole information.

However, the illiterate were still present, although their number was negligible. We are aware of three situations. Incidentally or not, all come from Bihor County. Here, Romanian priest shortage was a reality with negative repercussions on religious education, therefore on the population's literacy. One of the cases is that of Ioan Torj from the village Duşeşti, the economist elected in Ceica electoral circle, with three lawyers and a priest.[41] Ioan Torj, though illiterate, which may have constituted the rule and not the exception in his village, had managed to distinguish himself in other ways, perhaps by how he managed the farm and which entitled him to get the status of "economist". The same reasons may justify the presence of the other two illiterate economists in Bihor County among the delegates, elected by their fellow villagers in Bratca.[42]

According to the data, most members of the sample had gone to primary school, the confessional Orthodox or Greek Catholic school. However, there were not few those who had gone to state or communal primary schools, teaching in Hungarian. It is also significant the proportion of those who went to six classes primary school. This number of years of study stems from the fact that, according to the laws on primary education, parents who did not intend to send their children to a higher level of education were forced to enrol them to the so-called complementary schools or repetition schools, with two classes.[43]

A positive aspect for those included in this study is that, although subsequently they remained to farm, 20 of them had followed secondary education. Uroş Pătean, for example, from Nădlac, was sent by his parents to study precisely to the Superior Orthodox Gymnasium in Braşov. Later, he became administrator with a property large enough to justify his rightful membership in Cenad County Congregation. Politically, he asserted himself in 1910, as a delegate to the National Conference of Sibiu, and the following year by participating in the campaign for universal suffrage.[44] The highest form of education followed by Coman

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[41] MNU, *Documente*, tom II, 213.

[42] MNU, *Documente*, tom II, 261, 263; *Dicţionarul personalităţilor Unirii*, 103-104.

[43] Enescu, Enescu, *Ardealul, Banatul, Crişana şi Maramurăşul*, 98-99.

[44] MNU, *Documente*, tom II, 531-543; *Gazeta Oficială*, 13, 15/28 February 1919, 64; George Stoica, *Conferinţa naţională ţinută la Sibiu în 5 Aprilie 1910* [National Conference Held at Sibiu on April 5th 1910] (Sibiu: „Tipografia Poporului", 1910), 21; *Românul*, I, 22, 28 January/10 February 1911, 1; 74, 1/14 April 1911, 8; *Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*, vol. II, 206; Gabriela Adina

Șogan, mentioned above, shepherd from Rășinari become big landowner in the Turda-Arieș County was the German State Gymnasium in Sibiu.[45]

Other secondary schools attended by Romanian farmers from the late nineteenth century were the Superior Archdiocesan Gymnasium in Blaj, Superior Greek Catholic Gymnasium in Beiuș, Reformed Kun College of Orăștie, German State Gymnasium in Timișoara etc.

A third of those 20 future farmers, secondary school students, have followed only one or two years of study. Both at the primary school level and secondary school level, according to available information, school abandonment was due to parents' insufficient material resources.

The knowledge acquired in the four or six classes of the primary school, in the two, three or five classes of secondary school, could have proven useful in the agricultural economy. Meanwhile, literacy could have opened for some peasants often surprising cultural universes. In Transylvania we can talk about, not of a popular writer but a kind of such writers. Perhaps the most representative exponent of the preoccupations of this kind is Adam Bolcu (1871-1933), of Brad, Hunedoara. 10 years after he died, in 1943, his son considered him as an actual former "economist and popular writer".[46] The two classes that he had graduated at the Orthodox Gymnasium in Brad, his native village, opened his taste for reading. He read stories and poems collected by the folklorist Ion Pop Reteganul and also Ion Creangă's stories. Later, he subscribed to the *Foaia Poporului* of Sibiu, a supplement of *Tribuna*, addressed to the village world. In the pages of this newspaper he discovered the writings of Ioan Slavici and here he made his first appearance in 1896.[47] He continued collaborations in various newspapers and catalogues for people until he came to the attention of Andrei Bârseanu, president of "Astra", and after a few years, Horia Petra-Petrescu, literary secretary of this institution. They considered that the writings of Adam Bolcu are suitable for the collection

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Marco, "Uroș Pătean – un nădlăcan în Parlamentul ţării," [Uroș Pătean – A Citizen of Nădlac in the Country's Parliament] in *Administraţie românească arădeană. Studii şi comunicări* [Romanian Administration from Arad. Studies and Communications], vol. IV, eds. Doru Sinaci, Emil Arbonie (Arad: „Vasile Goldiş" University Press, 2012), 316-325.

[45] MNU, *Documente*, tom III, 818-820; Bosoancă, *Mureşenii şi Marea Unire*, 225.

[46] *Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*, vol. II, 44.

[47] Maria Razba, *Personalităţi hunedorene. Oameni de cultură, artă, tehnică, şi sport (sec. XV-XX)* [Personalities of Hunedoara. People of Culture, Art, Technology, and Sports (15th and 16th Centuries)], second edition (Deva: Emia, 2004), 65.

Biblioteca Poporală a „Asociaţiunii" (The People's Library of the "Association").[48]

Another popular writer has enjoyed less publicity, but has arrived at more important editorial results than those of Bolcu. He is Ion Ciucurel (1897-1955) of Şoşdea, Timiş. He has not exceeded the level of training of the six grades of primary school. However, his native literary inclinations were stimulated and chiselled by the readings of the church's library, to which the village's Orthodox priest, Petru Bohariu, urged him to read. He thus got to publish since young in newspapers like *Drapelul* (Lugoj), *Poporul Român* (Budapest), *Făclia* (Timişoara), in many popular papers, until he managed to found in Şoşdea his own newspapers: *Poporul Românesc* (1923), then *Cuvântul Satelor*, with a long appearance (1926-1946). He managed to publish two books, other texts still remaining in manuscript.[49]

The fact Ion Ciucurel was not an isolated incident is demonstrated by the contents of the chapter entitled "Fenomenul condeierilor plugari bănăţeni" [The phenomenon of ploughmen scriptwriters of Banat] in a volume started by Ion Ciucurel, completed and published by his grandson, Lucian Vasile Ciucurel and Vasile Rămneanţu.[50]

Economist Dumitru Iclănzan (1880-1971) spent his entire life in Iclănzel, Turda-Arieş County, subsequently Turda County.[51] He attended primary education, six classes, in Hungarian, at the state primary school in the commune. This did not prevent him that from early youth to do everything he could to obtain and read *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, all books for people circulated by "Astra", whose member he became in 1921. Like those listed above readings led him eventually to writing, and he managed

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[48] Adam Bolcu, *Din poveştile lui Moş Toader şi alte povestiri pentru popor* [From the Stories of Father Toader and Other Stories for the People] (Sibiu: Editura Asociaţiunii, 1927), 72 p.; Adam Bolcu *et al.*, *Un ceas de şezătoare poporală* [An Hour of Popular Soirée] (Sibiu: Editura Asociaţiunii, 1927), 64 p.
[49] Ioan Ciucurel, *Transformarea. Sau întoarcerea din Siberia. Roman din vremuri mari* [The Transformation. Or the Return from Siberia. A Novel from Great Times] (Timişoara: Tipografia „Rapid", 1931); Ioan Ciucurel, *Comoara de sub nuc. Poveşti* [The Treasure under the Walnut. Stories] (Timişoara: Poporul Român, 1947); Ioan Ciucurel, *Spre o viaţă nouă, într-o lume nouă, prin cultură, muncă, organizare* [To a New Life, in a New World, through Culture, Work, Organization] (Timişoara: Marineasa, 2011).
[50] Rămneanţu, Ciucurel, *Istoricul gazetei „Cuvântul Satelor" (scris de Ion Ciucurel)*, 247 p.
[51] Today in the County of Mureş.

to see published a novel that has enjoyed interest in the period and which was reissued after almost seven decades.[52]

There are enough examples of farmers who, without reaching the status of popular writers or editors of newspapers for the people, they distinguished themselves as inspired readers of the press and books in Romanian. But what unites them all is that they belonged to at least the rural middle-class and had sufficient incomes to ensure access to cultural goods which attracted them. We know that Todor Novac (1857-1941), for instance, without knowing the area of his farm, was recognized as leading peasant in Izvin, Timiş.

> "Magazines and newspapers that appeared in Romanian – wrote his son-in-law, Nicolae Marcu, in 1943 – Todor Novac was subscribed to all of them, being a leader of the commune and having financial possibilities, later in his last years of life he surpassed at reading his law niece's son-in-law and the priest, his grandchildren, reading their books from the secondary school."[53]

If the cultural assumptions mentioned so far have a touch more or less individual, special treatment should be given to the collective, consisting of acceptance of membership of a cultural association. The principle, also mentality, which was the basis of such an attitude, was one of solidarity. It is about national solidarity, which in its political nature was an element of the nationalist doctrine of the Romanian National Party, and in its cultural nature, of the "Astra" program and of other consubstantial associative structures. Solidarity, be it political or cultural, as principle and mentality, persisted after 1918, but was diluted due to the installation of party pluralism and diversification of cultural employment offers.

A person did not accept the membership of "Astra" or a similar association to benefit from its cultural program. This is because "Astra's" public, for example, has always exceeded numerically the category of the institution's members.

There had been for someone, especially before 1918, but also after, a double motivation to accept the membership of "Astra". On the one hand, through this, the person in question agreed to support financially the process that lately historians called nation building through culture. On the

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[52] Dumitru Iclănzan, *Maica Dobriţa. Povestire din sbuciumul unei vieţi* [Mother Dobriţa. Story from the Turmoil of a Life] (Cluj: The publishing house and bookstore Alexandru Anca, 1938), 89 p.; second edition (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Saga, 2005), 100 p.

[53] *Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*, vol. I, 238.

other hand, the gained position was likely to meet the need of personal prestige for the one who approved of it.

Members of "Astra" had a pyramid distribution within a hierarchy. According to the statutes of the institution at the top there stood *the founding members of the National Central House*, then followed, in descending order, *the founding members*, *the members for life* and the *active members*. This hierarchy actually doubled the social hierarchy, as a member of "Astra" paid a tax proportional to the importance of the position they occupied. The leadership of "Astra" was concerned to ensure to the members of the institution means to promote prestige in their social environments. The founding members and members for life received diplomas, and for active members, the membership amounted to a subscription to the magazine *Transylvania*. By 1921, members could find their names in the lists published annually in the administrative numbers of *Transylvania*.

In 1913, the last year with normal activity before the First World War, farmers, known as such, or by any other synonym, were missing from the lists of founders of "Astra". The 1000 crowns fee exceeded their payment possibilities. However, 16 Romanian parishes were registered as founding members, the tax being for them the result of a joint effort. Other 13 "owners" members were registered and we have grounds to believe that it is, in most cases, about the owners of land estates large enough to support their solvency. In the category of members for life, where tax was more reasonable, there are three farmers, also communes and owners in larger numbers, by 35. Finally, in 1913 in the category of active members, with a modest annual fee, we are dealing with nine farmers, seven parishes and 77 owners.[54]

The sample which the analysis carried out in this study is based on, reflects, in terms of members, the general situation of "Astra". He offers only one founding member, Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti, great owner and president of NRP, recorded in 1911, for the Department of Şimleu[55]. Seven life members follow mostly great landlords and eight active

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[54] The founding members of the National Central House paid once and for all, 1000 crowns, the founding members, 400 crowns, members for life, 200 crowns. Active members paid an annual fee of five crowns. In 1924, the following amounts were set for the fees: the founding members of the National House, 5000 lei, the founding members, 1,000 lei, members for life 500 lei. Active members were paying an annual fee of 50 lei. See Moga, *"Astra" şi societatea*, 164-175, 334-335.
[55] *Transilvania,* 4 jubilee (1911), 529.

members, most of them economists. In 1914 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod was already a member of the Medical Section of „Astra".[56]

An interesting fact that emerges from the same sample is that at its components, cultural activism was doubled by a political one. Most of "Astra" members were members of NRP until 1919, after members of the People's Party, the National Liberal Party, the National Peasant Party, the National Front, and in 1938 of the National Renaissance Front.

On a smaller scale, the aspects offered by the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People („Astra") can be found at the Society for the creation of a fund of Romanian theatre, or at the Arad association for the culture of the Romanian people.

A cultural phenomenon with national political significance was *the choirs and singing societies and music* from Banat.[57] In fact, the element of interest in this context is the great availability of Banat farmers to commit to such involvement and activities. This time the representation is much closer to the grassroots of society, because we are dealing in most cases with economists or ploughmen, choirs or societies of ploughmen. Historiographical approaches so far have treated the phenomenon almost exclusively from the perspective of music history. Without ignoring this artistic aspect, because such choral groups and societies could not accept people without musical talent, this time we insist on another aspect. It is the fact that the meetings and choirs fell in the process of building the nation through culture, providing backgrounds for expressing national solidarity and cultural nationalism, without investing any negative denotation to this latter concept. The assessment is supported by the fact that they brought before a peasant audience works of composers such as Ion Vidu, Timotei Popovici, Gheorghe Dima, Augustin Bena, but also Ciprian Porumbescu, Gavriil Musicescu or Dumitru Kiriac. Especially in the position of choral pieces, they had a national, liturgical or folkloric inspiration content and message.

According to statutory provisions, singing and music societies also had in their program the maintenance of choirs, orchestras or fanfares, popular theatre performances or popular social evenings. We will further give a few examples to highlight the significance of names on how programs and goals were organised: *Reuniunea de cântări şi muzică a plugarilor români din comuna Reciţa-Română* [Singing and music society of Romanian

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[56] *Transilvania*, XLV/7-9 (1914), 341.
[57] Such choirs and musical reunions did not exist only in the counties from Banat, but also in Sibiu, Bistriţa-Năsăud, Hunedoara etc. In Banat, however, concerns in this area were much more present, though.

ploughmen from Reciţa-Română][58], *Reuniunea de musică şi cânt a plugarilor români din comuna Curte* [Music and singing reunion of the Romanian ploughmen in the village Curte][59], *Reuniunea de cântări a plugarilor români din Hodoş* [Singing reunion of Romanian ploughmen of Hodoş].[60]

The fact is that when the Romanian National Central Council made public the act of convening the Great National Assembly on December 1st, 1918, addressing all representative structures of the Romanian nation, it also convened two delegates from each cultural association. Choirs and musical societies felt targeted, sending to Alba Iulia, along with representatives of other professions, five "ploughmen" delegates.

At the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the next, for a man to be considered an active a useful member of their nation in a multinational state, it was not sufficient to demonstrate success within their own socio-professional group. Whether it was clergyman, lawyer, doctor, professor, teacher or farmer, he had to prove available for several commitments defining successful model of their ethnic communities. He was bound to have at least a minimal school graduate, to be a member of a national cultural association, to be a member of a functional structure of a bank and, above all, be adherent or member of the Romanian National Party. Ideal was for that person to have all these qualities.

From these aspirations farmers were not exempt, sensitive to the perception of personal image within the community, and this resulted in their presence in banks' staff.

Regarding the Romanian banks of Transylvania and their role in the national economy views were not converging. In an article of 1901 there was supported the view that the conditions of Romanian industry and commerce's inconsistency, progress in banking are the only reasons for satisfaction. Albina Bank of Sibiu informally played the role of a central bank. Less than 30 years after the establishment of Albina, the first Romanian credit institution, 82 Romanian banks, joint stock companies were operating in Hungary.[61] Ten years later, the author of another article launched an alarming rhetorical question "Where are we going?" He believed that the proliferation of Romanian banks was actually the

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[58] Locality which is now included in the town Reşiţa. MNU, *Documente*, tom I, 333.

[59] The county of Caraş-Severin, today in the county of Timiş. MNU, *Documente*, tom I, 297.

[60] The county of Caraş-Severin, today in the county of Timiş. MNU, *Documente*, tom I, 305.

[61] *Revista Economică* III/7 (1901), 86-87.

expression of petty interests of some people who were trying to secure some sinecures, the result being the crumbling of Romanian bank capital potential and putting Romanian banks in a state of inferiority, especially against the Hungarian ones.[62] The authorized opinions of some Romanian specialists in the area of credit, such as Ioan I. Lapedatu or Constantin Popp also supported the project of Romanian banks' merger. However, in 1913, on the eve of the Great War, the number of Romanian banks in Hungary had reached 152.

The main collective leadership and control bodies within the banks were the *management committees* ("comitetele de direcțiune") and the *committees of supervisors* ("comitetele de supraveghere"). As some specific names of the Hungarian banking system, after 1918, in Romania, it was gradually passed, for the first ones, to the name of *boards*, and for the other the name of *committee of censors*.

The share of farmers in banks' internal structures could not be compared with that of priests or lawyers, but neither was it negligible and this had its own meaning. Processing the data published in 1913 in *Anuarul băncilor* (Banks' Yearbook), historian Vasile Dobrescu has established a share of economists in the management committees of 252 (20.46%) and the big landowners, 37 (3%).[63]

That same year, in the banks' committees of supervisors, there were 142 economists, medium owners and lessees (18.71%). But there were only four major landowners (0.53%).[64]

Remuneration paid to the members of the management committees were much higher than those given to the committees of supervisors. This explains the insignificant presence of big landowners in the latter category.[65]

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[62] *Revista Economică* XII/11 (1910), 141-142.

[63] Vasile Dobrescu took into account two categories, at the level of small and medium property: the "economists" (109 or 8.85%) on the one hand, "medium landowners and small farmers" (143 or 11.61%) on the other side. Because of the indefinite limit between the two categories, we took the liberty of combining them, hopefully, not altering the figures' significance. In the management committees of the Romanian banks, clerics were present in a number of 335 (27.19%). Dobrescu, *Funcții și funcționalități în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania*, 41.

[64] Dobrescu, *Funcții și funcționalități în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania*, 53. For comparison, we mention the fact that among the members of the committees of supervisors of the Romanian banks there were 184 (24,24%) clergymen in 1913.

[65] Dobrescu, *Funcții și funcționalități în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania*, 39-40; *Revista Economică* III/50 (1901), 458-459.

From the present study's sample, 23 out of 372 people, or 6.18% were involved in some way in the activity of Romanian banks. The data is not consistent with the general plan, but neither does it offer notable discrepancies. The advantage that the sample provides is however that it supports the transition from statistics to real people, with names, biography and residence. For example, most of the functions of members of management committees were occupied by big and medium owners. But the particular situations did not always meet the general findings. Cuzman Bogdan (1882-1953) for example, that Vasile Dobrescu nominated, according to sources consulted by him, in the category of economists, had been successively in the period 1911-1918, member of the management committee, chairman of the management committee and even executive director at Pesăcana, Institute of savings and credit SA in Pesac, Torontal County.[66] For a small bank like Pesăcana, it was not uncommon to offer such a development to an economist. In 1943, Cuzman Bogdan also declared the occupation of farmer and the position of director of the bank. In fact, he was quite wealthy to give communist authorities a reason to deport him to Bărăgan, where he died in 1953.[67]

A typical and successful position had the great owner Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti. By 1900, he was in some cases founding member of management committees, but always chairman of these committees, at the banks Silvania (Şimleu Silvaniei), Chiorana (Şomcuta Mare) Codreana (Băseşti), Sătmăreana (Seini), Selăgiana (Jibou) and Aurora (Baia Mare). He was the only member of the management committees of the banks Albina in Sibiu (1905) and Concordia of Gherla (1910).[68] Such a record could not have occurred without a solid expertise in banking economy. But the functions recorded were performed broadly in the same period, calling for efforts difficult to measure, to which problems of the presidency of the Romanian National Party and the management of its extensive estates added. All

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[66] Today in the county of Timiş.

[67] MNU, *Documente*, tom III, 748-758; *Tribuna*, XV, 39, 18 February/3 March 1911, 9; XVI, 39, 18 February/2 March 1912, 12; *Românul*, IV, 35, 13/26 February 1914, 12; *Revista Economică*, XVIII, 14, 1 April 1916, 183; XIX, 8, 10 March 1917, 101; XX, 11, 16 March 1918, 136; *Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*, vol. I, 108, 258; Dobrescu, *Funcţii şi funcţionalităţi în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania*, 204, 242, 247, 253, 308, 311; Viorel Marineasa, Daniel Vighi, Valentin Sămânţă, *Deportarea în Bărăgan. Destine*, *documente*, *reportaje* [Deportation to Bărăgan. Destinies, Documents, Reports] (Timişoara: Mirton, 1996), 314.

[68] See the collection of the newspaper *Revista Economică* for the period 1900-1918; Dobrescu, *Funcţii şi funcţionalităţi în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania*, 44, 45, 49, 133, 178.

these would have required being simultaneously in several places. Therefore, what should remain from his many jobs is the desire of Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti to contribute to the expansion and consolidation of the Romanian credit system in Transylvania. For the management committees of banks, Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti presence as their president meant an infusion of prestige, implicitly the chance of attracting a larger number of clients.

Administrative and political implication

In reviewing the dowry of civic values with which Romanian farmers in Transylvania were assimilated in Romania's public life, as important as the cultural and economic aspects were the electoral, ultimately the political aspects, too.

The sources used for this study indicate that the *mayor of the parish* was the elected position with the best representation for Romanians. Being an environment with mostly rural population, it was natural that these mayors came from among farmers. According to the census of 1910, Romanians constituted the majority population in 19 counties. There were, however, 11 counties where Romanians, as an ethnic community, had a majority of more than ¾.[69] Therefore, relatively wide areas included parishes with a population majority or entirely of Romanians. Even in the case of universal vote, the mayoral election was an electoral exercise which involved numerous men aged 20 years old.

Being a mayor was not always an attractive job. Under the law, if in one parish there would have not been any nominations submitted, the prime Praetor[70] entrusted the nomination to someone who, in case of refusal, would be exposed to sanctions. At the other extreme, there have not been few cases where a person with a vocation for managing the commune remained for decades in office, and prior to 1918 and afterwards. Stoiu Sârb, mentioned above, was mayor of Cuvin since January 10th, 1905 until September 10th, 1929, when he withdrew due to old age.[71] Alexandru Cristea was mayor of Cebza, Torontal County[72], for two decades, in

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[69] Caraş-Severin, Alba Inferioară, Făgăraş, Hunedoara, Sibiu, Solnoc-Dobâca, Turda-Arieş, Arad, Bistriţa-Năsăud, Sălaj and Cluj; Enescu, Enescu, *Ardealul, Banatul, Crişana şi Maramurăşul*, 12-13.

[70] The prime-Praetor was the head of an administrative structure which included several parishes.

[71] *Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*, vol. II, 258.

[72] Later in the county of Timiş-Torontal, today the county of Timiş.

Hungary and in Romania.[73] Great landowners had enough problems with
the management of their own farms, so being a mayor remained available
almost exclusively to those recorded until the First World War with the
status of economist.

Under the same terms, we can talk about *communal representation*.[74]
Its specificity consisted in the fact that it was composed in equal
proportion of elected members and the so-called "virilists", who owed
their position to a higher quantum of tax paid to the state.[75]

If the mayor's function in a rural commune and the collective one
fulfilled by the commune's representative, including elections for these
institutions did not have a political party importance for the Romanians in
Transylvania, not the same can be said about *congregaţia comitatensă*
[county's congregation].[76] Nominations in the congregational elections
were supported by political parties. The ruling party was using all means
possible to secure majority in as many county congregations. Within the
congregations important issues were discussed, such as the budget of the
county or local taxes, political issues which were the subject of
deliberations in the Transylvanian Diet: universal suffrage, laws on
primary education, administration and justice official languages etc.

All famous members of the Romanian National Party were, over time,
members of certain congregations. However, the electoral legislation did
not allow the party to gain a majority in any county. Because of this,
Romanian nationalists had no other choice but to constitute in active and
vocal minorities.

As municipal representatives, county congregations were made up in
equal proportions of members elected and virilists.[77] In an article of 1898,
it was estimated that after the counties of Caraş-Severin and Hunedoara, in
Arad there were most Romanian virilists, namely 40. The author of the
article observed irritated that their number could have amounted 100 if the
Romanian owners and would not have shown indifference to their registration

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[73] *Banatul şi Marea Unire din 1918* [Banat and the Great Union of 1918], ed. Ioan
Munteanu (Timişoara: Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, 1992), 416 p.

[74] The correspondent of the communal council in Romania.

[75] Ioan F. Negruţiu, *Constituţiunea Patriei sau drepturile şi datorinţele cetăţeneşti*
[The Constitution of the Homeland or Civic Rights and Obligations] (Blaj:
Tipografia Seminariului archidiecezan, 1903), 5-9.

[76] Correspondent of the county's council in Romania.

[77] Negruţiu, *Constituţiunea Patriei*, 18.

on official lists[78]. In the Alba Inferioară County, in 1911, there were 190 virilists, among which Romanians accounted for just over one-fifth, hence around 40.[79]

From the ones shown, it can be assumed that through the institution of virilists, Romanians managed to obtain a small numerical increase over the few seats that they obtained through the election of county congregations. However, in their circles of political opinion, virilism was harshly criticized. In 1895, Eugen Brote considered it an expression of "feudal aristocratism".[80] Paragraph 5 of the resolution of the National Conference of Sibiu, 1905, claimed in an unequivocal way the "abolition of the virilists' institution".[81]

> "Following the absurd law of virilism – accused Vasile Goldiş in the session of Arad County congregation in the fall of 1911 –, anti-cultural and anti-democratic, half the members of this assembly are brought here not by their moral and intellectual qualities, or due to their belief in civic things, but exclusively in the power of their fortune larger than of others. And this stupid and barbaric law does not even allow selection of well-off people, in terms of moral and intellectual qualities, who nevertheless have jurisdiction over the affairs of the citizens, but simply sent here those who sit on the ladder of the material wealth, either stupid or obedient, either honest or immoral."[82]

In the consulted lists there appear congregationalists whose attachment to the PNR program cannot be questioned. It is enough to exemplify with names as Ştefan Hotăran[83], economist in Pecica, always present at the political party's meetings, Emil Cormoş Alexandrescu, great owner in Grebenişu de Câmpie[84], Turda-Arieş County, president of the county's club in Mureş-Turda of NRP[85], and let us not forget the "farmers" Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, member in the congregation of Solnoc-Dobâca

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[78] *Tribuna Poporului*, I, 245, 25 December 1897/6 January 1898, 1282. Priests were favoured by law to become virilists, because for them it was calculated the double of the amount that represented tax to the state.

[79] *Unirea [The Union]*, XX, 52, 24 December 1910, 429.

[80] Eugen Brote, *Un memoriu politic. Cestiunea română în Transilvania şi Ungaria* [A Political Memoir. The Romanian Issue in Transylvania and Hungary] (Bucureşti: Tipografia Voinţa Naţională, 1895), [Anexe], 102.

[81] *Tribuna*, IX, 3, 5/18 January 1905, 1-3.

[82] *Românul*, II, 204, 18 September/1 October 1912, 4.

[83] *Tribuna*, XIV, 28, 7/20 February 1910, 3.

[84] With housing in Târgu Mureş.

[85] *Tribuna*, XIII, 207, 25 September/8 October 1909, 2.

County[86] or Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti, the party's president himself, member of the congregation of Sălaj.[87] But in his speech of 1911, Vasile Goldiş stigmatized the "Mamelukes from the office", be they Romanian or Hungarian. In the political language of the time, a "Mameluke", epithet with general circulation, regardless of ethnicity, was the permanent client of the ruling party.

About the political experience gained by Romanian farmers in the Budapest Diet we can only talk with reservations. The only Romanian political leader who justifiably assumed the main condition of a farmer was Gheorghe Pop de Băseşti. He had three parliamentary seats in legislatures 1872-1875, 1875-1878 and 1878-1881.[88] However, during 1875-1881 he was a member and even vice-president of the Hungarian Party of Independence. Also, his old age, and then his death in February 23rd, 1919 prevented him to exploit in Great Romania his political experience acquired up to the First World War. It remains Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, diet's deputy in two legislatures, 1906-1910 and 1910-1918. Physician, then career politician, he assumed all his life through the condition of landowner in order to highlight the origin and attachment to a family with aristocratic ancestry.[89]

It remains an important experience, but approached in another study. During the Neo-activist period, the electoral campaigns of 1905, 1906 and 1910 occasioned a direct communication between NRP candidates and Romanian rural communities, the effect consisting in the political initiation of the latter.[90]

The first article of the Great National Assembly Resolution proclaimed union with Romania of all territories inhabited by Romanians in Transylvania, Banat and Hungary. However, the second article of the document reflected a fact resulting from a historical development, from the fact that territories concerned still constituted a theatre of war and from

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[86] *Tribuna*, VIII, 6, 4/17 January 1904, 1.
[87] *Tribuna*, IX, 79, 28 April/11 May 1905, 5.
[88] Georgescu, *George Pop de Băseşti*, 36-47; Teodor V. Păcăţian, *Cartea de aur sau luptele politice naţionale ale Românilor de sub coroana ungară* [The Golden Book or the National Political Struggles of Romanians under the Hungarian Crown] (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei arhidiecezane, 1910), 738-741.
[89] Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii [Memoirs]*, passim.
[90] Valer Moga, "Naţiunea în discursul politic românesc din Transilvania anului 1918," [The Nation in the Romanian Political Discourse in Transylvania of the Year 1918], in *Problema Transilvaniei în discursul politic de la sfârşitul Primului Război Mondial* [Transylvania's Issue in the Political Discourse at the End of the First World War], eds. Valer Moga, Sorin Arhire (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2009), 42.

the need of a period in which to set up a legal and institutional framework of the unification. Consequently, the second article revealed a provisional autonomy to the territories mentioned in the document.[91] Political integration of Transylvania into the Romanian state began under the establishment of a temporary power comprised of an executive body, the Directory Council, presided by Iuliu Maniu, and a legislative one, the Great National Council. In fact, it was a power exercised by the Romanian National Party, which held an unequalled majority in the two institutions. In the Directory Council, from the first team designated in December 1, 1918, there were 13 members of the PNR and only two Social Democrats. In the Great National Council, of the 210 members elected at Alba Iulia, only 17 were Social Democrats.[92]

In addition to current affairs of the organization and administration of territories they had under their jurisdiction, the Directory Council and the Great National Council had the task of enacting the two major reforms, the electoral and agrarian laws, the first one having priority. Exactly the electoral reform principles created the conflict state that prompted the withdrawal, on August 2nd 1919, of the Social Democrats, both from the Great National Council and from the Directory Council, leaving the nationalists led by Iuliu Maniu exclusiveness of power.[93]

The Directory Council's draft on parliamentary elections followed, in general, the structure and content of the *Decree-law on electoral reform*, published in Bucharest November 29th, 1918. Therefore, Transylvanians could not enact the right to vote for women, a rule that would have been in conflict with the male universal vote stated over the Carpathians. Parliamentary contingent sent to Transylvania in Romania's parliament would have had another structure on genders than that of the rest of the country. In addition, we do not know how convinced were nationalists of

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[91] *Marea Adunare Naţională întrunită la Alba-Iulia în ziua de 1 Decemvrie 1918. Acte şi documente* [Great National Assembly Meeting in Alba Iulia on the 1st of December 1918. Acts and Documents] (Bucharest: 1928), 10-11.

[92] *Marea Adunare Naţională întrunită la Alba-Iulia în ziua de 1 Decemvrie 1918*, 20-21; Gheorghe Iancu, *Contribuţia Consiliului Dirigent la consolidarea statului Naţional unitar român (1918-1920)* [Contribution of the Directory Council in the Consolidation of the Romanian Unitary National State] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1985), 14-17.

[93] Iancu, *Contribuţia Consiliului Dirigent la consolidarea statului Naţional unitar român*, 72-73. Besides the fact that Social-Democrats claimed exact obedience of electoral stipulations from the Resolution at Alba Iulia, in this case the right to vote for women, they appreciated that they had disregarded the republican faith.

the right to vote for women, a principle rather supported by the Social-Democrats.

However, there remained significant differences between the two electoral decrees. Romanian National Party did no longer act as a political representative of the entire Romanian nation in Transylvania and Hungary. It was on the eve of an election campaign in which it was facing opponents positioned on both sides of the Carpathians. The electoral content should be such as to ensure nationalists a large majority in the area from this south side of the Carpathians. NRP leaders, victorious in the action aimed at the unification of Transylvania with Romania did not accept to lose now the struggle for power in a multi-party competition. They abandoned the principle of compulsory voting from the decree in Bucharest, which was not beneficial for them. Instead, they took a procedure of the election law last applied in Hungary in 1910, whereby if in a constituency a single nomination was submitted, the holder shall be declared elected without being subject to scrutiny.[94]

Due to the application of this "system of absolute majority", which probably comes from British law[95], at the elections to the House of Representatives in Transylvania, from 4 to 6 November 1919, of 205 constituencies, it was voted only in 61. The remaining 144, having only one candidate, each of them was declared elected *ex offîcio*.[96] In an analogous manner, the general elections for the Senate, from 7 to 8 November 1919, from 87 constituencies, it was voted in 15, 72 remaining

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[94] "Legea electorală ungară. Articolul de lege XXXIII din a[nul] 1874," [Hungarian Electoral Law. Article of Law XXXIII of the year 1874] in *Un memoriu politic. Cestiunea română în Transilvania şi Ungaria*, [Anexe] [A Political Memoir. Romanian Issue in Transylvania and Hungary – Annexes], ed. Eugen Brote (Bucureşti: Tipografia Voinţa Naţională, 1895), 173, 191, § 71; *Gazeta Oficială*, 52, 4 September 1918; in *Decretele, regulamentele şi ordonanţele Consiliului Dirigent din Transilvania publicate în Gazeta Oficială din 1918-1920 (retipărire)* [Decrees, regulations and ordinances of the Directory Council of Transylvania published in the Official Gazette from 1918-1920 (reprint)] (Cluj: Editura Buletinului Justiţiei din Cluj, 1929), 514-515.

[95] Marcel Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice în cifre şi grafice* [Evolution of Our Political Parties in Numbers and Graphs] (Sibiu: Publishing and printing Krafft & Drotleff SA, 1932), 6; Gheorghe Iancu, "Desfăşurarea şi rezultatul alegerilor parlamentare din noiembrie 1919 în circumscripţiile Transilvaniei," [The Conduct and Outcome of the November 1919 Parliamentary Elections in Transylvanian Constituencies] *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Series Historia* 1 (1974), 106, 112.

[96] *Monitorul Oficial*, 171, 18 November 1919, 9640-9642.

outside scrutiny.[97] In total, at the elections for both chambers, "absolute majority system" has led to inactivation of 74% of constituencies. We may estimate that in the same proportion, voters were deprived of exercising the right to vote. Farmers, the largest part of the province's voters were most affected by this frustration. We ask ourselves, under these circumstances: to what extent can we speak of universal male vote? Transylvania's electoral decree, promulgated on 24th of August 1919 was also applied in the next two election campaigns. However, in 1920 and 1922, in addition to Transylvanian political groups, the People's Party and the National Liberal Party benefited of its provisions, which were extending their electoral infrastructure across the Carpathians.

In November 1918, the Central Committee of the Romanian National Party was the main power pole in the Romanian National Central Council, which included six representatives of the Social Democratic Party. Then, first the nationalist leaders, but also Social-Democrats wanted to ensure the future Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia wide representation on which the success of political action for the unification of Transylvania with Romania depended. Therefore, in the act of convening, it was first recommended the representation in the assembly of the main national institutions: religious, cultural, educational, etc., but also of "all social strata of the nation", being considered primarily farmers, whose proportion in society exceeded 80%.[98] This is how the latter got to hold the highest weight in the Great National Assembly, followed closely by clergy and at some distance, lawyers.

A corporate vision has also manifested in the fall of 1918, especially in Banat, where the Romanian National Party was facing controversy. Circles of opinion in this area were proposing distribution of nominations by socio-professional categories and their numerical ranking based on the importance of these categories: farmers, clergy, teachers, lawyers, doctors etc.[99]

This political mentality was in contradiction with the rules and customs of the two-party or multi-party democratic electoral regimes, in which the approval of the lists of candidates by party leaderships was not a violation

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[97]*Monitorul Oficial*, 172, 19 November 1919, 9718-9719; Gheorghe Iancu, "Desfăşurarea şi rezultatul alegerilor parlamentare din noiembrie 1919 în circumscripţiile Transilvaniei," 115-116.

[98] *Românul*, VII, 11, 8/21 November 1918, 1.

[99] Gheorghe Iancu, "Campania electorală pentru alegerile parlamentare din 1919 în circumscripţiile Transilvaniei," [Electoral Campaign for Parliamentary Elections of 1919 in Transylvanian Constituencies] *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Series Historia* 1 (1973), 95.

of political ethics. Finally, within the NRP, candidates were nominated by the influence they exercised in the party, at central or local level. On the final list of candidates of the party for Deputies' Assembly there were 84 lawyers, 30 priests, 16 teachers, 7 public servants, 7 publicists, 6 owners, 4 teachers, 4 peasants, 3 doctors and so on. On the list for the Senate, clergy overtook lawyers, more interested in the other chamber of Parliament, whose greater authority they were aware of. The peasants had disappeared altogether, but of the 11 owners of the third position, with certainty, most, if not all, were farmers.[100]

For shaping the electoral positioning of farmers, elections of 1919 and 1928 were taken as reference situations, when Transylvania nationals have played an important role; at the last elections, along with their allies from the Old Kingdom, in the National Peasant Party. In 1928, within the whole Romania, farmers, who were in third place in the House of Representatives, obtained 22 seats, but they were a long way from first place, the lawyers, with 173 seats. The situation was better if we take into account the 16 owners, who, as was stressed, were mostly landowners, maybe big landowners, ultimately farmers. Amazingly, there were two "ploughmen" at the bottom of the hierarchy, whom we should not necessarily see differently from farmers, as social level.

According to the duties of both Chambers of the legislative and mentalities of the time, the Senate, although it was called the Upper House, had a secondary position in the Parliament's activity and in the interests of politicians. However, senators generally occupied a higher level in the social hierarchy. Therefore, it should not be surprising that in 1928, lawyers retaining their primacy, the owner senators, numbering 14, were located in a more favourable position, before the 7 farmers.[101]

The evolution of the sample's members used in the study doubles, broadly, the general electoral positioning of farmers, both as individuals and as a social group, depending on their political influence. Depending on the assumed social origin, it is about six farmers in the House of

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[100] Iancu, "Campania electorală pentru alegerile parlamentare din 1919 în circumscripțiile Transilvaniei," 91, 100. These were not all the Transylvanian candidates at the parliamentary elections of 1919. The Social-Democratic party withdrew from the campaign. However, the National Union of Banat participated, led by Avram Imbroane, the Peasants' Party and Hungarian and German political parties. All these parties have won parliamentary seats, but the big share went naturally to the Romanian National Party.

[101] Dogan, *Analiza statistică a "democrației parlamentare" din România*, Table no. V d, Table no. VI d.

Representatives elected in November 1919, including three economists and three big owners.

Dumitru Nica, economist of Moroda, Arad, was chosen in the electoral constituency Târnava. He was appreciated in NRP leadership, being part of the Chamber of Agriculture of Arad County.[102] In 1927, he became mayor of his native parish, subsequently, vice-president of the Chamber of Agriculture of Arad County. Uroş Pătean, on whom we return, was elected representative in the electoral constituency Nădlac, Cenad. He was very active in the leadership of the NRP, both before 1918 and after. In 1920, he was a member of the party's 100 Committee.[103] Mihai Vasiescu, economist, had graduated four classes of middle school. He ran for a mandate of representative in the electoral Constituency Lipova in Timiş-Torontal County.[104] Irritated that Vasiescu joined the Peasants' Party recently established in Transylvania, the president of the election bureau, which represented the position of NRP, has rejected his nomination, proclaiming as chosen member the lawyer Constantin Missici. Despite the persecutions he underwent, Mihai Vasiescu persevered, getting through an appeal, the repetition of the elections from Lipova. On February 24th, 1920 he won the deputy mandate with a large majority, running against another lawyer, Aurel Ciobanu.[105]

The great owner Alexandru Vaida-Voevod was elected representative in the constituency of Ighiu, Alba, where he also won two seats in the Diet in Budapest, in 1906 and 1910.[106] With the same social framework, Sever Sălăgian from Holod had followed law studies at the Royal Hungarian University of Budapest. Subsequently, in addition to managing his farm, he served as director of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Oradea domain. In the 1919 elections for the Chamber, in the constituency Sălard, Bihor, he has taken a centrifugal position. Although he was member of the NRP, he had not been appointed the official delegate of the party. However, he had obtained the majority of votes, adjudicating victory.[107] We are now

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[102] *Monitorul Oficial*, 171, 18 November 1919, 9640; *Ioachim Crăciun: documente la un sfert de veac*, vol. I, 223-225.

[103] See above, footnote 44; *Monitorul Oficial*, 171, 18 November 1919, 9641; *Românul*, IX, 91, 30 April 1920, 2.

[104] Today in the county of Arad. Vasiescu lived in Lipova.

[105] Iancu, "Desfăşurarea şi rezultatul alegerilor parlamentare din noiembrie 1919 în circumscripţiile Transilvaniei," 122-123.

[106] See above, footnotes 39, 40; *Monitorul Oficial*, 171, 18 November 1919, 9640.

[107] MNU, *Documente*, tom I, 161; Gabriel Moisa, "Parliamentary Elections in Bihor County and Their Results Between the two World Wars," *Revista Română de Geografie Politică*, XII/1 (2010), 99-100; Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*

returning to Nicolae Vulcu, great owner of Târgu Mureş, who has obtained the mandate, being a candidate in the constituency Bandu de Câmpie, the Mureş-Turda County.[108]

Compared to six persons in the House of Representatives, the Senate has a single member, the great owner Emil Cormoş Alexandrescu, elected in the constituency Târgu Mureş.[109]

At first glance, the presence of only three constituents of the sample among lawmakers 1928-1931 seems bleak. Regarded more closely, the situation falls within the political rules of the period. The proportion of farmers in the sample is not far below that of farmers in the entire parliament.[110]

It is also important the political value of the three in question. To Alexandru Vaida-Voevod we respect this time, too, even if only conventionally, the option that through the condition of an "owner" to draw upon himself the landowner prestige and noble ancestry. He had accumulated almost four decades of political experience. Since 1906, in Budapest and then in Bucharest, he was deputy without interruption. Mihai Vasiescu, the "ploughman" in Lipova with secondary education was at the third, but not last deputy mandate. In the Upper House, great owner Nicolae Vulcu, long-time member of NRP, then of NPP, came after deputy mandate from 1919-1920 and was about to exercise one of a senator in the legislature from 1932 to 1933.[111]

Conclusions

In the previous pages I have tried to assess part of the population of Transylvania, in view of its integration into the political life of Romania, invoking the data from the early twentieth century, or even the end of the previous one. They were made during some conclusions regarding the

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intelectualităţii româneşti din Transilvania şi Banat, no. 541, 365; *Monitorul Oficial*, 171, 18 November 1919, 9641.

[108] See above, footnote 30; *Monitorul Oficial*, 171, 18 November 1919, 9641.

[109] *Monitorul Oficial*, 172, 19 November 1919, 9719.

[110] In this study, farmers are 6.25% of the constituents who have obtained a parliamentary mandate at the elections in December 1928. At the level of the entire legislative, farmers are 10.26% of all elected members of parliament. Between the two groups, it remains analogous the distance between farmers and the best represented professional category, lawyers.

[111] Traian Bosoancă, Ilarie Gh. Opriş, *Alegerile parlamentare din judeţul Mureş 1919-1939* [Parliamentary Elections in the county of Mureş 1919-1939] (Târgu Mureş: Ardealul, 2004), 129.

Transylvanian electorate placed in front of the Old Kingdom. This comparative approach would have had greater relevance if Transylvanians would have made contact after 1918 with an experienced electoral system, in full development. But the principles and provisions of the *Decree-law on electoral reform*, of November 29th 1918 opened a political word unknown both to Transylvanian farmers and to the "regăţenilor" (the Romanians of the Old Kingdom) who, except those fulfilling the conditions of census, had lived until then outside of political life. Moreover, "the system of absolute majority", convenient to the elite of the Romanian National Party and of which did not hesitate to use, since 1920, the candidates of Averescu or the liberals, have kept a few years away from the polls on many who should have taken advantage of the universal male vote. The system was applied for the same period in Bucovina as well.[112] All this proves that after 1918 a transitional period was needed for political integration, not only of new provinces, but of the entire Romania. From this perspective, *Electoral Law*, of March 27th 1926, has all the reasons to join the so-called unification laws adopted in the third decade of the interwar period. An interesting process, approached in the pages above, but which should be reconsidered on a much larger number of pages, is how Transylvanians who had made politics in Parliament in Budapest and in the congregations of the Hungarian Counties reacted to the style and rules of similar institutions in Romania.

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[112] Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice*, 6.

Chapter Ten

The Reorganization of the Romanian National Party in Rural Areas of Lower Alba County prior to Parliamentary Elections in 1919[*]

Vlad Popovici

The prerequisites and context of local reorganization

For reasons preeminently due to an absence of documenting sources, studies of the Romanian National Party (RNP) and its successor, The National Peasants' Party, have relatively rarely dwelled on a description and minute analysis of local structures, including data on the great rural masses of members within these parties.[1] Even in cases where, by a remarkable act of fortune, lower-level party structures have been made known in their entirety within a set of cohesively delineated geographical localities, a scrutiny of local elites still proves to be a difficult attempt[2] at

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[1] The historiography of said issue is minutely addressed in the most recent synthetical approach to the party's history: Marin Pop, *Viaţa politică în România interbelică (1919-1938). Activitatea Partidului Naţional şi Naţional Ţărănesc din Ardeal şi Banat* [Political Life in Interwar Romania (1919-1938). The Activity of the National Party and of The National Peasants' Party in Transylvania and Banat] (Cluj-Napoca, Zalău: Editura Mega, Editura Porolissum, 2014), 13-15.

[2] In the absence of comprehensive prosopographical tools that would also cover Romanians in Transylvania {an exception therein are the works of Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualităţii româneşti din Transilvania şi Banat în epoca modernă* [The History of the Romanian Intelligentsia Development in Modern-Time Transylvania and Banat] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000) and *Intelectualitatea ecleziastică. Preoţii Blajului (1806-1948)* [Ecclesiastic Intellectuals. The Priests of Blaj (1806-1948)] (Târgu Mureş: Editura Universităţii

this time and the rural component is inevitably bound to slide from
political history into social issues. This is also the case of research
henceforth presented, focused on a micro-region area in Central Lower
Alba that consists of 43 localities within Aiud, Ighiu and Teiuş sub-
counties[3], with nominal RNP members' lists preserved within local
organisations that were drawn up during the party's reorganization process
in August of 1919.[4]

The outset of summer that year, as well as scheduled general
parliamentary elections in September, the first in the history of Greater
Romania, found RNP in an enviable political position. After 25 years
(1894-1918) during which its activity had officially been banned but
factually tolerated by authorities of Dualist Hungary, the end of the World
War and the collapse of the dual monarchy propelled this party from the
rank of an ethnic minority opposition party (on a Hungarian reference
scale) to the official position of luminary for the majority of Transylvanian
inhabitants.[5] The prestige earned in waging political-national contentions
over the previous decades, the capital role played by party leaders in the
organization of the Great Union and the administrative takeover of western

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Petru Maior, 2007)}, a solid analysis of local party organization would entail such
an equally deep and time-consuming immersion into microhistory, that an obvious
disproportion between the research plight and the findings would forcibly ensue.

[3] Sub-County Aiud: Aiud, Upper Aiud, Asinip, Beldiu, Ciuguzel, Ciumbrud,
Gârboviţa, Geogel, New (Romanian) Lopadea, Măgina, Meşcreac, Miraslău,
Ocnişoara, Odverem, Ponor, Rachiş, Sâncrai, Rădeşti; Sub-County Ighiu: Cricău,
Feneş, Galaţi, Găureni, Ighiel, Ighiu, Meteş, Pătrângeni, Poiana, Şard, Tăuţi, Ţelna,
Valea Dosului, Zlatna; Sub-County Teiuş: Benic, Căpud, Cetea, Coşlariu, Lower
Galda, Upper Geoagiu, Mesentea, Mihalţ, Obreja, Peţelca, Teiuş.

[4] Direcţia Judeţeană Cluj a Arhivelor Naţionale ale României (DJAN Cluj), Fond
Partidul Naţional Român – Blaj [Cluj County National Archives Bureau,
Romanian National Party Fund – Blaj], File 6. This fund covers documents on
RNP, that have come, through various circumstances, into the possession of
persons within the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Church of Blaj. Pre-1918 data
have been most likely entrusted to canon Ioan Micu Moldovan. Regrettably, we
have not been able to identify the person in charge with collecting the documents
in the file scrutinized in this study.

[5] Except cases where we explicitly delineate Historical Transylvania (the former
Great Principality) from the other newly-entered regions into the Kingdom of
Romania (Banat, Crişana, Sătmar, Maramureş), employment of the term
'Transylvania' over the course of our study shall refer to all territories as
mentioned above.

territories that had recently entered the Romanian Kingdom[6] served to strengthen their position within key political-administrative bodies, such as the Ruling Council or the Great National Council. That was thus conducive to the paradoxical situation where, albeit in the absence of central management and any form of internal hierarchical set-up[7], the party would still, through its members, be in a position to control the entirety of public life in Transylvania, including the organization of the electoral process.

However, its power status was fragile (as the first dissidences would demonstrate) and participation in elections called for an emergency reorganization of local subsidiaries. In all likelihood, the majority of party leaders would understand the imperative of building a functional internal structure to ensure RNP mass membership (voters, respectively) much needed in political confrontations with the parties of the Old Kingdom. Extension of the suffrage generated, among other effects, the emergence of a rural electorate to be attracted among the party ranks, protected by competing doctrinal influences and rendered loyal in the medium- and long-term. Not incidentally, on 30 July 1919, the Great National Council had co-opted several representatives of social rural groups: 11 peasants and 13 primary school teachers.[8]

Prior to 1918, the primary element of cohesion between the RNP elite and the Romanian electorate had been the nationalist incentive, generated by ethnic communion – a response to an increasingly aggressive policy of Hungarian governments. This incentive was not enough to ensure that the majority of Romanian voters from Dualist Hungary would be lured onto the barricades of the Romanian National Party, as shown by the 1905-1910 electoral failures in many constituencies with Romanian majority where, in theory, RNP candidates should have won by a landslide.[9] If the Romanian

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[6] Gheorghe Iancu, *The Ruling Council. The Integration of Transylvania into Romania 1918-1920* (Cluj-Napoca: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1995), 30-68, 94-153.

[7] RNP leadership, headed by George Pop de Băseşti, had submitted its mandate before the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia, thereby delegating political responsibility to the Ruling Council. Factually, although the Ruling Council and the Great National Council also included representatives of the Social Democrats, RNP representatives held key positions and their attitude was ultimately conducive to the withdrawal of the leftist representatives. *See* Pop, *Viaţa politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 22-26.

[8] Pop, *Viaţa politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 22-23.

[9] The best published statistics are to be found in: Stelian Mândruţ, *Mişcarea naţională şi activitatea parlamentară a deputaţilor Partidului naţional Român din Transilvania între anii 1905-1910* [The National Movement and Parliamentary

rural electorate had succumbed to tactics employed by Hungarian parties (endorsing Romanian candidates within Hungarian party program[10], buying votes, violence, and pressure exerted by the administratio[11]), their resistance to the persuasion of Romanian politicians would be even lower.

Also worth noting is the impetus of the social democratic movement, and, generally, of leftist ideas, that would find fertile ground in an impoverished world, brutalized by the war experience. Iuliu Maniu himself noted that "the defense of the masses against subversive currents" had to be among the objectives of the party.[12]

Last but not least, after 1918, RNP ceased to be a second-rate party[13], an ethnic minority representative sending, on occasion, certain voices to the Hungarian Parliament, and became a major player in the political arena of the newly enlarged Kingdom of Romania. As a result, the expectations of its members in middle and upper echelons increased, especially since the enforcement of the Romanian administration in Transylvania had certainly whet their appetite for civil servants' pay. Keeping the internal cohesion of the party depended largely on meeting the expectations of its *intelligentsia*, a matter mostly resolved by appointments to administrative, school, ecclesiastic or other positions, covered by the public budget. Nonetheless, uninterrupted employment in said functions would directly

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Activity of Romanian National Party Representatives in Transylvania between 1905-1910] (Oradea: Fundația Culturală „Cele Trei Crișuri", 1995), 79-80, 94-96, 152-153.

[10] The most recent monograph on the subject: Ovidiu Emil Iudean, *The Romanian Governmental Representatives in the Budapest Parliament (1881-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2016).

[11] Robert William Seton-Watson, *Corruption and Reform in Hungary. A Study of Electoral Practice, S*econd Impression (London: Constable&Co. Ltd, 1911), 1-41.

[12] Pop, *Viața politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 27.

[13] While RNP can be categorized as a "national party", according to P.P. Negulescu's acceptance (Petre P. Negulescu, *Partidele politice* [Political Parties], Second Edition (Bucharest: Editura Garamond, 1994), *apud Geneza, definirea și evoluția conceptului de partid politic în România până la primul război mondial. Antologie de texte* [Genesis, Definition and Development of the Political Party Concept in Romania up to WWI. An Anthology of Texts], ed. Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga", 2005), 25), according to the current state of knowledge in the field, it is difficult to accept the assertion that the RNP would not have been a proper political party but an organ of protest against the dualist state structure. Unfortunately, the absence of a monograph on the Romanian National Party is bound to hinder an overall analysis of its setup and workings, however, recent research on the national movement clearly reveals that, since 1869, especially after 1905, its differences from Hungarian parties are less significant than those suggested in previous national-movement-related historiography.

depend on the preservation of political power and the guarantee thereof would be the number of loyal party voters – an aspect in which rural voters played a key role.

In this context, capitalizing on the proceedings of the Sibiu Great National Council (29 July – 12 August 1919), the RNP Conference (9-10 August 1919) was held, in which Octavian Goga and Ioan Suciu presented a set of proposals shortly followed by the reorganization of the party based thereon. The situation in the upper echelons saw a clear and swift resolution: Maniu was recognized as the leader *de jure*, the Executive Committee was assimilated into the Ruling Council and the Great National Council became the RNP Congress (Social Democrat deputies had just left the conference in protest at the failure to observe the Alba Iulia Proclamation provision on extension of voting rights to women). Essentially, the only newly created entity would be the Electoral Commission, which included 12 members in charge of coordinating activities related to the upcoming elections, including territorial organization.[14]

Notwithstanding the fulfillment of general principles enunciated by O. Goga and I. Suciu (contact of party leaders with the masses, enrollment of peasants in the RNP and electing a number of local leaders from this pool), detailed data varied from constituency to constituency and even from commune to commune. Initially, the Commission issued a statement in *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (Transylvania Gazette) urging the voting popula-tion[15] to join the electoral rolls, publicized across city halls from 15 to 25 August. In the same statement RNP local leader spokespersons were asked to verify the presence of party members on the above lists, and party supporters were invited to choose two "reliable men" from their ranks to perform the same operation.[16] Thus it was ensured that verification of voters would also occur in localities where there were no party branches, and where these were in place (at least in theory), a double filter control was applied. It is worth noting that under the Electoral Law, the commission for official control of lists would also include, for each of the

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[14] Pop, *Viața politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 26-28.

[15] Suffrage was an exclusively male privilege, and was conducted directly and secretly. For the Chamber of Deputies, the electorate's age limit was 21 years, whereas for the Senate, it was 40 years. For details concerning The Electoral Law for Transylvania, the Banat, Crishana, Satmar and Maramuresh, *see* Sorin Radu, "Electoratul din Transilvania în primii ani după Marea Unire," [The Transylvanian Electorate in the First Years following the Great Union] *Apulum* XXXVII/2 (2000), 230-232.

[16] *Gazeta Transilvaniei* [The Transylvanian Gazette], Brașov, LXXX/173, 23 August 1919, 1.

villages, the local mayor, the town hall secretary and a primary school teacher or another "suitable person"[17], therefore, lay officials, whereas in fact, organization and running of the polls would, in most cases, be entrusted to members of the clergy.

The process of verifying electoral lists would not constitute a novelty to local leadership of the party and its more seasoned voters - this was a mandatory step to be taken, brought by national leaders to the attention of the Romanian electorate in Transylvania and Hungary during each round of parliamentary elections in Transleithania. Nevertheless, it must have been a new concept to most voters, invested with suffrage only under the recent law of the Ruling Council[18], so that the message of the Election Commission was entirely justified, both in terms of specific party needs and forging a general education and discipline among voters. A complete novelty, however, was the secret voting procedure by envelope.[19] Prior to 1918, the Transylvanian electorate was familiar with the spoken vote that publicly linked the elector's option to him, thus exposing him to political opponents, but at the same time have the advantage of simplicity in the exercise of suffrage. Colored ballots/ election logos/ technical markings[20] must have, at least partially, carried a hint of confusion for the rural voters, especially for those whose literacy was limited or inexistent – such cases were found, in large numbers, among RNP members of the surveyed micro-area.

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[17] Sorin Radu, *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866-1938)* [The Modernization of the Electoral System in Romania (1866-1938)] (Iași: Institutul European, 2005), 172.

[18] For example, at Cricău, out of 77 RNP members nominated in 1919, only 7 had been allowed to vote in the 1905 parliamentary elections, according to data provided in the brochure *Lupta noastră de la Ighiu dată în ziua de 26 ianuarie 1905 în jurul d-lui Dr. Alexandru de Vajda Voevod pentru a smulge cercul electoral din mâna străină și a-l cuceri pentru un deputat cu program național român* [Our Battle of Ighiu of 26 January 1905 on the Issue of Doctor Alexandru Vajda Voevod, to Wrest the Electoral Circle out of Foreign Grasp and Lend it to a Representative with a Romanian National Platform] (Orăștie: Tipografia Nouă, 1906), 21-22.

[19] Radu, *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866-1938)*, 173-174.

[20] Sorin Radu, "Semnele electorale ale partidelor politice în perioada interbelică (1919-1937)," [Electoral Insignia of Political Parties in the Interwar Period (1919-1937)] *Apulum* XXXIX/1 (2002), 573.

The reorganization of party subsidiaries at communal and sub-county level

The first steps towards locally reorganizing RNP in Transylvania occurred on 3 August 1919 (Hârtibaciului Plateau) and continued over the coming weeks[21], despite the fact that on 17 August, delayed parliamentary elections would be announced, originally scheduled in September and re-scheduled for the month of October.[22] This change does not seem to have impacted the calendar of internal reorganization anywhere, including the region that constitutes the object of our research, where constituent meetings were held between 16 and 29 August 1919.

It is good to start by addressing the representative character of preserved documents relative to demographic and micro-zonal administrative structure. The three sub-counties in central and northern Lower Alba County were, according to census data in 1910 and 1920, inhabited by a population of over 80% Romanians, approximately equally divided into Orthodox and Greek Catholic. The 43 municipalities for which data have been preserved constitute between 58-70% of all sub-county settlements, thus forming a percentage that cannot be challenged in terms of represent-tation. Their demographic structure conveys that, in terms of overall ethnic and confessional features of the region, the sub-county Ighiu was mostly Orthodox, while sub-counties Aiud and Teiuş were mostly Greek Catholic (*see also* Table No. 1, below).[23] Only one settlement locality had an urban status (Aiud), but it was factored in because the information provided in the minutes of a locally held meeting here are not numerous, not statistically different and do not disturb the overall picture offered by other documents. Perhaps, if the nominal list and social professional algorithm of its members had survived, there would have been a significant difference to lists in rural areas, with an impact on micro-zonal statistics, but in the absence of such a document, the constitutive meeting of the

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[21] Pop, *Viaţa politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 29-31.

[22] Pop, *Viaţa politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 28.

[23] Calculations were performed based on Varga E. Árpád, *Erdélyi etnikai és felekezeti statisztikája 1850-2002* [Ethnic and Confessional Statistics of Transyl-vania 1850-2002], online edition, accessed at http://www.kia.hu, on 25.10.2014. The Administrative Structure prior to 1918, *apud* Szabó M. Attila, *Erdélyi, Bánság és Partium történeti és közigazgatási helységnévtára* [Historical and Adminis-trative Topographical Dictionary of Transylvania, Banat, and Partium] (Budapest: Arcanum, 2006) (CD) *et apud* http://mek.oszk.hu/cgi-bin/thes.cgi?desc=Als%f3% 2dFeh%e9r%20v%e1rmegye&trunc=0 accessed on 25.10.2014.

Aiud branch appears to be similar to constituent assemblies in any other neighboring rural communes.

Table No. 1. The demographical make-up of surveyed localities, broken down by sub-county

Locality	Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Romanian	Total	% Romanian
Aiud	495	1877	2372	8663	27.38
Aiudul de Sus	7	1083	1090	1630	66.87
Asinip	3	509	512	640	80.00
Beldiu	3	354	357	364	98.08
Ciuguzel	7	630	637	680	93.68
Ciumbrud	0	614	614	991	61.96
Gârboviţa	3	430	433	433	100.00
Geogel	657	159	816	819	99.63
Lopadea Nouă (Lopadea Română)	6	716	722	724	99.72
Măgina	692	136	828	843	98.22
Meşcreac	6	478	484	502	96.41
Miraslău	3	506	509	951	53.52
Ocnişoara	2	631	633	658	96.20
Odverem	0	404	404	415	97.35
Ponor	1144	6	1150	1150	100.00
Rachiș	0	204	204	204	100.00
Sâncrai	0	400	400	615	65.04

Locality	Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Romanian	Total	% Romanian
Rădești (Tempăhaza)	3	799	802	931	86.14
	3031	**9936**	**12967**	**21213**	**61.13**
Cricău	996	318	1314	1432	91.76
Feneș	949	178	1127	1140	98.86
Galați	713	1	714	744	95.97
Găureni (Văleni)	329	0	329	336	97.92
Ighiel	800	1	801	804	99.63
Ighiu	639	575	1214	1559	77.87
Meteș	929	7	936	952	98.32
Pătrângeni	1003	124	1127	1144	98.51
Poiana	532	0	532	543	97.97
Șard	33	1568	1601	1789	89.49
Tăuți	652	12	664	665	99.85
Țelna	1076	2	1078	1115	96.68
Izvoru Ampoiului (Valea Dosului)	995	10	1005	1160	86.64
Zlatna	2451	576	3027	4317	70.12
	12097	**3372**	**15469**	**17700**	**87.40**
Benic	35	844	879	920	95.54
Căpud	5	352	357	525	68.00
Cetea	1257	157	1414	1424	99.30

Locality	Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Romanian	Total	% Romanian
Coşlariu	5	370	375	421	89.07
Galda de Jos	21	1353	1374	1455	94.43
Geoagiul de Sus	1474	89	1563	1584	98.67
Mesentea	241	6	247	257	96.11
Mihalţ	1047	1208	2255	2317	97.32
Obreja	43	515	558	588	94.90
Peţelca	4	606	610	610	100.00
Teiuş	119	1913	2032	3589	56.62
	4251	**7413**	**11664**	**13690**	**85.20**

Naturally, we must pose the question: what happened in other localities where no documents have been preserved? Were subsidiaries set up without the documents being sent to Blaj? At least in some cases, we have no reason to doubt this had been the case. Romanian majority communes within the same sub-counties (e.g. Galda de Sus, Galtiu, Tibru, Bucerdea Vinoasă, etc.) are not kept on record, but it is hard to imagine that, in communes with a population exceeding 1,000 inhabitants, with over 95% Romanians, RNP chapters would not be established, while competition from other parties was virtually inexistent. We must rather chalk these shortcomings up to chance that oftentimes determines the preservation of historical documents.

The first constitutive meetings in local subsidiaries were conducted at Aiud and Beldiu (16 August[24]), followed by Asinip, Rachiş (17 August) and Teiuş (19 August).[25] In most localities (30) they took place on 24 August, a Sunday. Organizing meetings in Teiuş and Ighiu sub-counties were held on 27 August. The organizational meeting in sub-county Aiud would have been held on the same date. Establishing local subsidiaries continued thereafter, at least in Aiud and Ighiu sub-counties, where

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[24] Over the course of our study, the Gregorian Calendar has been preferred.
[25] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 1-6, 65-67.

records of new meetings on 27, 28 and 29 August, including one on the occasion of the Assumption (15/28 August), are extant.

The calendar of these actions should be primarily linked to the closing of Great National Council and the open invitation to the public to reorganize the party[26], however, it should not be overlooked that most meetings were held on days of rest, i.e. an ideal time to propagate political ideas amidst peasant gatherings on such occasions: the church service or secular social spaces and premises. Given that, as will be seen, priests played a key role in the process of RNP local reorganizing, it would be hard to believe that their influence was not felt from the very moment of the religious service. This opinion is reinforced by our finding that in almost all localities (40, including Ighiu – sub-county center) the establishment of subsidiaries was held on Sundays or holidays.[27] Even on the common sense assumption that the one day meant for rest, necessarily, had to be the organization day of party meetings – because only then could an increased presence of peasants be counted on – the role of morning service in mobilizing the electorate cannot be denied, given that the 31presidents of the founding sessions were priests, and other 5 were of unknown profession (not nominated), but there is an increased likelihood that among them would have been servants of the church.

These are not the only time-related points of reference hinting at political organization based on religious or festive chronology in an attempt to amplify the impact of the event in the electorate's mindset. The documents that constituted the building blocks of our analysis were preserved as they were collected by a person (i.e. the regional coordinator of RNP activities) with an ecclesiastical Greek Catholic background of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș. Building on this prerequisite, the most recent information maintained (the Feast of the Assumption) becomes understandable and interpretable from the viewpoint of the collector's professional calendar. On the other hand, the date of 24 August (when 30 out of the 43 meetings were held) was not a common Sunday but happened to be the birthday of King Ferdinand I[28] – a celebration most certainly mentioned both during the morning service and in the opening of the organizational meetings.

It can be inferred that the original deadline of organization within a sub-county was fixed on August 27, the day preceding the church feast, in

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[26] *Gazeta Transilvaniei* [The Transylvania Gazette], LXXX/168, 16 August 1919, 1-2.

[27] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 7-52, 57, 64.

[28] Not his name day, as inaccurately mentioned in DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 10.

the hope that the coincidence with a major secular celebration on the 24th would encourage organization across the communes. But for reasons one can only surmise (a lack of commitment on the part of local supporters? the precedence of a church feast over Sunday and a secular holiday?), some communities, regardless of administrative or any other geographical affiliation, chose to proceed to the organization of subsidiaries during the religious event. Regardless of the reasons behind this choice, which we will likely never know, the relatively coherent schedule as can be discerned in the process of local RNP reorganization in Lower Alba County optimally highlights the relationship between the phenomenon of religion, festivism and politics in the rural Romanian world in the early years of the interwar period.

   Albeit not familiar with the details surrounding the Blaj coordinator of the RNP reorganization, we have instead gained a rather coherent image of local coordinators, presidents, and, to a lesser extent, secretaries in meetings for the establishment of subsidiaries. As emerges from the minutes, in principle, an initiator of a local communal reorganization process also takes on the president's capacity in the meeting for the establishment of the subsidiary. We know the names and professions of 39 of the presidents (90%), in 34 cases (80%) they are priests (including two archpriests[29]), in two cases they are mayors, in one case there is a village primary school teacher and in the other two cases there is a bank manager (Tit Liviu Bitea) who covered the organization of two communes.

   The body of secretaries is significantly less documented, and the little information preserved indicates that the position was filled by persons from the village elite - generally, but not necessarily, members of the rural intelligentsia: profession/occupation are only recorded for 1 teacher, 1 priest (Aurel Pascu at Ocnişoara, where the president was mayor Emanuel Lodroman), 1 notary, 1 church trustee and 1 peasant.[30] The Aiud secretary of the meeting was attorney Ioan Maior, Dr. iur.[31]

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[29] Ioan Maior, Iacob Domşa, Greek-Catholic Archpriests of Aiud and Zlatna, respectively. DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 1-2, 62.

[30] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 1-2, 18, 28, 38-40.

[31] We were not able to explicitly identify a family link between this person and the president, Archpriest Ioan Maior, but they are in all likelihood father and son, should Ioan Maior, Dr. iur. be the very person born in Roşia Montană in 1883 (where the future archpriest would work as a teacher and priest at the time) and should he have attended the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the Ferencz József University in Cluj. *Also see* Sigmirean, *Formarea intelectualităţi*, 346, 380,

Another category of officials at the meetings were the checkers or the trusted members, whose mission consisted of going through the text of the minutes and validating, by way of signature, the information contained therein. Their numbers would vary between 1 and 5, but on average, there were 2. In the 28 communes with extant records thereof 64 such individuals are listed by name. We do not know details about most of them, only in two of the cases professions (one teacher and one deputy mayor) are mentioned and in nine cases (including the two previously mentioned) the capacity of checker during meetings is doubled by a position held within the local structures of the party (local board member, secretary or cashier).[32] What we can safely state about these persons is that they must have been able to read and write, in order to be able to fulfill their mission and to inspire confidence among the great masses of attendees.

A special function that some of the members were invested with at the end of meetings was delegate to the sub-county committee. Although the project Goga-Suciu provided for sending only one delegate from each commune[33], there were cases in which 2, 3 or even six delegates (Teiuș)[34] were selected, some of them in the sub-county committee, others in the county committee. In more than half of the communes, mention of the election of delegates (including Ighiu as the center of the sub-county) is not made, but we believe that in such cases the subsidiary president would tacitly assume the role. Moreover, in the vast majority of cases (75%), the same person would hold the position of president of the meeting, president of the subsidiary and delegate to the sub-county committee.

Occasionally, during opening sessions, persons from the middle echelon of the party, such as first praetor Muntean, PhD from Cetea, the mine owner and bank manager Julius V. Albini from Zlatna, or priest and professor Vasile Bologa, PhD from Geoagiu, born in said village, would take the floor.[35] However, that did not seem to have been common

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491; *Șematismul veneratului cler al Archidiecesei Metropolitane Greco-Catolice Române de Alba Iulia și Făgăraș pre anul Domnului 1900 de la Sânta Unire 200*, [The Schematism of the Revered Clergy within the Romanian Metropolitan Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Fogarash in the Year of Our Lord 1900 from the Holy Unification] (Blaj: Tipografia Seminarului Archidiecesan, 1900), 721.
[32] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 7-8, 10, 14, 28, 38, 47, 52-53, 63,
[33] Pop, *Viața politică în România interbelică (1919-1938)*, 26.
[34] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 6.
[35] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 21, 25-26, 62. We were not able to accurately establish the identity of first praetor Muntean, PhD. On Iuliu V. Albini, *see* "O familie ca puține altele," [A Family Like Few Others] *Unirea Poporului* [The Union of the People], Blaj, XIX/37, 12 September 1937, 6-7.

practice, probably because the stakes were not directly electoral. Only during the Aiud meeting, another six members of a "board of candidacy" were listed, whose objective was to verify the candidacies for leadership positions of the subsidiary.[36] In rural communes such *ad hoc* bodies have not been reported.

Upon analysis of meetings in localities under survey we have identified nine points addressed during the debates, that served to chronologically structure the development of the event: 1. stating the objectives of the meeting, 2. touching upon the history of the party, 3. stating the need to elect representatives to Parliament, 4. *ad hoc* leadership election for the meeting, 5. presenting the RNP program, 6. expression of adherence to the program by those present, 7. local leadership election, 8. appointment of delegates to the sub-county committee, 9. checking and signing the protocol. Not all localities addressed all of the points above. In most communes, protocols make constant reference to points 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Point 2 (party history) and 3 (justifying the necessity to elect representatives) are tackled in approx. 50% of cases, while Points 4 (*ad hoc* leadership election for meetings) and 5 (presentation of the RNP platform) are less frequently mentioned.

Clearly, in some cases, the failure to mention a topic does not mean that during the meeting those matters couldn't have been discussed. For example, if we were to exclusively believe documents, the RNP platform presentation occurred in 14 towns and expression of adherence to the platform by those present occurred in 30. It is obvious that in the remaining 16, the platform must be presented in one form or another since participants have adhered to it. The issue of electing *ad hoc* leadership for meetings is, in its turn, problematic, as a segment of public acknowledgment / recognition of the meeting summoner as a president must have been the case. Documents record the topics described in speeches, at times re-phrasing the ideas, but never render text speeches, thus we only have an overview of them. Usually, the link between the RNP and the Romanian people of Transylvania would be infallibly emphasized, as well as the modern character of agrarian and electoral laws adopted by Transylvanian rulers. Overlooking small inconsistencies in documentation, it is important that we be able to make a step-by-step reenactment of how such events would be carried out, and more, to notice standardization across the micro-region, reflecting the likely existence of coordination and instructions received from a higher hierarchical level.[37]

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[36] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 1-2.
[37] An irrefutable proof seems to be the nearly identical texts of minutes in localities Obreja, Gârboviţa, Peţelca and Căpud. Most likely, a series of instructions had

The founding meeting would be opened by the person in charge of organization, who would, in most cases, become the *ad hoc* president of the meeting. In very few instances a meeting location (in all five cases a school) is specified. The atmosphere, as reflected in the documents, was enthusiastic but calm and orderly, different from the hustle and the liveliness of electoral assemblies (both future and past)[38], which is natural considering the mitigated stakes of such organizational events and physical lack of opponents. The opening consisted of stating the objectives of the meeting, then a brief historical overview of pre-1918 national struggles waged by RNP would be provided. Sometimes the party platform would be presented, to which attendees would cheeringly profess allegiance[39], and the necessity to elect representatives to Parliament would be further stated.

Further steps consisted of electing meeting leaders, members within local party structures and delegate/ delegates to the sub-county committee. In nearly 50% of cases, documents state that adherence to the RNP platform and local leadership election were performed "unanimously".[40] In the last stage, the minutes were verified and signed by the president, secretary and trusted members/checkers. In some cases, during the meeting, nominal lists of those who had opted for RNP membership would be drafted.

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been received from the county's leadership of the party and, in such cases, the rough document was used in drafting the minutes. DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 7-8, 10, 20, 22, 23.

[38] Sorin Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)* [Electorate in Romania during Parliamentary Democracy (1919-1937)] (Iași: Institutul European, 2004), 157, 164-165.

[39] As an example, a descriptive passage from the records is provided herein: "In the midst of the assembly speaks our local pastor-chaplain Nicolae Muntean, and in his speech illustrates to the people the purpose of the meeting for which they are summoned. With brevity he speaks of the past and present history of the Romanian National Party, which waged hard battles under the cruel rule of Hungarian regime, always fought hard and unswervingly for the enforcement of the rights of the people and peasants. Free from contending Hungarian counts and barons for the realization of its platform, it presently brings the most fundamental laws for the people, land reform and universal suffrage, which are the sole certain guarantee for happiness in the future of the people – he causes the congregation to declare if they so choose to adhere to this party." DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 58.

[40] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 1-2, 5, 11, 23-24, 39, 41-43, 47-48, 55, 58-59, 60-62.

Meetings were organized to involve the audience as strongly as possible, who, captured by the narrative and propaganda side of the event (the history and achievements of the party), was being led towards the collective expression of adherence to the party's program and, as a result, engaged in a very dynamic internal organization process at the time of local leadership elections. The above must have resulted in moments of intense community cohesion, which partly would explain the high percentage of "unanimity" in confirming the leadership. An additional explanation pertained to common sense: those meetings were most likely, almost exclusively attended by RNP supporters, who, in the summer of 1919 had no alternative political parties to chose from anyway.

The size of the electorate's participation in these meetings is only partly known. Data for 22 municipalities and estimates for the remaining 21 (see below Table 2) have survived. Cca. 1,600 people are known by name, but it is estimated that the total number of members present on this occasion must have been between 3,000 and 3,500.

For instances in which we do not have an accurate number of those in attendance, documents generically state that participation was "numerous", "mostly present" or even "unanimous". Of course, these considerations are relative to begin with, given that population in this case refers to men with suffrage (membership was conditioned by suffrage) and quantitative dimension of this demographic has until this day remained a complete unknown.[41] In other cases, percentages vary between 3.5% (Meşcreac, Feneş) and 21.71% (Gârboviţa), the majority being 8-11%. If we consider that the percentage of individuals with the right to vote must have been relatively equal to or slightly higher than the one nationwide (12.53%)[42], an average of 50-70% participation among the electorate in these meetings is broadly consistent with estimates such as "numerous" and "mostly present". It should also be born in mind that a secretary's propensity towards completing the nominal lists of members himself was reversely proportional to the number of those present, which is probably one of the reasons that many communes relinquished keeping accurate records of all those present and their social standing.

As previously mentioned, a total of cca. 1,600 RNP members' names from explored sub-counties, largely peasants, have been kept. In most cases other biographical data are missing, thus an overall prosopographical analysis is impossible to carry out at this point. A number of conjectures – more aptly termed hypotheses – can be made from onomastic hints. When

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[41] Radu, *Electoratul din Transilvania în primii ani după Marea Unire*, 232-233.

[42] Radu, *Electoratul din Transilvania în primii ani după Marea Unire*, 75.

documents successively recorded people with identical last names they are most likely members of the same family, signaling role of blood relations and kinship in influencing the electorat[43] – but without an historical demographic database such assertions retain a speculative level.

Another interesting aspect, on which expert literature has dwelled, is the level of illiteracy.[44] In this case, illiteracy may be detected upon closer inspection of the lists, except that we can not be certain why a number of members did not sign the nominal table – it may have been entirely filled in by the secretary for reason of efficiency. For this reason, we deemed only those persons illiterate who drew the sign of the cross next to their name written by the secretary. Another factor relativizing illiteracy research, when analyzing nominal lists, is that in reading the nominal lists, we only interact with one of illiteracy's components: the inability to write. The likelihood that the individual may not even known how to read (i.e. the component of illiteracy directly impacting suffrage) is, of course, statistically high, but it is not fully certain.

In the micro-area studied it was possible to calculate the percentage of illiteracy for 7 localities, yielding the following data: Asinip 51.79% (out of RNP-nominated members), Ciuguzel 53,23%, Măgina 55,68%, Odverem 60,98%, Sâncrai 45,10%, Ighiel 35%, Șard 32,06%.[45] Low sample levels and non-identification of sustainable correlations to other demographic characteristics (size of locality, Romanian population percentage, confessional distribution) solely allow us to observe that such data fall under overall average data provided by expert literature (53.65% of men with the right to vote in the Kingdom of Romania in 1930).[46]

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[43] See above, the potentially illustrative case of the two persons bearing the name of Ioan Maior from Aiud. Similar examples have been identified by the author in his analysis on the corps of "Astra" founding members in Vlad Popovici, "Astra`s Founders: a Prosopographical Study," *Transylvanian Review* 20 (2011), 93-94.

[44] Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)*, 92-94.

[45] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 4, 9, 13, 29-35, 57, 64-67.

[46] Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)*, 92.

Table No. 2. Founding meeting attendance in RNP subsidiaries

Locality	Romanians	% Local Romanians	RNP Members[47]	There of illiterate	% RNP Members[48]	% There of illiterate
Aiud	2372	27.38	N (20+)	-	-	-
Aiudul de Sus	1090	66.87	M (16+)	-	-	-
Asinip	512	80.00	56	29	10.94	51.79
Beldiu	357	98.08	M (4+)	-	-	-
Ciuguzel	637	93.68	62	33	9.73	53.23
Ciumbrud	614	61.96	M (7+)	-	-	-
Gârboviţa	433	100.00	94	-	21.71	-
Geogel	816	99.63	U (11+)	-	-	-
Lopadea Nouă (Lopadea Română)	722	99.72	9+	-	-	-
Măgina	828	98.22	88	49	10.63	55.68
Meşcreac	484	96.41	17	-	3.51	-
Miraslău	509	53.52	50	-	9.82	-
Ocnişoara	633	96.20	67	-	10.58	-
Odverem	404	97.35	41	25	10.15	60.98
Ponor	1150	100.00	U (17+)	-	-	-
Rachiş	204	100.00	U (24+)	-	-	-

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[47] This column indicates persons present at founding meetings, generally also being mentioned as registered members of RNP In cases in which the number present was not recorded, the following letters indicate the terminology from the document: N = "numerous"; M = "majority"; U = "unanimity". The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of persons nominated, of whom we know for sure that they were present.

[48] Of the local Romanian population, not the entire population.

Locality	Romanians	% Local Romanians	RNP Members[47]	There of illiterate	% RNP Members[48]	% There of illiterate
Sâncrai	400	65.04	51	23	12.75	45.10
Rădeşti (Tempă-haza)	802	86.14	6+	-	-	-
	12967	**61.13**	-	-	-	-
Cricău	1314	91.76	77+	-	5.85+	-
Feneş	1127	98.86	40	-	3.55	-
Galaţi	714	95.97	19+	-	-	-
Găureni (Văleni)	329	97.92	13	-	3.95	-
Ighiel	801	99.63	40	14	4.99	35.00
Ighiu	1214	77.87	88	-	7.25	-
Meteş	936	98.32	45	-	4.81	-
Pătrângeni	1127	98.51	82	-	7.28	-
Poiana	532	97.97	81	-	15.23	-
Şard	1601	89.49	131	42	8.18	32.06
Tăuţi	664	99.85	113	-	17.02	-
Ţelna	1078	96.68	6+	-		-
Izvoru Ampoiului (Valea Dosului)	1005	86.64	102	-	10.15	-
Zlatna	3027	70.12	N (10+)	-	-	-
	15469	**87.40**		-	-	-
Benic	879	95.54	M (9+)	1	-	-
Căpud	357	68.00	M (7+)	-	-	-
Cetea	1414	99.30	N (11+)	-	-	-

Locality	Romanians	% Local Romanians	RNP Members[47]	There of illiterate	% RNP Members[48]	% There of illiterate
Coşlariu	375	89.07	U (10+)	-	-	-
Galda de Jos	1374	94.43	72	-	5.24	-
Geoagiul de Sus	1563	98.67	85	-	5.44	-
Mesentea	247	96.11	M (6+)	-	-	-
Mihalţ	2255	97.32	M (8+)	-	-	-
Obreja	558	94.90	M (9+)	-	-	-
Peţelca	610	100.00	U (7+)	-	-	-
Teiuş	2032	56.62	M (13+)	-	-	-
	11664	**85.20**				

Of the 1,600 members known by name, a number of approx. 350 are recorded as holders of positions within the constituent meetings (139), local party governments (224), or both (61). We have previously discussed the categories of persons holding positions in meetings, thus henceforth we plan to focus on those who were elected to form the management for subsidiaries.

The leadership of a local branch of the RNP was generally composed of 3-4 members with specific functions (president, secretary, cashier) and 2-5 committee members. There were instances in which the committee would total 7-12 members, without the size being relative to the demographic size of the village.[49]

The majority of data kept are, of course, relative to presidents. Of the 44 nominees, a total of 33 (75%) were priests (including two archpriests), and of the remaining 11, only one person's profession is known: T. L. Bitea – bank manager.[50] In cca. 65% of the cases, presidents were also

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[49] Localities: Gârboviţa, Măgina (7), Pătrângeni, Teiuş (10), Ponor (12). DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 6-8, 10, 12, 29-31, 60-61.
[50] Vasile Dobrescu, "Consideraţii privind situaţia socio-profesională a funcţionarilor instituţiilor de credit româneşti din Transilvania la începutul

elected presidents of subsidiaries, and in 27% of cases we are certain that they were delegated to sub-county committees (although, as mentioned earlier, we can assume that in many cases taking the delegation was a tacit process). In four cases (Ighiel, Țelna, Feneș, Galați) vice-presidents were also elected, one of whom had been secretary of the meeting.[51]

A special case was recorded in Cricău. In this meeting, priest George Muncușiu, an old adherent to the party, had been nominated, but had stepped down on grounds of precarious health, and his place was taken by priest-chaplain Nicolae Muntean. In the end, both priests were nominated to act as presidents for the subsidiary.[52] The case is interesting in terms of strategies of delegation of authority and the status and inheritance of priestly functions in politics. Even if the strategy is not very elaborate, it is clear that the young priest is trying to draw as much from his predecessor's authority as possible, partnering with him for the leadership position even though the latter was practically unable to take part in the political act.

Less information was preserved about the secretaries, 42 (including a vice-secretary), a position more diversified in terms of its socio-professional makeup. Among the 16 with known professions, we can find primary school teachers (7), priests, mayors, secretaries and peasants (2) and a "retired docent cantor". From the subsidiaries' secretaries only 7 held positions in the meetings (3 secretaries, 2 delegates and 2 member-checkers).

As concerns the 39 cashiers we know only of 9 professions: 3 peasants, 3 secretaries, 1 priest, 1 landlord and 1 deputy mayor. They were seconded by 3 auditors, one of whom was a tailor. Information regarding the professional structure of members in committees' subsidiaries are few. Where they do occur, we are able to identify the professions of peasant (10), mayor (4), priest (3), primary school teacher (1), owner (1), tailor (1), first praetor (1)[53] and sub-prefect (1).[54] Most likely, all or most of them were part of what we might call the rural elite, made up of people with status and influence in the community, some based on education, others based on material standing.

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secolului XX," [Considerations on the Social-Professional Standing of Credit Institutions Clerks in Transylvania at the Onset of the XX-th c.] *Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Historica* 9/I (2005), 160.

[51] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 38, 40, 49-51, 56.

[52] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 58-59.

[53] Muntean, PhD, Cetea.

[54] Vasile Ciura, PhD, Aiud.

An interesting aspect regarding members of local party governing structures is given by the presence / absence of certain persons involved in the events of November-December of 1918, about whom we can surmise that they would have amassed the kind of prestige that could be put at the service of the party. RNP members identified in documents are Iacob Domşa, Iuliu V. Albini (from Zlatna), Ioan Maior, Ioan Maior, Dr. iur., Marcu Niculae (from Aiud), all five elected members on the Romanian National Council in the Lower Alba County, on 1 November 1918.[55] Emanuil Beşa (a priest in Zlatna) and Ioachim Totoian (a priest in Miceşti) are not mentioned herein. Neither of the presidents on local Romanian National Councils, such as Vasile Bocşa from Ponor, receive due mention.[56] Likewise, from the regional delegates to The Grand National Assembly, Aurel Sava (praetor in Teiuş), Radu Nicolae (a peasant in Rădeşti), Raţiu Gavrilă (a peasant in Teiuş), and Dumitru Magda (a primary school teacher in Galaţi), are not recorded. Neither are many of the former National Guard members present nor at meetings, nor in the leadership of subsidiaries.[57] Speculation need not be made as to why they appear not to have been nominated, as many communes did not keep full records of members, and the likelihood that they would have been attending the process of local subsidiary reorganization was very high. Also, we do not believe that their absence from local party governing bodies would have translated into an affiliation with any act of dissidence.

Nevertheless, these shortcomings seem to indicate a surplus of staff within the party: in the auspicious post-war situation, when RNP was in control of the entire Transylvanian administration perhaps generated greater interest in politics on the part of people who saw it as an opportunity for social advancement or material gain (which does not preclude sincere adherence to the RNP program). Under these conditions, some of the older members involved in the Union events no longer found

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[55] "Procesul verbal al adunării de constituire a Consiliului Naţional Român din Comitatul Alba de Jos" [The Minutes of the Founding Meeting of The National Romanian Council of Lower Alba County], 2008, No. 40, an online edition accessed at http://www.dacoromania-alba.ro on 10.12.2014.

[56] Viorica Lascu, Marcel Ştirban, *Consiliul Naţional Român din Blaj (noiembrie 1918-ianuarie 1919). Protocoale şi acte* [The National Romanian Council in Blaj (November 1918-January 1919). Protocols and Acts], vol. II (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1980), 229.

[57] Nicolae Josan, Gheorghe Fleşer, Ana Dumitrean, *Oameni şi fapte din trecutul judeţului Alba în memoria urmaşilor* [People and Facts from Alba County Past, in the Memory of their Successors] (Alba Iulia: The National Union Museum in Alba-Iulia, 1996), 274-278.

their place within the new organization, retaining at best an ordinary membership of the party.

Reflections on RNP's social makeup
in the surveyed micro-area

As previously estimated, on a quantitative level, The National Romanian Party had, in surveyed localities, approx. 3,000-3,500 members, mostly peasants, which was tantamount to approx. 7.5 to 9% of the Romanian population in the area. Given the ethnic mix in the area, and the clear-cut political boundaries between RNP and the political representatives of Hungarians, we deem it more appropriate to compare data against the percentile of Romanian population and not the entire population of the locality, given that the Hungarians were an electoral segment that, realistically, would have not interacted with RNP. Even if there is no exact data on the percentage of people voting in Transylvania between 1919-1922, it is clear that the percentage members of RNP stands at 30-70% lower than the 1919 average calculated for the rest of the country (12.53%) and at 100-120% lower than the 1920 average (18.82%)[58] – figures vary highly from village to village. If we consider that there was hardly any competition from other parties, the image of a rural world is conjured that remains relatively difficult to politically mobilize, even when such activities are predominantly lead by priests.

For reasons that can only be assumed (ignorance, apathy) a large part of the voters did not feel it was in their best interest to become members of the party, even if such a quality would not have entailed any financial obligation on their part. Available documents do not make any reference to fee collecting, as within the RNP this tradition was not in place. Attempts to impose such fees had existed even before 1900[59], but had failed consistently. If need be, they counted on donations and collections, as opposed to membership dues. A certain amount of distrust towards the new Romanian administrative structures (that could practically be linked to RNP) was present even among members of the population, faced with the petty abuses and corruption of civil servants. Maybe, not so much to make them draw on the older history of the problem[60], but its existence

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[58] Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)*, 54, 75.
[59] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 2, f. 105.
[60] Mircea Mușat, "Activitatea Partidului Național Român din Transilvania în preajma și în primii ani după desăvârșirea făuririi statului național roman," [The

could not be overlooked. Then tactical (internal discontent) and doctrinal prerequisites for future dissident acts were present (even if small centrifuge parties would still take a few months to emerge[61]) and certainly there were also peasants with more radical opinions, expecting a set of in-depth, more effective and swiftly if not immediately enforced reforms from the National Party.

From the estimated total of members, approx. 4-4.5% held positions in constituent meetings and approx. 6.5-7.5% held positions on local subsidiaries' committees. Of course, these two percentages are not cumulative but largely overlap. On a local management level, the most important position by far is the one held by the clergy. Priests lay claim to the vast majority of the positions of president, both in meetings and in subsidiaries, and form the backbone of the local RNP elite. But their work is carried out primarily at this lower level, as only a small percentage reach elite parliamentary ranks of the party.[62] Of the 16 priests (all Greek Catholic)[63] of whom biographical information has been retained, the majority were born between 1871-1890, thus they can be seen as part of the political generation that engendered new RNP activism, led by Maniu, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Teodor Mihaly, Octavian Goga.[64] Their distribution reflects the confessional structure of the area under survey, with Greek Catholics having a slight numerical surplus. Among them, secretaries and accountants, school teachers and civil servants seem predominant, but an important element is the emergence, in such functions, of the first peasants. The latter number increases significantly within the body of non-exerting members of local management, where the few retained data seem to suggest that they fill at least as many, if not more positions than teachers, civil servants and clergy members.

Activity of The National Romanian Party in Transylvania prior to and during the First Years after the Founding of The National Romanian State] *Apulum* VII-2 (1969), 342-345.

[61] Gheorghe Iancu, "Campania electorală pentru alegerile parlamentare din 1919 în circumscripțiile Transilvaniei," [Electoral Campaigning for Parliamentary Elections in 1919 Transilvanian Constituencies] *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Series Historia* 1 (1973), 105-116.

[62] Sorin Radu, Alexandru Nicolescu, "The Parliamentary Elite of the Romanian National Party (1919-1926)," *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historica* 9 (2012), 220, 225-227, 229-231.

[63] The data used stem from Sigmirean, *Intelectualitatea ecleziastică. Preoţii Blajului (1806-1948)*.

[64] Vlad Popovici, *Studies on the Romanian Political Elite in Transylvania and Hungary (1861-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2012), 83.

Of course, a discussion is warranted on the situation of these peasants. The big discrepancies in Romanian interwar society are reflected in the surveyed documents, the bulk of RNP members being peasants. This is nothing unusual, given that approx. 75% of the voting mass work in agriculture.[65] Among them, one can occasionally identify people plying various economic activities, be they secular or religious community jobs (owner, merchant, road worker, cantor, cobbler, miller, mechanic, forester). Their number is small compared to that of the peasants, but suggests that there is an eclectic, borderline socio-professional category made up of peasants tasked differently in addition to land work and who have taken an interest in politics. A further under-documented category, but certainly a manifested one, are the "day labourers" – rural proletariat not owning farmland and being in the seasonal employ of the higher social classes. Beyond the uniformity of terminology one can glimpse a certain socio-professional diversity, yet, unfortunately, it is impossible to distinguish and analyze in a case study such as this, in the absence of advanced tools like databases of historical population – although it would have been interesting to know to what extent the peasants in the documents are more than just that (see the case of a "peasant and mayor")[66] and the percentage of their presence within the party.

Attracting the category of peasant members was carried out by two methods: invitation / direct persuasion (personal, in rural socialising spaces, in church) and captivating by speech. The cultural difference between peasants and the authors of speeches (priests or local officials of the party) was large enough to render the electoral discourse topic one of major interest, in which discourse aesthetics would play a role as important as the ideas programmatically put forth.[67] Given that, as mentioned, the illiteracy rate varied between 30-60%, direct conveyance of ideas, by way of the spoken word, in a form as close as possible to the expectations and cognitive horizons of the receptor[68], was vital. Not coincidentally, in over 50% of the cases studied, a speech would begin

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[65] Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)*, 77, 91.

[66] DJAN Cluj, Romanian National Party Collection – Blaj, File 6, f. 29-31.

[67] Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)*, 164.

[68] Therein experiencing the liturgic discourse played a key role. *See* Valer Moga, "Lexicul religios în discursul elitelor politice româneşti din Transilvania anului 1918," [Religious Lexis in the Discourse of Romanian Political Elites, in 1918 Transylvania] *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*, 14/I (2010), 240 sqq.

with the historic depiction of battles carried by the National Party, an ideal component for both validating RNP representatives to the electorate and for cementing group cohesion by conveying the image of a defeated opponent: the authorities of the dualist Hungarian state. Participants were also involved in the election of local party government (a formality, as indicated by the high percentage of unanimous cases), and that constitutes a small-scale preamble to the electoral act, but at the same time enhances the feeling of involvement by the mass of peasants in the political act.

Administrative pressures, a reality of election campaigns in the interwar period[69], appear not to have been very strong, but the presence of officials (mayors, praetors) is easily noticeable and certainly had a stimulating role.

The image of the Romanian National Party in Lower Alba County, 1919, as reflected in documents created during the reorganization of local subsidiaries, is that of a formation that tries to capitalize on auspicious contexts (a glorious past on a national battle field and a present in which complete control of a vast territory was administratively secured) to gain as high a number of members and supporters in the rural world as possible. We are dealing with an organizational effort prepared in advance, sometimes down to the smallest detail (the standardized structure of protocols stands as living testament to this), with territorial presence of members of the county party leadership structure, with the collection and potential further analysis of the data (with the preserved package of documents underpinning the study as a proof).

The backbone of the local organization was constituted by priests, regardless of denomination, supported by the rural intellectual elite (primary school teachers, notaries) and persons practicing liberal or technical professions. Peasants were represented in local leading committees as secretaries and (more infrequently) cashiers or (commonly) as members of the committee. They formed the great mass of members (over 90%, out of which cca. 50% were illiterate), with mention that a segment thereof, difficult to identify or accurately quantify, consisted of persons with urban professions or occupations (craftsmen, traders, employees of state services – railroads, roads, etc.).

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[69] Moga, "Lexicul religios în discursul elitelor politice românești," 231 sqq.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AT THE EDGE OF THE POLITICAL WORLD: INTERWAR ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN RURAL BIHOR

GABRIEL MOISA

The Bihor County in the interwar period: Confessional and demographic situation

The interwar political life of Bihor County subscribed, with all its local particularities, to the general trend in Romania. For Oradea and Bihor, the period between the two World Wars meant, from all points of view, total conformity with the new politico-administrative realities resulting from the formation of the Romanian Unitary National State. In Bihor, the introduction of Romanian administration was possible only after 20 April 1919. The first steps were taken towards the integration of Bihor into the new Romanian state in 1919-1920, a process which continued gradually through the 1920's.

During the period in question, the county's population grew steadily. Oradea, for instance, had 68,081 residents in December 1920, 81,123 in 1927, and by 1930 came to have 82,653 residents, meaning an average annual increase of around 1,450 people.[1]

Under the new conditions brought about by the creation of the unitary Romanian national state, according to the 1930 census, the number of Romanians in Oradea had reached 22,945 (27.7%), a remarkable increase considering that only 5,734 were reported for 1918[2], and 8,441 in 1920.[3]

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[1] *Istoria oraşului Oradea* [The History of the City of Oradea], eds. Liviu Borcea, Gheorghe Gorun (Oradea: Editura Cogito, 1995), 356.
[2] Gheorghe Tulbure, "Problema oraşelor," [The City Problem] *Familia* 1 (1929), 2-4.
[3] Andrei Horváth, *Ghidul oraşului Oradea Mare* [Guide to Great Oradea] (Oradea Mare: 1923), 243.

Still, the city's Hungarian population continued to carry the most weight – 42,200 (51%) in 1930. In the 1920s, the city's Jewish population was also large: 20,262 in 1927 and 14,640 (17.7%) in 1930. This population's enormous apparent decrease in the short time between the two censuses could seem questionable until we consider that the difference, around 5,500 people, appears, almost exactly, in the increase of the city's Hungarian population: 36,779 in 1927 and 42,200 in 1930.[4]

Oradea was also home to people of other nationalities. The only others surpassing 1% of the population, with 910 people, were Germans, followed by Roma (595), Ruthenians and Ukrainians (410), Russians (317), Czechs and Slovaks (232) and other nationalities (Armenian, Italian, French, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, Turkish and Polish) – 404.

Each nationality that made up the city's population consistently used its native language. Public officials, on the other hand, were required to know the official state language. As of summer 1919, local authorities began to address this prerequisite by organizing Romanian language courses.[5]

According to 1927 census data, the largest religious group was Protestants – 21,079 (25.9%). Right after Protestants were Jews, almost a quarter of the city's population – 20,261. The Roman-Catholic community also held an important role, with 17,462 (21.5%). Orthodox Christians were 13,914 in number (17.1%). Finally, one more important religious group was Greek Catholics, at 7,659 people (9.4%). In the 1920s, the first Baptist communities began to appear in Oradea. By 1930, they had no less than 2,800 members.

The political spectrum

After the union, Bihor political life underwent a substantial and necessary change to fit into the Greater Romania administrative structure. Since the beginning of the 1920s, the majority of Romanians in Bihor had been associated with the most important party in Transylvania, the Romanian National Party (PNR), while many Hungarians, after the Union, had adopted a passive, circumspect political attitude. After this period, politics would suddenly diversify along with the offensive of the Old Kingdom parties, while the Hungarians would gradually begin to become more involved in the politics of the city and the country.

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[4] *Istoria oraşului Oradea*, 356.
[5] Petru Dejeu, *Aşezămintele culturale din municipiul Oradea şi judeţul Bihor* [Cultural Institutions of Municipal Oradea and Bihor County] (Oradea: Tipografia Transilvania, 1926), 53.

If the Oradea and Bihor political spectrums were fairly polarized at the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s[6], things later took an interesting turn for the Romanian community. The penetration of political parties from outside of the Carpathian area into the political spectrum led to the appearance of numerous organizations and groups with various political orientations. This led to the infection of local politicians with "politicianism" from outside the Carpathians, leading to the separation and division of Bihor Romanians, which affected the Romanian National cause[7]. With a few exceptions (The PNR, the National Peasant Party and the Hungarian Party), outside of municipal Oradea, the new political organizations were unable to gain a solid electoral base in Bihor.

The political life of the Hungarian community in Oradea and Bihor had a few characteristics distinct from that of the Romanians. In the first place, the Hungarian residents of Oradea, as well as the Jewish residents, didn't readily submit to the new situation. After a period during which they refused any involvement in politics, a kind of political passivism, they went on the offensive in the 1920s, attempting to use their numerical advantage to safeguard their local power. They presented Oradea as a Hungarian city unjustly handed to Romania in the Paris Peace Conference.[8] During this decade, the Hungarian and Jewish communities of the city left their mark in the political sphere, impeding the establishment of the Romanian political institution.

Certain Romanian politicians tried to change this situation and stabilize relations between Romanian and Hungarian leaders. Prominent among them was none other than Aurel Lazăr, who believed that the passivity of the Hungarian political leaders adversely affected relations between Romanians and Hungarians. Several times, Lazăr asked the Hungarians of Oradea to give up their passivity and try to integrate themselves into the new state[9], promising them a future in Greater Romania.

After the union, the strongest local political organization continued to be the PNR, led by Aurel Lazăr himself. Next to him at the head of this organization were other important names at the forefront of the fight for national unity. Among them were Sever Erdelyi, Vasile Teuca, Dumitru

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[6] Liviu Borcea, "Partidele politice din Oradea până la sfârşitul Primului Război Mondial," [Political Parties in Oradea until the End of the First World War] *Familia* 12 (1994), 63-71.

[7] Ion Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean în primul deceniu al perioadei interbelice (1919-1930)," [The Political Spectrum in Bihor in the First Decade of the Interwar Period (1919-1930)] *Crisia* XXVIII (1998), 95.

[8] Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean," 95.

[9] *Nagyvárad*, Oradea, 131, 31 August 1920, 1.

Lascu, etc. For this reason, in the early years of the decade, the organization was quite influential in Oradea and Bihor, continuing the party's politics while adapting to the new political environment. The local newspaper was first *Tribuna* (The Tribune), then *Glasul Bihorului* (The Voice of Bihor) and later *Dreptatea* (Justice). In 1926, the PNR joined with the Peasant Party, which led to its disintegration in the area. At the beginning of 1927, a loyal faction founded a local organization of the National Peasant Party, again led by Aurel Lazăr, later dominating local politics for some years.

Another important local political organization founded at the beginning of 1920 was the People's Party, created at the insistence of its president Octavian Goga. The organization coagulated around certain remarkable local figures. One of these was Gheorghe Tulbure, who left the PNR. His departure left a mark on the local organization, as the official *Tribuna* left with him.[10] Aside from Tulbure, the local organization of the People's Party was led by Colonel Gheorghe Bacaloglu, Lazăr Iacob, Nicolae Firu, Petru E. Papp, Adrian P. Deseanu, Nicolae Roxin, Iosif Iacob, Ştefan Mărcuş, etc. Andrei Horvath was elected president, and Ioan Iacob and Gheorghe Popa vice presidents. One important moment in this organization's history was its victory in the May 1926 elections. Subsequently, Tulbure was named president of the *Comisia Interimară* (Intermediate Commission), thus mayor of Oradea, to later be elected mayor.[11] From the ranks of the People's Party, Tulbure, Ioan Iacob, Lazăr Icob, Firu, Petru Vuruclas, and others became members of Parliament in the 1920's.[12]

Another group that made serious efforts to solidify its local presence in 1920's Oradea was the National Liberal Party (PNL). An important contributor to the PNL Bihor County organization was Nicolae Zigre, who was president of the organization from 1921 to 1924.[13] In addition, he was a part of Ion I. C. Brătianu's government in 1922, as undersecretary of state on minority issues in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.[14] He resigned after several months as a result of altercations with "the old liberals", which would eventually lead him towards the Carlists. In Oradea the tone

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[10] Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean," 93.

[11] At the end of his term as mayor in 1927, he was named Chief Inspector of Education.

[12] Ion Zainea, *Aurel Lazăr (1872-1930) – viaţa şi activitatea* [Aurel Lazăr (1872-1930) – Life and Work] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1999), 198.

[13] Zainea, *Aurel Lazăr*, 204.

[14] Stelian Neagoe, *Istoria guvernelor României de la începuturi, 1859, până în zilele noastre* [The History of the Governments of Romania from the Beginnings, 1859, until Today] (Bucureşti: Editura Machiavelli, 1995), 88.

of liberal politics was set by the Moşoiu family and those close to them. From 1924 to 1932, the president of PNL in Bihor was General Traian Moşoiu, accompanied by his son Tiberiu as vice president and judge Bogdan Ionescu as secretary.[15] In 1922, Traian rose to become Minister of Communications and Public Works in Brătianu's government. As General Moşoiu spent most of his time in Bucharest, party affairs were attended to by other local leaders, mainly Colonel Atanasie Negulescu, his former chief of staff from the time of the Budapest campaign, Gheorghe Rocsin, Romulus Barbu, and others.[16] Colonel Negulescu ran the liberal paper *Sentinela de la Vest* (Sentinel of the West) from 1924 to 1926. After the June 1930 restoration of Carol II, the liberal organization from Bihor was divided. General Moşoiu's faction remained loyal to the National Liberal Party led by Vintilă Brătianu, while Nicolae Zigre and another group were excluded from the party because of his Carlist atitude, and founded the same year the Bihor Georgist liberal organization, affiliated with PNL – Gheorghe Brătianu.

The Oradea political spectrum also entertained a organization of the Peasant Party, founded in 1925 by Professor Andrei Crăciun. The electoral base was made up of educators and professors, including Victor Felea, Ioan Silaghi, Gheorghe Popescu – Ceica, Iuliu Kurutz, etc. The local organization of the Peasant Party was not very active in local politics, being often strongly opposed to the central leadership. For this reason, on the union of the Peasant Party with the PNR, the local organization of the Peasant Party, led by Anastase Mavrodin, preferred to align itself with the Peasant Party of Nicolae Lupu.

The National Peasant Party, created in 1926 through the union of the Peasant Party with the PNR, became one of the most politically consistent in Oradea and Bihor. Having inherited the electoral base of the PNR, the new entity proved to have roots deep in the real life of Romania and especially Transylvania.

Not surprisingly, the president of the National Peasant organization of Oradea and Bihor from 1926 to 1930 was Aurel Lazăr, who had led the local organization of the PNR until 1926. In 1930, the lawyer Gheorghe Crişan, a figure known since 1918-1919, became president of the Oradea organization of the National Peasant Party.[17] The rest of the leadership of the National Peasant Party consisted of lawyers Teodor Popa, Demetriu Chiş and Sever Erdeli, priest Augustin Maghiar, judge Romul Pop, professor Andrei Crăciun, and others.

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[15] Horváth, *Ghidul oraşului Oradea Mare*, 243.

[16] *Nagyvárad*, Oradea, 19 January 1926, 2.

[17] *Steagul Nostru* [Our Flag], Oradea, 26 January 1930, 1.

Ethnically-oriented parties were also active in Bihor in the 1920's. Most significant was the Hungarian Party. The Hungarians in Oradea and Bihor did not participate in politics before 1922, preferring passivism. The local organization of the Hungarian Party was founded in 1925, led by lawyer Kocsán János[18], followed in 1929 by lawyer Soós István. Even after the Hungarian Party entered into politics, many local leaders still called for passivism. During the economic crisis, an intense dispute broke out on this subject. Victory went to the moderate wing and its cooperative attitude towards Romanian authorities.[19]

There was also a local organization of the Romanian Jewish Union in Bihor, which became the Jewish Party in 1931. It was founded in 1923 and had I. Mittelmann and lawyer Bárdos Imre as presidents and physician Klein Ernő as secretary general.[20] This party followed the Hungarian Party, although it tended to have a more realistic and pragmatic attitude[21], considering that both parties knew their political options could tip the balance in either party's favor.

The political spectrum of the 1920's also included left and extreme left organizations. The Oradea organization of the Social Democrat Party (PSD), representing unionized workers, was an example of the former. At their head was Emil Bösörményi, and alongside him Lajos Jordaky, Stefan Raffay, Francisc Újhelyi, I. Hubschenberger, Ludovic Lenkey and others. The latter included Blocul Muncitoresc (The Workers' Bloc), a communist organization that continued legally even after 1924, when the Romanian Communist Party was outlawed. At its head were lawyer Eugen Rozvan, and alongside him Alexandru Szenkovits, Alexandru Ullman, Eugen Kovacs, Nicolae Gyarmati, Francisc David, Artmin Reder and others.[22]

In the second part of the 1920's in Oradea were also far right organizations. There was the Antisemite League, led by Beiușian professor Ioan Bușița, Petru Popa, Mihai Gherlan, Coriolan Maniu, and Gavril Bardoș. One of its members, Oradean professor Petru Fodor, began the local organization of the National-Christian Defense League, run centrally by A.C. Cuza.[23]

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[18] *Nagyvárad*, 26 January 1926, 1.
[19] Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean", 93.
[20] *Bihorul strajă la hotare* [Bihor on the Alert] (Oradea: Tipografia Diecezană, 1933), 145-146.
[21] Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean," 93.
[22] Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean," 93-94.
[23] Zainea, "Spectrul politic bihorean," 94.

The election campaigns: between local and national specificities

Despite the existence of extremist groups, Oradea did not see major events of intolerance towards any particular type of residents. Perhaps, only the unrest occurring from December 4-6, 1927, on the occasion of a local National Student Congress, when many Jewish-owned stores and homes were destroyed.[24] While the events were covered extensively in the press of the time[25], even having an unfavorable international echo[26], it was an isolated incident in the ambience of 1920's Oradea.[27]

The first elections in Bihor, as in the rest of the country, based on the new law declaring the universal vote, were the parliamentary elections of November 2-8, 1919. They were organized by the government of General Arthur Văitoianu, which existed specifically for this purpose. This was the first election in which Romanians from all of the historic provinces of Romania participated. The Văitoianu government was, however, closely controlled by the National Liberal Party and its president I.C. Brătianu, who seemed to have the goal of election victory for the liberals. For this reason, the government retained the mayors and prefects in administrative functions, i.e. those who would organize the elections.[28] Since PNL controlled the whole administrative apparatus of the Old Kingdom, three major Romanian parties, The People's League, The Conservative Democrat Party and the Socialist Party refused to participate in the elections, considering that it couldn't possibly be legitimate.[29] As was the Transylvanian and Bihorean tradition, the Hungarians applied political passivism. Despite all of this, the liberals did not win the elections.

In this situation, as the parties of the Old Kingdom had not set up Bihor organizations, the party with the most influential local organization, the PNR, had real chances to win elections. It was thus the only party that

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[24] *Monitorul Comunal* [Community Monitor], Oradea, 1/6-7, 1927, 5.

[25] *Frontiera de Vest* [Western Border], Oradea, 1, 1927; 2, 1927; 3, 1927; *Dreptatea poporului* [Justice of the People], 37, 1928; etc.

[26] Armand Călinescu, *Memorii* [Memoirs] (București: Editura Humanitas, 1995), 76.

[27] For details see Gabriel Moisa, "Manifestările studenților participanți la Congresul Național Studențesc de la Oradea (4-6 decembrie 1927)," [The Student Demonstrations of the Participants in the Oradea National Student Congress (4-6 December 1927)] *Ziridava* XXI (1998), 299-309.

[28] Ion Mamina, Ioan Scurtu, *Guverne și guvernanți 1916-1938* [Governments and the Governing 1916-1938] (București: Editura Silex, 1996), 32.

[29] Mamina, Scurtu, *Guverne și guvernanți 1916-1938*, 32.

did serious campaigning in Oradea and Bihor. In the end, the Bihor organization of the PNR sent 23 representatives to the first parliament of Greater Romania: 18 deputies and 5 senators.[30]

Given the universal vote, the village world became an interesting electoral target for most political parties. The candidates and their parties immediately turned more towards the rural environment. Although the PNR carried out an extremely active campaign, not all of its candidates won in the end. Some who were not official candidates of the party, and even some independents, managed to enter into Parliament the same way. In Săcuieni, for example, Count Nesselrode Karoly prevailed when Gheorghe Pop withdrew. Likewise, the winners of the Oradea II district (Dumitru Ionaș), the Cefa district (Dumitru Lascu), and the Sălard district (Sever Sălăjan) were not official party candidates, but were members of the party.[31] Interestingly, representatives of PSD also participated in several districts in the 1919 elections, e.g. Adrian Deseanu in Vașcău and Kóos Mózés in Salonta. Like the other Transylvanian parliamentarians, those from Bihor arrived in Bucharest on November 18, 1919 and were received by Vasile Goldiș.[32] The explanation as to why some leftists won rural areas like Vașcăul and Salonta lies in the fact that the "industrialization" phenomenon was more pervasive there, where the peasantry and agricultural working class were closely tied to industrial developments in the area. For this reason, campaign promises addressing the difficult postwar economic situation had a greater impact here than in other parts of Bihor.

For the June 1920 elections, by decree on May 2, all Transylvanian electoral districts were reorganized. As a result, Bihor had 10 such districts for the Chamber of Deputies (Oradea, Beiuș, Beliu, Ceica, Aleșd, Salonta, Tinca, Sălard, Tileagd, and Marghita) and 5 for the Senate (Oradea, Beiuș, Tileagd, Marghita, and Salonta). As a result, the candidates changed their tactics, having to cover a much more well-defined space to connect with a peasantry which was now part of the Romanian interwar democratic excercise. Each district had its own candidate in the elections, which called for a closer bond between them and the villagers.

The peasantry began to realize its own importance in the Romanian electoral process, but notices the many abuses perpetrated by the interwar

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[30] *Patria* [Homeland], Oradea, 210, 8 November 1919, 2.

[31] In Oradea II, the official candidate was Gelu Egri; in Salonta, priest Petru Popa; and in Sălard, Dumitru Oros. Gelu Egru withdrew from the race, and the other two, as in the cases of Dumitru Ionaș and Sever Sălăjan, were simply opposed by candidates very popular in their respective districts.

[32] *Patria*, 220, 20 November 1919, 2.

governments which organized the elections. For example, in the election of March 13, 1920, the Averescan prefect of Bihor, Gheorghe Bacaloglu, supported by the inspector general of education, Gheorghe Tulbure, both sustained by the Alexandru Averescu government, in power since March 13, 1920[33], influenced the electoral campaign and election results. The government wanted to do everything possible to win the elections in Bihor by assigning Colonel Gheorghe Bacaloglu as prefect. This pressure was taken so far that PNR candidates were unable to run or forced to withdraw in the Beliu, Ceica, Marghita and Tileagd districts. The goal was the defeat by any means of PNR representatives. The injustices carried out by the Averescan prefect of Bihor were so extensive and obvious that, in one of the first sessions of the Chamber, Alexandru Averescu himself, president of the People's Party, acknowledged their existence.[34] The local press depicted more than a few times the dissatisfaction of Bihor peasants who couldn't understand why people they knew personally were not allowed to run for office with opposition parties. The peasants were prevented from voting for whom they wanted, despite their official right to vote.

   The electoral campaigns in Bihor's rural districts were thus rather tense. The peasants were informed about the situation, leaving them disgruntled. With the pressure they were under, PNR represantatives won only 2 of 10 districts. Aurel Lazăr won in Tinca and Dumitru Lascu in Salonta. The other 8 were won by People's Party representatives: Octavian Goga in Oradea, Cristian Musceleanu in Beiuş, Iacob Lazăr in Aleşd, Constantin Banu in Ceica, Gheorghe Tulbure in Beliu, Nicolae Firu in Marghita, Ioan Iacob in Tileagd, and Petru Vuruclaş in Sălard.[35]

   The rural reaction to these injustices didn't take long to appear. In June 1920, a series of independents ran and received a considerable number of votes. In Aleşd, Ioan Câmpeanu and Petru Dejeu ran. The former took 255 of 2822 votes and the latter 831. In the Sălard district Nesselrode Sandor ran as independent. Of 2513 votes, he took 640. In the Oradea district, Ioan Pelle ran as independent for the Chamber. He received only 16 votes out of 353 considered valid.[36]

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[33] Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria României în anii 1918-1940. Evoluţia regimului politic de la democraţie la dictatură* [The History of Romania 1918-1940. The Evolution of the Political Regime from Democracy to Dictatorship] (Bucureşti: Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1996), 74.
[34] *Patria*, 137, 27 June 1920, 2.
[35] *Nagyvarad*, 60, 5 June 1920, 1-2.
[36] Ion Zainea, *Economie şi societate în Bihor (de la Marea Unire la Dictatul de la Viena)* [Economy and Society in Bihor (from the Great Union to the Vienna Dictate) (Oradea: Editura Universităţii din Oradea, 2007), 256.

The clearest sign of dissent in the rural world regarding the injustices coming from local governments was that expressed in the Beiuş electoral district during these elections. Beiuş and the surrounding region were historically fiefs of Bihor PNR. Averescu, the head of the government himself, ran there with the People's Party. He thought his mere presence at the head of the list would hand him the vote. The result was a catastrophe: he received only 7 votes. The validation of the vote in this district was delayed in the July 15, 1920 session of the Chamber of Deputies to avoid addressing the extremely weak performance of General Averescu.[37]

Unfortunately, due to the permanent censorship of the press in Oradea and Bihor, these types of situations recurred during other elections. Politicians are initially unconcerned with the wishes of the Bihor peasantry, as shown by the abuses to which they resorted to gain power, ignoring the voting options of the peasants. But they punished, as they could, this type of politicianism. The awarding of large numbers of votes to local independent candidates, some in fact from the districts they ran in, clearly shows the dissatisfaction of the peasants with such practices. The increase in the number of votes received by independents in rural districts from one election to the next shows, on one hand, the continuation of the situation, and on the other hand, the fact that something had to change in regard to respecting the sensibilities and electoral possibilities of the peasantry. What needed to happen was for more attention to be given to the peasantry, in the first place to garner their votes.

This phenomenon actually occurred in Bihor County, in the late 1920's, when politicians began to realize this necessity. The Bihor press, accurately reporting electoral events, reflects this reality well, especially starting in 1928, on the naming of the new prefect of Bihor, Iosif Maiorescu.[38]

On November 3, 1928, Vintilă Brătianu presented the resignation of his liberal cabinet to the Regency. After a failed attempt to construct a government of national unity led by Nicolae Titulescu, the Regency assigned to Iuliu Maniu the task of creating a new government.[39] Thus the National Peasant Party came to power. They scheduled parliamentary elections for December 1928. "Preparing" for the elections, Maniu's government began to replace liberal prefects with National Peasant prefects.

In Bihor County, Iosif Maiorescu was named prefect. Thus, with the Prefecture and Oradea City Hall, the old interim liberal commissions were replaced with new ones, made up of National Peasant members. At the

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[37] Zainea, *Economie şi societate în Bihor*, 256.
[38] *Tribuna*, Oradea, 47, 18 November 1928, 5; 48, 25 November 1928, 3.
[39] Scurtu, *Istoria României în anii 1918-1940*, 105.

head of the Prefecture commission was Teodor Rocsin, and at Oradea City Hall, Aurel Lazăr.[40]

Most experts agree that the December 1928 elections were the most democratic of the entire interwar period in Romania. This oppinion is supported by the fact that censorship was abolished on November 19, 1928 by the Board of Ministers in all of the regions in which it operated. One exception was a 10-15-kilometer strip near the border. In the case of county seats, like Oradea, situated inside that border strip, censorship was likewise abolished. The electoral moment of the rapid ascention of the PNȚ led by Iulia Maniu was very important. This party understood better than others that approaching the village and the peasants could be a solid strategy for winning the elections.

In light of this need, the Bihor organization of the National Peasant Party came to an understanding with PSD and the Zionist movement.[41] Representatives of these groups were included in the list of deputies of the National Peasant Party; Iosif Jumanca for PSD and Tivadar Fischer for the Zionist movement.[42]

The Bihor organization of the National Peasant Party began its campaign the moment the date of the elections was announced, in the understanding that a better relationship with the peasant world would make for better results. Lists were drawn up including Aurel Lazăr, Gheorghe Crişan, Teodor Rocsin, Victor Cădere, Teodor Popa, Petru Popovici, Gh. Popescu Ceica, Enea Popovici and Nicola Pop, for the Chamber of Deputies, and for the Senate, Demetriu Kiss, Iuliu Chiş, Sever Erdely, Gelu Egri, Ioan Matei and Titu Trif.[43]

To make their candidates known in the villages, they participated in activities in each district. The main propagandistic activity started with the blessing of the flags of all of the National Peasant Party organizations, while all the candidates were presented. One of the most grandiose of these events took place in the community of Beliu. At the ceremony there, on November 25, 1928, among the Bihor Peasant Party leaders was Sever Dan, Minister of Public Health. The blessing of the flags was handled by arch-priest Ioan Catone from Tinca, who was invited to speak about the significance of this act. Aurel Lazăr, well-known party advocate from Oradea, in his turn evoked the political battle of Bihor Romanians from 1910 until the realization of the dream of unification in front of a large audience. Minister Sever Dan also spoke, recalling the long, hard path the

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[40] *Tribuna*, 47, 18 November 1928, 5; 48, 25 November 1928, 3.
[41] *Tribuna*, 49, 2 December 1928, 2.
[42] *Tribuna*, 51, 16 December 1928, 3.
[43] *Tribuna*, 51, 16 December 1928, 3.

National Peasants walked before taking power, promising that all "past wrongs" would be righted. The festivities closed with a demonstration of the flags of the 33 local organizations of the National Peasant Party in Beliu. The press wrote of the immense satisfaction of the National Peasants from Beliu on having minister Sever Dan himself alongside them. The gesture was seen by villagers as showing the new government's heightened interest in the village world. Many peasants from all of the villages of Beliu participated. It was a very practical approach to the campaign, proved by the election results, which were beyond expectations, especially considering the poor performance of the liberals at the national level. The elections of December 1928 in Bihor were won by the National Peasant Party. Of 83,578 valid votes, they received 54,451 (62.2%), followed by the Magyar Party with 16,155 (19.2%) and the Workers' Bloc with 7,332 (8.7%). PNL received 1,575, the Nicolae Lupu Peasant Party received 1,562 and the People's Party 1,397. 1,120 votes were cancelled and 630 rejected.[44]

It seems the local political leaders realized the importance of winning the sympathy of the peasantry. To do this, they resorted not only to democratic means, but also to subterfuge and various strategies, some not exactly in accordance with the democratic norms of interwar Romania. Vote buying, in various forms, became a familiar event in the Bihor peasant world. Taking advantage of the lack of education, political awareness and culture, and of certain people's weaknesses, the party propagandists tried to obtain as many votes as possible, violating the democratic spirit of the Romanian Constitution.

The most reprehensible gestures are those of certain politicians who exploited the weakness of some members of the electorate from rural areas. The press of the time shows that the phenomenon was already widespread. Thus, an article in the daily *Gazeta de Vest* (Gazette of the West) mentioned "bad news from the countryside and the way people prepare themselves for the polls".[45] The author of the article attempted to illuminate the peasants about their rights regarding the universal vote, but also regarding their duties towards the state. The article invoked the existence among the Bihor peasantry, during the election campaigns, of some "swindlers who poisoned the poor Romanian peasant with drink"[46] to buy their votes. The article referenced not so much peasants as party "poisoners" who passed through villages buying votes with drink, while

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[44] *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitor], Oradea, 2, 6 January 1929, 16.
[45] *Gazeta de Vest* [Gazette of the West], Oradea, 226, 30 April 1930, 2.
[46] *Gazeta de Vest*, 226, 30 April 1930, 2.

"the peasants drink on their money in village bars,"[47] thus distorting election results.

Peasants were reminded of the necessity to maintain "clean elections".[48] They were warned not to let themselves be fooled ("drunk")[49], as those who do this to them are their enemies. The vote, concluded the journalist, should be given to those known to be upstanding and deserving.

This phenomenon was repeated in every election, and the press took the same attitude regarding such practices. Each time the peasants were reminded that their vote is very important and should be given according to their freely expressed convictions, in no case in response to pressure or other practices aimed at them. One could not speak of freedom to vote as long as "the swindlers had opened their purses to buy people with drink, once the date of the elections had been determined."[50] The author went further with his considerations, insisting that free elections didn't mean just that the peasants "were not hindered by party propagandists from going to the countryside or people were not prevented from voting where they wanted or votes were not falsified. Elections couldn't possibly be free as long as, through food and drink or money and empty promises, the poor Romanian peasant could be bought."[51] The man drunk on empty promises, the article emphasized, could not be free, while "those who guard the freedom of the elections are obligated to act against those who have begun to pay brandy, wine and other drinks to the voters from the countryside."[52]

Women's suffrage made the rural space even more interesting through its increased electoral potential. The women of the villages of Bihor were invited to exercise their right to vote, as they were not using it.

In rural Bihor, the majority were easy to manipulate. This was worrying for the journalists of Oradea, who knew the electoral reality of village life all too well. One such desolant example was described in *Gazeta de Vest* on the occasion of the partial elections upon the death of the deupty of Bihor, Aurel Lazăr, in 1930. The description of the event is significant for the way the politicians approached the voters of the Bihor villages. Thus, it said, "voters from Bihor County were called by the government to send a new deputy in place of Aurel Lazăr. Again, elections. As in the free elections of 1928 and 1929, when the deputies, senators and councillors were elected, the most intense propaganda was

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[47] *Gazeta de Vest*, 226, 30 April 1930, 2.
[48] *Gazeta de Vest*, 424, 18 January 1931, 5.
[49] *Gazeta de Vest*, 424, 18 January 1931, 5.
[50] *Gazeta de Vest*, 124, 11 December 1929, 1.
[51] *Gazeta de Vest*, 124, 11 December 1929, 1.
[52] *Gazeta de Vest*, 124, 11 December 1929, 1.

again to begin throughout the entire county. Not even the most insignificant and remote villages could hope to escape unvisited. Again one heard of the coming of gentlemen in their automobiles. They climbed out and warmly squeezed the rough hand of the peasant, whom they hadn't even seen since the last elections two years prior."[53]

The biggest disappointment of the article's author was, however, connected to the fact that the political propaganda of the candidates was not limited to describing the "wonderful acts of their candidate"[54], but especially addressed "the rottenness of the adversaries, piling the most despicable sins on their backs."[55] If the adversary had in fact committed even one of these "wonders"[56] of which they were accused, they would have long ago been jailed. "Sadly, here, politics without insult, without the basest slander, cannot be imagined. It is like we are trying to outdo one another, the way we curse each other. This is the only way to do politics in Romania"[57], bitterly concluded the author of these lines, wondering if the Romanian peasant understood anything of these electoral struggles.

Still, it seems the peasants were often more mature than the politicians, especially where harsh attacks were concerned. Happily, as many press articles noted, the peasants were cautious regarding such electoral discourse. According to the press of Oradea, the peasants had a value system different in this regard from that of the "lords"[58] and they ignored the "shameless lies of the propagandists"[59] and otherwise, it was written, "it would have been a disaster for the country and the Romanian people. Luckily, however, the Romanian was deliberate and knew what to believe and from whom."[60] Even if the journalist exaggerated a bit, one thing is certain. In rural Bihor, slander and lies were disregarded by a peasantry used to things being settled and well-done. The result was that in such a situation, the factories of lies, propaganda and filth that were sent to the countryside through the means of various gazettes, unloaded from the mouths of propagandists, were received and believed only by outsiders. The latter believed the proverb that "When two are fighting, the third wins".[61]

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[53] *Gazeta de Vest*, 211, 2 April 1930, 4.
[54] *Gazeta de Vest*, 211, 2 April 1930, 4.
[55] *Gazeta de Vest*, 227, 1 May 1930, 1.
[56] *Gazeta de Vest*, 206, 25 March 1930, 1.
[57] *Gazeta de Vest*, 208, 28 March 1930, 4.
[58] *Gazeta de Vest*, 445, 14 February 1931, 1.
[59] *Gazeta de Vest*, 493, 7 February 1931, 6.
[60] *Gazeta de Vest*, 189, 5 March 1930, 2.
[61] *Gazeta de Vest*, 532, 4 June 1931, 4.

In the context of the universal vote, the rural areas of Bihor were evenly divided into many electoral sections, so the peasants could vote as close to home as possible. During the entire interwar period, there were from 44 to 52 electoral divisions in the county. With a few exceptions, they were: Vaşcău, Ştei, Dumbrăveni, Beiuş, Pocola, Ursad, Căbeşti, Curăţele, Bunteşti, Ceica, Hidişel, Lăzăreni, Sâmbăta, Tinca, Gurbediu, Girişul Negru, Beliu, Craiova, Ciumeghiu, Tulca, Salonta I & II, Cefa, Sânmartin, Cetariu, Episcopia Bihor, Girişul de Criş, Nojorid, Sălard, Spinuş, Popeşti, Abrămuţ, Almaşu-Mare, Marghita, Săcueni, Diosig, Tileagd, Picleu, Oşorhei, Aleşd, Măgeşti, Vad, Bratca, Borod, Răbăgani, Lazuri, Ginta, Tămăşeu Derna, Abram, Ineu and Şerghiş. Besides this, the city of Oradea had 8 more electoral divisions: Sector I: Grade School – Delavrancea Street; Sector II: Grade School – General Holban Street; Sector III: Jewish High School – Prince Carol Street; Sector IV: Oradea City Hall; Sector V: Grade School – Decebal Road; Sector VI: Fire Department; Sector VII: Gojdu High School; Sector VIII: Civil School – 100 Victoria Street.

There were also exceptions to this rule. For example, during the parliamentary elections of May 1926, a polling location was established in the village Varviz for several villages in the area: Vărzari, Borumlaca, Cuzap, Popeşti, Voievozi and Spurcani (now called Bistra), even though the village Popeşti was normally chosen to host the local election. On this occasion, voter turnout was rather high. 1,627 voters showed up at the polls. In the Varviz electoral area, the elections were won by four votes by the Romanian National Party. The results were: Romanian National Party – 529 votes; People's Party – 525 votes; Workers' Party (Communist and Socialist) – 432 votes; Christian National Defense League – 37 votes; PSD – 27 votes; PNL – 24 votes; Peasant Party – 4 votes.[62]

The rest of the votes were either cancelled (24) or rejected (25) because the voting stamp was wrongly applied. As can be seen, the most powerful political organizations in the region were the Romanian National Party, the People's Party and the leftist and far-left parties (socialists and communists). If PNL obtained a relatively low number of votes, we cannot say the same for the Christian National Defense League, the fourth most powerful force in this particular election, as the Cuza-Codreanu ideology was penetrating deep into the village world. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, member of the Christian National Defense League until 1927, when he split from A.C. Cuza and formed the "Archangel Michael" Legion, was more and more renowned, and his political discourse and charisma was winning over more and more followers.

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[62] *Legea românească* [Romanian Law], 11, June 1926, 11.

The results of PSD were also within normal limits, as the party never became a political force during the interwar period, although it already had somewhat of a tradition.

This was the only time in the interwar period when the polling location was established in Varviz. It was normally set in Popești. In general, in this period, in Bistra (Spurcani), Cuzap, Popești, Varviz and Voivozi, the Romanian National Party had the most followers, and after its fusion with Ion Mihalache's Peasants and the creation of the National Peasant Party (PNȚ), this was the party that garnered the most votes. This was the case in the majority of interwar elections.

Thus, in the elections for County Councillor in the begining of February 1930, the PNȚ won by a landslide.[63] At the polls in Popești, PNȚ obtained 1,304 votes, PNL 154, and the National Peasant Party of Dr. Nicolae Lupu (PNȚ Lupu) took 159, 113 votes being cancelled.[64] The partial parliamentary elections of January 1931 kept roughly the same electoral options in Popești and surrounding villages. There the votes were distributed: PNȚ – 390 votes; PNL Duca – 145 votes; PNȚ Lupu – 95 votes; Hungarian Party – 191 votes; PSD – 33 votes; Communists – 146 votes; People's Party – 90 votes; PNL Gh. Brătianu – 53 votes; Sladi Dumitru (independent candidate) – 6 votes.[65]

The exception was the elections for Chamber of Deputies organized by the goverment led by Iorga at the beginning of June 1931, when, in the Popești voting sector, Uniunea Națională (The National Union) obtained the most votes, 709. Surprisingly, after the Georgist Liberals took only 53 votes in February 1930, they now took second place with 237 votes, trailed by one vote by the National Peasants with 236 votes, way down from 390 votes in February 1930. The People's Party took 190 votes, the communists 186 votes, the Hungarian Party had 114 votes, the Lupists 28, PSD had 19 votes, and the Iron Guard 7 votes.[66]

Aside from the fact that the National Peasants were a local constant as far as number of votes, the communists and socialists took a surprisingly large number of votes in the interwar period. They were always among the leading the parties that obtained votes in the seven villages that voted in Popești. The explanation for this was a fairly large working class, due to coal mining.

With few exceptions, election campaigns in rural areas were carried out peacefully. There were, of course, heated situations, generated most

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[63] *Gazeta de Vest*, 8 February 1930, 4.
[64] Ion Zainea, *Economie și societate în Bihor*, 267.
[65] *Gazeta de Vest*, 31 January 1931, 3.
[66] *Gazeta de Vest*, 3 June 1931, 4.

often by propagandists and journalists of the parties involved, but they didn't dominate the political scene. Although the language of the press quite often hinted at a tense situation, the electoral process in rural areas took place with relative calm since "there was no longer political fanaticism in the majority of the populace."[67] While the press, especially the central press, often emphasized the possible existence of violence on election days, these fears were not at all justified, at least in Bihor County. Except for the first interwar years, the electoral battle was dominated by the two most important Romanian parties: PNL and PNȚ.

The elections in Bihor generally took place calmly. The great interest in the elections in Oradea was to be expected, but it is also worth noting that Bihor village residents became more and more interested in politics as the rural electorate began to realize its own importance in the poltical equation. So at almost every election, voter turnout was fairly high, whether they were local, general or partial elections caused by an empty deputy or senate seat.

Thus, on the occasion of the municipal, communal and county elections of February 1930, voter turnout was significant, and the atmosphere was lively, even among the peasants. The press of the time tells us that "until noon, people were going into the voting rooms in groups, not very large, but enough to indicate that something important was taking place, for anyone not in the know. In the 44 sectors voting continued until evening, between 500 and 800 people, perhaps even 1,000 voters. In one village in Bihor, Marghita, around 1,040 voters showed up."[68] For a population of around 3,000, Marghita being one of the larger communes of the county, voter turnout far exceeded 50% of those allowed to vote, which was excellent for a rural area. Likewise, voter turnout for Bihor County was very high. It must also be remembered that women were exercising their right to vote for the first time in Romania, even if a small number of them were able to do it.[69]

Of approximately 113,000 registered voters in Bihor County, at the end of the day, more than 80,000 had entered the polling places. After a slow start, where 35,000 voted before noon, presence increased by the hour, including in rural areas, until, by 4:00 PM, around 50,000 had voted, to

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[67] Zainea, *Aurel Lazăr*, 250.

[68] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.

[69] Ghizela Cosma, *Femeile şi politica în România. Evoluţia dreptului de vot în perioada interbelică* [Women and Politics in Romania. The Evolution of Suffrage in the Interwar Period] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002), 52-53.

reach 80,000 when the polls closed.[70] Speculations were made before the elections that women, despite receiving the right to vote in the *Law of Administrative Organization* of August 3, 1929, adopted at the initiative of the National Peasant government, would not be interested in the electoral process, especially as this right was restricted according to level of instruction.[71] As a result, only about 3,000 women were registered to vote nationwide.[72] Still, the moment is important in history as the first time women were allowed to vote in Romania. Even if their turnout was low in Bihor, the press remarked on it, as they deemed it worth reporting. According to an Oradea newspaper, "It wasn't true that women hesitated to vote in the elections; on the contrary, they were more eager to go than men, these being the first elections with universal suffrage,"[73] showing that they indeed went to vote. Women from rural Bihor were less present, as they didn't respond to the exigencies of the law (a law which was fairly restrictive on women's political involvement). In any case, it is worth noting the interest of the Bihor press in the participation of women in election day, concluding that "the women voters were intelligent enough, and on receiving instructions on how to vote, they replied that they knew very well how, as though they had been exercising this civil right since the world existed."[74]

Despite some expectations to the contrary, the peasants of Bihor proved generally connected to the elections. As announced almost every time in the press when there were local elections in the interwar period, at times somewhat exaggerated, "for the villagers, no other day was more important than that of the elections. As they sow, as they choose their leaders, so shall they reap."[75] More often than not, the election of a mayor or councillor in the villages of Bihor was the internal business of the residents, beyond the blatant interference of politics. The press noted in many cases that a certain liberty was reserved regarding those chosen by each community so that they could be led "by their own consideration, for 5 years".[76] The political organizations understood that the effective

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[70] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.

[71] Camelia Popescu, *Lupta pentru dreptul de vot în România interbelică* [The Fight for Suffrage in Interwar Romania], *Historia*, on http://www.historia.ro /exclusive _ web/general/articol/lupta-dreptul-vot-feminin-romania-interbelica, accessed 20 December 2014.

[72] Popescu, *Lupta pentru dreptul de vot*.

[73] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.

[74] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.

[75] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.

[76] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.

administration of the communities of Bihor primarily depended on the heads of the communities. They had to be accepted. There were many cases in which, in administrative elections, villagers were advised by political parties, for practical and economic reasons, not to emphasize party politics, "but in a friendly way to draw up lists, based on the number of votes, a list of the most important people of the village. Many villages saw the wisdom of this method, sidestepping pointless arguments, loss of time and a 10,000 Lei expense; they simply submitted one list. The expenses would cover bulletins or lists of voters, the poll, the seal, the booth, the judge, the clerk, transportation, and the army."[77] And thus, in rural Bihor, politicians' matters were often superseded by understanding between residents.

It was considereed that the presence of a single list for each village could help the peasants – not a rich group – avoid extra costs. They were offered practical solutions to any problems, be they of economic, political or any other nature: "Even if problems arose, they could be handled thusly. If, for example, out of 100 voters, a quarter did not wish to vote for the same candidates as the rest, the list of 12 candidates was divided; those with the majority of votes put 8 people on the list, and the rest put 4 people. The mayor should be the most capable person, regardless of which side he was from, and the assistants and treasurer had to be from another side than the mayor. Villages that proceeded this way avoided arguments and other unpleasantness. Even if the lists had already been submitted, they could be withdrawn in case there were troubled people who still didn't know who to vote for."[78]

In parliamentary elections in rural Bihor, we see that political groups were more and more involved as the years went by, each trying to get its own lists voted. In the campaign of May-June 1931, for example, which brought to power a government of national union organized by Nicolae Iorga on the basis of the deep economic crisis, Bihor political leaders were paying close attention to the peasantry.

The strategy was fairly aggressive, political leaders trying to cover every community in the county. The press closely followed developing events, promising that "we will record these events faithfully and we will not be carried away by any political passions that may arise."[79] The politicians descended on the villages on Sundays or holidays, but meetings also took place on other days.

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[77] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.
[78] *Gazeta de Vest*, 159, 28 January 1930, 3.
[79] *Gazeta de Vest*, 452, 23 February 1931, 4.

Bihor parliamentarians were also directly involved in the election campaign. They divided the county according to the districts in which they were running. Deputies Gheorghe Crişan, head of the county organization of National Peasants, together with Teodor Popa and Mircea Mihulin, chosen by the same political organization, visited many villages trying to convince the residents to give them their votes once more. Their presence was noted in Sântandrei, Tărian, and Girişul de Criş, among others. The press noted their presence there and the fact that they were carrying out an honest campaign, offering insight into their parliamentary activities on the part of Bihor, and explaining the "work" of the National Peasant Party to the peasants, such as the law on usury, the government hoping that once the law passed, it would help the peasants.

The presence of Parliamentarians or candidates for the Romanian Parliament in the county's villages seems to have been considered a necessity. In Valea Crişului Repede, always a lively zone in election years, that hosted the noisiest and most complicated electoral battles, big names in national and Bihor politics cycled through: "Sunday, in Valea Crişului Repede, the National Peasants passed through several villages"[80], wrote Gazeta de Vest. Deputy Dr. Teodor Roxin held meetings in several communities, and Professor Andrei Crăciun, secretary general of the National Peasant Party in Bihor, "swept through the villages of Valea Măgeştilor, holding meetings in Chisteag, Aştileu-Peştere and Măgeşti. Both offered information about the two years of National Peasant government, explaining to the gathered peasants and intellectuals the great struggles they had encountered in their time in office. Then they asked the voters to vote for the National Peasant candidate for secretary general, Teianu Constantin. The crowds received the name of the candidate with cheers, in hopes that he could improve the condition of the oppressed of Bihor."[81]

Other deputies appeared in other parts of the county with the occasion of these parliamentary elections. Senator Quintiliu Viniciu visited the communities of Săcuieni, senator Titus Trif was in Salonta, deputy Enea Popoviciu in Beliu post, deputy Gh. Popescu Ceica in Ceica post, Amos Borian in Beiuş and many others throughout the county. As the elections drew closer, these meetings with voters grew more and more frequent, and political rallies were held almost every day.[82] The press recorded large turnout at electoral meetings, though, to paraphrase some of the peasants

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[80] *Gazeta de Vest*, 452, 23 February 1931, 4.
[81] *Gazeta de Vest*, 452, 23 February 1931, 4.
[82] *Gazeta de Vest*, 444, 13 February 1931, 6.

who attended, "Much was spoken and even more was prognosticated"[83] with no follow-through to the majority of promises.

This was repeated with each election, including the elections of July 1932. The president of the local organization of the National Peasant Party, deputy Teodor Roxin, included the communities of Valea Crişului Repede on his tour. The largest electoral meetings were organized in the communities of Bratca, Beznea and Borod, but the tour was not without its share of incidents.

In Bratca more than 1,000 voters attended. According to the press of Oradea, "Agents of the Liberal Party attempted to disrupt the meeting, but the small number of drunks were removed from the meeting hall. And the deputy was describing his parliamentary activity and the entire political situation. After he had explained the causes of the economic crisis to the crowd, and the government's projects for assistance to the peasants and the usury law, the understanding public promised to remain loyal and united around the National Peasant flag."[84] At the next stop in the village Borod, more tense moments were arranged by the opponents of Deputy Roxin. Each time, the public was reminded of the enthusiasm with which he was received by the peasants, compared to the few dissidents who organized demonstrations against him. The incidents of Bratca were repeated in Borod, where "a priest, Clintoc, formerly Klintok Ianos under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, member of the '48-ist' party, together with the Jewish bar owner Steiner, influenced by business interests, used dirty methods to try to create an unwelcome atmosphere towards the National Peasant deputy. Both agents were exposed and the people declared themselves on the side of the government and its candidate."[85] It is worth noting that, at least according to the press, everyday peasants, politically unaffiliated, were the deciding factor in the electoral campaigns. It is no less true that a large part of the Romanian press in Oradea was politically opinionated, even if they declared themselves independent.

If Valea Crişului Repede was known for tense electoral clashes, the campaigns took place without problems in the rest of the county. In the same elections in 1932, in Valea Iadului, in the communities Bulz and Remeţ, Professor Andrei Crăciun, secretary general of the county organization of the National Peasant Party, carried out his campaign. His exchange with the peasants was utterly friendly, and they listened attentively to him and trusted his words. As the economic crisis was at its peak and the quality of life greatly decreased, "he pointed out to the voters

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[83] *Noua Gazetă de Vest* [New Gazette of the West], 18, 20 January 1938, 8.
[84] *Gazeta de Vest*, 819, 10 July 1932, 3.
[85] *Gazeta de Vest*, 819, 10 July 1932, 3.

that the party's mandate was four years, of which only two had gone by, so
he asked for patience, as the party put in power only by the people knew to
do its job as it had promised two years before, pulling the country out of
the difficulties it had been thrown into by circumstance."[86]

The discussions generally addressed problems raised by peasants. Thus
deputy Teodor Popa, holding meetings in the villages of Oşorhei, Fughiu,
Alparea, Ineul de Criş and Husasău de Criş was questioned by peasants
regarding the high level of industrial production compared to agricultural
production, which made the peasants rather uncomfortable and caused
them many problems. In their opinion, this fact contributed decisively to
their poverty. They asked deputy Teodor Popa to intervene as necessary to
force the prices of industrial products to be connected with the price of
grain. We can see that the peasants understood economic problems well,
also being well-informed about the causes of the economic crisis. They
were convinced, however, that the government could straighten things out.
The calm, consistent dialog that Teodor Popa had with the peasants could
be credited to the fact that the area was a fief of the National Peasant
Party, and the villagers were more than receptive to this party.

Similar situations arose in Tinca, where candidate Ioan Matei,
"accompanied by Mr. Ştefănescu, passed through the region, where he was
warmly received. They had a very successful meeting in the community
Girişul Negru."[87] Deputy Enea Popoviciu passed through Beliu, where he
was likewise received "with much enthusiasm".[88] All of these zones of the
county were controlled by the National Peasant Party, with a few
exceptions, for almost the whole interwar period.

The electoral campaigns in Bihor in the interwar period bore the mark
of local realities. The rural world had become the center of attention in the
Bihor political world, as it had in the rest of the country, together with the
introduction of the universal vote. Political leaders tried to become known
in the villages of Bihor. To this end, various actions were organized during
election periods that implicated various parts of the rural world.

Unarguably, the most active political organization in the interwar
Bihor village world was the National Peasant Party. This was to be
expected, as this political organization was concerned from its very
inception with the peasantry. It evolved in the circumstances of a national
Romanian movement with an electorate used to the new national peasant
politics after 1926, in line with the national vein. In a meeting of the
leadership of the National Peasant Bihor organization on September 12,

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[86] *Gazeta de Vest*, 819, 10 July 1932, 3.
[87] *Gazeta de Vest*, 819, 10 July 1932, 3.
[88] *Gazeta de Vest*, 819, 10 July 1932, 3.

1929, for example, Aurel Lazăr insisted on the necessity of an organization of youth from the villages of Bihor in "rings of the strong".[89] The reason for this, publicly declared by Aurel Lazăr, was to attract both young generations of voters and also women, who had received partial right to vote in the summer of 1929. He suggested that the leaders of the organization should travel through the villages, and during their meetings to explain not only new laws being voted on by Parliament in the people's interest, but also the necessity of founding cooperatives, schools and banks in the villages, as well as organizing the youth. It would all have to be coordinated with local organizations, who had been ordered to arrange meetings of the people.

Based on the results of that meeting, the Bihor parliamentarians, led by Aurel Lazăr, began a thorough campaign of propaganda throughout the villages of Bihor from September 23, 1929. Deputy Teodor Rocsin, accompanied by Andrei Crăciun, secretary of the county organization, and Aurel Barna, organized and participated in the popular gatherings in the Auşeu, Aleşd and Măgeşti villages. Each had his field of expertise around which he built his entire speech. So Rocsin explained the new norms voted on by the legislature in Bucharest, while Barna spoke to attendees about the rings of the strong and Crăciun about the importance of school in village life, encouraging the peasants to send their children to school for a basic education.

On the same day, September 23, 1929, rallies were taking place in other areas of Bihor County, too, featuring other local National Peasant Party leaders. Senator Titus Trif, accompanied by attorney Iosif Teodoreanu, participated in the gatherings held in the Cefa, Berechiu, Inand, Mădăras and Homorog villages, later heading to Tulca, Căuşad, Ianoşda and Ciumeghiu. Deputy Teodor Popa was doing the same in the Şuşturogi, Burzuc, Bălaia, Botean and Ineu de Criş communities, explaining to the peasants the assistance available to them through the *Creditul Agricol* financial institution.[90] Already sick, Lazăr was unable to travel through the villages of Bihor. He did participate, though, in the celebrations of the blessing of the flags and the inauguration of the group of the strong of Sălaj County on September 29, together with Gelu Egri, Victor Cădere, Gh. Popescu-Ceica and Quintiliu Viniciu.

At the beginning of November, National Peasant deputies and senators from Bihor traveled through the Beiuş area, offering information on the government's activities in the Roşia, Căbeşti, Remetea, Ursad, Dumbrăviţa

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[89] Zainea, *Aurel Lazăr*, 249.
[90] Zainea, *Aurel Lazăr*, 249.

de Codru, Uileac, Pocola, Răbăgani, Budureasa, Curăţele, Finiş, Fiziş and
Şuncuiuş communities.

From the point of view of the local elections at the beginning of 1930,
the political propaganda was diversified. All parties involved in the
elections seemed to become very sensitive to village issues. The press
missed no opportunity to lambaste what they considered hypocrisy in that
the peasantry was all but forgotten by the political class between elections.
Around election time, however, politicians came to the peasants at home.
"The lords from the city, so it goes, overwhelmed by unbounding love for
the people, abandoned the cities in the morning in their modern cars and
headed for the villages. They covered the entire county, their mouths full
of sweet promises. Everywhere, peasants waited for their arrival, the only
entertainment they had, breaking the monotony of village life with political
propaganda."[91] There, among the peasants, "from clean, disinfected throats,
spring the most eloquent phrases, hoping to sound convincing. Splendid
exercises of oration take place, from which sooner or later political figures
and leaders can be distinguished. Some even stick around with this gift."[92]
We see a merciless attack on the part of the press towards the politicians
from Bihor, that they are not interested in peasants' real issues between
elections. The attitude was quite harsh, sometimes rightly so, regarding the
way the democratic system worked and the fact that, after all, parliamentarians
couldn't exactly travel weekly or even monthly through the villages of
Bihor for meetings with voters. This also offers an explanation for the
relatively large interest Bihor peasants had in electoral events. It is said
that these events were, for them, more of an escape from rural monotony
than a real interest in what happened.

Although many political forces presented themselves to the electorate,
most peasants had a hard time grasping the nuances of campaign promises:
In their minds, what was changing was just the title and person in charge,
with all programs equivalent, aimed at "the good of the country and the
people".[93] All were championed by politicians "with the same speeches,
but half of them empty promises and the rest insults towards the other
parties."[94]

The peasants observed, however, this entertainment, on one hand with
much curiosity, and on the other hand with great interest when the subjects
affected them directly, even if they knew that many of these promises
would never be realized. Most of the time, the villagers listened quietly to

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[91] *Gazeta de Vest*, 172, 13 February 1930, 2.
[92] *Gazeta de Vest*, 173, 14 February 1930, 4.
[93] *Gazeta de Vest*, 173, 14 February 1930, 4.
[94] *Gazeta de Vest*, 173, 14 February 1930, 4.

the speeches and, "if they weren't instigated, the peasants listened to all. They were accustomed to just listening and waiting. They were waiting to hear something new, hoping to see for themselves promises kept. It was known that the Romanian peasant had the ability to suffer without losing hope. Hope was still alive, and if it hadn't been, there would have been grave consequences that would have purged the country of problems, forcing politicians to see their actions through the prism of reality."[95]

We can see that the press paid much attention to the relations between candidates and peasant voters during election campaigns. They understood that the peasants were being used for the most part to obtain votes, not to actually address their problems. The difficult situation of the peasants was presented, following the agrarian reform that, although it pleased some peasants, reduced production in Romania since small farm owners couldn't afford the tools necessary to make the most of the land. The press remarked that all governments arranging elections promised to help end this impasse if elected. Measures intended to help the peasants were taken right during election season. Villagers were happy when help arrived, and, some said, for this reason they listened eagerly to the discussions around the elections, then went to vote and send people they thought would help them to local councils and Parliament. Most reporters, very aware of this electoral dialog, questioned the sincerity of the candidates, affirming clearly more than a few times during the interwar years that what was sought in political gatherings was merely election victory, not solutions to the problems of peasants. Thus "the poor Romanians were fooled from the beginning regarding elections. Their votes mattered only inasmuch as they satisfied the needs of the candidates, after which their expectations were disappointed. No one was rushing to keep campaign promises. And another year would go by, until the next year, when the lies and promises began to flow again."[96]

The general impression emphasized by the press regarding the state of mind in the villages of Bihor was that politicians protect only their own interests – never those of the common man – and the "party collections"[97], that is, the interests of the party. All electoral programs promised "heaven and abundance"[98] to all, and were popularized as "the poor ignorants sounding their horns"[99] in public gatherings with fiery speeches, "making

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[95] *Gazeta de Vest*, 173, 14 February 1930, 4.
[96] *Gazeta de Vest*, 177, 19 February 1930, 4.
[97] *Gazeta de Vest*, 429, 24 January 1930, 4.
[98] *Gazeta de Vest*, 434, 31 January 1931, 3.
[99] *Gazeta de Vest*, 431, 28 January 1931, 4.

use of raised or sweetened voices and chest-beating"[100], all to "convince"[101] that their program is motivated by nothing but "love and humility towards the poor Romanian".[102] The newspapers presented this world of the interwar politician, marked by an often disdainful politicianism. Although they were very critical of the political world, the press didn't hesitate to publish manifestos and calls to action of political organizations towards the electorate. They did so, they said, to inform the citizens and to call them to vote. Addressing their content, the reporters commented sourly on what was written, saying that it all seemed divorced from reality, of an enormous falsehood, as if "it sounded like worry over the poor people, their needs and hardships, was killing the powerful lords. The happiness of the people, sung or lamented in the most varied sentimental tones and harmonies, non-stop for decades. The experience of these years demands that we scrutinize the sincerity of these printed speeches."[103]

Reflecting a real situation in rural Bihor, as the press claimed, party documents and politicians' speeches were utterly lacking in sincerity, and worse, they showed a total ignorance of "the nature of the Romanian people, due to never having tried to establish a genuine rapport between leader and masses."[104]

It is very interesting how the peasantry's reaction to political propaganda was reflected. In the opinion of the journalists who were in contact with the peasants during election periods, people accepted the rotation of politicians "being generally sympathetic people"[105] and, though they didn't necessarily believe the promises, their attitude towards a vote for some party was "All right, then, sir, let's see how you go to work".[106] The peasant was, by definition, exploited for politicians' selfish goals and "riding on his needs, how many raised themselves up where they couldn't have dreamed of arriving through merit? Why? Because the people were still, due to lack of cultural, civic and political education, the same mass of naive, gullible folks, sometimes even brutal and proud."[107]

In the middle of the interwar period, ten years after the implementation of the universal vote, the press came to a bitter conclusion about the fate of the Bihor voter, namely that he was nothing more than "a platform for

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[100] *Gazeta de Vest*, 165, 4 February 1930, 2.
[101] *Gazeta de Vest*, 167, 7 February 1930, 4.
[102] *Gazeta de Vest*, 157, 26 January 1930, 6.
[103] *Gazeta de Vest*, 157, 26 January 1930, 6.
[104] *Gazeta de Vest*, 47, 7 September 1929, 4.
[105] *Gazeta de Vest*, 47, 7 September 1929, 4.
[106] *Gazeta de Vest*, 431, 28 January 1931, 4.
[107] *Gazeta de Vest*, 430, 27 January 1931, 4.

election campaigns, a wonderful trampoline where politicians executed the most breathtaking leaps of ascension and ... of monetary gain."[108] What was missing in the politician-voter relationship, according to the press, was precisely that real contact with the masses of voters which, if it had existed, would have communicated their political messages better than the empty words of the election campaign. Another conclusion was that the politician's interaction with the peasant was realized too much with the help of election posters plastered in various places or manifestos that were rarely even read, as many were illiterate.

The electoral language was, likewise, a big problem during interwar elections. Too often were the speeches full of invectives, personal attacks used as weapons. The gazettes of Oradea fought against the mudslinging of the politicians. "We are disgusted by the passionate, derisive, gypsy speech full of invectives directed towards adversaries during political gatherings"[109], said one of the Oradea dailies, competitors insulting each other as if "at the entrance to a tent, making pig troughs of their meetings".[110] The worst attacks were in the party gazettes. Expressions like "minority Greek Mavrodin, Byzantine *fanariot*", "*Gazeta de Vest*, owned by traitor to his people Karacsonyi Endre …", " the infamous attacks of the mercenaries", "… the shrieks of the Bulgarian freedom fighter overstuffed by all of the parties …"[111] were everywhere in their pages. Faced with such an avalanche of invectives, the perception of the political world of rural Bihor was often devastating as the peasants sensed "the poison of souls soured by elections"[112], leaving them little hope for something positive.

The general impression given by the press regarding the perception of politicians in Bihor village life, while debatable and at times exaggerated, is that it was hard to distinguish between political competitors as they all took the same forms. Since they were branding each other as "fanariot Greek, gypsy, Jewified Russian Hungarian, traitor, Bolshevik, thief, pickpocket, communist and former comitagiu"[113], the villagers lost faith in all "leaders, seeing them all as traitors, foreigners, thieves or even pickpockets. It was far worse for the voters to label you thief and pickpocket than a political adversary. One couldn't lose trust in the voters;

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[108] *Gazeta de Vest*, 431, 28 January 1931, 4.
[109] *Gazeta de Vest*, 801, 7 May 1932, 1.
[110] *Gazeta de Vest*, 208, 28 March 1930, 4.
[111] *Gazeta de Vest*, 208, 28 March 1930, 4.
[112] *Gazeta de Vest*, 801, 7 May 1932, 1.
[113] *Gazeta de Vest*, 801, 7 May 1932, 1.

betrayed trust means a lost vote."[114] So it comes as no surprise how one peasant from Gepiş came to a sad conclusion, after many electoral campaigns, that "all lords are bad".[115] Another maintained that "if the lords consider each other thieves, traitors and rascals, how can we peasants not believe them?"[116] The peasants noted these flaws of interwar democracy but they were more than understanding towards the political class. Their main complaint was that, between electoral campaigns, they were left untended, no politicians interested in them. That they seemed close to the people during campaigns didn't change their basic opinion, and the massive participation of the candidates in campaigns "sometimes downright zealous, dropping all contact with the city and family, for three weeks, crossing the villages and communes of that part of the county day and night"[117] reinforced their conviction more than changing it.

The end of elections was often a huge relief for the locals. The villagers could escape from political worries and verbal disputes from election campaigns that quite often led to "serious bad blood between former friends who, during elections, became bitter enemies, all of this pulling the peasant away from his own business, leaving important daily business behind. So much drink, so much poison was poured down the throats of the voters in the last few months of propaganda."[118] Even the candidates were relieved to finish with the campaigns, considering the expenses that, once in power, would have to be recovered. The most satisfied were, according to the Bihor press, those who ran for mayor, as they could gather funds by "selling their livestock, just to cover their election expenses. Others would sell a plot of land, to be able to share some tipsiness (i.e., alcohol)"[119] with those who would vote for them. The voters, suffering from election "tipsiness", soon regretted their decisions, realizing they had been led with "sugar".[120]

Once the elections were over, people from the villages returned to the oldest tradition, "work and peace"[121], and fast reconciliation allowed them to get back to the work that had been deprioritized during the election campaigns. Unfortunately, even at the end of elections, electoral tensions weren't always easy to alleviate. Politicians acted on vendettas, either with

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[114] *Gazeta de Vest*, 801, 7 May 1932, 1.

[115] *Gazeta de Vest*, 216, 12 April 1930, 4.

[116] *Gazeta de Vest*, 279, 6 July 1930, 3.

[117] *Gazeta de* Vest, 279, 6 July 1930, 3.

[118] *Gazeta de* Vest, 429, 24 January 1930, 4.

[119] *Gazeta de* Vest, 429, 24 January 1930, 4.

[120] *Gazeta de* Vest, 429, 24 January 1930, 4.

[121] *Gazeta de* Vest, 429, 24 January 1930, 4.

former rivals or with voters, who for whatever reason had caused them problems. Many such stories were related by the press during the interwar period. Perhaps the most interesting instance came up after the general elections of 1928, when Anastase Mavrodin, president of the Bihor organization of the Peasant Party – Dr. Nicolae Lupu, prosecuted a group of peasants from Lugaşul de Jos, claiming that they accosted him during an electoral event there. The peasants admitted to having done so, claiming that they resorted to violence because Mavrodin was campaigning in their village against their wishes. It was determined on investigation that the assault was committed by peasant Teodor Todoraş together with several accomplices, leaving the candidate with light bruises. The Oradea court had the medical documents regarding the bruises, but declared them outside its competence, because the bruises were light, and the case was moved to the village court of Aleşd. When Mavrodin was able to provide medical documents proving that the wounds had not healed after 20 days, and thus could not be considered light, the case was returned to Oradea. We cannot know the outcome of the trial as the press failed to report further.

All of this could still create a dangerous situation for democracy, where people gave up believing in the political class. From here to the sliding away of democracy at the end of the 1930s was not a long way. This also explains why the population of Romania was "prepared" for the installation of the authoritative monarchy of King Carol II in 1938. The installation of this regime occurred in a special situation, considering the new political situation of Romania and Europe. It was after the short term of the Goga-Cuza "transitional" government and during the preparations for the elections scheduled for March 2-6, 1938. These elections never took place, as King Carol II instituted his own regime of Authoritative Monarchy. With the occasion of the preparations for the election, while citizens' rights were being reduced weekly, asked how he felt about all of this, Gheorghe Crişan, one of the most active local Romanian politicians of the interwar period, former Peasant national minister in several governments, describing the atmosphere in Bihor, stated: "How is it going with the elections in our Biharia? I can say: well. The people have the same old trust in the leaders of our party. From the electoral tours I have taken, this opinion has strengthened my belief that the masses understand well the difficulties the current government has had to handle and the necessity of the sacrifices made by the country. It was difficult at the time, but the great masses of voters perceived the necessity for the greater good, and have not abandoned the National Peasant Party. Their interest today in Mr. Const. Teianu, candidate for the government, proves this. In the

current election, the party is presenting 6 Romanian candidates. With a few small exceptions, the campaign has been civilized. The small exceptions are due to the fact that some prefer not to give up old habits, although they could, as those habits can only help the Hungarian Party." "All parties have complete freedom to campaign in the county. This is much talked about among the people, especially the Romanians, proud that the government deeply respects civil liberties. Speaking of freedom of propaganda, I want to set one thing straight. It does not mean the right to antinational and antisocial actions. Let it be known that the authorities have dealt swiftly and harshly with these kinds of actions."[122]

This appreciation is coming from someone in power. Different nuances regarding this election can be seen among the opposition. Nicolae Zigre, leader of the Georgist Liberals of Bihor, in an interview with *Gazeta de Vest* in his "elegant office in the Apollo Palace" in Oradea, considering the same electoral campaigns, states: "I am satisfied with how the campaign is going. The people have a faith in us that belies the hope they have in our mission: Only they have named us Georgists, young liberals, while the others have become old liberals – in other words, retirees. I have only one expectation of the government: to issue voter registration certificates and personal identification in a timely manner. Otherwise it would seem that the current regime wishes to influence the results, which I don't think is the case."[123] We can sense, then, some question over the election results from some of the liberal opposition leaders. The results could be distorted in certain ways by the National Peasants, such as by delaying the issuing of voter certificates, without which citizens could not vote.

On the subject of voter certificates, another worrying phenomenon for democracy was noted, especially as we are looking at elections that were already taking place in a more and more accentuated international revisionist atmosphere. In the elections of March 1938 could be seen, more than ever before, much apathy on the part of Romanian voters, compared to the Hungarian and Jewish majorities, especially in rural areas. The phenomenon could already be felt from the issuing of voter cards, when "Romanian voters were uninterested, while minority voters, to the very last one, came to claim their voter certificates. Our indifference was the strongest weapon that Romanians could unintentionally put in the hands of their enemies. Did anyone stop to think what would happen if all of the minorities picked up all of their voter certificates, which was quite likely, but apathetic Romanians preferred to leave everything to chance? I

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[122] *Gazeta de* Vest, 429, 24 January 1930, 4.
[123] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 5, 5 January 1938, 6.

don't think anyone was thinking, and even if they had been, it would have taken a long time for it to hit them. Respect for their forefathers who sacrificed themselves for country made them not think about the painful consequences for the Romanian. Bihor was a county, on the border, mostly inhabited by Romanians who were oblivious to the hostile atmosphere brought about by their indifference to state affairs. There were many Romanians, but if their indifference reflected their interest in their country, then they would lose the right to lead Romania, for which so much had been sacrificed for so long. However many Romanians there were according to the census, a statistic showing the number who exercised their right to vote would clearly show the minorities with a devastating advantage. There were definitely more enemies, which encouraged them to exploit the Romanians' apathy, like a failure of Romanian strength and will to hold onto leadership in that area. That is why Romanians needed to understand the importance of their participation in elections and of claiming all voter certificates, to show their strength and will. The greatest patriot was he who satisfied the most basic civil obligations, namely exercising the right to vote."[124]

So, in an international atmosphere oriented more and more against Romania, with Hungary more and more hostile towards Romania, the press drew attention to the need for high voter turnout to show Romanian demographic superiority in Bihor. This could help Romania in any potential international crisis, which was already on the way.

The same press suggested to Bihorians, regardless of political parties, how to vote, especially aimed at the peasants, who were the majority of the Romanian electorate in the county, as Oradea was ethnically dominated by Jews and Hungarians. The Romanian press considered the peasants the only ones who could show – through a huge turnout – the size of the Romanian demographic at the western border of the country. As they felt more Romanian than the urbanites, the Oradea papers claimed, the peasants had to vote in large numbers and not worry about who to vote for. In Bihor the peasants should vote "united in thought and feeling, all as one"[125] and, most importantly, "leave politics for the brothers south of the Carpathians, where there was less threat from foreigners who wanted to ruin everything".[126] All were strongly instructed, where "many enemies of our kin wandered, not to scatter their votes, but to carefully think of the Romanian candidates, to put aside party differences and to vote all together for one Romanian. Whoever won, he was chosen by the voters,

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[124] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 5, 5 January 1938, 6.
[125] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 13, 15 January 1938, 8.
[126] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 13, 15 January 1938, 8.

especially if the voters looked at the political and moral strength of each candidate."[127]

As the international atmosphere was quite complex at the beginning of 1938, both externally and internally, Romanian peasants were charged with voting for the Romanian and against the "Hungarian lords and Bolsheviks".[128] As the reporters saw it, "The problem was that much thought was needed about which candidate would be best for the county. There weren't many, only three, but the election had to be carried out intelligently, or the results would be unforeseeable."[129] The tone of these statements matches the new situation that would soon lead to harder times for Romanian society.

Following the electoral atmosphere in rural areas during election seasons, both local and parliamentary, during the interwar period, we can see occurrences that generally characterize Romanian politics, showing how Bihor fit well into the context of interwar Romania. What sets it apart are the local particularities. We can see that the Bihor peasant world became, together with the universal vote, an active part of Romanian politics. Peasants became important for candidates, seen as possible partners for dialog, when necessary.

Romanian interwar democracy did not function according to absolutes, nor could it have. The relationship of politician to rural electorate, as it came to be through the universal vote and the Constitution of 1923, was not exactly solid. As we have seen here, this partnership suffered a great deal between the two World Wars. Still, the interwar period clearly represented a step forward in Romanian politics.

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[127] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 825, 25 September 1938, 4.
[128] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 825, 25 September 1938, 4.
[129] *Noua Gazetă de Vest*, 825, 25 September 1938, 4.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SUSPICIOUS BEYOND IMAGINATION: CONSTRUCTS OF ETHNICITY AND THE RURAL WORLD IN INTERWAR TRANSYLVANIA

GÁBOR EGRY

Contemporary social sciences treat ethnicity – both as a separate social phenomenon and as a synonym of ethnic identity – as situational, malleable, diverse and socially constructed. Therefore, recent studies pay more attention to how ethnicity is evolving and how it is constructed under different circumstances than to a simple description or cataloguing of identities. Social construction is a broad term with many implied meanings, which usually refers to a large set of interactions and practices that could contribute to personal identification with certain groups, or which can be understood as the expression of group membership. The crucial role of interactions and practices in the construction of ethnicity points to the importance of those actors who interact or who stage a practice. In both cases many different actors gain potential agency over the definition and content of ethnicity, though none of them could have definitive authority. Although it is usually enough to have one party to an interaction or one observer of a practice who understands it as ethnic to stimulate reactions from others, depending on their roles, they could potentially completely redefine this initial understanding of ethnicity, thus leading to a process of negotiation.[1]

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[1] See Peter Stachel, "Identitás. A kortárs társadalom – és kultúratudományok egy központi fogalmának genezise, inflálódása és problémái," [Identity. Genesis, Inflation and Problems of one of the Central Concepts of the Social Sciences and Cultural Studies] *Regio* 4 (2007), 3-33; Rogers Brubaker, Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 1-47; Feischmidt Margit, "Megismerés és elismerés: elméletek, módszerek, politikák az etnicitás kutatásában," [Recognition and Acknowledgement: Theories, Methods and Policies in the Study of Ethnicity] in *Etnicitás. Különbségteremtő társadalom*, ed.

Nevertheless, different roles, positions and not least different resources mean that this negotiation process does not play out between equal parties. Especially nationalizing states invest much effort in making their own definitions of ethnicity, be it that of the titular nations or the irregular, minority ones, the only ones used and accepted. Greater Romania was an exemplary case of a nationalizing state throughout the interwar period and – at least in terms of politics of identity – homogenizing and unification was the key goal of its Bucharest elite. The much used keyword of the "unification of the souls"[2] was more or less understood as the necessity to make a unitary state from a diverse country with too many different legacies of statehood and social experiences. In the face of this attempt, those who were not easy to merge into the new, unified nation-state's titular nation were automatically seen as obstacles to achieving the Romanian national goals. Thus, defining ethnicity, i. e. Romanian-ness and un-Romanian-ness, was a means of controlling these dangers. The new provinces were especially seen as regions where the nation-state still had much to do because of the large minority population.

Although ethnic Romanians in Transylvania were predominantly peasants, it did not mean the minority population would have been confined to urban areas. Despite being more urbanized, most of these ethnic groups, Jews, apart from Maramures, and highly acculturated Armenians being the exception, still were agrarian in the sense that more than half of their members lived in rural settlements and had earned a living from agriculture.[3] However, despite the presence of phenomena which are often referred to as signs of "national indifference"[4] the state and the inhabitants quite often saw their rural world as divided along ethnic lines. Even efforts to improve economic conditions of the peasantry, like agrarian reform, were treated as means to show preference to one ethnic group at the expense of the others. Although the justification was reparation for historical grievances, the result was still biased. Thus, even the shift in material conditions and resources was not enough to eliminate

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Feischmidt Margit (Budapest: Gondolat – MTA Kiebbségkutató Intézet, 2010), 7-29.

[2] Lucian Leuştean, *România şi Ungaria în cadrul „Noii Europe" (1920-1923)* [Romania and Hungary in "New Europe" (1920-1923)] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2003).

[3] Nándor Bárdi, László Szarka, Csilla Fedinecz, *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* (New Jersey: Social Science Monographs, Boulder, CO, Atlantic Research Publications, Highland Lakes, 2011), 164-178.

[4] Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities. National Indifference as a Categoy of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69 (2010), 93-119.

traditions, institutions, structures and practices that persisted, although not necessarily unchanged.

Therefore, often not only the urban but also the rural Transylvania sometimes even the lines inhabited mainly by Romanians, was seen as strange.[5] The state attempted to control and to change the rural world and this implied defining, identifying and taming non-Romanian ethnic groups, but often with meagre resources. In this article I will pose the question of how ethnicity shaped state activity and individual reactions in the rural context of Transylvania[6], how it changed the concept of ethnicity either permanently or on a case-by-case basis, and how much the state was able to impose its own understanding of Romanian-ness and non-Romanian-ness on these worlds.

Who defines ethnicity?

Ethnicity, as I use the term in this article, is not simply difference, but a difference that is essentialized, i. e., seen as a marker of inherent, unalterable characteristics of persons because they are members of a group.[7] Certain character traits and practices are associated with this membership and taken as its expression, which is relatively stable and persistent throughout time. Nationality or national identity is bound to ethnicity, and in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, it was actually treated as the primary variety of ethnicity in Europe. Thus, nationalism as a political movement[8] which aims at making nation and state identical became inseparably entangled with ethnicity, and nationalizing, the process of establishing national belonging the primary category of all aspects of life was present in ever more sectors of life.[9]

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[5] Nicolae Iorga, *Neamul Românesc în Ardeal și Țara Ungurească* [Romanian Nation in Transylvania and the Hungarian Country], vol. II (Bucharest: Minerva, 1906), 601-630.

[6] In this paper I use the term Transylvania in its widest possible meaning, including all of the territories of pre-WWI Hungary annexed to Greater-Romania.

[7] Feischmidt, "Megismerés és elismerés".

[8] See Miroslav Hroch, "A nemzeti mozgalomtól a nemzet teljes kifejlődéséig: a nemzetépítés folyamata Európában," [From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: Nation-Building Processes in Europe] *Regio* 3 (2000), 3-24; Ernest Gellner, *A nemzetek és a nacionalizmus* [Nations and Nationalism] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2009).

[9] See Anders E. Blomqvist, *Economic Nationalizing in the Ethnic Borderlands of Hungary and Romania. Inclusion, Exclusion and Annihilation in Szatmár/Satu-Mare 1867-1944* (Stockholm University: Stockholm Studies in History 101, 2014), 19-29.

Already in dualist Hungary nationalizing was a key policy of successive governments, although it gained traction in the early Twentieth Century. The most prominent measures were the law on the new, Hungarian geographical names (which was never enacted in its entirety) and the law on education, the so-called Lex Apponyi.[10] They also show that nationalizing was aimed primarily at ethnic homogeneity (the Lex Apponyi stipulated that pupils should receive education in order to confess their identification with the Hungarian nation and recognize Hungarian history as their own) and political debates raged mainly around the issue of the use of minority languages and the possibilities of local self-government.

The state was usually seen as the foremost agent and tool of nationalizing and its representatives who engaged with the rural world often figured in grievances as pursuing these ethnic goals, like district chiefs (szolgabíró, pretor) fining minorities for not speaking Hungarian, schoolmasters compelling minority pupils to speak Hungarian even during breaks, gendarmes abusing non-Hungarians. Nevertheless, public perception of minorities increasingly treated them as posing an immediate danger to Hungarians and the integrity of their state. Most of their activity was seen through this lens, newspapers derided their reluctance to speak Hungarian, and their supposed disobedience, and even their economic gains, mainly the acquisition of landed property, were treated as part of a deliberate strategy to conquer the country.[11]

Despite the wave of patriotism brought about by the outbreak of WWI and the resulting concessions given to minorities (for example the permission to display their national colors publicly), WWI saw the strengthening of this mode of interpreting life. Nationality became more pronounced as a defining characteristic of non-Hungarians even if they were seen increasingly positively, like the Slovaks, of whom the mainstream media reported how much they had proven their patriotism at the front, despite the "pan-Slavic" instigations just before the outbreak of the war, and how much it reinforced their thousand-year-old commitment to Hungary.[12] On the other end of the spectrum, Romanians suffered a wave of suspicion and the accompanying measures after the Kingdom of Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary in August 1916. The authorities found it

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[10] Ágoston Berecz, *The Politics of Early Language Teaching. Hungarian in the Primary Schools of the Late Dual Monarchy* (Budapest: Pasts Inc., CEU, 2012).

[11] Egry Gábor, "Egy önlegitimáló narratíva kérdőjelei," [Question Marks of a Self-legitimzing Narrative] *Múltunk* 3 (2006), 4-33.

[12] László Vörös, "Premeny obrázu Slovákov v maďarskej regionálnej tlači v období rokov 1914-1918," [The Image of the Slovaks in the Hungarian Regional Press between 1914-1918] *Historícky časopis* 3 (2006), 419-450.

easier to qualify Romanian intellectuals as being potential spies and enemies, and as a consequence, they carried out preemptive measures, mainly arrest and internment, in some cases trials, against this group. After the invaders were defeated and Hungarian authorities returned, they started a wave of investigations, trials and disciplinary measures against those whom they suspected of having assisted the Romanian army. Often there was not much more to substantiate the accusations than the nationality of the accused and a few testimonies of dubious credibility.[13]

Apart from local schoolteachers and priests, it was mainly the rural Romanian population that was affected by spy hysteria, state driven proselytism and state control over land purchases. In order to lessen the danger posed by Romanians, the authorities, sometimes with sheer force, tried to compel Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Romanians to convert to a different religion. As religion was more or less equated with nationality, this practically meant changing their ethnicity, thus making them loyal and patriotic. The exchange of landed property was made subject to approval of state authorities with the aim of hindering Romanians from buying "Hungarian" soil.[14] But these practical measures were not all: prominent Transylvanian Hungarians, who established the so-called Transylvanian Alliance (Erdélyi Szövetség) cooperated with the governments installed after István Tisza's fall in devising overarching plans to strengthen the Hungarian society of the province. Population movement, ethnic engineering (the relocation of Romanians from Northern to Southern Transylvania, resettlement of Csángós in the region), a strictly Hungarian-speaking and centralized administration, and the establishment of a Hungarian-speaking Orthodox diocese were key elements of their proposals, alongside ideas to develop a self-sustaining rural Hungarian world which could, with the help of flourishing economic and cultural institutions, counterbalance Romanian dominance in most of rural Transylvania. The

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[13] Direcția Județeană Brașov a Arhivelor Naționale (DJANR Brașov), fond Prefectură Județului Brașov [The Brașov County Service. The National Archives of Romania. The Brașov County Prefecture Fund]. Some strange cases suggest that the situation was less straightforward than it was presented simultaneously and later. In Brasov County, for example, the disciplinary cases against Romanian schoolteachers were usually initiated by county chief prosecutor Eugen Metianu, whose harsh punishments were very often overturned by higher authorities. The Greek Catholic vice-dean from Band was released from captivity after the intervention of the county's lord lieutenant and the Minister of Internal Affairs, with whom he was clearly on very good, informal terms.

[14] Egry Gábor, "Regionalizmus, erdélyiség, szupremácia. Az Erdélyi Szövetség és Erdély jövője, 1913-1918," [Regionalism, Transylvanism, Supremacy. Transylvania's future and the Transylvanian Alliance, 1913-1918] *Századok* 1 (2013), 3-32.

aim was rather to develop ethnic Hungarian structures, obviously at the expense of the existing ones, than to eliminate everything Romanian. However, the dividing line between restriction and elimination was hardly clear and often blurred.

All of these developments contributed to the crystallization of ethnicity as a crucial aspect of rural life, determining important issues, like personal freedom, religious activity, and property rights. Furthermore, during the phase of the revolution at the end of WWI, ethnicity again gained importance, although the ethnic aspect of these events was less clear-cut than usually asserted. The revolution was social and national, but the closer it was to the rural world, the more significant immediate, material considerations became, sometimes entirely overshadowing national issues.[15] Nonetheless, the revolution, even at the local level, reinforced nationalizing tendencies, too. The idea that people should organize their societies along national lines, in the form of separate national councils, which would at the end cooperate in some ways in managing local government, was manifestly ethicised. Even if it was often proposed from outside, by delegates of the urban centers, it seemed the new norm for a while. It made a lasting impact on rural societies, primarily by making the phenomenon of "speaking nationally" not just legitimate, but the most appropriate way to justify even material claims.[16] It was also easy to translate the eruption of discontent with state authorities (which led to the expulsion of hundreds of village notaries without much regard to their ethnicity) into the symbol of national emotions, since the state administration was previously perceived as the means of the Hungarian, nationalizing state. But it didn't necessarily mean the dissolution of multi-ethnic rural communities; villagers often preserved ties to each other or prioritized material demands over national ones. In some cases this went so far as not taking over the management of local issues until the national councils of the other nationalities were established.

The most important characteristic of this period was that ethnicity gained political meaning and the definition of this politicized ethnicity was often promoted by agents of the state. Their success was never preordained and, given the significant social, religious and cultural differences of the different people of Transylvania, it was certainly not an intervention which aimed at establishing a difference in rural communities which did not

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[15] Egry Gábor, "A megértés határán. Nemzetiségek és mindennapok Háromszéken a két világháború között," [At the Edge of Understanding. Nationalitie Sand Everyday in Interwar Trei Scaune] *Limes* 2, (2012), 29-50.
[16] Jon E. Fox, Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood," *Ethnicities* 4 (2008), 536-563.

already exist. It was rather a new meaning and elevated importance attached to the existing, often very visible contrasts between villagers of different ethnicity, and it was rarely successful in its entirety. On the other hand, national activists[17] were also keen on counteracting the nationalizing policies and mobilizing their ethnic constituency politically by using their ethnicity. These actors represented opposite understandings of whether non-Hungarian ethnicity is favourable or not, but they quite often concurred in what they thought to be its content: language, religion and history in a modern sense, as a common story binding group members into a specific, metaphysically united entity. Exactly this modern under-standing could have found resistance in the rural world.

The takeover of the Eastern parts of Hungary by Romania was accompanied by a reversal of the roles in the process of nationalizing. The new state aimed at building a Romanian state, which made agents of the state proponents of another ethnicity, the Romanian one. Nevertheless, the structural characteristics of the process were not changed too much: the state tried to impose one understanding of ethnicity on the interactions and practices of the rural world, and often only the judgement, whether positive or negative for the national character of the state, differed from the previous period. But the Romanian state faced serious obstacles in its nationalizing efforts, most of which were clear from the beginning. The lack of educated and experienced administrators and public servants – often in key institutions, like the post, the railways, strategic industrial enterprises or even the courts[18] – made it harder to occupy these positions. The solution found, the delegation of many administrative positions to Old Kingdom Romanians, was also problematic as the result was political mobilization against the "invading" and "colonizing" Old Kingdom personnel.[19]

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[17] See Peiter M. Judson, *The Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[18] Gábor Egry, "Navigating the Straits. Changing Borders, Changing Rules and Practices of Ethnicity and Loyalty in Romania after 1918," *Hungarian Historical Review* 3 (2013), 449-476. In one case the county court assigned the investigation of a politically charged case with national significance, the murder of two Romanian intellectuals by Hungarian troops near Beius in April 1919, to a Hungarian investigative magistrate.

[19] Ioan Ciupercă, *Opoziţia şi putere în România între anii 1922-1928* [Opposition and Power in Romania between 1922-1928] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţi „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 1992); Florian Kührer-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Staatliche Integration und neue Identifikationsangebote zwischen Regionalismus und nationalem Einheitsdogma im Diskurs der Siebenbürger Rumänen. 1918-1933* (München: De Gruyter Verlag, 2014); Florin Andrei Sora, "Étre fonctionnaire «minoritaire» en Roumanie. Ideologie de la nation et pratiques d'état (1918-

It is hard to tell how much this political mobilization touched people's lives, but the representatives of the new Romania certainly encountered many, often petty, gestures of resistance and acceptance. Difference was not only encountered with non-Romanians (or people whom the authorities treated as such) but often with Romanians too, the result of which was a tendency to speak of the degradation of Romanian national consciousness among these groups.[20] Anyway, it is certainly not surprising that, given the huge task of unification and the social and cultural diversity of the new provinces, the foremost aim of detecting, identifying, locating and registering ethnicity was to strengthen state security. Everything non-Romanian was suspicious, although there was a certain ladder or hierarchy of dangerousness, topped by the Hungarians and, at least in Bessarabia, by the Jews, seen as Judeo-Bolsheviks.[21]

However, these groups were often not seen as homogeneous, at least in the case of Hungarians; the core of irredentism was "found" in the middle class and the elite (the "feudal oligarchy"), while workers and peasants were treated as potentially sympathetic to a democratic and just system after centuries of oppression.[22] As the state needed reliable subjects and citizens, it was eager to detach these social groups from the minority elite, and for this aim, just like in "reconquering" Romanians with a problematic national consciousness, it needed the re-education of these groups along national lines.

Who were the agents of these projects and who was contesting it in the rural environment? The circle of state actors was rather limited; Romania had on the one hand inherited an administrative system in Transylvania which was rather deconcentrated, and on the other hand it still lacked the necessary resources to realize a strong centralization, although things were certainly moving in this direction. Thus, the foremost permanent representative of the state in the villages was the notary and its auxiliary officials. He was accompanied by the gendarmes, responsible for public security and combat of crime and the schoolteacher(s) whose task was to raise patriotic Romanian citizens. One level higher, district chiefs (praetor and prime praetor) controlled the administration of a district, directly

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1940)," in *New Europe College Ştefan Odobleja Program Yearbook 2009-2010*, ed. Irina Vainovski-Mihai, 207-231.

[20] Egry, "Navigating the Straits".

[21] Kate Sorrels, "Ethnicity as Evidence of Subversion. National Stereotypes and the Secret Police Investigation of Jews in Interwar Bessarabia," *Transversaal* 2 (2000), 3-18.

[22] Gábor Egry, "Phantom menaces? Ethnic Categorization, Loyalty and State Security in Interwar Romania," *Hungarian Historical Review* 3 (2014), 650-682.

subordinated to the subprefect and prefect. The latter was a political appointee, in charge of almost all branches of the state administration, who was to deal with the minutiae of local issues too.[23]

These actors rarely had a uniform view of ethnicity, they held different perspectives on and ideas of the phenomenon. Furthermore, they had to act in an environment where other personalities also aimed to define ethnicity according to their own understanding, and where traditions and customs persisted too. Priests (not only from minority churches), teachers of denominational schools, merchants, landowners, students during the thirties, all attempted to engage with the peasants in order to raise their national awareness and educate them about their own national identity. Their encounter in the village with the villagers and each other was essential to the construction of ethnicity.

How to define ethnicity?

Differences surfaced mainly through conflicts of various natures in the interwar rural world. There were, obviously, differences concerning the types of such conflicts between localities with mixed populations and localities where Romanians, or one of the minorities, were dominant, but conflictual understanding of an event, an activity, a practice were always at the core of how ethnicity became important and invoked. However, conflict encompassed a broad range of activities and events, and the circle of parties to them was hardly fixed. Conflict could have meant a clash between locals – often not just a singular event but a series of – sometimes – mutual insults and grievances, an encounter with the representatives of the state, unilateral observation of what happened at a specific moment, or a quarrel with the state, be it a fight with its representatives as physical persons or against an institution. Although conflict was not the norm of rural life, it was a regular occurrence and the logic of ethnicity – the fact that it is based on differences between persons and groups – made it the most customary way to express it too. However, as we will see later, ethnicity was never given, it was more subject to interpretation. Participants or observers interpreted events, interactions, conflicts and practices and connected them to ethnicity. Often this interpretation did not remain

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[23] Andreri Florin Sora, *Servir l'état Roumain, Le corps préfectoral, 1866-1944* (Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 2011); Dietmar Müller, Andrei Florin Sora, "Notarul comunal în România: Cadrul normativ al unei institutii moderne (1864-1940)," [The Communal Notary (Communal Secretary): Normative Framework of a Modern Institution (1864- 1940)] *Arhivele Olteniei* 25 (2011), 369-385.

uncontested, or, as the interpretation was not made public – as in the case
of surveillance of irredentist activities – people could challenge it while
continuing their activities unaltered. This situation laid the framework for
the often dynamic construction and negotiation process of ethnicity and
opened the way for everyone to gain agency and power over its definition.

A closer look at such events reveals how the process unfolded, which
social and political factors, contexts it influenced, and to what extent
different actors could determine the outcome and, ergo, content of ethnicity,
be it their own or that of others'. The first element determining typical
encounters which led to invoking ethnicity was alcohol. Its consumption
was customary among the rural population and many of the conflicts
occurred after or while drinking. Key to ethnic understanding of such
events was either the presence of the foreign language or the use of insults
and curses, many of which was thought to be offending not just because of
the foreignness of the language in which they were exclaimed, but also
because they were thought to aim exclusively at the stigmatization of the
ethnic other, mainly Romanians.

Some examples give a good overview of the whole process and how
ethnicity was constructed throughout. The typical location is a pub or a
general store where liquor is sold. The active participants are usually male
villagers and not just peasants. Lajos Antal, a 70-year-old Calvinist priest
in Zagon / Zágon, for example, was part of an incident which arose from
his use of drugs and alcohol together.[24] Antal had a headache in the
morning and attempted to temper it with painkiller pills and alcohol. He
invited the village notary, who was passing by, to drink with him and then
he started to discuss politics. He did not spare Romanian politicians from
his verbal ire and a Romanian villager, who claimed to have overheard the
insults, denounced him at the gendarmerie for insult against the Romanian
nation. Antal defended himself, successfully, with the argument that he
was under the influence of the alcohol, but did not deny that he had
critiqued the Romanians and Romania.

Not every such encounter was so "peaceful". A few hundred kilometres to
the northwest, near Turda, and more than a decade later, Mihály Gombos had
just left the village pub in Cornești / Alsósinfalva to attend the village
feast. However, he refused to pay the entrance fee and started to exchange
insults (filthy, stinking, etc.) with the local Romanian villagers, which
ended in a brawl.[25] In a sense violence was the rule and not the exception,
which meant that often insults were not the cause of fight rather followed

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[24] DJANR Covasna, fond 47, File 213, f. 8-9.
[25] DJANR Cluj, Tribunalul Turda, fond 2, inv. 198. File 163.

the eruption of it, as happened in the case of János Ranek and his companions, who engaged fellow Romanian villagers in a pub in Bixad/Sepsibükszád in 1926.[26] What made this case exemplary of ethnicity was not the alcohol, but the insults themselves, which were understood as typical examples of ethnicity-based stigmatizing. It was often the Romanian participants, who claimed that something (over)heard hurt their national pride and most often these were only common and banal, although often truly malevolent phrases. The importance of the insults in revealing ethnicity for at least some of the participants is shown by the fact that quite frequently they lacked explicit reference to one's nationality. There were some cases when the much resented word "oláh" (which was often treated as being derisive in itself) surfaced, but at least as much conflict erupted without this once traditional name of the Romanians being uttered. It was enough to hear its usual attributes, filthy, stinking, thief and those concerned almost automatically associated them with the insults. In the case of Lajos Antal, his accuser had to admit during the trial that she did not understood a word of Hungarian, still she was convinced that when Antal used the word "oláh" he could only have been verbally abusing Romanians. In Corneşti, Gombos did not combine the attributes with the people's name explicitly, and still his attackers made this conjunction almost automatically. The practice of stigmatization was so widespread in this rural environment and its ethnic foundations were so ingrained that insults almost automatically were understood as being directed against one's group and not a person.

It obviously shows that language was an important element in the construction of ethnicity and, probably, the less people understood each other, the more they tended to understand this difference in negative terms. The shortcomings of language skills tended to polarize the interpretation of situations, clustering them around two opposites, as in-between intentions or situations – like mild mockery, teasing, irony, self-irony, some of them otherwise important aspects of everyday ethnicity[27] – were obviously not understood. An excellent example of this is given by the arrival of a Unitarian priest in the village of Araci / Árapatak, who was received by the local parish with an ad hoc triumphal gate, bearing the inscription: "Isten hozott!" (Welcome!) However, the patrol of gendarmes supervising the event had not one member who would have understood the text and when they asked the locals what was written on the gate the answer shocked them profoundly. Someone told them that "Isten hozott!"

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[26] DJANR Covasna, fond 47, File 56, f. 5-6.
[27] Feischmidt, "Megismerés és elismerés".

was a traditional Hungarian war cry, which resulted in an anxious report submitted to their superiors, arguing in general that since the ratification of the peace treaty Hungarians had started to become dangerously active and defiant, hardly obeying the authorities.[28]

Similarly instructive is the story of the Sfântu Gheorghe/ Sepsiszent-györgy police commissary Dragomir Constantinescu, who ordered the evacuation of a coffeehouse, still open in the city well after the legal closing time.[29] A Hungarian individual from the nearby village of Dălnic / Dálnok started to insult him with swearwords, but he did not understand. He only reacted when his companion Constantin Manda related the insults and they later arrested the drunken villager who, among other things, threatened the policemen with the loss of their job after falsely claiming to be be a close friend of the county prefect. Once again an investigation of the delict insult against the Romanian nation started because of the use of a non-Romanian language and specific words.

But the exchange of insults was not the only situation which was prone to be interpreted as deliberate and defiant expression of ethnicity. Music, most frequently singing Hungarian or German songs was often the reason for starting a criminal process or denouncing someone. Not just symbolic ones generated reaction, but often more ordinary songs too. Singing the Hungarian national anthem, like János Ranek and his companions did, was taken almost always as an act of expression of disloyalty, but other musical pieces could have earned this status easily too, and once again the less the suspicious participants understood the text the more eager they were to interpret it as an insult on their ethnicity. A patrol of Gendarmes in the village of Bădeni/Bágyon started an investigation of an irredentist act after overhearing a song from the local pub, from the text of which they complained about the following phrases: "Árpád apánk" (our forefather Árpád), "Kossuth lova" (Kossuth's horse) and "kinek nincsen künn ugató kutyája (who doesn't have a dog barking outside).[30] Even though it mentioned at one point the Romanian rule over Transylvania as a sorrowful fact, the ethnicity-based, stigmatizing stereotypes in the song were actually aimed at the Russians.

The latter cases point to the next type of interactions, which occurred between the authorities and the locals. It was often conflict-laden again, but, if this animosity originated from the locals, this was not necessarily

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[28] *Minorităţile naţionale în România 1918-1925* [National Minorities in Romania, 1918-1925], eds. Ioan Scurtu, Liviu Boar (Bucharest: Arhivele Statului România, 1995), document 47, 225-26.
[29] DJANR Covasna, fond 47, File 213, f. 8-9.
[30] DJANR Cluj, Tribunalul Turda, fond 2, inv. 198, File 26, f. 28.

aimed at the institution, it was often a conflict with a person, who happened to represent the state in some capacity. As the state had few delegates in the villages, the circle of persons was rather limited. Given their position of power, conflicts most frequently erupted with gendarmes and village notaries. However, exactly because they were exercising the power of the state, they had an opportunity to define ethnicity preliminarily as if it would have been fixed not just in terms of some attributes of a person but in terms of the meaning of practices in every possible context. The state used widespread ethnic categorization in its dealings with the rural population and its representatives were eager to enforce their own understanding of ethnicity. Nevertheless, it was often hardly different from the ordinary interpretation of what constituted being Romanian, Hungarian or German. Alongside language, the examples of which we have already seen, religion was one of the markers most often equated with ethnicity, and some gendarmes went so far in this practice as to describe the religion of people as Hungarian or Hungarian Catholic, even if identifying Catholic denomination with one nationality was less justified than it was to do with the Orthodox faith and the Romanians.[31]

Fixing ethnicity had an important consequence. If ethnicity was in every case and context, among all circumstances the same, then certain activities and practices could have only been expressions of ethnicity, whatever the intention of the people was. Thus, certain acts, certain institutions and occupations became unalterably ethnic and as such, at least from the perspective of the homogenizing state, suspicious ones. They merited permanent observation, surveillance and control and as soon as this interpretative framework of rural life was established, all of its practices were inevitably forced into this logic. According to the dominant perception of the minorities, mainly the local intellectuals and the institutions they led and represented were targets of this permanent surveillance of ethnic others. However, peasants did not remain "immune" to it either. If they were members, not to mention leaders, of associations (reading circles, parish organizations, cooperatives, etc.), they inevitably figured in the documents of the authorities, just as those who committed something once which was dubbed as irredentism.[32]

But these institutions still did not encompass the life of villagers in its entirety. Ethnicity was also constructed and/or became manifest throughout traditional rural practices. Representatives of the state, who were unfamiliar with the local traits, often saw in them the expression of

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[31] DJANR Covasna, fond 47, File 56, f. 5-6.
[32] Egry, "Phantom menaces?".

the nationality of the locals. Ordinary festivities at important occasions of personal or family life could became problematic on this ground, just as village feasts or customs. A typical spring tradition, adornments made of coloured paper strips fitted to buildings and trees, led to denunciation and trial in some Banat villages.[33] In Apața / Apáca, the newly arrived gendarme commander intervened to deny authorization for a yearly youth festivity, which he not only deemed to be immoral (the youth drank all night and girls and boys were allowed to spend some time together), but he connected this immorality to the Hungarian-ness of the locals.[34] To pour salt on the wound, there were occasions when these regular celebrations turned violent, mainly due to the alcohol consumed. Especially after conscription, local youth tended to drink, and under its influence, they often clashed with the authorities. If the local population was of minority origin, the events were easily understood as gestures of defiance towards the ethnic Romanian state from the ethnic strangers.[35]

In a more general sense, this had a very serious consequence, especially around the end of the thirties. The authorities responsible for state security gradually extended their intended sphere of control over ethnicity from the public to the private. Ethnicity was, from their perspective, on the one hand too elusive, and on the other hand too omnipresent, while it remained dangerous. Therefore its control was essential. This attitude was manifested not only in criminal trials or surveillance reports based on private events, but in such attempts as the prohibition of the use of certain colours on the exteriors of houses or the interest in internal design.[36]

But how could individuals influence the understanding of ethnicity in these specific situations? In most cases, the basis of interpreting these events and interactions as expressions of ethnicity was a clear difference that sorted the participants into different groups. Language use or practices like singing a particular song truly pointed out people who were customarily called Hungarians, Germans or Romanians. It could have

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[33] DJANR Timiș, fond 193, inventar 828, Legiunea Jandarmilor Severin, File 14/1940, f. 74.; Arhivele Naționale ale României, Bucharest [The Central National Historical Archives, Bucharest] (ANIC), Fond Ministerul Justiției, Direcția Judiciară, inventar 1937, File 123/1931, f. 5.
[34] DJANR Brașov, Legiunea Jandarmilor Brasov, File 10/7 1936, 37, f. 43.
[35] ANIC, Fond Ministerul Justiției Direcția Judiciară, inventar 1117, File 88/1932, f. 1; File 52/1930, 44-45, f. 50.
[36] DJANR Brașov, Prefectura Județului Brașov, Serviciul Administrativ, File 57/1941, Proces-Verbal No. 2. 42-940. Secret. January 29, 1940.

remained latent, banal,[37] and as such uncontested. However, as soon as someone publicly tried to enforce norms of behaviour on those whom he or she thought to have expressed their ethnicity publicly, the possibility arose of challenging this interpretation and the content of ethnicity, especially when the events were referred to the authorities in the form of a complaint or a criminal process. Among these circumstances, as often as not, the ethnicity of the participants was contested and thus fluid or contingent, the ethnic nature of the act they had committed uncertain.

Individuals could deny the ethnicity-based interpretation, like Lajos Antal did, when he argued that his disparaging remarks on the quality of the legislation of the "oláh" parliaments could not have been aimed at the Romanians as a nation, because he praised Iuliu Maniu as one of the few bright persons among members of the parliament.[38] They could, in a more general tone, contest whether their intent was in any way anti-Romanian. It was also possible to challenge the nature of these events. The frequent defence that one was acting under the influence of alcohol was, at least in the light of how local traits became contested, not just a desperate plea to the court. It portrayed the consumption of alcohol as a customary activity, a kind of peasant tradition. Such an argument could have been all the more feasible as the same argument was deployed concerning the above mentioned rural festivities and accepted by the authorities. Last, but not least, they could simply point out that Romanians were present, also practicing what was seen as essentially non-Romanian if done by minorities.[39]

But there were situations when ethnicity was less clear-cut, and often an inside-outside dichotomy determined how those involved saw it. It was especially flagrant in situations when rural customs were invoked by an external observer, who judged them on the basis of the easy dichotomy that what was non-Romanian was also ethnically other. Nevertheless, it was usually true that the further these cases were taken in the state administration, the more institutions had to judge them, and the more diverse their opinion on their ethnic character was. Thus, the different levels and branches of the state themselves contributed to the contested nature of ethnicity in the rural world. Although higher administrative or state security organs were in general more prone to "finding out" ethnicity in the rural world than the local organs who became accustomed to the context, this was far from being a strict rule. Often enough it was a

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[37] Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).
[38] DJANR Covasna, Fond 47, Tribunalul Trei Scaune, File 17. (The dossier consists of only the material of this case.)
[39] DJANR Brașov, Leginuea de jandarmi Brasov, File 10/7 1936, f. 33-34.

superior of the local representative of the state who dismissed accusations based on the ethnic understanding of customs, as it happened in Apața / Apáca, where the county commander of the gendarmerie gave permission for the questionable youth festivity.[40]

The most interesting cases were when individual villagers and different state institutions contested the meaning of the same event. Trials involving the charge of agitation against the nation or the state quite often resulted in such situations when individual denunciators, the gendarmes, the prosecutor's office and the court deliberated events with the implicit or explicit task of deciding whether they were of ethnic character. Some of these cases offer the best examples of how far ethnicity was negotiated in the rural world.[41]

The attitude of the locals clustered around the above mentioned defensive strategies. But besides these, they often deployed another one. It was customary to point out that denunciations were actually aimed at transforming a debate over a material issue (mainly property rights) into an idealistic struggle.[42] Furthermore, as the trials dragged on, and the investigations were relocated from their immediate environments, from the local level (the local gendarmes) to higher state organs, they tended to close the door on local issues, which manifested itself mainly in the tendency to renounce previous testimonies and answer questions in the courtroom very laconically, often only with a "don't remember". It was made easier by the fact that these trials allowed different state institutions to intervene with their own definitions of ethnicity and exposed the differences, which offered elbow room for the villagers too.

Sometimes authorities were visibly reluctant to act concerning denunciations.[43] When they did, they had to convince their superiors and the courts that what they saw as the manifestation of ethnicity (either directly, or indirectly, in the form of non-Romanian or anti-Romanian practices, which was deemed to be ethnic in this form too) were truly expressions of ethnicity. However, courts were especially reluctant to give in easily. They repeatedly questioned the tacit assumptions of the gendarmerie or the prosecution and thus contested the content of ethnicity too. It could happen in a broader sense, generally questioning the ideas on what really constitutes ethnicity, in a narrow one, if they dismissed the concept that resistance or opposition to Romania and its authorities could only be ethnicity-based, or they could simply reevaluate how real a danger

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[40] DJANR Brașov, Legiunea Jandarmilor Brasov, File 10/7 1936, 37, f. 43.

[41] See Egry, "A megértés határán," 29-50.

[42] Egry, "A megértés határán," 29-50.

[43] ANIC, Fond Ministerul Justiției, Direcția Judiciară, inventar 1117, File 85/1934. f. 201-206.

ethnicity was. As a result, they either acquitted the accused or imposed mild punishments, especially taking into account the seriousness of the charges.

In this effort the courts basically resorted to two strategies. The first one was applied mainly in the cases of peasants, whom the judges treated as "savages". Therefore they quite often accepted their defence based on the consumption of alcohol and they treated rural violence as part of rural life, something to which the authorities overreacted.[44] For the judges, it was just as natural to have a brawl in a village pub as to slaughter a pig. However, they often did not limit their decisions to this civilizing view of the village. In cases concerning more educated villagers, they were ready to reflect on the possibility of non-ethnic, i. e. legitimate, opposition to the authorities. In these cases, they invoked civil liberties and the right to deny abusive orders, as in the case of a merchant from the village of Gidfălău / Gidófava who refused to appear at the railway station in order to greet the train of the minister of justice, who was just passing by.[45] He was acquitted with the argument that in Romania the authorities don't have the right to compel people to perform such gestures. But there was a third possibility, too, the judgement of whether an act expressing ethnicity is really dangerous. In the case of János Ranek and his companions, the court analysed the text of the Hungarian national anthem which they had allegedly sung before the fight erupted, and it found nothing derisive or grievous in it which would have justified a criminal action.[46]

By way of conclusion: who is the other?

The divided opinion of state authorities certainly helped people to manoeuvre and gain agency over the definition of what constituted ethnicity in the rural world. Nevertheless, in the majority of these cases the basic difference between participants was obvious for them and for the observers; the main issue of contention was the ethnic nature of single acts

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[44] Egry, "A megértés határán,"; Gábor Egry, "Bozgorok. Verbális sértés, gúny, inzultus a mindennapi magyar-román kapcsolatokban a két világháború közti Romániában," [Bozgors. Verbal Slights, Scorn, Insult in the Everyday Hungarian-Romanian Interactions in Interwar Romania] in *„... nem leleplezni, hanem megismerni és megérteni." Tanulmányok a 60 éves Romsics Ignác tiszteletére* ["... Not Unmasking, rather Discovering and Understanding." Studies Honoring the 60 Years old Ignác Romsics], eds. Sándor Gebei, Iván Bertényi, János M. Rainer (Eger: Lyceum Kiadó, 2011), 366-372.

[45] DJANR Covasna fond 47, File 137.

[46] DJANR Covasna fond 47, File 56, f. 5-6.

or recurring practices and, in this form, the content of ethnicity, Romanian-ness, Hungarian-ness or German-ness. Thus, the question of who is 'us' and who is 'other' was relatively easy to answer and the situational nature of ethnicity manifested itself in the different understandings of what is ethnic and what is not.

But a not insignificant number of events transcended the boundaries of these groups, blurred them or even completely redrew them. And, even if they were more frequent in an urban middle-class setting,[47] the rural world was not immune to them either. Romanians tended to find surprisingly many occasions to express differences in relation to other Romanians, primarily Old Kingdom ones, and in certain, specific situations, ethnic Hungarians also acted to draw a line between themselves and other groups of Hungarians. In the case of Romanians, the basis of this distance was religion (at least with Greek Catholics), the specific customs of certain Transylvanian regions, notwithstanding the influence of non-Romanian folk customs and popular culture, and the revolutionary experience of 1918, which differed significantly from the Old Kingdom's political history.

Religious distance manifested itself in mutual proselytizing, which had less of an ethnic character, as both churches were legally defined as Romanian national denominations, However, the practice of celebrating national and dynastic festivities with a mass caused conflicts between the priests of these denominations and in some cases it was reported that Greek Catholics were reluctant to celebrate the appropriate mass or school program.[48] Given that similar behaviour from other churches was generally taken as the expression of their non-Romanian nature, such a move situated Greek Catholics, curiously, beyond the border of Romanian-ness. This was true for most of the social practices and for language use as well. Since the arrival of the Old Kingdom administration, news of defiant gestures from Transylvanian Romanians abounded in police files or in the press. People sang Hungarian songs in the pubs,

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[47] Gábor Egry, "Keresztező Párhuzamosok. Etnicitás és középosztálybeli kultúra a két világháború közti Erdélyben," [Parallels Crossing. Ethnicity and Middle-class Culture in Interwar Transylvania] in *Határokon túl Tanulmánykötet Mark Pittaway (1971-2010) emlékére* [Beyond Boundaries. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Mar Pittaway (1971-2010)], eds. Zsuzsanna Varga, Eszter Bartha (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2012), 282-301.
[48] DJANR Timiş, fond 223, Prefectura Judeţului Severin, File 81/1932, f. 1, 3.

danced Hungarian 'csárdás', and participated in Hungarian balls,[49] and this was usually seen as a sign of their deteriorated or entirely lost Romanian consciousness. It was probably not unintentional; at least some – albeit not necessarily unbiased – Hungarian observers concluded so. For example, an informant of the Hungarian government, who was travelling in county Sătmăr during Charles IV's second return attempt, was glad to see Romanian conscripts singing old k. u. k. and Honvéd military songs.[50] This informant also reported the widespread use of Hungarian, although it rather happened among and with the middle-class. Nevertheless, some sources on personal experiences of Old Kingdom Romanians in the border regions or in the Szekler counties reported the language use as another deliberately defiant gesture.

In all of these cases it was their customary ethnic understanding if they were enacted by minorities that made them problematic, if Romanians were involved, and it made them signs of problematic ethnicity. However, seen from a Transylvanian perspective, the Old Kingdom Romanians held a suspicious ethnicity, and this differentiation went sometimes so far as to translocate stigmata attached to Romanians by Hungarians, like the insult 'mămăligator' (polenta eater).[51] The strongest manifestation of difference was probably violence committed against Old Kingdom Romanians or, by way of retribution, against the followers of Old Kingdom political parties. This type of interaction bore the signs of a lasting impact of the revolution, which made local violent acts legitimate.[52] In some cases, the ensuing criminal trial brought forward a peculiar identification of the local Romanians, who professed loyalty only to the National Peasant Party and its leader Iuliu Maniu, not even mentioning the king.[53] But it is also telling that the same courts which tended to treat rural violence between minorities and Romanians as part of backward rural customs dealt with Romanian-Romanian violence as a political act, implicitly exemplifying

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[49] DJANR Timiş, fond 161, Legiunea Jandarmilor Timis-Torontal, inventar 620, File 175, f. 4-5; DJANR Braşov, Legiunea de jandarmi Braşov, File 10/7 1936, f. 34.

[50] Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives Central Archives], K437 1922 2. t.1922-2-480

[51] ANIC, DGP, File 56/1921, f. 173.

[52] See Gábor Egry, "Crowding Out. Experiences of Difference, Discourses of Identity and Political Mobilization in Interwar Transylania," in *Parliamentarism and political structures in Eastcentral and Southeastern Europe in the Interwar Period,* eds. Sorin Radu, Hans-Christian Maner, *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis, Series Historica* IX (2012), 161-182.

[53] ANIC, Ministerul Justiţiei Direcţia Judiciară, inv. 1117, File 102/1932, f. 3-4, 7-8.

its ethnic character, because it was deemed to be a real threat to Romania, unlike the clashes with the minorities.

As for the 'regrouping' of minorities, it was either political affiliation or participation in the administration which led to such a practice. Peasant parties running against the Hungarian party were often labelled as renegades, implicitly not Hungarian, just as with those who accepted candidacy of a Romanian party. Nevertheless, it was often imposed on the local situation from outside, hardly affecting how people actually categorized each other. But, a peculiar case shows how local Hungarians were able to enforce their own interpretation on the other Hun-garians even in predominantly Hungarian inhabited areas. Lajos Kelemen, a villager from Pachia / Páké waged a many-years-long war against the local authorities and the director of the local state school, all of them Hungarians.[54] Kelemen refused to pay taxes and, at least verbally, showed insubordination, but his success was rather due to successfully redefining ethnicity through permanent insults. Kelemen insulted the local council, calling it 'oláh' council, he told the pupils who sang Romanian songs learnt in the school, not to learn 'oláh' songs and to tell it to the 'oláh' schoolmaster, and he even physically abused a young girl who was practicing Romanian greetings at the street. It lasted for years because the local council wished to sit out the conflict which they saw as being the result of material disagreement between Kelemen's son and the school-master. Even when they gave in, the mayor, who had become the leader of the village during the revolution, initially wanted to resign, and he was convinced to just file a denunciation by the gendarmes. However, as Kelemen was charged with agitation against the nation and the state, it meant Kelemen's triumph too. The local council members, who always emphasised that they were as good Hungarians as Kelemen, must have represented the Romanian state, and its Romanian-ness, in the face of the accused.

In all of these cases, be it Romanian-Romanian or Hungarian-Hungarian difference, the primary issue was authenticity. The practices which were seen as incompatible with a specific ethnicity meant a degeneration of this ethnic group, usually because they were associated with a different ethnicity. However, it was exactly the fluid nature of ethnicity that made it possible to claim and reclaim authenticity with the help of 'foreign' practices too. As in the rural world no one, not even the state security organs, had a monopoly of defining ethnicity, it was always possible to challenge these notions and redraw group boundaries. What was in one

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[54] DJANR Covasna, fond 47, File 194, f. 2-4.

situation taken as a sign of a foreign ethnicity could become the expression of authenticity of another ethnicity in a different one. Maybe this manifest malleability of ethnicity was a significant factor in driving the authorities towards ever more extended control over the private sphere. It generated insecurity and the uncertainty surrounding ethnicity pushed these institutions to try to fix it, but, due to the situational nature of ethnicity, only a total supervision of the society seemed to be suitable for this aim, because the others were everywhere and nowhere.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE HUNGARIAN PARTY AND HUNGARIAN
PEASANTS IN ROMANIA:
ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN RURAL AREAS
AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF HUNGARIAN
PEASANTS IN THE INTERWAR ELECTIONS

SZILÁRD TOTH

The aim of this study is to analyse the position of the Hungarian Party toward the Hungarian peasantry in Romania. We intend to analyse the position of the elites of the party on this issue and the importance of Hungarian peasants for the political elite. These subjects have not been of interest of many researchers on the Hungarian minority in Romania during the interwar period. This investigation shall analyse the election campaign waged by the Hungarian Party in rural areas, the approaches of candidates towards the peasantry and the effectiveness of this election campaign. We will also focus on the position of the Hungarian peasantry toward the Hungarian Party (sympathy for the Hungarian Party or for other political parties) and peasant participation in the interwar elections. Addressing this subject matter might present risks and challenges, especially since my main observation from previous research has been that the Hungarian Party, through its program and campaign, always approached all problems from the point of view of an oppressed minority, which is its main weapon in electoral rhetoric.

From passivism to activism: the formation
of the Hungarian Party

After 4 June 1920, the Hungarian minority now residing in Romania, both the elites and the general population, had a very difficult situation to accept. The political and cultural elite, on advice from Budapest, initially chose political passivity, considering that these changes in the borders between Romania and Hungary would be temporary, and the Hungarian minority only had to "last" until the next round of changes. Only after Károly Kós, István Zágoni and Árpád Paál managed to sway some of the Hungarian elite in Transylvania through the manifesto *Kiáltó szó*[1] (The Voice of One Crying) of 23 January 1921, other members of the elite who had advocated political passivity started to realize the flaws in their strategy. Károly Kós tried to mobilise the Hungarian minority, still dazed by the new territorial changes, who refused to acknowledge reality.[2] This mobilisation, however, was not easy, since the vast majority of the Hungarian political elite in Transylvania had played political roles in the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Emil Grandpierre, István Ugron, György Bethlen) and were loyal to suggestions received from the government in Budapest, and therefore more inclined to be passive.[3]

The Hungarian political elite wanted to satisfy the demands of the Hungarian minority by appealing to international public opinion and the League of Nations;[4] however, devotees to political activism did not agree with this tactic and, on 5 June 1921, in Huedin, founded the Hungarian People's Party (Magyar Néppárt), having as president lawyer Lajos Albrecht and as secretary Károly Kós.[5] This separatist action of the Hungarian People's Party created serious concerns to the conservative elite, who were

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[1] Kós Károly, *Kiáltó szó* (Kolozsvar: Lapkiado Rt., 1921); see the text in Romanian in *Maghiarii din România şi etica minoritară* [Hungarians in Romania and the Ethnic Minorities], ed. Nastasă Lucian, Salat Levente (Cluj-Napoca: Fundaţia CRDE, 2003), 45-51.

[2] Szilárd Toth, *Partidul Maghiar şi problema minorităţii maghiare în Parlamentul României în perioada interbelică* [The Hungarian Party and the Issue of the Hungarian Minority in Interwar Romanian Parliament] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2008), 25.

[3] Toth, *Partidul Maghiar...*, 26.

[4] Toth, *Partidul Maghiar...*, 26.

[5] Imre Mikó, *Huszonkét év. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai története 1918. dec. 1-től 1940. aug. 30-ig* [Twenty-Two Years. The Political History of the Hungarians of Transylvania from 1 December 1918 until 30 August 1940] (Budapest: Studium Kiadó, 1941), 20-23.

facing a big dilemma: to remain passive and lose the support of at least part of the Hungarians in Transylvania, or try a different tactic and move towards political activism, even with Budapest suggesting otherwise. Considering this scenario, they decided to adopt political activism, to preserve unity among the Hungarian electorate from Tran-sylvania, but also to temper the enthusiasm of the "young naive" (as Károly Kós later called his own group) of the Hungarian People's Party.

The conservatives convinced the Hungarian People's Party to also form the Hungarian Union, which was founded on 6 July 1921. The newly established Hungarian Union elected as President Baron Sámuel Jósika, executive president Gusztáv Haller and Vice-presidents István Ugron, Emil Grandpierre, Kálmán Béldy, Géza Ferenczy and Lajos Albrecht. Károly Kós became secretary.[6]

As can be seen, the Hungarian People's Party group played only a secondary role since the Union was established: the conservatives had the position of president, executive president and four vice-presidents, while the Hungarian People's Party only one position of Vice President (Lajos Albrecht) and secretary (Károly Kós). They were, indeed, permanently marginalised in the following years. The Hungarian Union's activity did not last long as it was suspended by the Romanian authorities on 30 October 1921 on the basis of an old Hungarian ministerial decree which forbade ethnically-based political association.[7] This decision would again lead to fragmentation of the Hungarian minority.

The Hungarian People's Party, which bravely propagated political activism, restarted its activities with the elections of 1922. A national congress in Cluj, held on 15 January that year, elected as president István Kecskeméthy, professor at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Cluj. On 12 February, also in Cluj, the Hungarian National Party was founded, having as president the Unitarian Bishop József Ferencz and as secretary Endre Székely. Subsequently, on 5 August, 1922, the real creator of the movement was elected president, Emil Grandpierre.[8]

The Hungarian minority in Romania was again divided. Eventually, thanks to the persuasiveness of Sámuel Jósika, the Hungarian minority unified their vote under the banner of the Hungarian Union. However, the founding of a single party that would represent the interests of the Hungarian minority was going to be long and difficult. The Hungarian Union was again suspended by the authorities and the Hungarian National Party tried to make up for its absence. It had, however, a notable

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[6] Mikó, *Huszonkét év...*, 24.
[7] Toth, *Partidul Maghiar...*, 26.
[8] Mikó, *Huszonkét év...*, 26.

competitor in the Hungarian People's Party. Disputes between the two political groups were eventually settled on 28 December 1922 with the merge of the Hungarian People's Party with the Hungarian National Party. After this period of political transformations and adjustments, the Hungarian Party was founded as a political organisation for all the Hungarians in Romania.[9] Samu Jósika was elected president, and finally the Hungarian minority in Romania had a single party in the political system. But, as mentioned earlier, the Hungarian People's Party group was permanently marginalised and played a secondary role within the Hungarian Party.

Some leaders, dissatisfied with the direction of the Hungarian Party and their role in it, made several unsuccessful attempts to reform the party, but eventually ended up out of the party and established in 1927 (for the third time) the Hungarian People's Party. There were other dissident movements, crystallised through the establishment of the Hungarian Economic Union (Magyar Gazdasági Szövetség / Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület), and the Hungarian Smallholders' Party (Magyar Kisgazdapárt / Magyar Parasztpárt),[10] established in 1933. To this, we should add MADOSZ (Magyar Dolgozok Országos Szövetsége – Union of Hungarian Workers of Romania) and the dissident groups of Miklós Krenner or György Bernády's, and the group around Miklós Bánffy.[11]

The Hungarian minority's leftist movements and political parties started to take shape in the early 1930s. In September 1932 they were grouped around the newspaper *Falvak Népe* (Village World), and on 19 June 1933 a political party called Országos Magyar Párt Ellenzéke (Hungarian Party's Opposition) was born.[12] A year later, in August 1934, the Hungarian communist groups came together under the name MADOSZ (Magyar Országos Dolgozók Szövetsége- Hungarian Workers Union in Romania) under the direction of László Bányai. Although they tried to get

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[9] Mikó, *Huszonkét év...*, 40-41.

[10] Due to the use of several names in the literature for the same political party, the differences being due to their ephemeral duration, the problems of their translation into Romanian, as well as their frequent change in their names lead to more variants in the literature. Imre Mikó uses "Magyar Parasztpart", while Virgil Panǎ "Magyar Kisgazdapart". For details see Mikó, *Huszonkét év...*, 166-167 and Panǎ Virgil, *Minoritățile etnice din Transilvania între 1918 şi 1940. Drepturi şi privilegii* [Ethnic Minorities in Transylvania between 1918 and 1940. Rights and Privileges] (Târgu-Mureş: Tipomur, 1996), 104-105; Bárdi Nándor, "A romániai magyarság kisebbségpolitikai stratégiái a két világháború között," [The Political Strategy of the Hungarian Minority in Interwar Romania] *Regio* 3 (1996), 155-159.

[11] Mikó, *Huszonkét év...*, 166-167; Bárdi, "A romániai magyarság kisebbségpolitikai," 158-159.

[12] Bárdi, "A romániai...," 188.

close to the Hungarian Party at the end of 1937, they were rejected by them.[13]

The relationship between the conservatives and reformists of the Hungarian Party and their position toward the Hungarian peasantry in Romania

But let us see what the relationship was between the Hungarian Party and the Hungarian peasantry of Romania. The Hungarian Party was often accused of being the party of the nobility, of the Magyar landowners and that it did not represent the interests of the Hungarian peasantry. Those accusations came primarily from interwar Romanian political leaders, and were taken up later by most Romanian historians. It is based mainly on the fact that most political leaders of the party were members of the Hungarian aristocracy, but the predominance of aristocracy in the political elite of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries is common to most European countries.

Certainly, the Hungarian Party, as mentioned before, was built by and around the Transylvanian Hungarian aristocratic elite, who had a decisive role in the political, economic and cultural life of the last two decades of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It is true also that this political elite sought to consolidate its monopoly on the political life of the Hungarian minority in Romania during the interwar period, trying and succeeding to limit access for other social groups in the party elite. The attempt of the new wave of "young naive" enthusiasts (Károly Kós, Árpád Paál, Miklós Krenner) to accede to leadership positions of the party and change the social policy of the party was doomed to failure. They tried several times to modify the social composition of the party's leadership so that the Hungarian workers (in large numbers in the cities of Transylvania) and the peasantry, which represented approximately 75-80% of total Hungarians in Romania,[14] would benefit from representatives within the party. However, those efforts of the leftist intellectual elite (or rather center-left) to reform the party failed and the conservative wing of aristocrats retained control of the party.

The left elite still had a role that cannot be neglected in this period: they had significant control over most media outlets in Hungarian, through which the problem was always discussed of the lack of representation of

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[13] Bárdi, "A romániai magyarság kisebbségpolitikai," 189.
[14] Mikó Imre, "Kikből áll az erdélyi magyarság?," [Who are the Transylvanian Hungarians?] *Új Szellem* [New Mentality] 10-11 (1937), 4-5.

peasants and workers in the governing bodies of the party, putting pressure on its leaders and permanently demanding more representation for the other social ladders.

One of the most influential press outlets was *Keleti Újság* (Eastern Newspaper) in which we can find articles signed by Árpád Paál, Miklós Krenner and István Zágoni. They were trying to influence the strategy of the Hungarian Party, without jeopardizing the integrity of the party, an integrity considered vital for the Hungarian minority.[15] The party's integrity was also compromised by a statement of the state secretary Gheorghe Tătărescu published in the newspaper *Keleti Újság*. Gheorghe Tătărescu stated that the greatest impediment for the affirmation of minority rights was represented by the Hungarian Party's leaders, who, according to the liberal leader, did not represent the interests of the Hungarian people, but of the great Hungarian landowners. Tătărescu also mentioned that when the Hungarians in Romania had leaders who represented their social, economic and cultural interests, Romanians would be willing to discuss with them the methods for accomplishing the needs of this minority.[16] This criticism was not new.

Ever since the elections of 1922, the Hungarian Union (the predecessor of the Hungarian Party) was accused of being a secret alliance of the Hungarian tycoons of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, who still wanted to remain "dictators" of Hungarians in Romania.[17] Nevertheless, the novelty of Gheorghe Tătărescu's statement is the suggestion that if there were to be a new party organisation and/or a new leadership of the party, the Romanian government would be willing to address the problems of the Hungarian minority. The following day, the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Party discussed this issue, and what is interesting to observe is that those who come forward for maintaining the integrity of the party are the same who had criticized its leadership structure and the lack of representation of workers and peasants in governing bodies of the party. There were leaders of the same opinion as Tătărescu regarding the aristocracy's monopoly over the party's leadership, but they were not willing to break the party.[18] Three days later, the newspaper *Keleti Újság*

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[15] It is worth mentioning the article written probably by Paál Árpád at the founding of the Hungarian Party: "A Magyar Párt országos megalakulása," [The Founding of the Hungarian Party] *Keleti Újság* [The Eastern Newspaper]*, 28 December 1922.

[16] *Keleti Újság*, 13 April 1924.

[17] *Epoca*, 4 February 1922.

[18] For details see the opinions of Paál Árpád, Bernády György, and Sándor József in *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez* [Documents on the

dealt in detail with this issue and stressed the need to organise the workers and peasants, and placed great emphasis on the importance of solving their internal problems. The authors of the article[19] believed that instead of seeking scapegoats for the failure of the Hungarian Party's minority policy, the focus should be put on achieving true union of the Hungarians in Romania.[20]

While conservative Hungarian Party leaders wanted a "preservation" of Hungarians in Romania until interstate borders in the area could be reorganised, young leaders, leftists, reformists of Transylvanian origin wanted a complete reformation of Hungarian society in Romania. On 3 July 1923, Sámuel Jósika, the president of the party, died, and with this came the first opportunity for the reformist leaders to accede to power, since there was a big favourite to take over party leadership – at least in the opinion of the intellectuals and Hungarian press in Transylvania – György Bernády, one of the leaders sympathetic to the reformist group. Yet, besides the admirers that he would have had, there was also a group of people against him that began to grow inside the party. This faction denounced him, among other things, since he was not living in Cluj (but in Târgu Mureş) and may not always be present at the party's headquarters, that he did not have a fortune sufficient to perform this function, and that he had "surrendered" too early to Romanians[21] (in his first speech in Parliament on 10 April 1922, also the first speech by a Hungarian Party representative in the Romanian Parliament, he mentioned the Hungarian minority's attachment and loyalty to the Romanian state, no matter how painful territorial changes that had occurred in recent years would be for them).[22]

Despite these indictments, György Bernády was generally positively viewed, and the Hungarian press in Romania, except the *Brassai Lapok* newspaper (which did not take a stand on the issue), began a serious

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History of the Hungarian Party in Romania], ed. György Béla (Csíkszereda-Kolozsvár: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 2003), 45-50.

[19] According to the style of the article, Bárdi Nándor believes that this is a common article of Zágoni István and Paál Árpád, in Bárdi Nándor, *Otthon és haza* [Home and Country], PhD Thesis, 149 https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace /bitstream/ handle/ 123456789/42137/978-951-39-5396-6_BardiNandor.pdf?sequence=1   (12 December 2014).

[20] "A miniszteri nyilatkozat után," [After the Ministerial Declaration] *Keleti Újság*, 17 April 1924.

[21] György Béla, *A romániai Országos Magyar Párt története (1922-1938)* [The History of the Hungarian Party (1922-1938)], PhD thesis (Budapest, 2006), 52, http://doktori.btk.elte.hu/hist/gyorgybela/diss.pdf (12 December 2014).

[22] Toth, *Partidul Maghiar...*, 284-291.

campaign to support him.[23] At the same time, he benefitted from the support of the Hungarian political elite, especially Prime Minister István Bethlen.[24] On 18 October 1924, the Executive Board of the Hungarian Party met in Târgu Mureş. György Bernády and József Sándor were nominated for succession, but the decision of the Executive Board was to create a board consisting of 9 people (József Sándor, György Bernády, Árpád Paál, Elemér Jakabffy, István Hajdú, Elemér Gyárfás, György Bethlen, Kálmán Béldi and Hugó Róth).[25] After this failure, Bernády did not take part in the Hungarian Party's congress in Braşov, and a few weeks later he complained to the counsellor of the Hungarian Embassy in Bucharest that he was still persecuted by some party members and the media.[26]

István Ugron was elected president of the Hungarian Party, representative of the conservative wing. Ugron, according to a report by the Hungarian Embassy in Bucharest, did not occupy this function with great joy, and he was constantly searching for pretexts to honourably escape these duties.[27] After his resignation on 1 April 1926 (after a conflict with György Bernády) reformist leaders had a second opportunity to introduce a new leader, but the president elected was György Bethlen.

The reformist leaders were defeated by the conservative wing of the Hungarian Party and slowly removed from the party. In 1927, the Presidential Council accused György Bernády of betraying national interests. Miklós Krenner was the only one who defended him. He was summoned to answer to the charges, and the the rumour of his possible exclusion from the party was circulating. Bernády announced by telegram to the Presidential Council of the party that he was leaving the Hungarian Party.[28] Károly Kós also left the party, exasperated by the fact that the

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[23] Béla, *A româniai...*, 52.

[24] See Bethlen István's message to Ugron István. Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary], Fond Külügyminisztérium [Fond Ministry of External Affairs], Political Section Collection, secret documents, K-64, fasc. 27/1924, 442.

[25] Béla, *A româniai...*, 52-53.

[26] Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary], Fond Külügyminisztérium [Fund Ministry of External Affairs], Political Section Collection, secret documents, K-64, fasc. 27/1925, 41, 1-4.

[27] Magyar Országos Levéltár, Fond Külügyminisztérium, Political Section Collection, secret documents, K-64, fasc. 27/1926, 144.

[28] For details see Toth Szilard, "Bernady Gyorgy şi strategia politică a Partidului Maghiar," [Bernady Gyorgy and the Political Strategy of the Hungarian Party] *Acta Musei Napocensis, Historica* 48/II (2011), 133-135.

Hungarian Party was still neglecting the peasantry, and he re-established the Hungarian People's Party.

As a matter of fact, the conservative wing of the Hungarian Party strengthened their victory by purchasing the newspaper *Keleti Újság* (a newspaper where the reformist group had published articles that were particularly damaging to the conservative group), which, on 14 August 1927, became the official press body of the Hungarian Party. Árpád Paál, after his removal from *Keleti Újság* and the failure of the new press body, Ujság, loses his place as deputy in 1928 and fades into obscurity. Miklós Krenner also suffered, perhaps the most important advocate of the need for reform of the Hungarian Party. Thus, in 1927, the conservative wing, which had thus far held power permanently in the Hungarian Party, defeated the reformers decisively and permanently.

Hungarian Party election campaigns in rural areas

But let us focus now on the position of the Hungarian Party toward the Hungarian peasantry. It is important to mention that even if they did not centre their attention on the peasantry, as the younger reforming generation of the party would have wanted, they could not have completely neglected it, because the Hungarian peasantry represented 75-80% of the electoral base of the party.

Analysing the records of leading bodies of the Hungarian Party which remained intact, namely those of the Executive Committee of the party, the Presidential Council, the Parliamentary group and the Congress of 1937, it appears that indeed the party elite was not too concerned about the peasantry in general. This can also be seen from the fact that in the minutes of the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Party, the word "peasant*"* is not found even once.[29] The phrase "from the villages" is mentioned only twice. The first time it appears is when György Bernády calls for imminent action against the cultural zone established by the Romanian government, saying that children in rural areas can barely read and write in Hungarian.[30] We can see that even this reference to the rural world is somewhat indirect; it does not refer to the social, economic needs of those living in villages in Romania, but to the problem of a cultural zone. A second mention is from József Udvary and refers to the urgency of

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[29] *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, 27-213.

[30] "Jegyzőkönyv**.** Felvétetett Kolozsvár, 1934. november hó 13-án délelőtt 10 órai kezdettel az Országos Magyar Párt Intézőbizottságának üléséről," [Minute of 13 November 1934, Cluj, Hour 10, at the Executive Committee Meeting of the Hungarian Party] in *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, 174.

organising the party at the rural level. And this happened in 1935, 13 years after the foundation of the Hungarian Party.[31]

We find the same situation in the minutes of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian Party of 7 March 1927 – 7 October 1935, 16 in number, in which the word "peasant" is completely absent, and the phrase "from the villages" appeared only twice, referring to the fact that the central organs of the party prefer not to get involved in local elections, leaving a free hand to local branches of the party.[32] Both cases are in the meeting of 31 October 1925[33] and they refer to the party's political strategy for the upcoming local elections (held in February 1926).

The situation is similar at the minutes of the Parliamentary Group of the Hungarian Party from 24 July 1926 – 21 January 1937, 55 in number, where the word "peasant" is again absent and the phrase "from the villages" appears only four times, in two cases with reference to the pathetic situation of rural cooperatives, and the other two cases with reference to the law on local administration.[34]

However, the total omission of the word "peasant" in all those minutes does not necessarily show disinterest of the leadership of the party toward the peasantry, as that term was often considered pejorative, but the fact that the concept "from the villages" only appears 8 times in the minutes (addressing 5 individual cases) of the leading bodies of the party that we have available (109 minutes), clearly shows that the rural world was not the main priority of the central leadership of the party.

Since the documents of the Hungarian Party do not help us much in this matter, we have only to try to analyze the Hungarian press of the interwar period on this issue. We analyzed the following media outlets: *Magyar Kisebbség* (*Hungarian Minority* in translation, but the Romanian version appears as *The Voice of Minorities*), *Keleti Újság* (Eastern

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[31] "Jegyzőkönyv Felvétetett Kolozsvárt, 1935. június hó 15-én délelőtt 1/211 órai kezdettel, az Országos Magyar Párt Intézőbizottságának üléséről," [Minute of 15 June 1935, Cluj, Hour 10.30, at the Executive Committee Meeting of the Hungarian Party] in *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, 186.

[32] "Az Elnöki Tanács jegyzőkönyvei," [Minutes of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian Party] in *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, 219-258.

[33] "Az Elnöki Tanács jegyzőkönyvei, Jegyzőkönyv, Felvétetett Kolozsvárt, 1925. okt. 31-én Országos Magyar Párt elnöki tanácsának üléséről," [Minutes of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian Party, Minute from 31 October 1925] in *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, 236-242.

[34] "A parlamenti csoport jegyzőkönyvei," [Minutes of the Parlimenatry Group's Meetings of the Hungarian Party], in *Iratok a romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, 259-374.

Newspaper) and *Magyar Nép* (Hungarian People). *Magyar Kisebbség* was a magazine founded by Elemér Jakabffy, István Sulyok and József Willer in 1922, being the first theoretical publication devoted to minority issues in Central Europe. Through its theme and its proximity to the Hungarian Party (Elemér Jakabffy and József Willer being MPs of the Hungarian Party), the magazine, published in 480 numbers (the longest-running Hungarian-language magazine in the interwar period), can be considered an unofficial press body of the Hungarian Party. *Keleti Újság* was the main press body in which the younger, reformist generation of the Hungarian Party presented their ideas and concepts on the strategy to defend the rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania, while also denouncing the politics of the conservative group in power in the Hungarian Party. But, as mentioned before, the conservative wing of the Magyar Party acquired the newspaper *Keleti Újság* and from 14 August 1927 it became the official press outlet of the Hungarian Party. Therefore, after 1927, the analysis of this press release becomes very important in light of the fact that it is the official press of the Hungarian Party.

However, the most interesting element from our point of view is the *Magyar Nép* newspaper (Hungarian People), which is a newspaper edited by Domokos Gyallay, selling 16-18000 copies[35], dedicated especially to farmers, peasants, and the village world, but partially to small entrepreneurs and traders. Since this press outlet selected most categorically the target group of the Hungarian peasantry of Romania, and the fact that it permanently supported and publicised the official policy of the Hungarian Party, we can consider it the most important source for this study.

Of these three media outlets, *Magyar Kisebbség* had the highest theoretical level, publishing articles by some prominent intellectuals, world-renowned legal advisers, opinion leaders who had proven themselves nationally as well as internationally. This magazine was focused on the issue of minority rights in general and minority rights in Romania in particular. *Magyar Kisebbség* did not address the issues of the Hungarian minority in urban and rural areas separately, but treated them together, as part of an overall framework. If there were still issues that were aimed more at the Hungarian minority in rural areas (land reform, the common assets of Ciuc, the problem of Hungarian settlers, etc.), they were also treated from the point of view of minority rights, and no special arguments were brought in terms of the social and economic needs of the rural population. To that matter, we must also take into account the fact that

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[35] Gaál György, "A néptanító regényíró," [The Novelist Teacher] in Gyallay Domokos, *Vaskenyéren és tizenhat elbeszélés* [Iron Bread and Sixteen Novels] (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1996), 5-51.

Magyar Kisebbség's target audience was especially the Hungarian political and intellectual elite in Romania, and we believe that the intellectual level of the articles published in its pages was too advanced for most people in rural areas. Moreover, considering its theme, on average only 2-3 articles per year were likely to interest the Hungarian peasantry, namely: the reports on the elections, irregularities during the elections, and the Hungarian Party's platform. It is worth mentioning that on the magazine's pages there was no campaigning, just occasionally a brief overview of the Hungarian Party's candidates, or a summary of election results.

On the other hand, *Keleti Újság* was a press outlet designed from the start for readers in urban areas, especially those in Cluj. We can observe this at first sight, without even reading an article, from the advertisements in the newspaper. While in *Magyar Nép* ads for agricultural machinery prevailed, *Keleti Újság* highlighted the use of cosmetics, which can be associated with a more urbanised public. Also, the language of articles in *Keleti Újság* is very elevated, both in the time when it was dominated by the reformist wing of the Hungarian Party, and after having been taken over by the Hungarian Party. The themes of the articles were pre-dominantly political and cultural, while in the case of *Magyar Nép* articles on agronomic topics prevailed, and only a small portion of them with political or cultural themes. Both in terms of quantity and in terms of quality, *Keleti Újság* offered superior articles in terms of the Hungarian Party's activity, interwar elections, campaigns, pacts between political parties, platforms, everything that meant politics in interwar Romania. Nevertheless, all those articles were not intended for the Hungarian peasantry, but the elite, the bourgeoisie and a part of the working class. For these reasons we can only find very few items that may be of interest to people in rural areas, even though they made up 75-80% of the Hungarians in Romania, and implicitly 75-80% of the voters of the Hungarian Party.

For this reason, the most interesting press outlet from our point of view is *Magyar Nép* (The Hungarian People), a newspaper edited by Gyallay Domokos and particularly aimed at agriculturists, peasants, and the village world. Since it chose, as mentioned, the Hungarian peasantry as its clear target audience, and since it permanently supported and publicised the the official Hungarian Party platform, it can be considered the most important source for this study.

From the start it can be noted that dialogue between the Hungarian Party and the Hungarian peasantry of Romania functioned most effectively on the pages of this newspaper. It can be seen from the large number of articles addressing the Hungarian peasantry, compared to other media

outlets, but it can also be noticed from a qualitative analysis of the articles, which are not formulated in a pretentious manner, as intellectually as in the pages of the two sources analysed earlier. This does not mean that the language in the articles is trivial, but they are not crowded, for example, with complicated legal concepts, used by the lawyers who were publishing legal treatises on minorities in the magazine *Magyar Kisebbség*, and they do not have the sophisticated language of the reformist intellectuals of the Hungarian Party who were publishing in *Keleti Újság*. Even after these young intellectuals were forced to leave *Keleti Újság* (some before, some after it became the official media outlet of the Hungarian Party), *Keleti Újság* kept its quite elevated language, more comfortable for the elite and urban population. Instead, *Magyar Nép* addressed farmers, peasants, and the village world from the beginning.

But before getting to the detailed analysis of the methods by which the Hungarian Party addressed voters in rural areas, we must also analyze the strategy of the Transylvanian Hungarian elite (and the Hungarian Party) regarding rural areas. Part of the Hungarian political and cultural elite from Transylvania began slowly to realize that the most important support that could be offered to the Hungarian population in rural areas, besides establishing an educational system and cultural institutions that preserve national and cultural identity, was to support the economic development of the villages, since, without a stable economic base, educational and cultural institutions necessary for maintaining national identity could not be supported.

The development of cooperatives played a major role, in particular *Ant Cooperative* (Hangya Szövetkezet). In the second half of 1920, the pace of development of cooperatives dropped and a decisive role was soon taken by the *Erdélyi Gazdasági Egylet* (Economic Society of Transylvania). György Bethlen had a decisive role in this activity; in addition to being president of the Hungarian Party, he coordinated and worked in the Economic Society of Transylvania.[36] In 1936 the head of the Economic Society of Transylvania was followed by Pál Szász, who turned it into a professional organisation of small and medium farmers. In just a few years he managed to engage more than 40,000 farmers in the company's activity.[37] This was complemented by the work of Domokos Gyallay, who held seminars promoting village life for Hungarian students.[38] In this activity of helping the development of rural areas, we can also mention the magazine *Erdélyi Fiatalok* (Transylvania's Youngsters) published in 1930,

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[36] Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 403.
[37] Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 472.
[38] Gaál, "A néptanító regényíró," 5-51.

which focused on the social problems of the village. They were complemented by a series of studies on the life of the Transylvanian – Hungarian villages, of which we must mention that of Imre Mikó, *Erdélyi falu és a nemzetiségi kérdés* (Transylvanian Village and the Nationalities' Problem). As can be noticed, part of the Transylvanian – Hungarian elite placed great emphasis on the economic, social and cultural life of the village.

Besides this attempt to help in the economic development of villages (which also brings social and cultural development – for example, cooperatives gave financial aid to social and cultural institutions) the Hungarian elite made quite a significant effort for the development of the political culture of Hungarian peasants. Both efforts can be seen in *Magyar Nép*'s pages. Most of the articles are on agricultural issues, thereby trying to help Hungarian farmers to adopt modern techniques and methods in this field, to use advanced agricultural machinery, fertilizers, pesticides, noble breeds, etc. On the other hand, we are dealing with a significant amount of articles presenting literary and cultural events from the villages. Articles on political issues are rare, even very rare compared to the number in *Keleti Újság*, but this was for an urban public, which was more interested in politics, both internal and external. However, especially in times when domestic politics were in turmoil (government crisis, imminent election, election campaign, etc.), the number of political articles increased significantly.

The most common type of article is aimed at awakening peasants' interest in the elections and calling for organisation and voting. For example, in an article entitled *Hungarian Brothers!,* the reader is approached very personally, even intimately we might say, like a dialogue between friends. The reader is asked if he is informed about the upcoming local elections, on which our future depends? The reader is asked if he has discussed the elections, if he organised for the elections and if he knows who the candidates are in these elections. After this *captatio benevolentiae*, the reader is informed that the government has decided that from 17-20 February 1926 local elections will be held. After this brief information, the article calls for unity of Hungarian followers. At the same time the reader is urged to follow the local leaders of the Hungarian Party, because they will lead them in such a way as required by the interests of Hungarians.[39]

In an article entitled *On the Eve of Elections*, readers are informed about the date of elections and warned that between 1 and 10 February

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[39] "Magyar Testvérek!," [Hungarian Brothers!] *Magyar Nép* [Hungarian People], 30 January 1926, 42.

those who are not on the voter's lists should file a complaint. About the possible electoral alliance of the Hungarian Party, the article informed readers that nothing has yet been perfected, and that most likely a final decision will be taken on 1 February. Until then, in this total uncertainty, one sure thing has to be communicated to Hungarian voters: Hungarians should calmly follow the Hungarian Party's flag.[40]

Moreover, the most often used electoral slogan is the call for unity of Hungarians in Romania. This call for unity is argued considering the critical situation in which the Hungarians in Romania have found themselves after becoming a minority and that the only hope in a better future is to be united under the flag of the Hungarian Party. This is in fact the main argument of the Hungarian Party, no matter which social strata it was addressing. But let us see some articles on the subject. On 16 January 1926, an article entitled *Vallomástétel a magyar egység mellett*[41] (Testimony on the Hungarians' Union) relates that all the leaders of the Hungarian Party, both at the central level (personal) and locally (by correspondence), have congratulated the party's president, István Ugron, in the new year, and assured him of Hungarians' unity in Romania. The speech was held by Árpád Paál, one of the vice presidents of the party. In his speech, Árpád Paál stressed several times that the 2 million Hungarian souls living as minorities are more united than ever, and should be treated as such. István Ugron replied, thanking for the good wishes, and said that the Hungarian Party and Hungarians in Romania had never been more united than now. István Ugron further states that the Hungarian Party is considered both by the Romanian Government and all Romanian political parties as the only legal representative of the Hungarian minority, and also the only one whose destiny is to lead this minority. Therefore, it is the national duty of every Hungarian to follow the Hungarian Party's flag, regardless of who is holding it.

Great emphasis is put on the legitimacy of the party, on its mission to unite and represent all Hungarians in Romania, argued, in an interesting way, by the recognition of this mission even by Romanian parties. Interestingly, those statements came exactly after the biggest internal crisis of the Hungarian Party, when, during 1924-1926, there was an internal struggle for power between conservatives and the reformist leaders of the party, a battle eventually won by conservatives, by halting György Bernády's accession to the leadership of the party. Despite those solemn

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[40] "Választások küszöbén," [On the Eve of Elections] *Magyar Nép*, 6 February 1926, 51-52.

[41] "Vallomástétel a magyar egység mellett," [Testimony on the Hungarians' Union] *Magyar Nép*, 16 January 1926, 15.

declarations that the Hungarian Party and Hungarians in Romania were more united at that moment, a few years of conflict followed, culminating in 1917 in György Bernády's and Károly Kós's leaving the party, each setting up separate parties. From this perspective it can be interpreted that the call to unity of Hungarians in Romania was not just a *simplistic* propaganda slogan for the more or less educated masses, but also a necessity arising because of conflicts within the party, that led some of its prominent leaders to leave the party and establish new parties that could *divert* part of the Hungarian voters. Moreover, despite Ugron István's statements that the Hungarian Party is considered both by the Romanian Government and all Romanian political parties as the only legal representative of the Hungarian minority, and the only one whose destiny is to lead this minority, the important Romanian parties, especially when they were in government and had the opportunity to organise elections, tried continuously to lure some of the leaders of various minorities to run under their logo.[42] This call for unity is always present on the pages of newspapers during the election period, being the most used election slogan:

"Our election sign is the sign of Hungarian solidarity: X"[43] "The electoral battle of the Hungarian Party starts under the sign of solidarity and desire for victory of the Hungarian people." "We can happily say that Hungarian solidarity has never been so great as today. The sledgehammer strikes suffered in recent years have forged the Hungarians into a solid block... If Hungarians from all over the country were able to keep their solidarity, in villages, Hungarian voters would do the same…"[44]

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[42] For such attempts of the German minority, see Vasile Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni, 1918-1944* [Contributions to the Knowledge of the Transylvanian Saxons' History] (Sibiu: Editura Hora, 2001), 165, and with regard to the Hungarian minority, please see Toth Szilárd, "Comportamentul electoratului maghiar la alegerile parlamentare din România interbelică şi şansele de reuşită ale Partidului Maghiar," [Hungarian Voters' Behaviour in Parliamentary Elections in Interwar Romania and the Hungarian Party's Chances of Success] in *Partide politice şi minorităţi naţionale din România în secolul XX* [Political Parties and National Minorities in 20th Century Romania], eds. Vasile Ciobanu, Sorin Radu, vol. V (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2010), 112-113; Toth, *Partidul Maghiar...*, 21, 116, 121, 149.

[43] "Választási jelünk a magyar összetartásnak jele X," [Our Election Sign is the Sign of Hungarian Solidarity: X], *Magyar Nép*, 9 December 1933, 1.

[44] "A magyar egység és a győzelmi akarat jegyében indult meg a Magyar Párt választási küzdelme," [The Electoral Struggle of the Hungarian Party Starts under the Sign of Solidarity and the Desire for Victory of Hungarians] *Magyar Nép*, 4 December 1937, 935.

We even have warnings regarding the attempts of other parties to break Hungarian solidarity.

In an article entitled *Hungarians, be careful, decide your own fate!* Readers are warned that "other parties, too will have Hungarian candidates on the list, but they are not members of the Hungarian Party and cannot be considered representatives of the Hungarians. They will come to you with the people in power and will give speeches in Hungarian, even Romanians will talk to you in Hungarian, and they will also call you "Hungarian Brother". They will tell you that they love you very much and will promise you everything. They may have already done this. Be careful! Of this, one thing is certain, and that is what turned out to be true from their earlier promises: nothing.[45]

Another article from 2 July 1927 (*Attention, Hungarian brother!*) warns readers that "there are numerous signs from the Székely Land, especially in the *Trei-Scaune* (Three-Chairs) region, that bribed Hungarian people are trying to convince Hungarians to join PNL (The National Liberal Party). In most cases even local officials go to people's homes and try to convince them 'to sign the form', which is actually the registration form for PNL [...] The eternal shame of the Hungarian people will always remain that they are such well-paid traitors, who are able to sell their own Hungarian countrymen [...] Hungarian brethren, you who have signed the 'form', know that through this act you committed a very big mistake against your nation. You have a single excuse, that you were deceived by those who were paid for your signature. This mistake you can fix – at least partially – if, when you enter the voting booth (wooden booth) to vote, with the ballot and seal, you look for the multiplication sign X on the ballot that has been handed to you and neatly put the stamp on it. Nobody can see you in this cabin, only the Good Lord, who will one day ask you if you were faithful to the Hungarian nation, or if you betrayed it?! The Hungarian Party does not give money to anyone – it does not have any – but he who stands by it will have a clear conscience."[46] As we can see, not only does the Hungarian Party appeal to people's consciences, but also mentions divine punishment for betrayal of the nation. The entire text starts from the realities of the elections of interwar Romania (bribery, fraud, etc.), focusing on scaring traitors to the nation (and those who have been tempted), the text being sprinkled with a series of very "heavy" words: treason, traitor to the nation, clean/dirty conscience, Good Lord

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[45] "Magyarok, vigyázzatok, sorsotok felett kell döntenetek!," [Hungarians, be careful, decide your own fate!] *Magyar Nép*, 1 February 1930, 74-75.
[46] "Vigyázz, magyar testvér!," [Attention, Hungarian Brother!] *Magyar Nép*, 2 July 1927, 313.

sees you, answering to God, etc. The text is very close to a curse upon a traitor to the nation who does not vote with the Hungarian Party.

The article *Two Hungarians* also belongs in this category, accompanied by a very eloquent graphic. "…can we pride ourselves on fraternal solidarity, or should we be ashamed of failure caused by tensions, disinterest or even hostile opposition? ... Which of us has fulfilled the obligation of Hungarian, and how? Happy is the one who left the polling station with the belief that he was faithful to his people: he voted in the spirit of the great national union! Such a man carries on with his life with his head held high. The serenity of a clean conscience pours across this man's way, the fields and tree branches are hallowed around him, and the lark sings a divine song above his head. The ray of calm and self-confidence beams on his face: *I was faithful to my Hungarian nation, I did my duty!*"[47] As we can see, he who has a clear conscience is raised to divine glory, he who has not betrayed his nation but has voted for the Hungarian Party. He is blessed throughout his entire life. But let us see the other text: "Take a look at the other: son of *Belial*! What strikes us at first sight? His hand is rummaging in his pocket, in the money bag! For him our great national challenge is another matter of interest, a matter of money. He does not look up to the sky proudly, like the other, but looks at the dirty hollows of his path. He faces his inner judge, who even in his arid and broken soul occasionally shouts: You infidel, you traitor son of Belial! Shame, shame! The birds of his dirty conscience cry around him. And he walks there, on the brink of the falls, where one day he will fall in and sink into the filth of immorality. So you, who read this, which of these two individuals are you soul mates with? With the one who was loyal to his nation, or the one who violated the sacred, unwritten laws and betrayed the Hungarian community? After the ordeal, will there be peace in your soul, or self-flagellation and hidden shame?"[48]

We are again faced with almost a curse. The betrayer of the nation is called son of Belial, the son of Satan, who sold his nation for two pennies, but all will be well, he will fall into the abyss of immorality, he will not be spared the curse. After these very grim words the reader is also addressed directly, he is questioned about analysing his own actions and being aware of whether he had sinned against the nation. Both articles that have been presented are full of more or less veiled threats, showing that not only remorse, but fate would punish them some time.

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[47] "Két Magyar," [Two Hungarians] *Magyar Nép*, 9 July 1927, 321-322.
[48] "Két Magyar," [Two Hungarians] *Magyar Nép*, 9 July 1927, 321-322.

Speaking of threats, some are less gloomy, funnier, humorous: "It does not hurt to be careful! Hungarian Women: He who does not vote this sign (X) will be awaited at home with the stirrer!" accompanied by an image with two angry-looking women.[49] Or another one: "Feminine threat: 'I only say, watch yourself. Vote well, because I have a distaff!'" accompanied by an image of a woman threatening her husband.[50] Or another image less aggressive, but full of peasant humour: "Seduction: 'Even if you were beautiful girls and you tempted me, I would still vote with the Hungarian Party!'" says a Hungarian to the representatives of the other parties who want to lure him.[51]

So not only by calling for solidarity and veiled threats to potential traitors is the Hungarian Party trying to convince the electorate, but also through normal peasant humour.

At the same time, great emphasis is placed on informing farmers of the election dates[52] and procedures of the elections,[53] and voters are warned several times to check if they appear on the voter lists, and if not, then they will be informed when and how they should make referrals and appeals.[54] Also interesting is the propagation of the party's electoral sign: the multiplication sign, X. During electoral campaigns, the newspaper was dotted with a number of slogans:

"He who votes this sign multiplies the power of the Hungarian people!"[55]

"The multiplication sign is the sign of Hungarians' honour!"[56]

"X is the electoral symbol of the Hungarian party!"[57]

"The electoral symbol of the Hungarian Party is the sign of multiplication: X"

"He who votes this sign multiplies the power of Hungarians!"[58]

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[49] "Jó lesz vigyázni!," [It does not Hurt to be Careful!] *Magyar Nép*, 16 December 1933, 760.

[50] "Asszonyi intelem," [Feminine Threat] *Magyar Nép*, 11 December 1937.

[51] "Csábitás," [Seduction] *Magyar Nép*, 18 December 1937, 979

[52] *Magyar Nép,* 1 July 1932.

[53] *Magyar Nép,* 1 February 1930, 74-75.

[54] "Most kell jelentkezni a választói névjegyzékbe való felvételre!," [Now you should show up and be Listed on the Voters' Lists!] *Magyar Nép,* 23-30 December 1933, 766.

[55] *Magyar Nép,* 2 July 1927, 310.

[56] *Magyar Nép,* 2 July 1927, 310.

[57] *Magyar Nép,* 18 June 1927, 292.

"Our electoral symbol is: X. Vote for this sign!"[59]

"Hungarians! X. Under this sign you will conquer!"[60]

We need not present all of the slogans, since there are many more and these can be considered representative for this article. But many more of these examples appeared during the 1930s, and they were repeated periodically. They have the same message: those who vote the multiplication sign will multiply the power of Hungarians and will conquer. It is noteworthy that during the electoral campaign 2-3 similar slogans appear on one page of the paper.

The attention given to the electoral sign is not because Hungarian voters from villages are illiterate (then they could not even read the newspaper), but mostly because there were many cases where Hungarian candidates were on the lists of other parties (Romanian) and voters should not be misled.

On the other hand, the Hungarian Party's leaders probably realized that visual effects are more relevant than the text itself, so especially in the 1930s, more and more election illustrations appeared, from the simplest, such as a hand stamping the election sign of the Hungarian Party[61], to more complex ones, as we have shown above with the two voters leaving the polling station. Also in this category is the picture of Hungarian voters who cast ballots in a mill (symbolizing the urn) and on the box of flour is written: "Votes introduced into the Hungarian mill bring us prosperity!"[62] This graphic is specifically designed for the rural world. There is another that presents tables of different parties, with voters seated at the tables: while the Hungarian Party's table is clean and tidy, with people sitting quietly in place, the other tables are surrounded by troublemakers and drunks who spill beverages and seek scandal.[63]

Besides the growing abundance of election images and graphics, we also wanted to remark the newspaper's willingness to enter into dialogue with the reader. One example is a thorough article in which the newspaper's

[58] *Magyar Nép,* 18 June 1927, 285
[59] *Magyar Nép,* 23 May 1931, 343.
[60] *Magyar Nép,* 30 May 1931, 362.
[61] "Hová üssük választáskor a bélyegzőt?," [Where shall we put the Stamp at the Elections?] *Magyar Nép*, 30 May 1931, 362; "Magyar ember ide szavaz!," [The Hungarian votes like this!] *Magyar Nép*, 9 December 1933, 732; "Magyar ember ide szavaz!," [The Hungarian votes like this!], *Magyar Nép*, 11 December 1937, 956.
[62] "A magyar malomban," [In the Hungarian Mill] *Magyar Nép*, 8 December 1928, 1.
[63] *Magyar Nép*, 30 May 1931, 1.

editors answer a reader's letter who had complained about Hungarian landlords and Hungarian Party leaders. The article entitled *This is my message to my Hungarian brother* shows the dissatisfaction of a "Hungarian from the Transylvanian Plain" (Mezőségi Magyar), who complains that Hungarian landlords are arrogant, do not even nod, do not participate in the Hungarian community's balls, but they do go to the Romanian ones, and that the Hungarian Party MP did not bother to bring his problem to the ministry, while the Romanian member of Parliament solved the problem very quickly. The "Hungarian from the Transylvanian Plain" says this is the core of dissensions within the Hungarian community. In response, the newspaper condemns such behaviour (in the event that it actually took place) and declares that the one who does not respond to a fellow countryman's greeting, or any man's greeting, should not be called a gentleman. Also, the newspaper thanked him for the sincerity and courage to report these problems, but claimed that most of the Hungarian nobility did not fall into this category and that Hungarian Party leaders were fighting for the rights of Hungarians. If they do not have much success, it is not their fault. But it draws the attention of the "Hungarian from the Transylvania Plain" to the fact that, through these generalizations and accusations against the Hungarian Party, he does much harm to the Hungarian community, and that only through solidarity can the Hungarian minority succeed. It can be seen, therefore, that even if irregularities are observed, there are dissatisfactions with some leaders of the Hungarian Party, the newspaper wants to keep the block of Hungarians in Romania united, making the reasonable suggestion that at the next elections in the party, members should take care not to choose such people in local and central governing bodies of the party.[64]

Conclusions

We can notice that the hypothesis we started from was basically correct, but not 100% true. From previous research, my main observation on this issue was that the Hungarian Party, through its platform and campaign, always approached all issues from the viewpoint of an oppressed minority, this being its main weapon in the rhetoric of the election, and did not treat voters in rural areas differently. Indeed, the main electoral slogans of the Hungarian Party focused on "the fate of the minority" and the solidarity of the Hungarian minority as the only way to

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[64] "Ezt üzenem magyar testvéremnek!," [This is my Message to my Hungarian Brother!], *Magyar Nép*, 3 September 1927, 420.

succeed. This rhetoric was in all Hungarian press releases that were more or less in the area of influence of the Hungarian Party, whether the press release was intended for readers in urban or rural areas. But there can still be observed a significant difference between newspapers for the bourgeoisie, urban middle class, intellectuals, and *Magyar Nép*, which was intended for the village world. There is a major difference of language; articles from *Magyar Nép* are not formulated so pretentiously, so intellectually, like in the pages of the two analysed earlier (*Magyar Kisebbség*, *Keleti Újság*). The difference is noticeable when addressing the electoral campaign: while in *Magyar Kisebbség* almost no campaigning was made (on the one hand, the magazine was dedicated to the cultural and political elite, which was an integral part of the Hungarian Party, and on the other hand, the magazine's profile did not allow this, being focused on a theoretical approach to minorities, an intellectual and not a propagandist approach), in *Keleti Újság* a comprehensive analysis of political life in Romania was presented every day (with the latest news, electoral alliances, negotiations between parties, etc. – actually politics was discussed on most pages of the newspaper), in *Magyar Nép* these problems occur only on the eve of elections, in full electoral campaign or in the annual report of the Hungarian Party's activity.

This was probably due to the fact that farmers and the rural world were not as interested in politics as the residents of urban areas. Peasants did not have a very developed political culture compared to urban dwellers. The former were more interested in new production methods, new agricultural machinery, pest control (there are many articles on the dangers of rats, which shows what the main problems of a Hungarian peasant were), etc. We can therefore state that the Hungarian Party left the Hungarian peasants to their work, not burdening them constantly with intricate electoral alliances of interwar political life, and appealed to the rural voters only on the eve of the election campaign. Until then, it did not distract him from work, but rather aimed to help with the qualitative and quantitative development of agricultural production in Hungarian villages. I have actually talked earlier in detail about the strategy of the Hungarian elite in Transylvania (and of the Hungarian Party) concerning rural areas: in addition to the establishment of a system of education and cultural institutions that preserve national and cultural identity, supporting the economic development of the village, because, without a stable economic basis, educational and cultural institutions necessary for maintaining national identity cannot be sustained. As can be seen in the newspaper *Magyar Nép*, a part of the Hungarian elite of Transylvania placed great emphasis on the economic, social and cultural life of the village. The Hungarian peasant was helped to work, and occasionally he was called to the polls.

Another important aspect worth mentioning: the newspaper *Magyar Nép* did not present the differences of opinions within the Hungarian Party, problems that led to the establishment of new Hungarian political parties, while in *Keleti Újság* this was covered. It is true that this happened one month before becoming the official press organ of the Hungarian Party, though in June – July 1927 *Keleti Újság* was already under the influence of the Hungarian Party. *Keleti Újság* presented the establishment of new parties[65], even the platform of the Hungarian People's Party.[66] Even the next year, 1928, when the newspaper was the official press release of the Hungarian Party, the dissidents of the Hungarian Party were presented, albeit not in the most favourable light, but they were talked about in the newspaper.[67] But *Magyar Nép* did not bother to burden Hungarian peasantry's thoughts with the fact that there were several Hungarian parties, the new ones (mostly the Hungarian People's Party) being even much closer in purposes and programs to the peasantry than the Hungarian Party. It would have been very dangerous for the rural electorate of the Hungarian Party to be informed of the existence of a Hungarian People's Party. The middle class in urban areas was not attracted to these new parties, although they had a much broader political culture and the emergence of these new parties could not be concealed from them. Therefore, from many points of view, a difference in political culture between the two social categories can be seen.

Although (or because) it had a limited political culture, and the focus of the Hungarian Party did not receive the attention it deserved, the Hungarian peasantry was always the most stable electoral base of the party in interwar Romania. The Hungarian peasants consistently voted in large numbers with the Hungarian Party, they were very disciplined, they tried to refrain from scandals in election campaigns (except for the incident at the polling station from Olteni[68]), and the oscillating results of the Hungarian Party in various inter-war elections cannot be attributed to the peasants, but rather to the evasion perpetrated by the ruling parties.

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[65] "Megalakult a Magyar Néppárt," [The Hungarian People's Party was founded] *Keleti Újság*, 17 June 1927; "Uj pártot alakitanak Orbán Balázs és hivei," [Orbán Balázs and his Followers set up a New Party] *Keleti Újság*, 6 June 1927.

[66] *Keleti Újság*, 25 June 1927.

[67] *Keleti Újság*, 5 December 1928.

[68] Szilárd Toth, "Incidente sângeroase la alegerile parlamentare din 1928 la secţia de votare din comuna Olteni (jud. Trei-Scaune)," [Bloody Incidents during the 1928 Parliamentary Elections at a Polling Station in the Village of Olteni (Trei-Scaune County)] *Acta Siculica*, 2008, 419-427; Toth, *Comportamentul electoratului maghiar...*, 103-118.
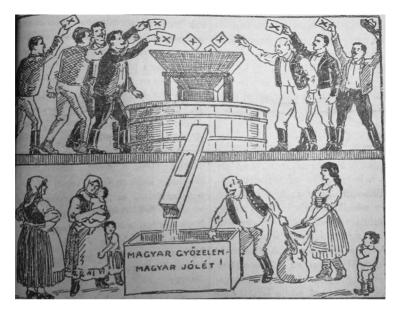
Annexes

Presenting the two Hungarians: the honest one, who is faithful to his people, and the traitor. *Magyar Nép*, 9 July 1927, 321-322.
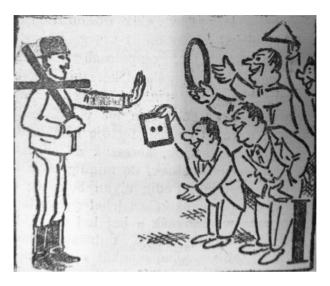

"He who does not vote this sign will be awaited at home with the stirrer," *Magyar Nép*, 16 December 1933, 760.
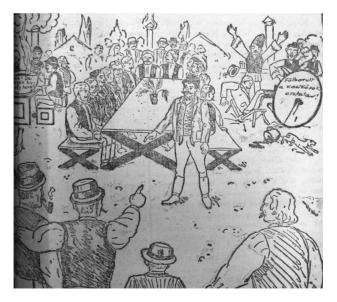
"Votes introduced into the Hungarian mill bring us prosperity," *Magyar Nép*, 8 December 1928, 1.
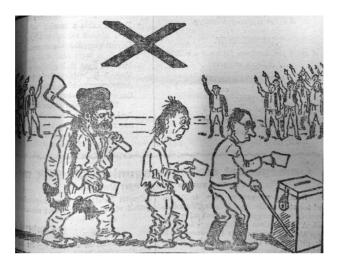

Feminine threat: "I only say, watch yourself. Vote well, because I have a distaff!" *Magyar Nép*, 11 December 1937.

Hungarian speaking to the representatives of the Romanian political parties: "Seduction: 'Even if you were beautiful girls and you tempted me, I would still vote with the Hungarian Party!'" *Magyar Nép*, 18 December 1937, 979.

"The Sunday of the elections: the Hungarians' table (center) is tidy and clean, the other tables are in chaos," *Magyar Nép*, 30 May 1931, 543.

"Only the blind, the crazy and the bandit should not vote with the Hungarian Party". *Magyar Nép*, 1 July 1932, special edition.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE GERMAN PEASANTS OF ROMANIA IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD

VASILE CIOBANU

Introduction

Politics, as a domain, is more difficult to capture and analyse than other levels of human activity. Great mobility of ideas, rapidly changing opinions, the incipient democratic system in Romania, the poor state of available sources, they all contribute to this state of affairs. In the case of national minorities, involvement in the political life should be studied while bearing in mind that the purpose of their elite is to preserve and strengthen their own identity, to defend their economic, political and cultural interests. Even with all the difficulties related to the research of the political life, there are many works available on this topic. Although the ideological directive had imposed popular masses as main research topic to the forefront of research during the communist years, the works published before 1990, in terms of political life, have only referred to the actions of a ruling elite that has developed programs, constructed and deconstructed organizations and political parties. Research should be deepened on the terms and conditions under which most of the population took active part in political events, from simple assemblies to parliamentary elections. The national minorities' past was not ignored in those years, but research on the involvement in the political life was not accepted, particularly because Nazism had spread among them too. Establishing the extent to which German peasants in interwar Romania took part in the political life in terms of active presence in political parties, in national organizations, and in terms of running local and parliamentary elections is possible, and in the following pages we intend to focus on a number of aspects of this complex field of issues. Today, although the

focus on historical research is more concerned with the ruling elites, it is natural not to omit the widest social groups, which have their role in the democratic system and are represented by the elite. What were the specific elements of the German peasantry in the interwar period, to what extent the German elites in interwar Romania represented the national and social interests of the peasants, to what extent these elites were interested in the political education of co-nationals, in the preservation of national unity, these are questions that we seek to answer in the following pages.

Current research status. The history of Germans in Romania has been intensively studied during the recent decades in dozens of studies, PhD theses and monographs on certain personalities, but their social life has not been sufficiently investigated. Especially peasantry and their involvement in the political life have not been extensively researched, although they represented the majority in all groups of Germans in Romania. The impact of the introduction of universal suffrage, the participation in national-political activities and elections were insufficiently investigated.

The papers published so far are indispensable to our attempt to address some aspects of this complex subject, which concerns the largest social group of the German minority in Romania during the interwar period. These approach synthetically or in detail certain areas of life of the German minority in its entirety. There are also monographs on some of its groups – Saxons, Swabians from Banat or Satu Mare, Germans from Bukovina, Bessarabia, Dobruja – but also reconstructions of their economic, social, political or cultural life in the interwar period. We have taken into account primarily the working tools that have multiplied in recent decades. Thus, volumes of documents were published in Romania and Germany, which generally present the past of the Germans in Romania, including the interwar years[1], but sources grouped based on "lands of colonization", as Germans called the regions they inhabited, were also put into scientific circulation. Naturally, the works regarding Transylvanian Saxons are the

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[1] *Minorităţile naţionale din România. Documente. 1918-1925* [National Minorities in Romania. Documents. 1918-1925], vol. I, eds. Ioan Scurtu, Liviu Boar (Bucharest: Arhivele Naţionale ale României, 1995); vol. II: *1925-1931*, eds. Ioan Scurtu, Ioan Dordea (Bucharest: 1996); vol. III: *1931-1938*, eds. Ioan Scurtu (Bucharest: 1999); *Quellen zur Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen 1191-1975*, ed. Ernst Wagner (Köln, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1976); *Die Rumäniendeutschen zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur. Der politische Nachlass von Hans Otto Roth, 1919-1951*, ed. Klaus Popa (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang Verlag, 2003); *Akten um die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1937-1945. Eine Auswahl*, ed. Klaus Popa (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang Verlag, 2007).

most numerous, since they have the most seniority in "their colonizing land". We note the recent summaries published by Michael Kroner and Konrad Gündisch, which approach the interwar period, as well as their volumes about Germans in Romania in their entirety.[2] We should also mention the numerous studies on the evolution of Saxons between the two world wars, which address a number of socio-economic, cultural and political issues, essential to understanding the status of peasants, their place and role in the interwar society.[3] The Banat Swabians' past was treated in the new synthesis in four volumes published in recent years and benefits from the contributions of the most well-known researchers from the older generation as well as that of the younger generation.[4] Recently, other thorough, and useful to our approach, monographs about the Swabians in the interwar years, concerning their political life, have been published.[5] The past of Germans in Bukovina was recently synthesized in extensive works, which give the third and fourth decades of the last century their proper attention.[6]

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[2] Michael Kroner, *Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, Band I. *Von der Ansiedlung bis Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Band II. *Wirtschafts- und Kultur-leistungen* (Nürnberg: Verlag Haus und Heimat Nürnberg, 2007-2008); Konrad Gündisch, *Siebenbürgen und die Siebenbürger Sachsen* (München: Langen Müller Verlag, 1998).

[3] Harald Roth, *Politische Strukturen und Strömungen bei den Siebenbürger Sachsen 1919-1933* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1994); *Siebenbürgen zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen*, ed. Walter König (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1994); Vasile Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni 1918-1944* [Contributions to the Knowledge of the History of the Transylvanian Saxons] (Sibiu: Editura Hora, 2001).

[4] Oskar Feldtänzer, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte*, Band 1: *Das Jahrhundert der Ansiedlung 1689-1805*, Band 2: Ingomar Senz, with the colaboration of Rudolf Fath and Friedrich Gottas, *Wirtschaftliche Autarkie und politische Entfremdung 1806 bis 1918*, Band 3: Georg Wildmann, Oskar Feldtänzer, Hans Müller, Kaspar Hügel, Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt, *Die Tragödie der Selbstbehauptung im Wirkfeld des Nationalismus der Nachfolgestaaten 1918-1944* (München: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 1997, 2006, 2010).

[5] Mihai A. Panu, *Filiere şi mecanisme de propagandă nazistă în Banat 1933-1945* [Nazi propaganda channels and mechanisms in Banat 1933-1945] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2014); Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Donauschwaben 1868-1948* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2014); Olaf Stephan Schüller, "*Für Glaube, Führer, Volk, Vater- und Mutterland?" Die Kämpfe um die deutsche Jugend im rumänischen Banat (1918-1944)* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009).

[6] Daniel Hrenciuc, *Între destin şi istorie: germanii în Bucovina (1918-2012)* [Between Destiny and History: the Germans in Bukovina (1918-2012)] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2013); Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung der*

During the interwar period, the Germans of Bessarabia were also the subject of extensive research, brought about by several PhD theses.[7] Smaller groups, such as the Swabians from Satu Mare, the Germans from the Banat Highlands or the Germans from Dobruja have lately stood in the spotlight of some researchers who have published summaries containing findings that cannot be overlooked.[8] The bibliography of Germans in Romania is also continuously enriched with numerous studies, communications, scientific notes published in journals, periodicals devoted to the study of the past of Germans in Romania, as *Forschungen zur Volks- und zur Landeskunde* (Bucharest-Sibiu), *Siebenbürgische Semesterblätter* (Munich) *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* (Munich), calendars and annuals for Saxons, Germans from Bessarabia and Bukovina - *Hauskalender der Siebenbürger Sachsen* (Munich), *Jahrbuch der Deutschen aus Bessarabien. Heimatkalender* (Hanover), *Kaindl Archiv* (Augsburg), which provide much information, many memories and memoirs of contemporary events crucial for these groups of Germans.

The context of political life in interwar Romania was investigated in all its structures: political parties and organizations, parliamentary and local elections, voters, political elite, parliamentarianism. Of course, a number of other issues remain to be researched, including the issues concerning the presence of peasants in political parties, the extent to which they appropriated political ideas and campaigned for putting them into practice,

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Bukowina. Die Durchsetzung des national staatlichen Anspruchs Grossrumäniens: 1918-1942 (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001).

[7] Olga Schroeder, *Die Deutschen Bessarabien 1914-1940. Eine Minderheit zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Anpassung* (Stuttgart: Bessarabiendeutscher Verein e. V., 2012); Cornelia Schlarb, *Tradition im Wandel. Die evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in Bessarabien 1814-1940* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2012); Luminiţa Fassel, *Das deutsche Schulwesen in Bessarabien, 1812-1940. Eine komparativ-historische und sozio-kulturelle Untersuchung* (München: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 2000).

[8] Ernst Hauler, *Istoria nemţilor din regiunea Sătmarului* [The History of the Germans in the Satu Mare Region] (Satu Mare: Editura Lamura, 1998); *Die Banater Berglanddeutschen: ein Handbuch*, eds. Waldemar Günter König, Karl Ludwig Lupşiasca, Erwin Josef Ţigla (Reschitza: Verlag "Banatul Montan", 2013); Karl Ludwig Lupşiasca, *Dem Emporbringen und Aufblühen dieser Bergwerke. Eine Geschichte des Banater Berglands in der Zeitspanne 1855-1920* (Bukarest: Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung für Rumänien, 2000); *Germanii dobrogeni – istorie şi civilizaţie* [The Germans from Dobruja – History and Civilisation], Second edition revised and improved/*Die Dobrudschadeutschen – Geschichte und Zivilisation*, eds. Valentin Ciorbea, Corina-Mihaela Apostoleanu, Olga Kaiter (Constanţa: Ex Ponto, 2014).

briefly – their political level, their choice in the leaderships of political organizations and local government bodies. In addition, the German minority had national organizations, where they could practice democratic skills. For all national minority groups these structures have played such a role and have provided the framework for the consolidation of the group unity and for defending their own identity. This vital objective has often dictated the attitude of a minority in the political background of a state at a given time.

The social structure of German peasantry

At the 1930 census, 745,421 Germans were recorded. They formed 4.1% of the total population, being the second national minority after Hungarians. Of these, 552,542 (3.8%) lived in rural areas and 192,879 (5.3%) in urban areas. Only 399,877 (3.1% of this category in the country) dealt with land exploitation. 80% of them were involved in agriculture, compared to the national average of 78.7%.[9] Settled in the Carpathian-Danube area starting with the 12th and 13th centuries, Germans were mostly farmers. At the beginning of the interwar period they still did not form a homogeneous community. They were divided into groups, colonized in different historical stages, that have maintained their specific character until today, insomuch that some authors consider each group to be a national minority. However, after 1918, their leaders campaigned for the defence of their common interests, presenting themselves as representatives of all Germans in Romania.

Saxons brought here during the 12th and 13th centuries and later settled in Southern Transylvania and in the Northeast, in the Bistriţa-Reghin area. According to the data from 1920, 224,067 Germans were living in Transylvania, out of which 59,101 were living in cities. They formed the majority of residents in 159 settlements and they were in the minority in the other 72. Saxons represented 8.5% of the total population of Transylvania and owned 8.5% of the total area of the province.[10] In 1930, there were 253,426 Carpathian Germans in Transylvania included in

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[9] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930* [The General Census of Romanian Population of 29 December 1930], vol. V, p. XCIII; vol. IX, ed. Sabin Manuilă (Bucharest: Institute of Statistics, 1940), 376; Dumitru Şandru, *Populaţia rurală a României între cele două războaie mondiale* [Romania's Rural Population between the Two World Wars] (Iaşi: Editura Academiei R. S. Romania, 1980), 91.

[10] Karl Braunias, "Das Deutschtum in Großrumänien," *Mitteilungen zur Kenntnis des Deutschtums in Großrumänien*, Sibiu, I (1923), 15.

the census, forming 7.9% of the region's population and 6.9% of the rural population. Of these, 152,431 were engaged in agriculture,[11] but only 43,810 were active, the others being auxiliary, family members and non-active people.[12] According to data from 1916, the 37,815 Saxon families who had a property were structured as follows:[13]

Surface	Number of properties	%
Up to 5 jugera[*] (2.8 ha)	8,764	23.2
5-10 jugera (5.8 ha)	10,433	27.6
10-50 jugera (28.8 ha)	17,528	46.4
50-100 jugera	835	2.2
More than 100 jugera	235	0.6

[*]1 jugera (*iugăr*) = 0,5775 hectars

The statistics show that the structure of Saxon land ownership was relatively homogeneous; the small and medium property dominates, while the big landlords are absent. We should also take into account the widespread properties of the communes, consisting of grazing lands, forests, meadows, which helped peasants, especially those with little land, raise their cattle and to complement their sources of income.[14]

Swabians from Banat and the area of the city of Arad, colonized in the 18th century, were the largest group of the German minority: in 1930 275,369 persons were registered. They formed 23.7% of the population of Banat. 76.5% of them lived in villages, while the average rural population of the province was 82.2%.[15] In 1919, there were 45,685 Swabian

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[11] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. V, CV, 24.

[12] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930* [The General Census of Romanian Population of 29 December 1930], vol. VII, ed. Sabin Manuilă (Bucharest: Institute of Statistics, 1941), LXVII.

[13] Gustav Adolf Klein, "Viaţa economică germană din Ardeal, Banat şi Satu Mare," [German Economic Life in Transylvania, Banat and Satu Mare] in *Transilvania, Banatul, Crişana, Maramureşul* [Transylvania, Banat, Crişana, Maramureş, 1918-1928], vol. I (Bucharest: Cultura Naţională, 1929), 572-579.

[14] Marcel Ştirban, *Din istoria României 1918-1921. Probleme ale vieţii politice, economice şi sociale* [The History of Romania between 1918 and 1921. Issues of Political, Economic and Social Life] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1987), 258-259.

[15] Sabin Manuilă, *Studiu etnografic asupra populaţiei României* [Ethnographic Study on the Romanian Population] (Bucharest: Cultura Naţională, 1940), 34-52.

smallholdings, of which 26,000 had under 5.7 hectares (10 jugera). Of these, about 8.000 were living off their property, and the others had to supplement their income as seasonal agricultural workers in larger farms or to rent small areas for special crops (tobacco, vegetables). Some of them chose to emigrate to America. Around 20,000 smallholdings had over 5.7 ha. These were, however, working 81.5% of the arable land of the Swabians.[16] They formed the nucleus of the Swabian villages. By some estimates, the average area of a property was 18.4 ha after the war, but was diminished by the land reform and the dissolution of properties to 9.15 ha at the end of the interwar period. Hence, the conclusion that, compared to the agrarian structures in interwar Romania, the smallholdings of Banat Swabians had the best position and made significant progress.[17]

The Swabians in Satu Mare area were settled in the 18th century and they numbered 35,337 in the 1930 census, living in 34 communes in Satu Mare, Sălaj and Bihor.[18] By other estimates, however, in the middle of the interwar period, about 70,000 Satu Mare Swabians lived in this region. Up to 1918 they were assimilated by Hungarians and underwent a process of re-germanization thereafter. According to some authors, their magyarization was a forced process, through school and church,[19] yet according to others it was a natural assimilation.[20] They were peasants in a proportion of 90%.

Germans from Bukovina were brought here after 1775, the year the province was annexed by the Hapsburgs, as military, officials, but also as miners, workers in mines or in forests, craftsmen or farmers. Following the

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[16] Josef Komanschek, "Die Produktionsbedingungen der Banater Landwirtschaft," in *Die landwirtschaftliche Leistungen der Banater Schwaben in Rumänien. 1919-1944*, ed. Josef Komanschek (Reutlingen: Selbstverlag, 1961), 31-33.

[17] Komanschek, "Die Produktionsbedingungen der Banater Landwirtschaft," 22.

[18] Sepp Pfeiffer, *Zur Geschichte der Madjarisierung des Sathmarer Deutschtums* (Hermannstadt: 1940), 21-25.

[19] Pfeiffer, *Zur Geschichte der Madjarisierung des Sathmarer Deutschtums*, 21-25; Ernst Hauler, "Das Minderheitenschicksal der Sathmarschwaben," in *Relaţii interetnice în zona de contact româno-maghiaro-ucraineană din secolul al XVIII-lea până în prezent / Interethnische Beziehungen in rumänisch-ungarisch-ukrainischen Kontaktraum vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart / A román, magyar és ukrán nécsoportok egymáshoy való viszonya a 18. Századtól napjainkig* [Interethnic Relations in the Romanian-Hungarian-Ukrainian Contact Area of from the 18th Century to the Present], ed. Hans Gehl, Viorel Ciubotă (Satu Mare, Tübingen: Editura Muzeului Sătmărean, 1999), 255-256.

[20] Lóránt Tilkovszky, "A szatmáry németség a két világháború között," [The Germans in Satu Mare County in Interwar Period] in *Relaţii interetnice în zona de contact româno-maghiaro-ucraineană din secolul al XVIII-lea până în prezent*, 226-243.

war, 68,075 were left in the province and formed 8.4% of the whole region. 38% of them lived in communes where they formed the majority of the residents.[21] The 1930 census recorded 75,533 German inhabitants.[22] Farmers were mainly Swabians, being spread out all over the province and making up about half of the German population. In the interwar years, the 17,216 families of German farmers had the following structure: 5,790 did not have any land, 5,112 (44.8%) had up to 0.5 ha, 4,104 (35.9%) had 0.5 to 2.5 ha, 1,408 (12.3%) had 2.5-5 ha, 619 (5.4%) had 5 to 10 ha, 134 (1.3%) had 10 to 20 ha, 39 families (0.4%) had 20 ha.[23] This structure was characterized by small property owners and through the agrarian reform of 1921, 3,109 landless Germans were granted land, with a total area of 5,022 ha.[24]

The Germans from Bessarabia were settled here by tsars, after they annexed this part of Moldova in 1812. In the 1930 census, 81,089 Germans were recorded, 81.7% of them being peasants living in the Southern part of the province, forming 2.8% of the total Bessarabian population.[25] A total of 77,753 were living in rural settlements, forming 3.1% of the total rural population in Bessarabia and only 3,336 lived in urban areas (0.9%).[26] Compared to the surface of the land received from tsars in the 19th century (about 144,000 ha), when they were settled, in the interwar years, they managed to double this area by buying and tilling land, and to possess 11.11% of the total arable land in Bessarabia.[27] 13% of them were craftsmen, about 3% worked in trade, crafts, industry, and

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[21] *Grothes kleines Handwörterbuch des Grenz und- Auslandsdeutschtums*, ed. Hugo Grothe (München, Berlin: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1932), 71.

[22] *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930* [The General Census of Romanian Population of 29 December 1930], vol. IX, ed. Sabin Manuilă (Bucharest: Institute of Statistics, 1940), 382-384.

[23] *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums*, vol. I, ed. Carl Petersen, Otto Scheel, Paul Hermann Ruth, Hans Schwahn (Breslau: 1933), 618.

[24] Hrenciuc, *Între destin și istorie: germanii în Bucovina (1918-2012)*, 70-71.

[25] *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. IX, 382-384.

[26] *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930* [The General Census of Romanian Population of 29 December 1930], vol. II (Bucharest: 1938), XXVI, XXXII, LI, LIV.

[27] Igor Nacu, "Germanii basarabeni în cadrul României interbelice," [Bessarabian Germans in Interwar Romania] in *Analele Asociației Naționale a Tinerilor Istorici din Moldova* (Chișinău: Editura Ruxanda, 1999), 212.

2.5% were intellectuals (priests, teachers, doctors, lawyers).[28] According to an estimation of the Evangelical Lutheran District Consistory of Tarutino from 1939, 95% of believers were farmers, living in 140 settlements.[29] Under these circumstances, the 1915 ukases of the tsar, through which land was taken from Germans and they were to be deported to Siberia, because Russia was at war with the German Empire, signified a turn that could have been fatal for the existence of the community. After the union of Bessarabia with Romania, German leaders demanded the suspension of the effects of these decrees and their demand was met.[30] Through the agrarian reform, which in Bessarabia expropriated estates over 100 hectares, the Germans here lost 64,177 ha[31], but those who were entitled to land allotment received up to 6 ha, adding up to 8,200 ha in all. Thus, they established 13 new settlements, the so-called "one-hectare communes".[32] Up to 1918, the Bessarabian Germans with less land rented approximately 25,000 ha annually, but after the agrarian reform they could not rent these anymore since the number of big properties had been greatly diminished. Consequently, German authors estimate that under the agrarian reform Bessarabian Germans lost 15% of the arable land that was available, as well as the possibility of setting up new settlements, the so-called "daughter-communes", where the newly-weds settled down. As a result, more and more immigrated to America, but in 1924 they were also invited to Banat by Kaspar Muth, president of the National Swabian Council.[33] Others turned to trades and to the industry which was starting to develop in this region. In the years with poor agricultural productions, due to drought, Bessarabian Germans took loans, received aid from Germany

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[28] Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabien Deutsche Kolonisten am Schwarzen Meer*, Second edition, updated, expanded and corrected (Potsdam: Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2012), 253.

[29] Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale București [Central Historical National Archives Service Bucharest] (hereafter: SANIC), fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri [The Presidency of the Council of Ministers Fund], file 1464, 47, address of the Tarutino District Consistory to the Ministry of Minorities of 23. 03. 1939, signed by pastor Immanuel Baumann.

[30] *Handwörterbuch des Grenz - und Auslandsdeutschtums*, 405, 411.

[31] According to other authors they lost only 40,000 ha. Erich Szegedi, "Der deutsche Bauer Bessarabiens," *Volk und Kultur*, Sibiu, 3/16-17, January-February 1936, 603.

[32] *Handwörterbuch des Grenz - und Auslandsdeutschtums*, 412.

[33] SJSAN, Fond Liga Culturală a Germanilor din România [Cultural League of Germans in Romania Fund], file 4, 1924, 933, the letter of K. Muth of 27 November 1924, to the German National Council in Bessarabia.

and from other groups of Germans in Romania.[34] All these changes led to a social stratification and to the emergence of new occupations in the dominantly agrarian society of Bessarabian Germans[35], like the society of other cohabiters of this province. Occupations such as farmhand and day-laborer started to appear in agriculture, but a middle class, which was missing before, was also consolidated.[36]

In the 19th century, in the absence of necessary land, some of these Germans went to Dobruja in several stages, reaching 12,581 in 1930, which meant 1.5% of the province's population. Of these, 10,102 were living in rural areas, the majority living in the county of Constanța, where they formed 4.4% of the population. They lived in 38 settlements, but only four were inhabited exclusively by Germans. According to the mentioned census, 8,974 Germans from Dobruja (78.2%) were employed in land exploitation, many of those employed in small industrial enterprises (textile, food industry), in transports and trade were living in villages.[37] At the end of the interwar period, 42.4% of Germans peasants in Dobruja did not own arable land, while 21.4% had about one hectare, 13.4% possessed 5-10 ha and were considered poor, 9.1% had 20-50 ha and were included in the middle class category and 2.7% owned over 50 ha. In total, Germans possessed 23,801 ha, the average for a property being 8.7 ha. The Germans were also working about 7,000 other hectars leased from owners of different origins. The natural increase of Germans in Dobruja was particularly interesting: 18.6‰, while in Germany it was 6.6%.[38]

In the Old Kingdom, Germans who came in small groups or individually, in the 18th and 19th centuries, as technicians, doctors, pharmacists, engineers etc., lived mostly in cities.[39] In 1930, 32,366 were

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[34] *Grothes kleines Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslanddeutschtums*, ed. Hugo Grothe (München-Berlin: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1932), 12, 401; SANIC, GDR Microfilms collection, roll 9, frame 32, Reich Government meeting protocol, of 31 October 1928.

[35] Ute Schmidt, *Die Deutschen aus Bessarabien. Eine Minderheit aus Südosteuropa*, Third edition (Köln, Weimar: Wien Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 69-70.

[36] A. Fiechtner, "Zum Berufsaufbau der Deutschen in Bessarabien," *Deutsche Zeitung Bessarabiens* (hereafter: DZB), Tarutino, 21/95, 29 November 1939, 2-3.

[37] Sabin Manuilă, "La population de la Dobroudja," in *La Dobroudja* (Bucharest: s. n., 1938), 462-463, 515.

[38] O. P. Hausmann, "Gefüge und Lebensordnung der deutschen Volksgruppe in der Dobrudscha," *Volkstum im Südosten*, Viena, XVII, November 1940, 203-207.

[39] Christa Stache, Wolfram G. Theilemann, "Evangelisch in Altrumänien. Zu Themenrelevanz, Forschungsstand und Konzeption," in *Evangelisch in Altrumänien. Forschungen und Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschsprachigen*

registered, most of them (20,826) living in Muntenia, concentrated in Bucharest (14,231) and along the Prahova Valley. Only in Moldova, of the 5,808 Germans, 0.1% were living in villages, this percentage being lower in other regions.[40]

In addition to the significant differences between these groups, which until then had lived in three different states, had been colonized at different times from different regions of the German-speaking space, there are also elements of economic nature which separate them. All these groups had been colonized to the respective regions mainly for their professional knowledge, because they were known as good farmers and craftsmen. In order to convince them to leave their native lands and to head for Eastern Europe, attractive promises were made and they were given extensive lands and a number of privileges and rights, which the natives did not have. In these circumstances, using their agronomic knowledge from the West, Germans became model farmers for their neighbours and were appreciated for their smallholdings. Initially, the received lots were approximately equal in all regions of colonization. In time, however, due to increasing communities, differentiation appeared. By some estimations, in 1939 there were 75,000 households of Germans in Romania. Together they owned a surface of 1.13 million jugera, on average 14.9 jugera for each household. The most numerous was the Swabian peasantry, grouped in about 40,000 farms and 138 communities who used 730,000 jugera.[41] These properties were structured differently from province to province and sometimes there were great differences, which remained even after the agrarian reform of 1919-1921, which had aimed to satisfy the thirst for land of the peasants deprived of this resource essential for their existence and their social status, for their dignity. Thus, in the case of Saxons, the nearly 38,000 smallholdings were of medium size, having between 6 and 28 hectares, but 23% of these had less than 3

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evangelischen Kirchengemeinden in Rumänischen Regat, eds. Christa Stache, Wolfram G. Theilemann (Sibiu/Hermannstadt: Bonn Schiller Verlag, 2012), 24-25.

[40] *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. IX, 376, 380, 382; *Enciclopedia României* [The Encyclopedia of Romania], vol. I (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 148.

[41] Franz Riedl, *Das Südostdeutschtum in den Jahren 1918-1945* (München: Verlag des Südostdeutschen Kulturwerks, 1962), 53; Hans Hartl, *Das Schicksal des Deutschtums in Rumänien, 1938-1945-1953* (Würzburg: Holzner Verlag, 1958), 47. At Hartl the numbers are a little different. However, one great difference is when assessing the total surface, because the first author uses as measurement unit the iugăr = 0,5775 ha. and the second uses the hectare; Josef Rieß, *Deutsche Volkwerden im Banat* (Temeswar: 1935), 49.

ha. It bears mentioning that there were no big landoweners among Saxons. Only 235 farms (0.6%) had more than 100 jugera (57.5 ha).[42] Conversely, political and religious communes had pastures and vast forests. These were mostly expropriated due to the agrarian reform from 1921 and raised grievances against the Romanian state.

German peasants during the changes of 1918-1919

The first Germans from the future Romanian state who were involved with the transformations from 1918 were those from Bukovina. This is where the German People's Council of Bukovina was formed, on 18 September 1918. Among its members there were also six delegates of the German Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (Verband landwirtschaftlicher Genossenschaften), along with those of other societies and associations.[43] In the discussions with representatives of the Romanian National Council, the Germans presented a document with ten demands. In addition to the guarantee of equal rights with Romanians and the participation in administration, Germans demanded that German peasants be taken into consideration in the implementation process of the agrarian reform. At the congregation of reliable German men of 26 November 1918, it was decided they would support the unification of the entire Bukovina with Romania if the demands advanced to the Romanian National Council led by Iancu Flondor were satisfied. A delegation was also elected to attend the General Congress of Bukovina of 28 November. At the Congress, the delegation's chairman, Alois Lebouton, read a statement through which Germans approved of the union, voted by this assembly, of Bukovina with Romania.[44] They took into consideration the preservation of the unity of Bukovina and the establishment of a German minority of almost one million Germans in the future Romanian state. In fact, their representatives were present in June 1919 in Sibiu, creating the Union of Romanian Germans and later, on 7 September 1919, in Timişoara, where the common electoral platform of Germans in Romania was developed for the elections in November of the same year. But in agreement with Iancu Flondor's group, Germans did not participate in this election. However, Norbert Kipper was entered on the lists for the National Liberal Party and

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[42] Petre Suciu, *Proprietatea agrară în Ardeal. Scurt istoric al dezvoltării* [Agrarian Property in Transylvania. A Short History of Development] (Cluj: 1931), 41-42, 85.

[43] *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslanddeutschtum*, 630.

[44] Vasile Ciobanu, *Germanii din România în anii 1918-1919* [The Germans in Romania between 1918-1919] (Sibiu: Honterus, 2013), 195-197.

was elected, but was not recognized by the Germans as their representative, because of his attitude of insubordination. German farmers from several villages (Bucşoaia, Iacobeni, Frasin, Ilişeşti) joined a common cause with Romanians and protested against abuses committed during the elections.[45] For example, in Iacobeni the government's candidate won, not the opposition's, whom the Romanian and German villagers supported.[46] Furthermore, other German residents of the county expressed their dissatisfaction for the introduction of the Romanian language in administration or for other injustices, for which they were pursued by Siguranţa (*t/n the safety police service in interwar Bukovina*). An agent's report showed that he considered that the expression of dissatisfaction was due to the hope Germans had, that would only last until the signing of the Peace Treaty of Saint Germain with Austria on 9 December 1919, after which complaints would have ceased.[47] But other reports reveal that Romanian peasants were unhappy with the authorities and were missing the old leadership.[48]

Saxon peasants were probably the most involved in the events that changed the fate of their community in 1918-1919. The Saxons had an old national-political organization and since 1876 they had the Saxon People's Party (Sächsische Volkspartei), a national structure with local organizations and constituencies, and a Central Committee at their disposal. The Party resumed its work in October 1918. Universal suffrage was among the demands of the Saxon constituencies even since October 1918, and the group "Hermannstädter Bürgerabend" (Social Citizen Gatherings of Sibiu), an organization of the city's middle class, discussed during the gathering of 30 October 1918, among other things, the possibility of extending itself to villages and convening a General Assembly of the

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[45] Serviciul Judeţean Suceava al Arhivelor Naţionale [Suceava County National Archives Service (hereafter: SJSvAN)], Fond Serviciul Special de Siguranţă Câmpulung Moldovenesc [Câmpulung Moldovenesc Special Safety Service Fund], file 1, 1919, 31 apud Florin Pintescu, "Atitudinea germanilor din Bucovina faţă de regimul românesc în anul 1919," [The Attitude of Bukovina Germans towards the Romanian Regime in 1919] *Codrul Cosminului* 15/5 (1999), 270.

[46] SJSvAN, Câmpulung Moldovenesc Special Safety Service Fund, file 3, 1919, 23, apud Pintescu, "Atitudinea germanilor din Bucovina faţă de regimul românesc în anul 1919," 269.

[47] SJSvAN, Câmpulung Moldovenesc Special Safety Service Fund, file 3, 1919, 49, 51 apud Pintescu, "Atitudinea germanilor din Bucovina faţă de regimul românesc în anul 1919," 270.

[48] SJSvAN, Câmpulung Moldovenesc Special Safety Service Fund, file 3, 1919, 50, file 4, 130, 192, 232 apud Pintescu, "Atitudinea germanilor din Bucovina faţă de regimul românesc în anul 1919," 270-271.

Saxon Delegates (Sachsentag). On the other hand, the National German-Saxon Council (Deutsch-Sächsische Nationalrat), which became the main forum for political decisions in November 1918, appealed to the countryside for the establishment of councils and national guards, made up of soldier peasants who returned from the fronts of war. These structures were formed in dozens of Saxon villages, and usually worked together with similar Romanian structures.[49] Since the constituencies' management was incomplete, the possibility of completing them was discussed, but it was agreed that it was a period unfit for elections (marshal Mackensen's army was retreating through Transylvania, from south of the Carpathians; after which the Romanian army troops advanced). But the soldiers who returned home, some influenced by the revolutionary ideas in Russia, started to revolt. As a result, the desiderata of the peasantry had to be monitored carefully. The Saxon National Council in the county of Târnava Mare convened a meeting in Sighişoara, on 18 November 1918, that was attended by representatives of the Saxon villages in the county. Its purpose was to inform the rural population of the new political orientations. The topics discussed were: the establishment of new national councils, the cooperation with Romanian councils, the newer attitude, favourable for Romanians, the formation of national guards in cities and rural guards in villages, and the cooperation with Romanian guards in matters of defence and supply.[50] Noting the spirit of insubordination of the soldiers returned to their villages, Michael Ambrosi, a great landowner from Mediaș, proposed the participation of peasants in the government of public issues: "The problems and requirements of this times are too heavy to be handled by the same ruling class as before. From now on, the peasant, the artisan and the worker will also be drawn to the important councils of our people".[51] He stated, especially for those back home with Bolshevik ideas, that freedom did not mean disrespect for the old order. "We, the Saxon peasants – continued Ambrosi – should understand freedom and equality in the following sense: each is free to decide openly on all issues of the day and of the people and actively participate in raising the organization of our people", so that in all institutions (communal councils, church and national representations) people from all social categories be accepted, on the basis of merit, the availability to sacrifice for fellow countrymen, for morality.[52]

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[49] Ciobanu, *Germanii din România în anii 1918-1919*, 26-35.
[50] *Groß-Kokler Bote*, Sighişoara, XL/2079, 24 November 1918, 3.
[51] Michael Ambrosi, "Ein neues Jahr−eine neue Zeit!," *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter*, Sibiu, XLVII/2, 12 January 1919, 9.
[52] Michael Ambrosi, "Ein neues Jahr−eine neue Zeit!," 9.

However, in December 1918-January 1919, the Saxons leadership attention focused mainly on the negotiations with the Romanians, on the organization and the unfolding of the meeting in Mediaş, in 8 January 1919, when it was decided to accept the union of Transylvania with Romania.[53] In the debates they carried out, Hans Otto Roth, Secretary of the Saxon National Council pleaded for the acceptance of the decision of the National Assembly of Romanians of 1 December 1918, because the participation of Saxons in the preparation of the upcoming land reform was necessary, otherwise the reform might be carried out without consulting the Saxons, and highlighted the danger of the spreading Bolshevik propaganda.[54] The resolution of Mediaş was a particular document compared to other similar ones, from Chernivtsi, Timişoara, Tarutino. The assembly was in fact launching a proclamation to the Saxon people, composed mostly of peasants, which were announced of the decision taken. In the following weeks, a real propaganda campaign was launched throughout villages to explain to the people the meaning of the resolution of Mediaş, especially as they were discontent about the requisitions made by the Romanian troops (fodder, horses, houses).Young Saxons were called to colours in the two divisions formed in Transylvania. In some places priests were held responsible for the decision taken in Mediaş, although of the 138 members of the congregation only eight were priests.[55] Especially in the case of rural regions, the National Saxon Council sent, directives to be followed in the new political context. Saxons were given explanations on why the resolution in Mediaş had to be adopted quickly, they were asked to strengthen the national solidarity, and they were given explanations for the need to answer the call to arms of the 1896-1898 contingents in order to combat the danger of Bolshevism.[56] During the discussion and implementation of the agrarian reform law of 1919, adopted by the Grand Council of Sibiu and then of the agrarian reform law for Transylvania, adopted in 1921, by the Parliament in Bucharest, the Saxon leaders showed particular attention for the situation of those living directly from agriculture. This political struggle for maintaining the land under Saxon ownership came from the conviction expressed by Michael Englisch, director of the School of Agriculture in Bistriţa, who in 1919

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[53] Harald Roth, *Der „Deutsch-sächsische Nationalrat". Siebenbürgen 1918/1919* (München: Verlag Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1993), 48-63.
[54] "Die Mitschrift der Mediascher Anschlußversammlung vom 8. Januar 1919," *Zeitschrift für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 26/2, 2003, 206-207.
[55] Ciobanu, *Germanii din România în anii 1918-1919*, 84-85.
[56] SJSAN, Fond Consiliul Naţional Săsesc [National Saxon Council Fund], file 14, 1919, 54-60, the directives given in 12 February 1919.

considered that the existence of Saxons over the centuries had been secured by "our peasants' love for land". To secure the future of Saxons, he asked that peasants be encouraged and supported, that they have more children who would live their lives in villages, that they buy land.[57] The Saxon National Council formed a special committee for the agrarian reform, gathered data through trusted people in villages, discussed the draft of the 1919 law with the Directory Council, and H.O. Roth led a delegation of 50 Saxon peasants to Cluj, to the Directory Council, where they presented their complaints about the reform.[58] Although some success has been achieved in the draft law and its application through these negotiations and campaigns, the Saxons lost 35,000 jugera of pastures and forests in total, expropriated from the Saxon University, 12,000 jugera from private owners and 55% of the properties of political and religious communes, all these areas being estimated to amount to 1.5-2.5 billion lei.[59]

This effect stirred up great discontent among Saxons, especially in villages, which was expressed during the election campaign from autumn 1919 at the General Assembly of the Saxon Delegates (Sachsentag) in Sighişoara, from 5 to 6 November 1919, attended by both working delegates and peasants.[60] All speakers underlined the need for solidarity among all Saxon social categories. In his statement of 5 November 1919, peasant Bucholzer from Şura Mică, Sibiu county, showed that he understood the imperatives of the moment: "We want to be faithful citizens of our country, if we are left to be what we are – faithful evangelical German Saxons".[61] In the report presented at the conference, Hans Otto Roth, secretary of the National Saxon Council, stated that, in terms of universal suffrage, everybody had to participate in the political life: "Our politics will not be made in the capital as before, but each of our communes and cities must make politics. It goes without saying that democratic ideas will be taken into consideration in the new national organization. The whole nation is a voter."[62] After the reorganization of

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[57] M. Englisch, "Grundbesitz und Volkserhaltung," *Deutsches Volkskalender für das Jahr 1919*, Kronstadt, XV, 180-181.
[58] SJSAN, Fond Consiliul Naţional Săsesc [National Saxon Council Fund], file 44, 1919, 451, 459, 477, 479, 488.
[59] Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt [hereafter: SDT], 46/13 795, 8 October 1919, 2; Ciobanu, *Germanii din România în anii 1918-1919*, 106-107.
[60] *Der vierte Sachsentag Schäßburg, 1919. Berichte*. Gathered by the Leadership of the Sighişoara District Committee, Schäßburg, 1919, 27-34.
[61] SDT, 46/13 993, 26 November 1919.
[62] SDT, 46/13 994, 27 November 1919.

the national Saxon community structures, they have indeed performed well, Saxon voters being the most disciplined, a quality that imposed the attention of the Romanian political world of the interwar years.[63] Governments which, since 1922 (except the 1927 elections) had electoral cartels with the German Party could be certain of the votes of the Saxons. In 1919, the Saxons presented their own lists for elections. Eight Saxon MPs were elected. The representatives of the farmers' interests in this first term were the landlord Michael Ambrosi sen. (1862-1933), who became a famous wine grower in Mediaș, and the agronomist Connert Fritz (1883-1942), director of the Transylvanian Saxon Reunion for Agriculture of January 1919, elected in Codlea and then re-elected in all legislatures in the interwar years, with the exception of 1932.[64] This fact is explained by Connert's dedication to the cause of the peasants, whose interests he represented in Parliament, and by his expert knowledge, for which he was appreciated even by the Romanian political circles.

In Banat, the transition of the province to a Romanian ruling was more complicated than in other counties. The occupation of the province by Serbian troops and their attempt to force the annexation of the province to Serbia, to intimidate the Romanians and the Saxons, led to their replacement with French troops, as France did not want two of its allies in the Balkans to reach an armed conflict. In this context, even determining the attitude of Swabians towards the events in progress was difficult. Given the significant progress of Magyarization, it is understandable that part of the ruling elite wanted Banat to remain in Hungary, which had been proclaimed a republic a few days earlier. Still, there was also a trend in favour of the separation of Banat and its annexation to Romania or Serbia, neighbouring countries which claimed Banat. The events were researched

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[63] Sorin Radu, *Considerații cu privire la cultura politică și comportamentul electoral al minorităților naționale din Transilvania în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)* [Considerations on the Political Culture and the Electoral Behaviour of National Minorities in Transylvania during the Years of Parliamentary Democracy (1919-1937)], *Acta Transylvanica,* Bucharest I (2004), 149-150, 157.

[64] Only H.O. Roth, president of the German Party was elected in all legislatures in the interwar period and became senator for life due to this performance. Paul Șeulean, "Die Ergebnisse der Deutschen Volkspartei in Rumänien bei den Legislativwahlen von 1919 bis 1937," *Forschungen zur Volks - und Landeskunde* 54 (2011), 87-105; *Schriftsteller-Lexikon der Siebenbürger Deutschen. Bio-bibliographisches Handbuch für Wissenschaft, Dichtung und Publizistik*, Begründet von Josef Trausch, fortgeführt von Friedrich Schuller und Hermann A. Hienz, vol. V, A-C (Köln, Weimar: Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 31-36, 364-372.

and broadly reconstructed[65], but the attitude of Swabian peasants, in fact of the vast majority of the population of this ethnic group, was less taken into consideration.

The revolutionary events in Hungary have also shaken the Swabian society in Banat. On 3 November 1918, the Swabian National Council was established, chaired by Professor Josef Striegl (1874-1945), deputy to the president of the Association of Peasants (Bauernverein). The call to organization took into account all social classes. Next, local councils appeared in Swabian communes. At the end of 1918, most of the elite of the Banat Swabians still felt closely connected to the Hungarian state, but also took the peasants' increasingly insistent demands for land into consideration. As a result, at the Swabian congregation of 8 December 1918, the National Swabian Council asked in the adopted Manifesto[66] that Banat Swabians enjoy self-administration, with the autonomy of justice and of church and with the right to apply a democratic-agrarian reform.[67] In addition, autonomy in the field of defence of industrial and agricultural workers was expected and "social justice in all spheres of political and economic life".[68] Moreover, other claims from the socialists' program arose: an autonomous national-Swabian representation, elected by universal, equal, secret vote of all men and women. At the same time, sending a delegation of Swabians to the Peace Conference in Paris and international insurance for the mentioned rights of national minorities was also demanded.[69] The lawyer Kaspar Muth from Timişoara (1876-1966) was a prominent member of the Independence Party of 1848 in Hungary and became the leader of the group of moderates, who wanted Banat to remain autonomous in Hungary, and later the Swabians' leader in the interwar period; he was the author of this manifesto and ever since 1917 he publicly claimed that large secular and ecclesiastical properties had to be abolished, that a limit to the great ownership had to be fixed by law and that the parcelling started by the Hungarian state had to be continued in

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[65] Wildmann, Feldtänzer, Müller, Hügel, Spiegel-Schmidt, Band 3: *Die Tragödie der Selbstbehauptung im Wirkfeld des Nationalismus der Nachfolgestaaten 1918-1944*, 225-240; William Marin, *Kurze Geschichte der Banater Deutschen. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Beziehungen zur rumänischen Bevölkerung und ihrer Einstellung zur Vereinigung von 1918* (Temeswar: Facla Verlag, 1980), 64-124.

[66] Kaspar Hügel, *Das Banater deutsche Schulwesen in Rumänien von 1918 bis 1944* (München: 1968), 154-155.

[67] Rieß, *Deutsche Volkwerden im Banat*, 50.

[68] Rieß, *Deutsche Volkwerden im Banat*, 50.

[69] Rieß, *Deutsche Volkwerden im Banat*, 51.

order to expand the small properties of peasants. Muth had called this course of action the "agrarian democracy". In February 1919, he said he had found his idea quite appealing, insomuch that at the end of the war it could become a reality, at least for Swabians, as they had no aristocracy or co nationals who held large equity. Muth was satisfied with the law on the right to self-determination of the Germans in Hungary, from 29 January 1919, and with the Law-Decree for the agrarian reform of 16 February 1919[70], saying that their provisions were coming to meet the demands of the Swabian Manifesto adopted on 8 December 1918 by the national assembly of Swabians, attended by representatives from 136 communes inhabited by Swabians and from two Swabian communes of Bácska. Through the Hungarian law-decree, families with no land could have bought land with "cash" or they could have rented. Obviously, noted K. Muth, people in villages had higher hopes, but the idea had the force of a magnet for peasants, who had always wanted to own land.[71]

The attention paid to the Swabian peasants increased when the communists took power in Budapest on 22 March 1919. The intellectual elite of the Swabians had given more attention to the lower classes ever since the Republic of Hungary promised to reintroduce the education in the German language, as the Swabian National Council had asked since 3 November 1918. Peasants were not sufficiently involved in the struggle between moderate and radical trends that had emerged in the Swabian elite, depending on the attitude towards the annexation of Banat to Romania, Serbia or its staying in Hungary as an autonomous province. They made contact with these concerns which had, indeed, cardinal implications for the rural Swabian world as well, only through the newspapers of the two currents "Schwäbische Volkspresse", the former "Südungarische Reform" (of the pro-Hungarians moderates or Magyarones) and "Deutsche Wacht" (German guard), of the radicals, pro-Romanians. Both movements had exponents in villages, in doctors, notaries and priests, but the documentary basis does not allow us to assess the level of involvement of peasants in these social and national concerns. We may set out the working hypothesis that the Swabian peasants were rather interested in social issues than the national ones, in the awakening to Germanism, which their leaders were preoccupied with, as proven by their attitudes, often fervent in the press, as the few preserved documents

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[70] Nicolae Bocşan, Valeriu Leu, Stelian Mândruţ, Radu Mârza, Rudolf Gräf, *Cronologia Europei Centrale (1848-1989)* [The Chronology of Central Europe (1848-1989)] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2001), 158.
[71] Kaspar Muth, "Besitzreform. Agrardemokratismus," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, Timişoara, XXXI/2, 19 February 1919, 1.

show[72] and as some of the protagonists maintained over many years, in their written memories.[73] The interest for villagers and for their political force was also present in Banat, considering that the idea of universal suffrage was in discussion. Their organization was taken into account concurrently with that of the urban population, because the awakening of the Swabians also started from a census of their forces and has been debated publicly. The Swabian National Council of Timișoara supported the organization movement of Swabians from the counties of Arad, Békés and Satu Mare, estimated in February 1919 at 4,300 in the city of Arad, 50,000 in the entire Arad county, 5,000 in the county of Bekes and 17,000 in the county of Satu Mare.[74] In March 1919, a meeting was held to elect a Council of Swabians in Arad. Doctor Karl Zimmermann was elected president, and members were: teachers Peter Heil, Franz Hirmann, Michael Karolini, Josef Lindner, farmer Andreas Hampel from Peregu Mare, lawyer Albert Schaunen et al.[75]

The organization of Swabians had become a serious problem in the spring of 1919. Attorney Emmerich Reitter (1875-1971) from Lovrin, addressing the topic in the press, stressed that the position the Swabians would adopt had to closely match their interests and "protect them from the attack of communist ideas". He estimated, however, that most of his countrymen were against Marxist, communist ideas, but could not deny that the Social-Democratic Party had many followers among the Swabians, including among poor Swabian peasants, attracted by the propaganda of the workers who were members of this party. However, Reitter noticed that these peasants did not want collective farms or state property, but their own land. They were directed against wealthier villagers because these conducted the administration of the pasture commons of the parishes in their interest. The author, however, showed that the violent takeover of power by communists, the terror used by them and the attempt to also make the peasants' land lots collective could not be supported by the poor peasants. They should have united in a democratic political party that

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[72] Rieß, *Deutsche Volkwerden im Banat*, 51.

[73] See, for example, Franz Kräuter, *Erinnerungen an der ersten Bischof von Temeschwar, Dr. h.c. Augustin Pacha (1870-1954). Ein Stück Banater Heimatgeschichte* (Bukarest: ADZ Verlag, s.a.); Hans Weresch, Nikolaus Engelmann, Hans Wolfram Hockl et. al., *Banatia. Erinnerungen aus alter und neuer Zeit* (Freiburg i. Br.: Selbstverlag, 1976); Michael Kausch, *Schicksalswende der Banater deutschen Volkes*, vol. I (Temeschburg: *Wegbereitung und Aufbauarbeit*, 1939).

[74] *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/1, 18 February 1919, 2.

[75] *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/27, 22 March 1919, 1.

defends private property, supports economic progress, makes a land reform and prevents enmity among Swabians. "Such a party must be Swabian - considered E. Reitter – in order to apply the self-administration of our nation in all areas, in peaceful agreement with all nations."[76] E. Reitter went further to sketch the party's organization. He proposed that initiative committees of priests, teachers, officials be created in villages, to inform the peasants of the party's purposes. The party should not accept leaders of older parties. The author emphasized the propaganda from man to man, since under the conditions of the Serbian occupation, gatherings were banned and it was believed that every peasant had to become an agitator, as the Bolsheviks from the villages, enemies to the peasants, were well known by them. Agitators were required to make propaganda for national papers, as the newspapers which supported the idea of the social revolution flooded villages, urging the class struggle. The peasants did not have to fight with the workers, craftsmen, traders, to be aggressive, but to defend their interests vigorously. The party would have had to publish their own newspaper to inform correctly, to strengthen the spirits of its readers, to urge them to preserve their habits.[77] An anonymous from Jimbolia intervened in the discussion and supported the need for the political organization of Swabians. Thus, a party was needed that would include not only peasants, but also intellectuals, traders, artisans, all those who wanted to preserve the bourgeois order and the rejection of socialism. The name proposed for this party was: the Bourgeois-Democratic Party (die demokratisch-bürgerliche Partei).[78] Another debater thought that contradictions could arise in the Peasant Party between peasants, workers and agricultural labourers. That is why all Swabians should enter this party, because "common ethnicity is a strong means of connection to bring the agricultural peasant closer to his agricultural worker, to awaken and strengthen the sense of community and to equalize contradictions peacefully".[79] This new political structure should be called Swabian Citizens' Party (Schwäbische Bürgerpartei), following the already used formulas: Swabian Publishing Society (Schwäbische Verlagsgesellschaft), Swabian Press (Schwäbische Volkspresse) etc. As a conclusion of the

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[76] Emmerich Reitter, "Bauernpartei," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/51, 20 April 1919, 2.

[77] Reitter, "Bauernpartei (III)," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/63, 7 May 1919, 1-2.

[78] Ein Hatzfelder, "Bauernpartei," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/69, 14 May1919, 1-2.

[79] (E.T.), "Schwäbische Bürgerpartei," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/72, 17 May 1919, 1-2.

debate hosted by the "Schwäbische Volkspresse", an editorial article in
early June 1919 concluded that under the given circumstances, when not
even the state affiliation of Banat had been decided, Swabians needed a
national organization, since their national lives were in the making and
they needed all forces, united across class differences, which were
otherwise considered minimal. All Swabians, peasants or bourgeois
needed national culture for the establishment and strengthening of the
national consciousness. And this had to be the most pressing and most
important mission of those who assumed the political leadership of the
Swabians. The conclusion, pertinent for any national minority, was
formulated unequivocally for Swabians: "Our economic and cultural
interests can be defended only through a united representation, not by
representatives of different classes, in the face of the state, whether
Hungarian, Yugoslavian or Romanian."[80] The necessity of Swabian unity
in order to find their national German conscience was also mentioned in
the debates from the clubs established in Timișoara, where, however, no
unanimity was reached on the state ownership of Banat.[81] After the
decision of the Peace Conference of June 1919 on the division of Banat
between Romania and the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom, on 10 August
1919, a meeting of the Swabians was held in Timișoara, which decided to
support the union of the entire Banat with Romania by sending a
delegation to Paris to present this view. The moderates have remained in
support of Banat's autonomy and even established the Swabians'
Autonomy Party (May 1920). In this context, the peasants were disputed
by both groups. At the assembly in Timișoara, 10 August 1919, which was
assumed by the Swabian People's Party, about a thousand Swabians
attended, among them farmers from 33 Swabian rural communes, but their
social wishes did not appear in the adopted resolution. However, in the
delegation chosen to present this decision to the Directory Council,
composed of 12 members, three farmers were elected: Anton Anton
(1872-1951), from the commune of Variaș, Wendelin Bauer and Johann
Dissler. Furthermore, on 15 August 1919 in Sibiu, Anton Anton was the
first from the delegation who took the floor, when he delivered the
resolution to support the unification of the entire Banat with Romania.[82] A
meeting of representatives of the groups of Germans from the Romanian
state with its new borders was also held in Timișoara on 6 September
1919. Here was adopted a platform for the first parliamentary elections,

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[80] (-f-l), "Politische Organisierung des Schwabentums," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*,
XXXI/87, 5 June 1919, 1.
[81] Marin, *Kurze Geschichte der Banater Deutschen*, 111.
[82] SDT, 46/13 930, 16 August 1919, 1.

with the collective demands of the Germans in Romania towards the Romanian government. Peasants were not represented, but among these claims there was also the extension of the provisions from the Unification Resolution of 1 December 1918 to the whole country. Among these was the agrarian reform, which was of high interest to all peasants, regardless of ethnicity.

In these clarification disputes of the Swabian elite, the issue of the relations between Swabian intellectuals and the great mass of the peasantry was also raised. An anonymous author, who was probably the chief editor of "Schwäbische Volkspresse" at the time, Professor Franz Kräuter, PhD (1885-1969), stated in February 1919 that there was "no nation in Hungary that has more intellectuals than the Swabian people in Banat. Our people are represented in all branches of public life and in a large proportion".[83] This was the result of the fact that even the poorest peasants made efforts to send their children to school, because they did not have enough land. The 1919 moment required that these intellectuals exercise their role as the ruling elite, as the guide of the Swabians. But most had forgotten their origins. The author called on all intellectuals to engage in this battle to regain the national consciousness and dignity of Swabians, to revive the education in the German language, to rebuild a culture in the German language.[84] In turn, Karl von Möller showed that, in addition to schools, the Swabians needed priests, notaries, mayors, doctors, theatres and universities in German. He rightly appreciated that many of them were lost to their people, but hoped that once Swabian national life restarted, these intellectuals would return to their roots. Because most Swabians lived in villages, he emphasized the importance of cultural and national activities of priests and teachers in villages.[85] The detachment of many Swabian intellectuals of their people from the villages was also noticed by a Saxon contemporary, who found that some of these intellectuals were avoiding contact with peasants and spoke only Hungarian, because Swabian dialect was disregarded by officials and considered inferior to the status of the elite that intellectuals aspired to. And this was because of the lost identity, which they started to recover in 1919-1920. By comparison, it was considered that Saxon intellectuals had represented their peasants honourably, they defended them.[86]

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[83] Andronicus, "Die schwäbische Intelligenz und ihre Pflichten," *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/10, 2 March 1919, 1.
[84] Andronicus, "Die schwäbische Intelligenz und ihre Pflichten," 1.
[85] *Schwäbische Volkspresse*, XXXI/12, 5 March 1919, 1; XXXI/13, 6 March 1919, 1.
[86] (-k-), "Die Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn Feier," *Ostland*, Sibiu III/17, 1921, 512.

After the revolution from February 1917 in Russia, the Germans from Bessarabia also started to organize. On 1 June 1917, a meeting held at Sărata chose a committee to deal with the pressing agrarian and educational issues, which was presided over by pastor Daniel Haase (1877-1939) and had Andreas Widmer, an administrative official, former deputy in the Duma in Sankt Petersburg, as deputy (1856-1931).[87] Two representatives, who were lesser known before and after this moment, were sent to the the Country's Council in Chişinău: Robert von Lesch, accountant at the Bessarabian Zemstvo Committee in Chişinău, and Philipp Almendinger, teacher and administrator at the evangelical parish in Chişinău.[88] In 27 March/ 9 April 1919 they abstained from voting for the union of Bessarabia with Romania on the grounds that they had no mandate for this. Von Lesch said that only a congress of Germans from Bessarabia could decide on state ownership of the province.[89] This congress was convened on 7 March 1919, in Tarutino, many of the delegates being peasants. The Assembly decided to join the union of Bessarabia with Romania, voicing confidence that Germans will be able to maintain and strengthen their national identity in the Romanian State. The speakers underlined the motivation of the decision: chasing Bolshevik military gangs from German villages, the restoration of peace and order by Romanian army units, the presence of other groups of Germans in the Romanian state, who had already joined the union of the provinces in which they lived with Romania, the promise that the laws of expropriation and liquidation of 1915 through which German peasants lost their land will be cancelled. Congress had requested this explicitly and the delegation which handed the resolution to the King in Bucharest reiterated the claim. In 6 October 1920 the Royal Decree that gave satisfaction to this justified request was published. As a result, on 22 October a new congress of representatives of the villages inhabited by Germans was held, which expressed gratitude for this act. The Minister for Bessarabia and one of the leaders of the Bessarabian Peasants' Party, Ion Inculeţ, was present at the event and urged participants to choose two representatives for a delegation of minorities in Romania who would have to go to the Peace

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[87] Olga Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940. Eine Minderheit zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Anpassung* (Stuttgart: Bessarabiendeutscher Verein e. V., 2012), 51-56.
[88] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 61-63.
[89] Ştefan Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei. Studiu şi documente cu privire la mişcarea naţională din Basarabia în anii 1917-1918* [The Union of Bessarabia. Study and Documents on the National Movement in Bessarabia during 1917-1918] (Bucharest: 1993), 273.

Conference in Paris to support Romania's cause. Professor Albert Mauch of Sărata and winegrower Jakob Wagner of Şabo were elected.[90] However, they were not sent to Paris anymore, because the government did not consider the planned presence of the minority delegation in Paris necessary. The national organization of Bessarabia Germans made its first steps with the support of the elite of the other groups of Germans. They endorsed the decision taken on Pentecost, in June 1919, in Sibiu, which laid the foundations of the Union of Germans in Romania and, later, at their joint electoral platform adopted in Timișoara, in 6 September 1919. Bessarabian leaders did not arrive in Banat to sign the platform, but acceded to it. Of the 30 representatives, 12 were listed as farmers, one as a landlord, one as tenant, one as winegrower and another as a mill owner. The others were teachers, officials, entrepreneurs.[91] This professional composition of the ruling Germans' elite from Bessarabia reflected the socio-occupational structure dominated by agriculture, more than in other groups of Germans.

Of particular importance for their national organization was the publishing of the first newspaper in the history of Bessarabian Germans, "Deutsche Zeitung Bessarabiens" (the German newspaper of Bessarabia), published in Tarutino and edited by Christian Kalmbach. The journal aimed to be a binding and a coagulation factor of the endeavours of the intellectual elite of Germans for the unity of the community and for the strengthening of their national identity.[92] The newspaper appeared twice a week (daily since 1927) and addressed peasants too by approaching issues like: the land reform, schools, taxes. Newspaper circulation was 1,500 copies initially, but the number of readers was certainly much higher. The newspaper had several supplements, including one for peasants: "Der bessarabische Landwirt" (the Bessarabian farmer). Calendars with current information and practical advice for farmers were more common in villages. Hence, "Deutscher Volkskalender für Bessarabien" (the German people's calendar for Bessarabia) appeared in the years 1920 to 1939 and "Heimatkalender für die Deutschen in Bessarabien" (Calendar for Germans in Bessarabia) in the years 1922 to 1933 and even a calendar for farmers in the years 1936-1940, all with instructional and educational purposes, of national and political propaganda, Nazi in the 30s.[93]

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[90] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 100-101.
[91] SJSAN, Fond Consiliul Național Săsesc [Saxon National Council Fund], file 32, 1919, 23-24.
[92] *Deutsche Zeitung Bessarabien* (hereafter: DZB), I/1, 6 November 1919, 1.
[93] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 276-277; Silvia Grossu, *Presa din Basarabia în contextul socio-cultural al anilor 1906-1944* [The Media in

German peasants and political life in the third decade

Peasants formed the majority of the national political organizations: the national communities (Volksgemeinschaft) comprised of provinces and led by a National Council. This was the main organ of decision and had autonomy before the national leadership of the Union of Germans in Romania. The national structure also included district and local organizations. Through them, farmers participated in the national political life of the German minority in Romania. The traditional and famous ethnic solidarity of Germans was, however, destroyed in the interwar years by a number of complaints that led to the formation of separate groups of opposition to the national leadership, taking the form of real political parties. Peasants were also included in these groups. In the political negotiations of the leadership of the German Party in Romania with Romanian parties for electoral cartels, the Germans were famous for their national discipline, put to the test now by these "slips". In addition, some German leaders joined Romanian political parties (in Bessarabia, Banat, attempts were recorded in Transylvania as well). Generally, in the '20s, national discipline was preserved and German peasants voted as their national leaders indicated them, in the spirit of outward national unity, even if there were contradictions within the communities.

The leading group of Germans in Romania was represented by the Saxons, who had the longest political experience. In the '20s the interests of the Saxon peasants were represented in Parliament by approximately the same group of deputies and senators: H.O. Roth (1880-1953) and Adolf Schullerus in the county of Târnava Mare, Arthur Konnerth in Bistrița, F. Connert in Codlea, Wilhelm Binder and Michel Ambrosi sen., then Hans Hedrich in the county of Târnava Mică.[94] The Saxon National Council nominated the candidates and following the agreements made with governments (except in 1927), the positions on the eligible lists were known from the start. Meetings in several villages were organized during the election campaigns, with appreciable participation, as it was an action of the national organization, to defend the interests that really concerned all Saxons, such as: ownership of collective property, the right to use the mother tongue in public life, the state's support in education. In their speeches, candidates emphasized the Saxons' need for national solidarity, for the preservation of internal unity. Prompted by the leaders of the local

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Bessarabia in the Socio-Cultural Context of the Years 1906-1944] (Chişinău: Editura Tehnica-INFO, 2003), 181.

[94] Şeulean, "Die Ergebnisse der Deutschen Volkspartei in Rumänien bei den Legislativwahlen von 1919 bis 1937," 91-98.

German organizations, they went to the polls and voted according to the given instructions.[95] Analyst Karl Braunias from the Institute for Minorities in Vienna, studying the 1922 parliamentary elections, concluded that "the Germans had brought every German to the ballot, to give, according to the agreement with LNP, their votes for this party."[96] The method of transmission in the rural world was verbally, through neighbourhoods, which were considered the smallest entities of the national organization, which also fulfilled the communication function.

The high level of culture of the Saxon peasants who had their own schools and had been attending them for hundreds of years should also be considered. Their vocational training was provided by the three schools of agriculture (Mediaş, Bistriţa, Feldioara), established in the 19th century, and the winter school in Sibiu, established in 1929. Thousands of graduates of these schools, with 2-3 years length schooling, have helped to raise Saxon agriculture, to educate and train a significant contingent of villagers who formed a true peasant elite, with real contributions to raising the village world and with beneficial influence on Romanian and Hungarian neighbours, recognized repeatedly by Romanian experts and politicians. Thus, academician Gheorghe Ionescu-Şişeşti stated in 1925 that "the Germans are the best farmers and cattle breeders from all nationalities in the united Romanian provinces".[97] Schools and other forms of training peasants (conferences, demonstrations, etc.) were actions of the Transylvanian Saxon Agriculture Reunion (Siebenbürgisch-Sächsischer Landwirtschaftsverein), founded in 1845, which in the '20s had 235 local associations with 12,767 members. The members' connection with the leadership was made through the newspaper "Landwirtschaftliche Blätter" (Farming Papers), distributed free of charge to members. With its circulation of 13,000 copies, it was the most common professional news sheet across the country. Since 1919, Director of the Reunion and editor of the news sheet was Fritz Connert, whose contribution to the economic and political life of the Saxons remains to be thoroughly researched.[98] The

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[95] See, for example, in this respect a circular of 1926, SJSAN, Fond Liga Culturală a Germanilor din România [The Cultural League of Germans in Romania Fund], file 10, 1926, 1350.

[96] Karl Braunias, "Die rumänischen Parlamentswahlen vom 1. bis 17. März 1922 in statistischer Betrachtung," *Deutsche Politische Hefte aus Großrumänien* (hereafter DPH), Sibiu, IV/7-10, July-October 1924, 4.

[97] SDT, 52/15 529, 5 March 1925.

[98] There is an entire literature for the contribution of the Reunion and of the agricultural schools, especially for their economic and professional purpose. See, in particular, Ernst Wagner, "Zur Geschichte des Siebenbürgisch-Sächsischen

paper contributed with advice and incentives not only to the increase of the
volume of the farmers' agricultural knowledge, but also to their national,
civic and political education, for which there were special sections.
Moreover, in the years 1926-1929, the supplement "Deutsches Volksblatt"
(The paper of the German people), written by Oskar Wittstock and then
Fritz Theil, was published. The weekly newspaper had information, news
and articles about national life for the peasant members of the Reunion,
but it certainly had a greater number of readers in the world of Saxon
villages.[99]

When possible, peasants, otherwise disappointed by the inefficiency of
their politicians, were involved in negotiations. In May 1920, the Secretary
of the National Saxon Council, Deputy H.O. Roth, led to Cluj a delegation
of 50 Saxon peasants, unhappy with the forced lease system, and also
discussed about the new parliamentary elections with Ioan Suciu, president
of the Liquidation Committee of the Directory Council. He was promise
that the Saxons will have six mandates of deputies and two senators "in
their colonization land", but the final decision was to be taken in
Bucharest.[100]

Fear of breaking the unity was justified, because the socialist ideas had
spread much in 1919-1920 and thousands of votes were cast for some
Saxon socialist candidates. For example, Rudolf Mayer received 2.113
votes in Sibiu in 1920, and Friedrich Schneider received 742 votes in
1922.[101] Romanian parties also tried to enter the Saxon rural electorate.
The People's Party convinced peasant Georg Bodendorfer of Seleuş
(county of Târnava Mare). He was a candidate on the list of the party led

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Landwirtschaftsvereins (1845-1940)," in *Naturwissenschaftliche Forschungen
über Siebenbürgen*, vol. I, ed. Ernst Wagner, Heinz Heltmann (Köln, Wien:
Böhlau Verlag, 1979), 197-294 and Hans Acker, *Die deutschen Landwirtschafts-
schulen in Siebenbürgen. Zur Geschichte der sächsischen Ackerbauschulen in
Bistritz, Marienburg, Mediasch und Hermannstadt, 1870-1945* (Thaur bei
Innsbruck: Wort und Welt Verlag, 1990); Josef Schobel, "Învăţământul agricol la
saşii din Transilvania şi reorganizarea învăţământului agricol de grad inferior,"
[The Agricultural Education of the Transylvanian Saxons and the Reorganization
of Lower Grade Agricultural Education] *Agricultura nouă* [New Agriculture],
Cluj, IV/5, May 1937, 183-191.
[99] Elena Dunăreanu, Mircea Avram, *Presa sibiană în limba germană (1778-1970)*
[The Press of Sibiu in the German Language] (Sibiu: Biblioteca "Astra", 1971),
23.
[100] SJSAN, Fond Consiliul Naţional Săsesc [National Saxon Council Fund], file 3,
1919-1922, 178.
[101] SDT, 47/14 142, 9 June 1920; *Deutsche Tagespost*, Sibiu, XIII/121, 8 June
1920.

by General Averscu and in power in 1920. Although he was combated for betraying national interests, Bodendorfer received 1.397 votes, but he could not defeat H. O. Roth in the native constituency of Sighişoara.[102] He tried to set up a new party, the Peasant Union (Bauernbund), but failed.[103]

The Saxon parliamentarians and national organization leaders were the same, even if periodically, there were elections. Facing reduced effectiveness of their political activity when dealing with the Romanian authorities in matters vital to the Saxons, as well as for the other Germans in Romania, such as the agrarian reform, state support for education, participation in leadership of communes and cities, enrolment of provisions regarding the national minorities in the Constitution and so on, discontent and contesting movements appeared that got a hold of the peasantry as well. The strongest of these was the Movement of the Discontented (Unzufriedenenbewegung), which began in Sibiu in 1925 with the publishing of a periodical leaflet titled "Die Unzufriedenen" (the Discontented), converted into the weekly "Sächsisches Volksblatt", on 1 November[t] 1925. In August 1925, 16 Germans in Sibiu: Albert Dörr, former prefect, M. A. Schuster, retired priest, Karl Morscher, pharmacist, Johann Zeibig, retired bank director et al. gathered over 4,000 signatures (the majority of them from peasants) on a petition with some complaints addressed to the Evangelical Church Consistory of Romania, accusing the too high taxes and demanding their reduction and expenditure-saving measures through the elimination of theoretical schools by restricting the wages of priests and teachers. They were told that they had to wait for the general assembly of the Church, which would discuss their demands. Under these circumstances, they sent a memorandum to the Parliament, demanding that the future law on religion introduce provisions such as: the tax exemption to the state to be extended to the church tax as well, people who had incomes below the subsistence minimum to be exempt from the direct tax to the state and to the church, the churches should be able to put taxes higher than 20% of the tax owed to the state etc. Signatories signalled that since 1920 the Church had increased the tax which amounted to 7 million lei in 1920, reaching 138 million lei in 1926.[104] They wanted the payment of priests to be returned to the authority of the villages, which would have autonomy, that the subsistence minimum be set, and would not be taxed. Combated vigorously for breaking the unity,

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[102] SDT, 47/14 125, 6 June 1920; 47/14 133, 16 May 1920; 47/14 140, 6 June 1920.
[103] *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter*, Sibiu, 48/21, 23 May 1920, 161.
[104] *Sächsisches Volksblatt*, Sibiu, I/8, 20 December 1925.

the discontented were excluded from neighbourhoods and associations.[105] The movement's leaders responded through articles in their own publication, and presented the cases of the peasants who could no longer pay the church and school taxes. To gain greater efficiency of their actions, the movement's leaders started transforming it into a party. In September 1926, the status of the League of Saxons (Sachsenbund)[106] was published and also sent for approval to the prefects of the counties inhabited by Saxons.[107] The League's aim was the "support and advancement of the Saxon people within the Romanian state on a purely legal basis", the "support and protection of the church and the school affairs". The support of schools that were compulsory and expenditures savings were envisaged.[108] The assembly that established the party was held in Sibiu, on 14 April 1927. 130 delegates were present, of which about a hundred were peasants from 40 Saxon communes. Albert Dörr was elected as president of the League.[109] This new step of the discontented was condemned by the Saxon National Council and by the bishop Friedrich Teutsch. The following year, the League threatened to go as far as to exclude its members from the Evangelical Church, but has not resorted to this act. The attempt to expand in Bessarabia and Bukovina was unsuccessful.[110] Although in 1930 there existed local groups in 60 villages, the lack of efficiency of the League's activity led to its breakup. The last issue of the League's newspaper, "Sächsisches Volksblatt", appeared on the last day of the year. The League had no chances to succeeding because the national organization and the Church reacted promptly, and the attack against schools and priests did not attract the majority of the Saxon population, as priests and teachers were still respected and listened to, especially in rural communities. On the other hand, malfunctions and contradictions in the rural world and in the life of national organizations were also reported by the president of the Union of Germans in Romania, Rudolf Brandsch, who wrote in 1927 about a process of removing some sections of the peasantry from the ruling

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[105] *Sächsisches Volksblatt*, II/ 2, 10 January 1926; II/3, 17 January 1926; II/4, 24 January 1926; II/6, 7 February 1926, 3.

[106] *Sächsisches Volksblatt*, III/36, 5 September 1926.

[107] Serviciul Județean Mureș al Arhivelor Naționale [The Mureș County Service of the National Archives], Fond Prefectura județului Târnava Mare [Prefecture of the County of Târnava Mare Fund], file 8, 1926.

[108] The Mureș County Service of the National Archives, Prefecture of the County of Târnava Mare Fund], file 8, 1926.

[109] SDT, 54/16 141, 16 April 1927.

[110] SDT, 54/16 149, 29 April 1929; 54/16, 1 May 1927; 56/16 777, 8 June 1929.

circles.[111] Heinrich Zillich and Misch Orend arrived at similar findings in articles published in the journal „Klingsor" (Braşov) of 1927.[112]

Another contesting movement of the existing leadership was initiated in 1922 by Fritz Fabritius. The movement was called "Selbsthilfe" (Mutual Assistance) and was a kind of cooperative which helped members build their house. The movement fought against usury, the spirit of capitalist enrichment and spread nationalistic, pro-German ideas. During the conferences organized for the members of the cooperative, ideas of homeland and roots, those of race, of German origin, were also disseminated inclusively by the Nazi Party in Germany.[113] The National Socialist Mutual Aid Movement of Germans in Romania was then formed from this group, in 1932, against the background of discontent towards the Romanian state, against the conservative leaders, which also attracted young Saxons from villages, extending to Germans from other regions of the country as well.[114]

In Banat, the national-political situation was more complicated compared to that of the Transylvanian Saxons. The national-political organization did not have the Saxons' experience. Swabians had been, until 1918, members of the Hungarian parties. Magyarization made great progress among them, and in 1918-1919 there was a real fight among them to return to their German identity. The name of "Swabian" was used to designate a marginalized person, an uneducated peasant. Indeed, as one Swabian author found, until 1918, "the peasantry in Banat participated little in the spiritual life of the German language community, mainly due to the unfortunate situation of their education".[115] In 1913/1914, out of 192 primary schools with Swabian students, there were only 34 left with classes in German language. After the war, the situation changed and German was reintroduced. Classes for agriculture were also included in the curricula. For this purpose, the teachers trained in the school established in 1920 were specifically trained to work in Swabian villages. The Swabian Association for Agriculture (der Schwäbische Landwirtschaftsverein), better known as the Peasant Association (Bauern-

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[111] R. Brandsch, "Volksfragen," DPH, VII/7-8, 1927, 133-135.

[112] *Klingsor*, 4/1, 1927, 185-187.

[113] Harald Roth, *Politische Strukturen und Strömngen bei den Siebenbürger Sachsen (1919-1933)* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), 144-146; Johann Böhm, *Die Deutschen in Rumänien und die Weimarer Republik 1919-1933* (Ippesheim: AGK Verlag, 1993), 191.

[114] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni 1918-1944*, 185-188.

[115] Komanschek, "Die Produktionsbedingungen der Banater Landwirtschaft," 34.

verein), founded in 1891, was reorganized in 1919 under the leadership of prelate Franz Blaskovics (1864-1937), renewing its local organizations from the communes.[116] Blaskovics was a member of the Hungarian Parliament (1896-1904) and as the vicar of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Timișoara had great influence in the Swabian villages and was elected Senator in the Parliament in Bucharest in 1926-1927. The association organized supplementary courses for boys and girls in the countryside. Also, in 1927, the school of agriculture at Voiteg was opened. Young Romanian and Hungarian peasants were also welcomed in the school.[117] The connection of the members of the Association with the central leadership was provided by the news sheet "Banater Landwirt" (Banat Farmer), whose editor was, concurrently with the position of president of the Associartion (1919-1933), Franz Blaskovics. He had experience as a journalist and had been editor to the news sheet "Landbote" (the Rural Courier) from 1886 to 1893, collaborating in other periodicals as well.[118] The Reunion aimed to further promote the progress of agrotechnics in villages, to import and distribute machinery and fertilizers, to train peasants in evening classes, to help them through provision and credit cooperatives, to fight the abuses against Swabian peasants during the implementation of the agrarian reform in 1921. Local associations of peasants, subsidiaries of the Association, have been crucial in this complex activity, and included wealthy peasants and many middle-class peasants.[119] Thus, in 1925, 260 members were registered in Tomnatic, 218 in Biled, 160 in Guttenbrunn, 124 in Deta, 95 in Variaș, 92 in Johannisfeld, 87 in Nițchidorf, 80 in Sânpetru German, 65 in Becicherecu Mic etc.[120]

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[116] Komanschek, "Die Produktionsbedingungen der Banater Landwirtschaft," 35-36.

[117] Walter Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (4). Leistungen und Schwächen der Schwäbischen Volksgemeinschaft," *Neuer Weg*, 36/10904, 16 June 1984, 4; Anni Engelmann, "Woijteg," in *Tschakowa. Marktgemeinde im Banat* (Augsburg: s.n., 1997), 422.

[118] Mads Ole Balling, *Von Reval bis Bukarest. Statistisch-biographisches Handbuch der Parlamentarier der deutschen Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919-1945*, vol. II (Kopenhagen: Dokumentation Verlag, 1991), 654; Anton Peter Petri, *Biographisches Lexikon des Banater Deutschtums* (Marquartstein: s. n., 1992), 152.

[119] Johann Kühlburger, "Der Schwäbische Landwirtschaftsverein," in *Die landwirtschaftliche Leistungen der Banater Schwaben in Rumänien. 1919-1944*, ed. Josef Komanschek (Reutlingen: Selbstverlag, 1961), 78-82.

[120] SJSAN, Fond Liga Culturală a Germanilor din România [Cultural League of Germans in Romania Fund], file 10, 1926, 271-273, 276-278, 281-283. Responses

For the professional training and general education, civic included, of Swabian peasants, this system was beneficial, as in the case of Saxons.[121] These peasants organized and trained in such manner manner had an active attitude towards the national-political life.

In 1919, there also existed a group of the Swabian elite who condemned the "Maghyarones", the Magyarized Swabians. This group addressed the Swabian peasants, awakening their pride of being Germans, even though those were difficult times, after the end of a war lost by Germany, who was considered the only one to blame for having starting the conflagration. The pro-Hungarian group led by Kaspar Muth and prelate Franz Blaskovics established in 10 January 1919 the Swabian Party of Autonomy (Schwäbische Autonomiepartei), which championed for Banat to remain in Hungary as an autonomous province. Its press organ was "Schwäbische Volkspresse", which had been released for 30 years as "Südungarische Reform". "Radicals" (Johann Röser, Michael Kausch, Victor Orendi-Hommenau et al.) formed the Swabian-German People's Party (Deutsch-Schwäbische Volkspartei), on 19 March 1919, with "Deutsche Wacht" as an officious newspaper. As noted in a recent paper, in fact, both groups wanted to be considered national and were struggling to get access to the Swabians' leadership, but each following different connections of the community with the state and each preferring a different state.[122]

In 1921, the two groups merged to form the Swabian-German People's Community (Deutsch-Schwäbische Volksgemeinschaft). The Community had to comprise all Germans in Banat, Arad and the Satu Mare Swabians, irrespective of the party they belonged to. The organization would protect their interests and the economic, cultural and political rights in front of state authorities. In 1922, 70 local organizations were established, and ten others were under process of being established.[123] The elected president of the Community and of the German-Swabian National Council was Kaspar

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to the questionnaire addressed to local associations of the Reunion by the Cultural League of Germans in Romania in 16 September 1925.

[121] Komanschek, "Die Produktionsbedingungen der Banater Landwirtschaft," 36-38.

[122] Georg Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte. Die Tragödie der Selbst-behauptung im Wirkfeld des Nationalismus der Nachfolgestaaten 1918-1944*, vol. III, With the collaboration of Oskar Feldtänzer, Hans Müller, Kaspar Hügel, Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt (München: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 2010), 245-248.

[123] Tonţa, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (3). Die organisatorische Struktur der Volksgemeinschaft," *Neuer Weg*, 36/10 892, 2 June 1984, 4.

Muth (1876-1966), deputy and senator. The community's basic unity was the neighbourhood. Theoretically, the Community was going to cover all Swabians, but in practice most of the German workers, numerous in the Highlands of Banat, Timișoara and Arad were members or supporters of the Social Democratic Party of Romania, which in the '20s had a German section in Banat. However, as Walter Tonța finds, "many poor peasants and artisans also remained far from the Community for it did not represent their interests".[124] These could be kept away from the Community and from the internal unrest of the ruling elites.

Along with the creation of the Community, the Party of the Swabian Autonomy dissolved itself, but the Swabian People's Party continued to exist. Historian Franz Wettel was elected president (1854-1938). The party ended its existence in 1924-1925, because in 1924 Michael Kausch was elected the party's chairman (1877-1942). In 1923, deputy Michael Kausch was excluded from the German Party, and in January 1925, together with a small group of followers (Dr. Franz Noll, Philipp Jahn, Johann Tengler, Georg Logel) joined the Liberal National Party.[125] It was estimated that after this moment, the Swabian People's Party ceased to exist. Another group, composed of merchants and industrialists, called Eisenring (Iron Ring), led by Peter Hollinger, offered Liberals its support in the parliamentary election of July 1927, in exchange for a mandate in the Chamber of Deputies, as the Community had not designated him as a candidate. Moreover, disregarded by LNP, Hollinger also addressed the NPP, but with no success. Such a national-political gesture, obviously for personal interests, was blamed by the Community and even by the members of the group. To accelerate the disintegration of this group, the Community supported the establishment of a German-Swabian Union of Merchants and Entrepreneurs as Trade Syndicate (Deutsch- Schwäbische Handels- und Gewerbeverband als Fachsyndikat), led by deputy Hans Beller (1896-1955), editor of the daily newspaper „Banater Deutsche Zeitung", the press organ of the Community. In response, Hollinger, together with Anton Hügel (1889-1938), set up a new national-political group, the Free German Community (Freie Deutsche Gemeinschaft), which he wanted to be considered as representing the day labourers and servants. Of course, it was not recognized by the Swabian People's Community. As a result, they participated on their own lists in the

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[124] Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (4). Leistungen und Schwächen der Schwäbischen Volksgemeinschaft," *Neuer Weg*, 36/10 904, 16 June 1984, 4.
[125] Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (4). Leistungen und Schwächen der Schwäbischen Volksgemeinschaft," 4.

communal and parliamentary elections of 1930-1931.[126] In spite of political opportunism of Hollinger, his orientation towards a group of extensive electoral potential, especially in rural areas, is noteworthy, especially since this group was not mobilized and motivated by a program with provisions tailored to the requirements of this social category, with the most harsh fate.

In 1927, the young people of the Swabian Community formed a special group, who complained about the lack of flexibility of the administration and the leadership style that they considered authoritarian and conservative. In 1927, several young intellectuals (Anton Valentin, Josef Gassner and Hans Eck) called their action the Swabian Youth Movement (Jungschwäbische Bewegung), which became the Swabian Youth Club in the following year. They condemned the prevalence of promoting personal interests before the public interests and proposed the change of this report and the selfless commitment to the welfare of all Community members. These objectives resulted from the Swabian Youth's Manifesto of 19 January 1931, and appear as an opposition group right in the middle of the Community.[127]

The same was happening in 1928 with the interest circle around the publicist from Arad, Nikolaus Bitto, who was the editor of the newspaper "Arader Zeitung". The news sheet criticised the old leadership of the Community led by Kaspar Muth (1876-1966), whose methods were considered outdated, conservative, seeking only to keep the power in the Community, in their own hands, in order to promote their own financial interests. These differences were even more detrimental to the real interests of the Swabians, since they appeared in public through the vivid press debate between „Banater Deutsche Zeitung" and „Arader Zeitung".[128] The officious publication of the Community, „Banater Deutsche Zeitung" published, expressly to keep in touch with the rural world, the calendar „Schwäbischer Volkskalender" (Swabian People's Calendar), which reached an annual circulation of 25,000 copies.[129]

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[126] Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (5), Zentrifugale Kräfte wirken," *Neuer Weg*, 36/10 928, 14 July 1984, 4.

[127] Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (5), Zentrifugale Kräfte wirken," 4.

[128] Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (5), Zentrifugale Kräfte wirken," 4.

[129] SJSAN, Fond Liga Culturală a Germanilor din România [Cultural League of the Germans in Romania Fund], file 10, 1926, 238-239, Response of the editorial office "Banater Deutsche Zeitung" to a questionnaire of the Cultural League (29 January 1926).

All these political groups had their own newspapers through which their messages were conveyed, trying to attract supporters, including in the rural world. Here, however, they often created confusion and dissatisfaction among readers, adversity against the "gentlemen" who were arguing among themselves, accusing each other of unfairness and lack of interest for the situation of the peasants.

Another problem for the Community, revealing its lack of unity, was the relationship with the clergy of the Catholic Church. They had a "German-Catholic" orientation in the cultural and political areas and failed to meet the directions set by the leadership of the Community. This attitude had a major impact on the relation with the rural population, on which the lower clergy had a great influence. It was found that the Church often still maintained the pro-Hungarian attitude from before 1918, as the vast majority of Hungarians were also Catholic, as the Swabians. In terms of organization, the Union of the Catholic People (Katholische Volks-verband), which was supposed to reunite the Catholic Swabians in Banat, the Swabians in Satu Mare and the German Catholics in Transylvania, was established.[130]

A phenomenon that emerged in the '20s without being taken into consideration too much was the establishment of several forms of organization of the Nazi movement that developed in Germany. Some of the students who went to study in Germany returned home, including in villages, with Nazi writings. A role, yet little researched, in conveying information about Nazism was played by the reserve colonel Karl von Möller (1876-1943). He had attended the military schools in Vienna and had fought in the World War in the imperial army. In 1910, he returned to Timişoara and stayed there. In 1919, he retired and entered the national and political life of the Swabians. He was among the leaders who organized the gathering of 10 August 1919 in Timişoara, which passed the decision to unite the whole Banat with Romania. He was one of the leaders of the Swabian-German People's Party, since its beginning, in August 1919. However, he left this party in May 1920 and, like other leaders (Peter Schiff, Josef Gabriel), went over to the Autonomy Party. He was elected in the Romanian Parliament and was the editor of the party's newspaper, "Schwäbische Volkspresse" and then, from 1925, of "Banater Deutsche Zeitung", as he was a famous journalist and an active writer. In 1927, von Möller left these functions saying that he wanted to devote himself to literary creation and journalism. According to some authors, he

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[130] Tonța, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (4). Leistungen und Schwächen der Schwäbischen Volksgemeinschaft," *Neuer Weg*, 36/10 904, 16 June 1984, 5.

had contacts with the Nazi Party since 1922 and had helped spread Nazi ideas in Banat, from Jimbolia, where he had settled. In 1931, he established a Nazi organization here and others similar in Timişoara, but also in villages (Aradul Nou, Periamoş).[131] Von Möller joined the National-Socialist Mutual Aid Movement of Germans in Romania, led by Fritz Fabritius, who set up a regional organization in Banat, led by von Möller as Gauleiter. He founded and edited the weekly press release of the Movement in Timişoara (1932), „Der Stürmer" („The Revolutionary").[132]

One of the roles of the Banat Swabian Community was supporting the national awakening of the Satu Mare Swabians. The revival of their ethnic specifics was a difficult process as opinion formers and leaders in the German villages, the priests and the teachers, were mostly against this revival and even prevented it. The few local intellectuals, aware that they were Germans, were helped in the work of explaining to their fellow countrymen by some intellectuals from Banat (Professor Josef Striegl, prelate Josef Nischbach) and Saxon intellectuals (Rudolf Spek, Richard Csaki, Doctor Egon Gundhardt from Sibiu etc.).[133]

The Germans from Bessarabia entered the political life of their new homeland at the same time as the the parliamentary elections from November 1919 were taking place. The members of their elite were convinced to adhere to the ideas of the Bessarabian Peasants' Party, founded on 23 August 1918. Andreas Widmer was elected senator by Cetatea Albă on the lists of the Peasant Party, which militated for agrarian democracy and agrarian reform. He was elected also for the party leadership and he was a parliamentary reporter of the newspaper in Tarutino. In 1920, he was elected within the same constituency, by the same party, but was part of the parliamentary group of the German People's Party in Romania. In 1927-1928, Widmer, who had the most experience of all members of the political elite of Bessarabian Germans, was elected senator of Cetatea Albă, enjoying the confidence of his countrymen.[134] The national-political organization of the Bessarabian Germans, which started in 1917-1919, continued to exist following the model of other groups and by the indications of the Union of the Germans

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[131] Tonţa, "Die Banater Schwaben in den Jahren 1918-1928 (5), Zentrifugale Kräfte wirken," *Neuer Weg*, 36/10 928, 14 July 1984, 4.

[132] Balling, *Von Reval bis Bukarest. Statistisch-biographisches Handbuch der Parlamentarier der deutschen Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919-1945*, vol. II, 651.

[133] Hauler, *Das Minterheitenschicksal der Sathmarschwaben*, 260; Tilkovszky, *A szatmáry németség a két világháború között*, 227-237.

[134] Balling, *Von Reval bis Bukarest*, 606.

in Romania, where Bessarabians were represented by Andreas Widmer. In 30- 31 July 1920 a new congress of the Bessarabian Germans took place, with the participation of Adolf Schullerus and H.O. Roth, president, respectively the secretary of the National Saxon Council, the first senator, the second deputy. The two Transylvanian leaders shared their experience in the organizing field. The congress passed a national program based on which the Union of Germans in Bessarabia was formed, which was part of the Union of the Germans in Romania. Naturally, the delegates discussed economic issues and agreed on the need of cooperatives and concluded that German schools had to be placed under the auspices of the Evangelical Church. In the debates, some delegates brought examples of the difficulties of the organizing process. These, concludes Olga Schroeder in her recent doctoral thesis, "reveal the political inexperience and low interest of the peasant population in politics."[135] For the actual leadership, a National Council of Germans in Bessarabia composed of representatives elected for four years, was chosen. For each 500 Germans a delegate was sent, and smaller villages, with at least 250 German peasants, elected a representative as well. Landowners sent a representative for each 10 people. It seems that the peasants tended to choose representatives from their own ranks, because "Deutsche Zeitung Bessarabiens" advised them to also elect intellectuals[136], although only 1.1% of the total population had higher education.[137] On 7 April 1921, the National Council reunited and elected Professor Christian Kalmbach as its president. The Council had to defend and represent the interests of Germans from Bessarabia to the authorities, to designate German candidates in local and parliamentary elections. Its headquarters was in Tarutino, which was a real "capital" for Bessarabian Germans. The over a hundred villages where Germans formed the majority or at least half of it were usually ruled by German mayors and notaries. Germans also formed the communal councils in these settlements. The National Council nominated as their candidates for the representation in Parliament the personalities who had relations in the Romanian political world. Germans entered the Romanian parties which were stronger in their province and had credibility based on their program. Therefore, they were members of the Bessarabian Peasants' Party and the People's Party. In Parliament their representatives were elected on the lists of these parties, which promised the recognition of minority rights. During the electoral propaganda meetings took place, manifestos and newspaper articles were published. The German peasants usually voted with the

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[135] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 256.
[136] DZB, I/32, 31 August 1920, 1.
[137] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 256.

candidates proposed by the National Council, with those they already knew because they had been in the Russian Duma: Andreas Widmer and landowner Johann Gerstenberger (1862-1930), deputy of Cetatea Albă from the People's Party in 1919-1920. It's easier to understand the sympathies of the Bessarabian peasants and of their leaders for the Bessarabian Peasants' Party, founded on 23 August 1918 and led by Pantelimon Halippa (1883-1979), merged in 1921 with the Peasant Party from the Old Kingdom, which became the National-Peasant Party in 1926. It mainly represented the interests of wealthy and middle class peasants, proposing an agrarian democracy and the Bessarabian Peasant leaders (Ion Inculeţ, Ioan Pelivan, Constantin Stere) were known at least by the German leaders. In addition, the party had a sympathetic attitude towards the national minorities.[138] On the other hand, in 1919, the Peasant Party was the strongest in Bessarabia.[139] This explains the four German members of parliament elected on its lists at the first elections in Greater Romania: Andreas Widmer as senator, Daniel Erdmann, Jakob Ohlhausen and Daniel Bittau as deputies. In 1920, the idea that the Bessarabian Germans submit their own list arose, but it was found, that there were no people with experience for the election campaign and that there were little chances of success because the Germans were part of four electoral constituencies.[140]

The peasants' lack of active participation in the national-political life and lack of familiarity with the issues raised herein was also present among the Germans from Bessarabia, as observed in 1922 by deputy Peter Mutschler, who signalled the carelessness for politics of his countrymen. He noted that this was due to the lack of acquaintance with a democratic system. In Tsarist Russia peasants were not allowed any kind of political activity, but in Romania it was asked for these rights to be exercised. In order to be informed, one needed to know about current affairs, however,

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[138] Contemporary with the events and participant, Liviu Marian in his paper *Coloniştii nemţi din Basarabia. Consideraţii istorice, politice şi etnografice* [German Settlers in Bessarabia. Historical, Political and Ethnographic Considerations] (Bucharest: 1920), 16-17, has eulogistic appreciations for the Bessarabian Germans and mentions that there were 5 members of parliament (without naming them) elected, although proportionally there would have been 2 deputies and 1 senator.

[139] Ioan Scurtu, Ion Alexandrescu, Ion Bulei, Ion Mamina, Stan Stoica, *Enciclopedia partidelor politice din România 1859-2003* [Encyclopedia of Political Parties in Romania 1859-2003] (Bucharest: Editura Meronia, 2003), 144-145.

[140] *Deutsche Tagespost*, Sibiu, XIII/100, 8 May 1920, the editorial article *Die Deutschbessarabier und die Wahlen.*

he wrote, nobody read the newspaper in many villages.[141] The German peasant conservatism, like the attitude of their neighbours towards other nations, was refractory to any outside intruder in the village life, especially when it came with a request for participation or in the form of various financial sacrifices for cultural, religious or public purposes. These conclusions were also reached by a contemporary, who noted that local councils "were not fully aware of the purposes of their existence and of the means that lead to these purposes",[142] that they lacked initiative. However, the German peasants began to attend meetings, to be present in the life of economic and national organizations, in elections, although, as a former teacher in the village Eigenheim remembered, "80% of the electorate were not aware of the significance of the election campaign, nor of the importance of their vote."[143] We can assert, along with Olga Schroeder, that in the Romanian state, "compared to the Russian rule, the former settlers intensified their activities in the political and social field".[144]

A major milestone in defining the attitude of the German peasants towards their own interests, but also towards the new Romanian government, is their firm engagement, with a gun in their hand, against the rebellion staged by Soviet authorities in Moscow, in 1924, in Tatar Bunar, which was supposed to be a signal for the beginning of a revolution and of the reoccupation of Bessarabia by the USSR. After 1918, the Bolsheviks sent agitators in Bessarabia who tried to incite the peasantry who was dissatisfied with the land reform and with the taxes against the Romanian government. This propaganda had no echo among the German peasants, only with few exceptions. The communists considered the German peasants kulaks, wealthy owners with a lot of land, exploiters.[145] In reality, there were also poor peasants and labourers. The Germans knew of the illegal acts of the Bolshevik bands from 1918. On 11 to 12 September 1924, the rebellion in Nicolaevca started and in 16 September 1924 reached Tatar Bunar, where the Soviet agents together with the locals occupied the town hall, the police station, the post office and the mill of a German villager; they intended to expand the rebellion. The Germans formed a self-defence guard and fought back with weapons, together with

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[141] DZB, III/37, 8 October 1922.

[142] Rudolf Zailer, "Etwas über unsere völkische Organisation," DZB, III/82, 15 October 1921.

[143] Immanuel Manske, "Rumänische Wahlen," *Heimat*, 5/13, 1960, 95 apud Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 264.

[144] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 263.

[145] See, for example, V. Tembo, S. Timov, *Vosstania bessarabskih krestian protiv rumânskih pomeşcikov* (Moskovskii rabocii: 1925), 23-24.

the gendarmes, until the Romanian army troops reached the scene, defeated the rebellion and restored order. The government expressed its gratitude to the Germans in Parliament and at the scene through minister Ion Inculeţ and the state secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Gheorghe Tătărescu, which awarded decorations and promises soon to be forgotten, as was the case with the recognition of the status of public religious schools for the normal school in Sărata and the two gymnasiums in Tarutino.[146] With the act of force of the rebellion from Tatar Bunar, communism achieved the most efficient counter propaganda also among German farmers from Bessarabia, which proved that they knew their interests. On 8 May 1926, a new congress of the Germans took place, where a new statute was adopted through which the Bessarabian German People's Community (Bessarabische Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft) was established and became part of the Union of Germans in Romania. At the core of the new structure were the local communities led by a local council of 5-15 people, who had specific tasks of defending the national interests and the strengthening of the national consciousness. A National Council was elected at the head of the Community, with priest Daniel Haase (1877-1939) as president.[147] He was also elected deputy in 1926 and re-elected in the next legislatures, until 1937. Haase was heading the deanship of the Evangelical Church of Bessarabia and enjoyed the prestige among his countrymen. A coalition that was against him consisted of the discontented ones, the young people eager for change, attracted by the Nazi ideas of the followers of Fritz Fabritius, who they ousted in the election of the National Council in 1934.

Following the model of the other provinces, the German Bessarabian Association for Agriculture (Bessarabisch-Deutsche Landwirtschafts-verein) was founded in 1926. This had organizations only in 27 German of the more than one hundred villages, which proves that the idea was not as successful as with the Saxons or the Swabians.[148] In addition, "Der bessarabische Landwirt" (the Bessarabian farmer), written for the village world, containing agro-technical advice and news from the national life, was published as a supplement to "Deutsche Bessarabische Zeitung".

The Bessarabian German elite, which included wealthy farmers, was drawn towards the Romanian parties, and in 1928 the National Council decided to consider those who adhered to other parties, to be outside of the

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[146] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 105-117; DZB, III/52, 3 July 1926.
[147] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 264-266.
[148] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 268.

national organization.[149] Haase came into conflict with other leaders for such a decision, gaining new enemies. The most bitter of his opponents were the followers of Fabritius, the Nazis. These had already formed a group in 1932 in Sărata, the Self-Aid Movement (Selbshilfebewegung). At the same time, Alfred Csallner, a Transylvanian priest, came to Bessarabia and set up a self-aid cooperative, which found adherents in villages, but the movement progressed more slowly than in other provinces. This also included the Youth Movement and in May 1932, when the Self-Aid Movement was transformed into a political party, Johannes Wagner was appointed leader of the organization in the county (Gauleiter). He published a newspaper, "Bessarabischer Beobachter" (The Bessarabian Observer).[150]

The spread of German culture in the villages of Bessarabia, through books, concerts, theatre performances, conferences, was one of the aims of the Cultural League of Germans in Romania, which addressed primarily the elite, but they did not forgot peasants, because they had formed the majority of this group of Germans and because in cultural terms there was a big difference as compared to other "colonization regions" of Romania.[151] The effects are hard to quantify, but they certainly existed, and the peasants enriched their knowledge about Germany and its culture. Unfortunately, in 1933, Nazism gained power in Berlin, and the press and other branches of culture became vehicles for this ideology; funds were even sent from Berlin to spread this ideology.[152]

In Bessarabia, the catastrophic effects of the economic crisis of over-production of 1929-1933 were felt in combination with the compromised agricultural productions, due to the drought that lasted several years, and the propagandist embellished news about the gladdening agrarian policy of the leadership of the Third Reich. However, Mariana Hausleitner believes that what prevailed in attracting the Bessarabian Germans was the fact that the negotiation policies of the conservative leaders of the Germans in Romania, regarding the issue of German schools in Bessarabia, failed.

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[149] Hildrun Glass, *Zerbrochene Nachbarschaft. Das deutsch-judische Verhältnis in Rumänien (1918-1938)* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996), 115.

[150] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 319-322.

[151] Vasile Ciobanu, "Germanii din Basarabia şi Liga Culturală a Germanilor din România (1922-1931)," [The Germans in Bessarabia and the Cultural League of Germans in Romania (1922-1931)] in *In honorem Alexandru Moşanu. Studii de istorie medievală, modernă şi contemporană a românilor* [In honorem Alexandru Moşanu. Studies of Romanian Medieval, Modern and Contemporary History], ed. Nicolae Enciu (Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 407-420.

[152] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 291-304.

When the liberals returned to power in November 1933, the last German classes were removed in public schools. In January 1937, even the religion classes in the mother tongue were removed from the curriculum. Only after a delegation of the German villages in Bessarabia had gone to protest at the government, were the religion classes in German reintroduced.[153] Added to this lack of effectiveness of the conservative leaders was the influence of the Nazi propaganda from Germany, carried out by young people returned from studies in the Reich, by propagandists sent from Germany and those who came from Transylvania, followers of Fritz Fabritius, who himself visited Sărata, in 1931. Not least was the anti-Semitic propaganda of the National Christian Defence League in southern Bessarabia led by A.C. Cuza, which recorded a quick success among German peasants in 1930-1932. At the 1932 election many Germans did not respect the indication of the National Council to vote with the government's list, giving their votes to the Cuzists (members of the National Christian Defence League).[154] The conservatives in the leadership of the Bessarabian Germans had lost their influence. Haas was vehemently attacked and because he had involved the church in these political struggles, he resigned in February 1934 and the followers of the National Renewal Movement, in 27 April 1934, appointed Otto Broneske as Chairman of the National Council (1899), an economist who was successfully active in the German cooperative movement.[155]

Dobrujan Germans resumed the organizational trends of 1913 and 1918.[156] Among those who took the initiative of organization there were also leaders of villages. They kept the records of some meetings in villages where they held gatherings to set up local organizations, to designate the representatives of communes in the governing board. Almost all were peasants with wealthy smallholdings. In addition, relevant documents from the political life, such as adhesion forms and membership lists, were

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[153] Mariana Hausleitner, "Die interethnische Beziehungen der Deutschen in Bessarabien im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," *Südostdeutsches Archiv*, München, XLVI/XLVII, 2003/2004, 100.

[154] Schroeder, *Die Deutschen in Bessarabien 1914-1940*, 333-335; Horia Bozdoghină, *Liga Apărării Național-Creştine şi problema minorităţilor în anii '30* [The National-Christian Defense League and the Minorities Issue in the '30s], in *Partide politice şi minorităţi naţionale din România în secolul XX* [Political Parties and National Minorities in Romania in the 20th Century], vol. 4, eds. Vasile Ciobanu, Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Editura Techno Media, 2009), 145-146.

[155] *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandeutschtums*, 411-412.

[156] Otto Klett, "Von unseren völkischen Organisationen," in *Jahrbuch der Dobrudscha-Deutschen*, vol. 1 (Heilbronn: 1956), 160.

preserved.[157] The constitution process was long and only on 17 March 1924, was Verband deutscher Abstammung rumänischer Bürger in der Dobrudscha. Liga cetățenilor români de origine germană din Dobrogea (League of Romanian Citizens of German Origin in Dobruja) registered at the Court in Constanța. The official name of the organization was bilingual, a situation never to repeat in the case of any other national political organization of Germans in Romania. The League aimed to promote the preservation of the German identity, of its members, through school, associations, cooperatives and other means. The league's leadership was provided by the National Council (Volksrat), according to the model of the other German groups. The first president of the Council was Michael Emanuel Leyer, landowner from Cobadin. Between 15 and16 May 1926, the first national conference of Germans in Dobruja took place in Cogealac, attended by delegates from 23 communes, mostly peasants. The Assembly discussed the need to support schools in German language and decided to vote the list of the Averescu government during elections.[158] At the same time, it was decided that the League join the Union of Germans in Romania[159], but the event did not occur until 1931. Thus, the Dobrujan Germans received significant support in the fight to protect the rights and interests of their members and coordinated their entire political activity with that of the Union.

Conclusions

The German peasantry from Romania, which is estimated at 500,000 people, was a distinct social group even among the German minority, to which it ensured the preservation of national identity and of stability. After the Great War and the transition to a new state, after the election and the agrarian reforms, this peasantry behaved, under the assault of the "new times", like the other villagers of other nations. However, there were specific elements. Thus, in all the provinces where they lived, German peasants were among the best farmers and smallholders, real role models

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[157] SJSAN, Collection of documents Brukenthal, LL 1-29, no. 237, 83, 87-87v., 93-128, 135-188, 278, 280-435.
[158] Vasile Ciobanu, "Date noi privind germanii din Dobrogea în perioada inter-belică," [New Data Regarding the Germans in Dobruja in the Interwar Period] in *Germanii dobrogeni. Istorie şi civilizaţie* [Germans in Dobruja. History and Civilisation], Second edition, revised and completed, eds. Valentin Ciorbea, Corina-Mihaela Apostoleanu, Olga Kaiter (Constanţa: Editura Ex Ponto, 2014), 146-147.
[159] SDT, 53/15 863, 19 May 1926, 2.

for their neighbours. They were a true elite of peasantry in Romania, being perceived as such at the time.

The same can be said in respect of their participation in the national political life and elections. This peasantry has had the exercise of elections within the community for centuries: they chose the leaders of neighbourhoods, the priest of the commune, the teachers. Additionally, German peasants attended primary school in a higher percentage than others. Most were members of professional or agricultural unions, and they subscribed to the papers of these unions, which were not confined to vocational training but also conveyed political messages. In these circumstances, the introduction of universal suffrage found a better prepared election body, better prepared than the majority of their neighbours. The impact of the introduction of the universal suffrage concerned particularly the members of the ruling elite and less the German peasants. The rural elite was sooner interested in participating in local government than in parliamentary elections. However, German peasants participated in the votes, respecting the national discipline. The electoral alliances with the German Party were popular precisely because the votes of the Germans were safe. The land reform had different effects on German villages, according to the average of ownership. But directing the abuse committed in the application of the reform towards the Germans offered a permanent subject of claims in all election campaigns, which could mobilize the rural voters.

From an objective analysis of the 1926 election, when the Germans had an election cartel with the Averescu government, K. Braunias concluded that "the Romanians and the minorities had the same rights and the same voting participation in elections", that the minorities in the cartel were not subject to government abuse, "that the votes that were given on the lists of socialists and communists came exclusively from the minorities, the Romanians did not show any big inclination for Marxists on international positions."[160]

In the first interwar decade, the German peasants were involved in the concerns of the national-political life, the unity of the communities being put to the test. The Nazism intrusion inside their communities, begun in the '20s and continued in the next decade, distorted this famous national unity, especially among the Saxons, and had serious consequences for the existence of these communities.

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[160] Karl Braunias, "Die rumänischen Parlamentswahlen 1926 in statistischen Betrachtung," DPH VII/1, January 1927, 27.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE NAZIFICATION OF THE RURAL
TRANSYLVANIAN SAXON PRESS:
CASE STUDY – "LANDWIRTSCHAFTLICHE
BLÄTTER" (1935-1941)

CORNELIU PINTILESCU

Motto:
"Those against us are against the Reich."[1]
—Andreas Schmidt

Introduction[2]

As Bernd Heidenreich and Sönke Neitzel noticed, "the propaganda was one of the most pregnant and durable" forms of manifestation of Nazism in Germany.[3] This explains the fact that Goebbels was, perhaps, second only to Hitler as the most renowned political figure of this regime.[4] The means of propaganda developed by the Third Reich went on to become sources of inspiration for other far-right movements in Europe. Nazism

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[1] "Wer gegen uns ist, ist gegen das Reich!" Fragment taken from the speech held by Andreas Schmidt at the rural festivities in Grosspold during the days of 13 and 14 December 1941. *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941* (Herausgegeben von der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien Landesbauernamt, Druck Krafft & Drotleff, Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, s.a. [1942], 138

[2] This study is a revised and extended version of "«Wer gegen uns ist, ist gegen das Reich». Die NS-Propaganda in der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen land-wirtschaftlichen Presse (1935-1944)," formerly published in *Spiegelungen. Zeitschrift für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas* 11 (2016).

[3] Bernd Heidenreich, Sönke Neitzel, "Vorwort," in *Medien im National-sozialismus*, eds. Bernd Heidenreich, Sönke Neitzel (Paderborn: Schöningh &Fink, 2010), 7.

[4] Heidenreich, Neitzel, "Vorwort," 7.

came to existence in Germany as an urban movement, and until the 1928 elections, the Nazis did not pay great attention to the rural world. With the beginning of the 1930s, however, the Nazi movement starts putting in more and more effort to attract the rural population, because – as Detlef Mühlberger highlighted – "in a country which has a significant rural population – the Nazi Party could not have gained power without the aid of a great part of this population."[5] Richard Walther Darré played a crucial role in the development of a coherent politics concerned with attracting the rural population. He was a Nazi ideologist who gained his reputation through his role in the development of the Nazi rhetoric formed around the saying "blood and soil" ("Blut und Boden") – symbolizing two central components of the Nazi mythology: the "race" and the "vital space" – and by theorizing the agrarian politics of the Nazi Party. The emergence of the rural population in the Nazi political program had as effect the frequent presence of agrarian politics in the Nazi propaganda during the 1930s.[6] The experience Darré had previously acquired through the *Blut und Boden* magazine played an important role in his assertion as one of the important ideologists of Nazism.[7] At this point, Darré's activity intersected with that of August Georg Kenstler, a Transylvanian Saxon from Sighişoara, who remained in Germany during the 1920s. Kenstler, a prominent member of the far-right organization entitled "Bund Artam e. V." came to the forefront through the role he played in the development of the "Blut und Boden" Nazi myth, as he also was the editor of the magazine bearing the same name.[8]

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[5] Detlef Mühlberger, *Hitler`s Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Nazi Ideology and Propaganda*, vol. 2 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 247.

[6] Mühlberger, *Hitler`s Voice*, 256.

[7] Regarding the biography of Richard Walther Darré see Anna Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's Green Party* (Buckinghamshire: The Kensal Press, Abbotsbrook, 1985).

[8] The complete name of the magazine was "*Blut und Boden. Monatsschrift für wurzelstarkes Bauerntum, für deutsche Wesensart und nationale Freiheit*". August Georg Kenstler was born on the 24th of December, 1899 in Sighişoara. After the First World War, he settled down in Germany where, in 1924, he found himself among the founding members of the far-right movement called "Bund Artam e. V.". See Johann: "August Georg Kenstler, Herausgeber der Monatsschrift "Blut und Boden" und aktiver Vorkämpfer der nationalsozialistischen Agrarpolitik," *Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik* 1/1 (2003), 19-43 and Andreas Möckel, "August Georg Kenstler. Angehöriger einer verlorenen Generation," *Zeitschrift für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 35/2 (2012), 219-227.

Politics and propaganda regarding the rural population played an important role in the Nazi movement among Germans in Romania as well, as the German model influenced their evolution both directly and indirectly. The importance of penetrating the rural environment is easily understandable if we analyze the social structure of the Germans in interwar Romania, as more than 80% of them were peasants.[9] Even though, among the Transylvanian Saxons, the urban segment was significantly more comparable to other German-speaking communities in Romania, in 1930, out of 253.436 Transylvanian Saxons, 152.431 worked in the agricultural domain.[10] From its very beginnings as the *Selbsthilfe* movement, the far-right among Germans in Romania was tightly connected to the rural population. The economic support policies of the *Selbsthilfe* organization specifically targeted the rural population in order to build houses through a mutual aid system.[11] Also, many significant members of the Nazi movement in 1930s Romania came from peasant families, such as Andreas Schmidt[12], or they would develop activities which were tightly related to agriculture, such as Alfred Bonfert, a veterinarian who had completed his studies in Germany during the 1920s.[13] The importance of the rural population for the success of the Nazi movement in Romania represents the main reason for which this topic was chosen. So as not to disperse the research, I have chosen to approach a case study regarding the weekly publication entitled *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter* during the years 1935-1941, as in the last year of this interval, the magazine was no longer published due to the so-called "alignment policy", undertaken by the German Ethnic Group in Romania (Grupul Etnic German – GEG). During the interwar period, *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter* was the most widespread Transylvanian Saxon periodic publication aimed at the rural public. The present study continues the initiatives undertaken by Vasile Ciobanu or

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[9] Johann Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volks-gruppe in Rumänien 1936-1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985), 125.
[10] Vasile Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni: 1918-1944* [Contributions Towards a Better Knowledge of the History of Transylvanian Saxons: 1918-1944] (Sibiu: Editura Hora, 2002), 174-175.
[11] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 178.
[12] Born in a family of rich peasants in Mănărade (Alba County).
[13] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, and Johann Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*.

Johann Böhm, which were concluded through the publication of book chapters or through studies regarding the German press in Romania.[14]

Starting from the importance of the rural population among the Transylvanian Saxons, the study aims to answer several questions: How did the Nazification process of the press dedicated to the rural environment unfold? Could it possibly have taken certain steps? What were the messages this press conveyed? How do the politics of the magazine chosen for the case study change? Which are the dominant themes? How was Nazi propaganda received by the rural population? The primary sources employed are mainly newspapers and leaflets of those times, documents from the "Gundelsheim Siebenbürgen Institut" archives, files from the archives of the former *Securitate* (the secret police of the communist regime in Romania) and interviews with people[15] who lived in the Transylvanian Saxon rural environment during 1935-1941.

From a conceptual point of view, the study is inspired by David Welch's perspective, who considered that the main purpose of Nazi propaganda was to create a revolution regarding the system of values of the population and its political engagement. The primordial aspect of the new system of values was the advancement of a national unity, of the so-called "community of the people" ("Volksgemeinschaft"), based on racial criteria, a body which would cancel out existing rivalries stemming from class or ideological reasons.[16] The study is made up of four parts: the first part is dedicated to the Nazification process of the German minority in Romania, aiming to place the Nazification of the press in a broader socio-political context; the second part is dedicated to the condition of the Transylvanian Saxon rural population and of the GEG policies regarding this social group; the third part is concerned with the problem of Nazification of the Transylvanian Saxon press in general and of that particularly rural in nature; the final part, which is also the most complex, is made up of a case study regarding the Nazification of the main periodic publication aimed at the rural population, entitled *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter*.

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[14] See Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, and Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, and Johann Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien 1932-1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008).

[15] The author took three interviews with ethnic Germans, natives of Romania, who live in Germany and whose ages were 11 to 17 in 1940.

[16] David Welch, "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39/2 (2004), 214, 217.

Short history of the Nazification of the political life of Germans in Romania

During the 1930s, the political life of the German community in Romania saw a development of the political organizations which looked up to the Nazi Party in Germany (NSDAP). This process can be explained through the combined action of several internal and external factors. Within the historiography of this theme, some authors such as Wolfgang Miege[17] have specifically highlighted the internal factors, understating the importance of the external factors, while Johann Böhm and Vasile Ciobanu have brought forth both the importance of the internal factors (such as the social problems created by the great crisis) and that of the external ones (Hitler's rise to power). In this sense, our position is closer to the latter two studies. Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and his constant, well-funded policy regarding the ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe played a crucial role in the popularity of the local copies of the Nazi Party. At least among the Transylvanian Saxons, Germany had represented a model of development for centuries, and many of the intellectuals of the community had completed their studies in Germany.[18] Therefore, constant contact with the German environment became a vehicle of the extension of the Nazi ideology among the German minority in Romania. On the other hand, in the 1930s, these influences found a favorable context for their development. A series of economic, social, cultural and political factors contributed to the success of the Nazi propaganda. After the unification of Transylvania and Banat with Romania, the Romanian Germans had to face the competition of the agrarian products of the Old Kingdom[19], as the former market of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was lost. Also, the policies of the liberal governments in the 1920s, featuring intense taxing of the export of agrarian products, led to problems for the Saxon peasants.[20] The

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[17] Wolfgang Miege, *Das Dritte Reich und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien. 1933-1939. Ein Beitrag zur nationalsozialistischen Volkstumspolitik* (Berna: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1972), 263-264.

[18] See Irina Nastasă-Matei, "Relaţiile culturale româno-germane în perioada 1933-1944. Acordurile culturale," [Romanian-German Cultural Relationships in 1933-1944. The Cultural Agreements] *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Bariţiu» din Cluj-Napoca* LIII (2014), 85-95.

[19] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 99.

[20] See Bogdan Murgescu, *România şi Europa: acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)* [Romania and Europe: the Clustering of Economic Offsets (1500-2010)] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010), 252-253.

agrarian reform in 1921[21] stripped the Evangelical Church of A.C.[22] in Transylvania of its material possessions, which led to the introduction of taxes in order to support the schools, expenses which had a major impact on rural households.[23] The great economic crisis of 1929-1933, and especially the price drop for agrarian products, came as a powerful blow to the economic situation of the peasants, who produced first and foremost for the market.[24] Another source of discontent was their political situation in Greater Romania, as the Transylvanian Saxons were disappointed by the fact that they received no autonomy in the new state. These reasons for discontent eroded the political capital of the conservative forces which dominated the political life of the Germans in Romania during the 1920s and in the first part of the 1930s and eventually led to the ascension of the far-right groups.[25]

The fact that the middle class occupied the most important positions inside the political and church institutions of the Transylvanian Saxons left very little space for social mobility. However, the far-right organizations inside the German communities in Romania brought forth alternative ways of social ascension, offering young people with modest possibilities the chance to assert themselves within the multiple forms of organization of the Nazi movement. Alongside these social factors, authors such as Johann Böhm have highlighted the generation split between the conservative wing and the Nazi one.[26] The adherence of German intellectuals in Romania (such as Heinrich Zillich) to the far-right wing represented an impulse for the growth of the Nazi influence among the young Saxon population. Similar to the case of Romanian intellectuals such as Mircea Eliade or Emil Cioran, their adherence can be explained partly through the domination, during the 1930s, of a trend of ideas which criticized rationalism and

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[21] Dumitru Şandru, *Reforma agrară din 1921 în România* [The Agrarian Reform of 1921 in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1975), *passim*.

[22] The Evangelical Church of the Augustine Confession.

[23] Konrad Gündisch (with the collaboration of Mathias Beer), *Siebenbürgen und die Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 2nd edition (Verlag: Langen-Müller, 2005), 183-184.

[24] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 104.

[25] For an analysis of the connections between the nostalgia of the lost privileged position and the emergence of Nazism among the Transylvanian Saxons see: L Balázs, A. Szelényi, "From Minority to Übermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia," *Past and Present* 196/1 (2007), 215-251.

[26] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 136. Schmidt's generation with that of Roth.

positivism in cultural life, capitalism and democracy in economic and political life, and middle-class individualism in social life.

The emergence of the far-right wing among the Germans in Romania took place in several stages during 1922-1944, as the beginnings of the local Nazi movement were connected to the name of Fritz Fabritius, a clerk at a bank in Sibiu, who was influenced by one of his trips to Germany in 1922 and who established, after coming back, the *Selbsthilfe*[27] association. Even though this association promoted economic mutual aid against the background of the issues that had risen after the First World War, *Selbsthilfe* had a discourse and an ideology which were inspired by the far-right movements of 1920s Germany.[28] At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the activity of *Selbsthilfe* becomes progressively more political.[29] In 1931, *Selbsthilfe* was renamed "The Renewal Movement" (*Erneuerungsbewegung*) and in May, 1932 it was called "The National Socialist Mutual Aid Movement of the Germans in Romania" ("Nationalsozialistische Selbsthilfebewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien" – NSDR). Even though NSDR saw a rise in influence in the beginning of the 1930s, the movement did not manage to assert its own candidate (Wilhelm Staedel) in the bishop position during the 1932 elections, which shows that the conservative wing still dominated the political life of the Transylvanian Saxons.[30] The Renewal Movement promoted political practices similar to those of the Nazis in Germany, and its discourse was centered on the themes of Nazi mythology, such as antisemitism, the "leader principle" ("Führerprinzip") and "blood and soil" ("Blut und Boden").[31] After Hitler's rise to power, the local Nazis began asserting their vision on the Transylvanian Saxon political program, and the conservatives manifested a certain receptiveness towards achieving a compromise.[32] The ascension of NSDR, which had won the elections for the local authorities of the Transylvanian Saxons in November, 1933 was hindered by the fact that the government declared the movement illegal.[33] Similar to other political organizations in interwar Romania which were forbidden by the authorities, NSDR appealed to a means of elusion and

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[27] Paul Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu: Rumäniendeutsche in der Waffen-SS* (Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 27.
[28] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 37-38 and Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 178.
[29] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 39.
[30] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 188-189.
[31] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 45-46.
[32] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 190-191.
[33] Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu,* 32.

changed its name to the National Renewal Movement of the Germans in Romania ("Nationale Erneuerungsbewegung der Deutschen in Rumänien" – NEDR).[34] However, in July, 1934 the government also disbanded NEDR, although its political activity continued illegally.[35] As a result of the pressure exerted by Nazi Germany, the moderate Nazis and the conservatives came closer.[36] In spite of this pressure during 1935-1938, the Nazi movement among the Germans in Romania was dominated by internal conflicts between the moderate Nazis, led by Fritz Fabritius and the radicals, led by Waldemar Gust and Alfred Bonfert.[37] The pressure coming from Berlin led, in October 1938, to the signing of an agreement to unify the two competing organizations: the National Community of the Germans in Romania ("Volksgemeinschaft der Deutschen in Rumänien" – VDR) and the National German Party of Romania ("Deutsche Volkspartei in Rumänien"), as Fabritius was accepted by the radicals as president.[38]

Starting with the spring of 1939, VDR went through a swift process of Nazification of its political practices, and its official nomenclature was changed to the National German Community of Romania ("Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft in Rumänien" – DVR).[39] In spite of the unification in 1938, Fabritius was challenged by several groups in the community. It was in light of these facts that Berlin replaced him in the autumn of 1939 with Wolfram Bruckner. Johann Böhm's opinion is that Bruckner was promoted from the very beginning as a "temporary solution", because Berlin had already prepared Andreas Schmidt[40] to occupy the position of the community leader. The fall of King Carol II's regime in September 1940 led to the increase of the influence of Germany in Romania and created the necessary conditions to promote Schmidt, on the 27th of

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[34] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 196.
[35] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 197-199.
[36] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 203.
[37] Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu,* 34.
[38] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 210-211.
[39] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 214.
[40] Andreas Schimdt was born on the 24th of May, 1912 in Donnersmarkt (Mănărade), in the southern part of Transylvania (close to Blaj). His parents came from the families of wealthy peasants. The high school he went to was Stephan Ludwig Roth in Mediaş, though he did not obtain a diploma. This forced him to study at the Romanian high school Sf. Vasile in Blaj. Starting in 1930, he studied Law in Cluj, but he never finished. In 1938, he began studying agrarian sciences at "Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule" in Berlin. For more details, see Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 109.

September 1940, as a leader of the ethnic Germans in Romania.[41] Schmidt had left for Germany in 1938 in order to study at "Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule" in Berlin.[42] In Berlin, he had reached the ranks of the SS, where he was trained for the future mission of Nazifying the ethnic German community in Romania.[43]

The final phase of the Nazification of the political life of the ethnic Germans in Romania began on the 9th of November, 1940 with the appearance of the National Socialist German Workers' Party ("Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeitpartei" – NSDAP) of the German Ethnic Group in Romania. And on the 21st of November, 1940 the state published "the law regarding the formation of the German Ethnic Group", through which the Romanian state granted GEG the status of judicial entity under public rights, as GEG was assigned the role of "taking mandatory decisions for its members" […] "with the approval of the leader of the Romanian state."[44] The new organization controlled the political, economic, social and cultural life of the ethnic Germans in Romania, mobilizing their material and human resources so as to serve Nazi Germany.[45] The structure of GEG was based on offices which dealt with the administration of the main areas of the lives of the Germans in Romania: the Major State Office, the Treasury, the Organization Office, the Economics Office (which also included an office meant for the rural population), the Statistics Office, the Press and Propaganda Office and the Arts and Sciences Office.[46] Following the Nazi model, several organizations were created, commissioned with the control, the mobilization and the indoctrination of certain social or professional categories. For instance,

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[41] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 110, 111.

[42] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 109.

[43] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 237-238 and Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 109, 114.

[44] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 239.

[45] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 127; Ottmar Traşcă, "Constituirea Grupului Etnic German din România şi relaţiile cu Biserica evanghelică din Transilvania în primii ani ai 'erei' Andreas Schmidt. 1940-1942," [The Establishment of the German Ethnic Group in Romania and its Relationships with the Evangelical Church of Transylvania during the First Years of the Andreas Schmidt "Era". 1940-1942] *The Annual of the "A.D. Xenopol" History Institute* XLVIII (2011), 321-322.

[46] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 150; Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 239.

the ES ("Einsatz-Staffel") was a paramilitary organization which mimicked the SS, and "DJ" ("Deutsche Jugend"), which included children between the ages of 10-18 mimicked the HJ ("Hitlerjudend"). "Deutsche Bauerschaft" was the name of the organization which targeted the rural population, and "Deutsche Arbeiterschaft" was destined to take care of the workers.[47]

The Transylvanian Saxon peasantry in the interwar period: economic crises, associationism and the mirage of the German market

In 1939, 75,000 rural households belonging to the Romanian Germans in Transylvania and Banat, representing 3.8% of the national total, held 1,130,000 yokes of land (about 652,000; 4.67% of the tillable land).[48] The German peasantry in Romania, which was spread through Transylvania, Banat, Basarabia, Bucovina and Dobrogea represented a category which stood out within the rural population through a productivity which was higher than the average in Romania. Among the rural population in Romania, the Transylvanian Saxons stood out through their use of modern methods in agriculture and through the development of certain powerful aspects of processing agricultural products.

On the other hand, the Transylvanian Saxon peasantry saw, during the time which followed the First World War, economic difficulties created by the loss of the market of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and by the competition created by the producers in the Old Kingdom. Later on, in the beginning of the 1930s, the great economic crisis had a strong impact on a community of small and middle-ranged producers. The peasants handled these difficulties by reorienting the agricultural production towards the growth of animals and industrial crops, which brought in bigger profits.[49] However, the factor which would consistently ameliorate the economic situation of the Transylvanian Saxon peasantry in the second half of the '30s was the development of economic relationships with Nazi Germany. The economic treaties with Germany of March 1935 and March 1939 brought forth great export opportunities for the Romanian agricultural products in Germany, in spite of the subjugating nature of the latter

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[47] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 125.
[48] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 107.
[49] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 99.

agreement.[50] Along with these commercial agreements between Germany and Romania, there were certain initiatives and arrangements between the German authorities and local decision factors for the increase of the exports of the German peasants in Romania towards the Reich. For example, in May 1938, Deputy Hans Hedrich of the Romanian Parliament paid a visit to Berlin in order to establish a better collaboration between the German agricultural cooperatives in Romania and Germany.[51] As a result of these economic contacts, in 1939, as the German households in Romania represented 4% of the country's total, they recorded 47% of the country's pork export and 14.7% of the country's beef export. After 1940, the exports shipped by the German agricultural associations in Romania became even more consistent. Between July 1941 and July 1942, the agricultural producers who registered with GEG sent the Reich agricultural products worth 565,878,102 lei (or 9,431,302 RM).[52] And between July 1942 and September 1943, the Reich received: 1046 railcars of pork, 241 railcars of oxen and 567 railcars of dairy products.[53]

Other areas in which the Transylvanian Saxons excelled within interwar Romanian agriculture were the development of agricultural producers' associations, the support they showed for special training and the implementation of the latest techniques in the field.[54] A very important role in the development of the Transylvanian Saxon agriculture was played by the Transylvanian Saxon Agricultural Association ("der Sieben-bürgisch-sächsischer Landwirtschaftsverein"), which had existed since 1845.[55] Right after the First World War, it had 231 local associations, counting up to 16,000 members.[56] The association played an important role in the introduction of new crops and agricultural exploitation techniques through the professional schools under its control and it supported the sell-out of the rural products by building market houses in the Transylvanian Saxon cities in order to store the products for export.[57]

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[50] Graţian Lupu, *The Romanian-German Relationships between 1930-1940* (Cluj-Napoca: Ph.D. thesis defended at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, 2011), 174. 202-208.

[51] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 109.

[52] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 151.

[53] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 131.

[54] *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien* (Hermannstadt: edited by "Amt für Presse und Propaganda", Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, 1944), 95.

[55] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 100.

[56] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 100.

[57] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 100.

After its emergence as a judicial entity under the public rights in November 1940, The German Ethnic Group aimed, among other things, to gain control of the economic life of the rural population. Therefore, both the Transylvanian Saxon Association for Agriculture ("der Sieben-bürgisch-sächsischer Landwirtschaftsverein") and the twin association of the Saxons in Banat ("der Banater Schwäbische Landwirtschaftsverein") were fused together in December 1940 under the name of "Die Deutsche Bauernschaft Rumäniens", an organization created in December 1941 which was controlled by the GEG.[58] A part of the attributions of these organizations were taken by the "Peasants' Office" of the GEG. The "Deutsche Bauernschaft" association was particularly commissioned with the formation and the mobilization of the German peasantry in Romania.[59] The reasoning behind this decision, invoked by Hans Kaufmes[60] in 1941, the leader of the "Peasantry Office" within GEG, was the fact that the old organizations of the peasants were oriented towards a free market logic, while according to the discourse of the GEG leaders, the new organization would offer the peasants a controlled market, where the producer would receive a "fair price".[61] This orientation towards liberalism would have led, according to Kaufmes, to a conflict between the old organizations and the "Renewal Movement" at the beginning of the 1930s.[62] The real cause of this decision was, in fact, the wish of the GEG to control the peasant associations, as the old structures were controlled by people who were closely connected to the conservatives, such as Fritz Connert, who were not considered trustworthy by the Nazis. Finally, the main aim of the office with which 65,000 farms/agricultural enterprises were affiliated, which covered over 860,000 hectares, was the growth of production for the Reich.[63] GEG's official reason was to create an "agrarpolitischer Apparat" through which all those involved in agricultural activities or related in any way to agriculture would be integrated and coordinated by

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[58] Otto Schwarz, "Die Deutsche Bauernschaft Rumäniens. Aufbau und Gliederung," in *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941* (s.a.: Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, 1942), 17.

[59] Schwarz, "Die Deutsche Bauernschaft Rumäniens," 18-19.

[60] *Lexikon der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, ed. Walter Myß (Thaur bei Innsbruck: Wort und Welt Verlag, 1993), 229.

[61] Hans Kaufmes, "Trotz Krieg! Aufbauarbeit und Leistungssteigerung," in *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941* (s.a.: Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, 1942), 57.

[62] Kaufmes, "Trotz Krieg," 57.

[63] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 151.

GEG. This integration mimicked the Nazi Germany system, where the production and distribution activity of the food was controlled by the Ministry of Food Control.[64] The new structure would control not only the agricultural production and its processing, but also its commercialization.[65]

The conjoining was also a means of marginalizing the former leadership of the agricultural association of the Transylvanian Saxons, with which Hans Kaufmes, the one soon-to-be responsible for the future of GEG for agriculture, had had several conflicts since 1935.[66] This conflict seems to be the reason for which in 1938 he gave up the position of director of the Agricultural School in Feldioara / Marienburg, which he had led since 1923.[67] In 1940 he was appointed chief of the "Peasantry Office" of the GEG, a position which he occupied until the GEG was dissolved in 1944.[68] Unlike his predecessor (Fritz Connert), the new leader Hans Kaufmes was a man trusted by the local Nazis and he did not slow down the Nazification process of the agricultural associations and the technical studies. On the contrary, Kaufmes would assert himself in this sense by employing a sustained propaganda in the press and during the events which were aimed at the German peasants, such as the harvest festivities ("Erntedankfest"). Led by Kaufmes, the "Peasantry Office" of the GEG implemented a thorough propagandistic program in 1941, through which 10,000 young peasants were involved in training programs in the Nazi "Weltanschauung" spirit.[69] One of the constants of this program was mobilization in order to support the so-called interests of the "German people", which were actually the interests of the Third Reich. The argument regarding this mobilization was the unity of the racially-defined community ("Volksgemeinschaft") which would overcome the cultural,

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[64] Otto Schwarz, "Die Deutsche Bauernschaft Rumäniens," 17.

[65] Otto Schwarz, "Die Deutsche Bauernschaft Rumäniens," 17.

[66] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 108.

[67] *Lexikon der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 229

[68] Hans Kaufmes was born on the 29th of August 1897 in Brenndorf. After finishing his high school studies in 1915, he kept studying agricultural sciences at the Stuttgart-Hohenheim Agricultural Academy. After coming back to the country, he was appointed chief of the Feldioara Agricultural School during 1823-1938, vice-mayor of Braşov during 1938-1940 and leader of the "Peasantry Office" of GEG during 1940-1944. He fled Romania in 1946, continuing his activity in the academic field in Austria and the USA. He died on the 23rd of November 1971 in Corvallis (Oregon/USA). *Lexikon der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 229.

[69] Sepp Komanschek, "Deutsches Bauerntum und nationalsozialistische Agrar-politik," in *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941* (s.a.: Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, 1942), 81-82.

religious or social differences existing between the ethnic Germans in Romania.[70]

The German press in Romania during 1935-1941

According to several statistical data, there were 89 periodical publications in German in Transylvania in 1933, which was, as Vasile Ciobanu highlighted, a big number when compared to the total number of Transylvanian Saxons.[71] The phenomenon can be explained through the importance the Saxons assigned to books, considering the literation process developed during the 16th – 18th centuries as an effect of the conversion to Lutheran Protestantism. Furthermore, the Transylvanian Saxon population had a consistent middle class, which could afford subscriptions to publications, be they general or specific.[72]

Among the important daily papers of the Transylvanian Saxons in the interwar period were the *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, the *Deutsche Tagespost* (up to the point when it merged with the former, in the mid-1920s) and the *Kronstädter Zeitung*.[73] The seminal daily papers which came out in the Saxon cities dominated the German press in Romania, as they tended not only to represent the interests of their communities, but also claimed to speak for all Germans in Romania. Alongside these daily papers, the Transylvanian Saxons also had various specialized publications. For instance, the *Industrie Zeitung* was the publication of the Saxon industrialists, the *Siebenbürgische Handels-zeitung* was that of the merchants and the *Schule und Leben* was dedicated to the teachers.[74]

Starting in 1933, along with Hitler's rise to power, the influence of Nazism among the German community in Romania rose and the press was also affected by this phenomenon. In a first phase, the actions of the government regarding the far-right political organizations posed problems for the extension of the Nazi-inspired discourse among the Germans in Romania. In July 1934, the Romanian government dissolved the "National Renewal Movement of the Germans in Romania" and banned its official publication, the *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*. It was superseded by the

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[70] Komanschek, "Deutsches Bauerntum und nationalsozialistische Agrarpolitik," 71.

[71] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 337.

[72] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 337.

[73] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 343. *Kronstädter Zeitung* is the oldest Transylvanian Saxon daily paper, as the first issue appeared in 1836.

[74] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 339.

Deutsche Tageszeitung daily publication, which initially came out in Sibiu until 1936 and then in Braşov, led by Waldemar Gust. In 1935, Gust and Alfred Bonfert created the National German Party in Romania, and the publication became its press instrument. The movement had stemmed from Fabritius' Renewal Movement.[75] Starting in 1935, a new *Süd-Ost* publication came out in Sibiu, an instrument of the German Community in Romania. In the same year, Fritz Fabritius rose to lead the German Community in Romania and to impose his own program.[76] After 1935, a gradual "alignment" of the discourse of the German publications took place, moving towards Nazi themes and inspiration. However, this "alignment" varied from one case to another, depending on the political orientation of the editors of each publication. For example, the *Sieben-bürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, controlled by the conservative group led by Roth, was criticized by publications such as the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* and by the *Süd-Ost* for its distant attitude towards the local Nazis.[77] During 1939-1940, the pressure put on the press was intensified against the background of the changes regarding the internal and the international situations of Romania, but also of the position of the local Nazi movement within the community. The ascension of Nazi Germany inspired the local Nazi leaders to intensify the "attunement" process of all German institutions in Romania towards the direction imposed by the Reich. After the Nazis, led by Schmidt, took absolute power over the ethnic Germans in Romania, the control of the *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt* became a priority.

Starting in the autumn of 1940, the main Nazification instrument of the German press in Romania was the "Press and Propaganda Office" ("Amt für Presse und Propaganda") of the GEG. The office controlled not only the periodic publications, but also the activity of the publishing houses, the book trade, the libraries, the publicity system and the educational system.[78] The chief of this office, Walter May, also had a great influence within the Nazi Party (NSDAP) of the GEG. The office had 24 permanent employees and 734 volunteers.[79] On the 13th of October 1940, 47 sub-editors and publication editors were called to Timişoara and were given clear instructions by Walter May, chief of the Press Office of the GEG, and by Andreas Schmidt. Schmidt asked those present to follow, in their editorial politics, the Nazi ideology and to accept GEG control over the German

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[75] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 343.
[76] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 344.
[77] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 344.
[78] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 162.
[79] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 163.

press in Romania. It is Schmidt who also said in March, 1941 that the press had become an instrument of the "national Nazi community" ("ein Instrument der nationalsozialistischen Volksgemeinschaft")[80] to aid with the formation of the "general opinion" according to the interests of the community, defined by the Nazis.[81]

On the same occasion as the aforementioned meeting in October 1940, the German Press Union in Romania was formed ("Landesverband der Deutschen Presse in Rumänien") as a professional organization of the journalists. Just like in Nazi Germany, the influence on the journalists was achieved substantively through the control exerted on the right to practice.[82] Therefore, within the German community in Romania, only those who would become members of the German Press Union in Romania would have the right to work as journalists.[83] Important figures such as Alfred Hönig, chief editor of the *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, who had previously opposed the Nazification of the publication, had to obey the new policy, therefore being co-opted.[84] Along with May, other important figures who occupied key positions in the orientation of the German press in Romania were Alfred Hönig ("Hauptschriftleiter der SdT") and Hans Hartl ("Stellvertrender Schriftleiter der SdT").[85]

Another training which was initiated by May and which involved the sub-editors and the chief editors of the publications took place during the 7th-9th of February 1941 and it specifically mentioned that they would always be in contact with the GEG leadership and that a "radical purification" would happen in the German press, thus removing any individuals who did not agree with the "Nazi policies" of the GEG leadership.[86] After opening the front with the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Nazification process of the press became even more intense because of the existing pressure put on the GEG for the mobilization of the ethnic

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[80] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 164. See Andreas Schmidt, "«Nationalsozialistische Pressepolitik». Geleitwort für die erste Folge der «Südostdeutschen Tageszeitung» am 13 März 1941»," in *Nationalsozialistischer Volkstumskampf. Reden und Aufsätze eines Kamfjahres*, ed. Andreas Schmidt (Sibiu: Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, Krafft & Drotleff, s.a.).

[81] Schmidt, "Nationalsozialistische Pressepolitik," 9.

[82] Rudolf Stöber, "Presse im Nationalsozialismus," in *Medien im National-sozialismus*, eds. Bernd Heidenreich, Sönke Neitzel (Paderborn: Schöningh &Fink, 2010), 281-282.

[83] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 344-345.

[84] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 345, 357.

[85] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 168

[86] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 165.

Germans in Romania towards the human and material effort of the war, as the content in the 1944 GEG Annual shows (*Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien*).[87]

A new step towards the subordination of the press was taken on the 16th of March 1941, when the *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt* and the *Banater Deutsche Zeitung* were forcefully merged under the name: *Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung*. However, the publication still kept separate editions for Transylvania and for Banat.[88] In the first issue of *Südost-deutsche Tageszeitung* of 16 March 1941, the essential mission of the new Nazi press was drawn out, namely the coordination of "the fight of the German community in Romania."[89] During 1941-1944, *Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung* reached its maximal number of 15,000 copies.[90] If we analytically compare the local phenomenon with the similar process of Nazification of the press in Germany, we notice that this process was faster in the case of the German press in Romania, and the attunement process was more consistent. In Nazi Germany, a series of liberal publications were allowed to exist, even though they were censored, such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* up to 1943 and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* until the fall of Nazi Germany.[91] However, the German press in Romania went, during 1940-1941, through a radical process of restructuring, which implied the merging or the banning of numerous periodic publications.

The Nazification of the agriculture-oriented press

As for the rural press, both the Transylvanian Saxon specialized publication *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter* and the one in Banat, entitled *Banater Landwirt*[92], were merged together under the name of *Südostdeutsche Landpost*[93] on the 1st of January, 1941.[94] *Südostdeutsche Landpost* was a weekly publication which reached over 32,000 copies during 1942-1944.[95] Alongside this weekly publication, there was the *Der Pflug* (The Plow) annual magazine, with over 28,500 copies. Aside from delivering technical

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[87] *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 99.
[88] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 346.
[89] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 166.
[90] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 167
[91] Stöber, "Presse im Nationalsozialismus," 315.
[92] The Banat Peasant.
[93] The Rural Courier of the South-Eastern Germans.
[94] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 108, 346.
[95] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 167.

information related to the agricultural sciences, these publications
intensely promoted the values of the Nazi ideology and the support of the
ethnic Germans of the war effort through the increase of agricultural
production and especially through the promotion of enrollment in the
German army.[96] Alongside these publications, the "Peasantry Office" of
the GEG also edited numerous volumes and leaflets propagandistic in
nature, which targeted the peasantry in particular. One of these publications,
issued in 1942 in Sibiu was the one dedicated to the peasants' day, which
took place during the 13th and the 14th of December 1941 in Apoldu de Sus
(Grosspold; *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941*). This publication
synthesizes in its pages the key themes of the Nazi propaganda regarding
the peasantry. The conceptual background of this propaganda was
provided by the Nazi mythology around "Blut und Boden", which unified
the elements of the discourse regarding the races with that regarding the
"vital space".

   One of the articles published in this volume referred to the main
ideologist of the Nazi agrarian policy, Walter Darré, through its motto:
"The only true wealth of our people is its blood".[97] The importance of the
peasantry for the new racial order was stated through a quote from Hitler,
which highlighted in his characteristic style that "the Third Reich would
be a Reich of the peasantry or else it will never exist at all!" We must
interpret the quote in the broader context of the Nazi discourse regarding
the fate of Eastern Europe which, after being defeated, would be colonized
with German population which would assure the future of the "Aryan
race" through territorial expansion and by securing new food sources.[98] In
the preface of the aforementioned volume, Andreas Schmidt stated,
following this vision, that "returning to the soil" would ensure the eternity
of the "German people".[99] According to the mythology "Blut und Boden",
working the fields would ensure both the "health" and the "robustness" of
the race, as well as the sources of food necessary for a population which

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[96] Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 131.
[97] "Der einzige und wahre Reichtum unseres Volkes ist sein gutes Blut," in *Tag
der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941*, 117.
[98] Andreas Schmidt, "Vorwort," in *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941*, 8.
[99] "Es ist daher unsere vornehmste Aufgabe, gerade hier auf hart erkämpftem
Kolonistenboden ein neues national-sozialistisches Wehrbauerntum heranzubilden,
durch welches der rassisch wertvollste Teil unseres Volkes wieder mit dem Boden
verwurzelt und als Blutquell unseres Volkes seine Ewigkeit sichert." Schmidt,
"Vorwort," 8.

would see continuous growth.[100] Therefore, as seen by Andreas Schmidt, one of the most important missions of the GEG was to provide food for the war effort.[101] The economic mobilization of the peasantry is described as a veritable battle on an internal front called "the front of food" (der Ernährungsfront).[102] In his discourse, Schmidt supports the so-called "voluntary work service" ("Arbeitsdienst"), which aimed to attract unenrolled young people to volunteer work in the countryside in order to compensate the absence of those sent to battle. The involvement in this Arbeitsdienst is described as the participation in a veritable internal battle front.[103] Both the general press and that dedicated to the peasantry highlight the importance of the contribution of the South-Eastern European Germans to the war effort through the food provided to the Reich.[104] The idealization of the rural population is done not only by invoking its racial purity and robustness, but also by praising the peasant traditions regarding the community life, traditions which place the "collective interests" above the "individual interests".[105]

Beginning in the autumn of 1941, the dominant theme of the propaganda carried on by the rural press was the mobilization towards the battle front of all the efforts of the community and especially the support of the enrollments in the German army.[106] In 1943, the propaganda became even more intense in the context of the troublesome situation on the Eastern front and of the growing need for recruits for the German army. It is against this background that Schmidt launched the slogan: "Everything for the battle front!" ("Alles für die Front!").[107] Beginning in the summer of 1941, among those who stayed home, Schmidt promoted voluntary work for gathering crops ("Erntehilfe").[108]

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[100] Otto Schwarz, "Bauerntum und Arbeitsdienst der Deutschen in Rumänien," in *Volk im Osten* II/8 (1935), 274.

[101] Schmidt, "Vorwort," 8.

[102] Schmidt, "Vorwort," 8.

[103] Schwarz, "Bauerntum und Arbeitsdienst der Deutschen in Rumänien," 274.

[104] Sepp Komanschek, "Deutsche Landwirtschaft im Südosten. Rumänien," in *Volk im Osten* 3-4 (1941), 10.

[105] Schwarz, "Bauerntum und Arbeitsdienst der Deutschen in Rumänien," 274.

[106] Böhm, *Das Nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 189.

[107] *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 98; Böhm, *Das National-sozialistische Deutschland und die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien*, 189.

[108] In *Nationalsozialistischer Volkstumkampf. Reden und Aufsätze eines Kampf-jahres*, Andreas Schmidt, Führer der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien (Hermannstadt: Krafft & Drotleff, s.a.), 12.

Another theme of the Nazi propaganda among the peasantry is the antisemitism and the critic of the free market. The specifics of the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the Nazi propaganda in the rural press is the combination of antisemitism and of the accusations brought against the free market for the agricultural products. Taking into account the low number of Jews in the German ethnic areas of high density (Banat and Southern Transylvania), the anti-Semitic discourse could not have been successful simply by invoking racist arguments. It could have been a cause for which the main accusation brought against the Jewish people was that they interfere with the work of the peasant by manipulating the market. Hans Kaufmes argues this on several occasions, one of the most complex texts being the introduction to the "Wege zur Leistungssteigerung des Deutschen Bauern in Rumänien" leaflet, edited by the local association "Deutsche Bauernschaft".[109] In this preface, Kaufmes stated that within the free market, the "Jewish speculator" was the one having all the advantages, and the producer only held the disadvantages.[110] Kaufmes highlighted the merits of the GEG, which ensured better prices and the access to loans and to agricultural technology through the support of the cooperatives. However, the leader of the "Peasantry Office" did not mention that these prices were those dictated by the Reich depending on its financial availabilities, which collapse along with the worsening of the situation on the Eastern front and that the entire rural economy was organized so as to support the interests of Nazi Germany.

However, the rural-oriented press was used in tandem with other methods which required the active implication of the participants, such as public manifestations, propagandistic movie previews or voluntary work in teams. The combined use of this compound of propagandistic practices can be seen on the occasion of the organization by the GEG of several festivities dedicated to the peasantry, inspired by the celebration of the crops in Nazi Germany ("Erntedankfest"), such important festivities taking place in October 1942.[111]

Also, the "Peasantry Office" of the GEG organized during the 13th and the 14th of December 1941 the "Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft" festivity

[109] Hans Kaufmes, "Geleitwort," in *Wege zur Leistungssteigerung des Deutschen Bauern in Rumänien*" (edited by Deutsche Bauernschaft in Rumänien, here promoted Genossenschaft, s.a.).
[110] Kaufmes, "Geleitwort".
[111] "Unsere Erntedank," Hans Kaufmes, Landesbauernführer, SdT, 9 okt. 1942. Also see Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien*, 122.

in Grosspold.[112] Among the participants at this event, there was, alongside the important figures from the "Office", the GEG leader, accompanied by emissaries of the Reich. Alongside the discourses accompanied by the Nazi-specific scenography which aimed to highlight the greatness of the Nazi political mission, the manifestation also had propagandistic film previews.[113]

Landwirtschaftliche Blätter under the pressure of Nazification (1935-1941)

The most widely read agricultural periodic publication of the Transylvanian Saxons in the interwar period was the publication of the Transylvanian Saxon Association for Agriculture ("der Siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Landwirtschaftsverein"), entitled *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter* ("Agricultural Pages"). The publication already had a tradition from the interwar period, as its first issue had come out in 1873.[114] The publication recorded in 1926 a printing number of 16,000 copies, a number which could breed envy even in the hearts of general publications.[115] Both the position of chief editor of the publication and that of director of the Transylvanian Saxon agricultural association which owned the publication were occupied by the same person: Fritz Connert.[116] Born in Moşna (Meschen/Sibiu County), on the 28th of June 1883, Fritz Connert finished his studies in Agronomy, working as a teacher since 1906 and after 1908 becoming the director of the agricultural school in Feldioara/Marienburg, an institution which was later led by Hans Kaufmes. His career also developed in the economic area, as Connert became the director of the Braşov milk processing cooperative ("der Molkereigenossenschaft Kronstadt") in 1911, and in 1919 he became the director of the Transylvanian Saxon Association for Agriculture.[117] He was also active in the political field and in the interwar period he was a member of the parliament in several legislatures.[118] The orientation of his political activity seems to have been connected to the conservative group of the Transylvanian Saxons present in the parliament. In 1931, his position in the Transylvanian Saxon political elite was consolidated by the admission to the collective

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[112] "Einleitung," in *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941*, 9.
[113] "Zeitliche Folge," in *Tag der Deutschen Bauernschaft 1941*, 11.
[114] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 361.
[115] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 100.
[116] Ciobanu, *Contribuţii la cunoaşterea istoriei saşilor transilvăneni*, 100.
[117] *Lexikon der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 91.
[118] *Lexikon der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 91.

administration body of the Evangelical Church of A.C. (the Consistory), which was considered in Transylvania as the church of the Transylvanian Saxons.[119]

The conservative orientation of Fritz Connert influenced the editorial politics of the *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter* publication, as the themes of the political columns were dominated up to 1940 by the important figures of the conservative circles and by a discourse which was very scarcely influenced by the Nazi ideology, when compared to other Transylvanian Saxon publications of those times. The slow progression of the themes and concepts of the Nazi ideology, such as the racism ("Volk und Rasse"), the blood unity of the Germans in Europe, the antisemitism, the vital space, the soil and the blood or the leader principle was also influenced by the fact that the publication was focused on the technical aspects, as its purpose was to inform the peasants about the activity of the organization and about the latest progress made in the domain of the agricultural sciences. Having all this in the structure of the publication, the political component registered an increase of its proportion within the publication during 1938-1940, when an intensification of the Nazification process of the political life of the Transylvanian Saxons can be seen.

During 1935-1938, the specialized thematic (the agricultural sciences) took up about two thirds of the publication, and sometimes several pages were dedicated to the Transylvanian Saxon Association for Agriculture reports. During 1938-1940, the political themes took up more and more space, but the surprising fact is that the internal important figures which dominated the political columns were not Fritz Fabritius, Waldemar Gust or Alfred Bonfert, but predominantly King Carol II, on a national level and important figures of the conservative political life, such as Hans Otto Roth, the anti-Nazi bishop Viktor Glondys and often the chief editor Fritz Connert himself. As for the international personalities, we can notice an increase in the presence of the Nazi leaders, mainly Hitler. More and more space was given to the stories about the success of Nazi Germany in different areas and about the life of the Germans in the East, with the accent falling on the Germans in Czechoslovakia and Poland. A great increase in the political-themed columns took place in 1940, especially in the autumn, when GEG was given the status of a judicial entity under the public rights. During 1935-1938, out of the 12 pages of the publication, the technical part, agricultural in nature, only takes up about eight pages,

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[119] *Lexikon der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 91.

and the rest of the columns take up about five pages, out of which only one or two are dedicated to the internal and international political life.[120]

From a structural point of view, alongside the beginning part, which was agricultural in nature, there were three more parts: a second part entitled "Pleasant and Useful" ("Unterhaltendes und Belehrendes"), a third part "The Woman and the Family" ("Frau und Familie") and the last part, which was dedicated to advertisements. The political thematic was concentrated in the part of the publication entitled "Unterhaltendes und Belehrendes". During 1940-1941, we can also spot a political tint in the "Frau und Familie" part. The part called "Unterhaltendes und Belehrendes" was also split into several columns, and during 1935-1940, the most stable columns of this part were those dedicated to the international and internal "News" ("Wochenschau") and "Topicalities" ("Vom Tage"), the latter being dedicated to the news about the Germans in Romania ("Vom Deutschtum in Rumänien"). There was also the column dedicated to the events in the general German-speaking space, entitled "About the Germans in the World" ("Vom Deutschtum in der Welt"). Looking at the dedicated part ("Frau und Familie"), the most consistent column was the one named "Küche und Haushalt", which initially reflected the role assigned to the woman as wife and mother.[121] Later on, starting with 1940, the politicization also targeted the involvement of women in bringing up children ready for the battle front, as certain concepts of the Nazi eugenics infiltrated the lines of this column.[122]

In 1938, the three politically-oriented columns "Wochenschau", "Vom Deutschtum in Rumänien" and "Vom Deutschtum in der Welt" did not occupy, on average, more than two pages.[123] During 1938-1940, the space assigned to these columns grows, but the factors which produce this change are in particular the space assigned to King Carol II's propaganda, which dominates the internal news of the "Wochenschau" column, the beginning of the Second World War and the evolution of the fronts. King Carol II's regime did not only assert the dominant presence of the king in the political column, but it also obstructed, through censorship, the news about the local Nazis, seen by the state structures, as the *Securitate*

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[120] *Landwirtschaftliche Blätter* (further on *LB*), 66/1-4, January 1938. See for instance *LB*, 66/2; 66/9, January 1938, 1.

[121] See *LB*, 66/1-4, January 1938. See for instance *LB*, 66/2; 66/9, January 1938, 1.

[122] *LB*, 66/2; 66/9, January 1938, 1.

[123] *LB*, 66/1-4, January 1938.

archives[124] show, as elements of influence coming from Nazi Germany into Romania.

The disintegration of King Carol's regime at the beginning of September 1940 and the establishment of the National Legionary State led to the growth of Germany's influence in Romania, as well as to the liberation of the local Nazi movement from the limits imposed by the king's dictatorship. This way, there internal and external conditions were created for the emergence of the GEG and for the intensification of the Nazification of the ethnic Germans in Romania. These political changes had a strong influence on the press content. During September – October 1940, out of the total of 12 pages, about five of them were dedicated to political themes.[125] A new column was introduced, entitled "Aus dem Volksgruppe", which dealt especially with the GEG activity and with its organizations.[126] A series of articles from the "Vom Deutschtum in Rumänien" column, published in 1940, propagandized for the "Work Service" ("Arbeitsdienst"), in which brigades of young people volunteered most often in the villages in order to do political education and later on in order to compensate for those who had gone to battle.[127]

Beforehand, among the internal important figures of the communities of the ethnic Germans in Romania, conservative figures seen by the Nazi movement as opponents, such as Hans Otto Roht or Viktor Glondys dominated the columns dedicated to the internal political life. Starting with September – October 1940, the GEG leaders superseded them. Articles such as "Verlautbarungen der Volksgruppenführung" became common.[128] We can notice a triad of the important political figures which dominated the political columns, made up of Hitler[129], Antonescu[130] and Andreas Schmidt.[131] The surprising fact is that the appellative Führer was very rarely used up until 1939, which denotes the lack of certain discursive

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[124] See Arhiva Consiliului Naţional pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securităţii [The Arhive of National Council for Study the Securitate Archives, hereafter: ACNSAS], Bucharest, Documentary Fund, file no. 3412 (SRI ID).

[125] *LB*, 68/41, 6 October 1940, 505.

[126] The "Aus der Volksgruppe" is created; *LB*, 68/41, 6 October 1940, 506.

[127] "Vom Deutschtum in Rumänien. Ein Abschiedswort," *LB*, 68/41, 6 October 1940, 293.

[128] *LB*, 68/41, 6 October 1940, 504-505.

[129] Alongside Hitler, other Nazi leaders such as Himmler appear in the background.

[130] *LB*, 68/43, 20 October 1940, 527. Also, Antonescu's position is not so clear because Horia Sima is also a common occurrence in the stories, thus creating a contradiction.

[131] *LB*, 68/42, 13 October 1940, 515-516.

reflexes, which became dominant starting with 1940.[132] The three leaders of the triad symbolize the "leader principle" with its three levels: the international level (Germany as the dominant power), the national level (the National Legionary State) and the local level (the German Ethnic Group). The three important figures are brought together by the theme of the Romanian-German partnership, through which an attempt is made at the dilemma regarding the loyalty of the ethnic Germans in Romania.

As Otto Trașcă noted when asked which state to be loyal to, Romania or Nazi Germany, the discourse of the German Ethnic Group attempted to offer an answer through the so-called "double loyalty".[133] This way, Germany was described as the "father country" ("Vaterland") and Romania was the "mother country" ("Mutterland"). According to the GEG discourse, the "double loyalty" was no longer a contradiction, because due to Antonescu's regime, the alliance with Germany was solid and natural, both countries now looking towards "the same point". According to Andreas Schmidt: "Die höheren Interessen unserer Zeit fordern von uns Disziplin einem Staate gegenüber, der für immer an der Seite Deutschlands stehen wird".[134] The GEG is described by Andreas Schmidt as an agent between Germany and Romania, even though GEG was actually more of an obstacle to German-Romanian relationships rather than a balance point.[135]

All these editorial policy changes in the autumn of 1940 took place in spite of the fact that Fritz Connert was still chief editor, as he tried, as many other conservative leaders, to adapt to the new context. The editorial policy change was accompanied by the appearance of new authors having a discourse centered around the themes of the Nazi ideology, such as Otto Schwartz, who published in October 1940 an article about the forceful displacement of the Germans in Bessarabia in the Reich, bringing forth as an argument the fact that there was a risk of mixing the German blood with that of the local population, as Nazi Germany was able to provide protection for the purity of their blood.[136]

Alongside the change in the publication structure, there was also a change of theme and of the concepts used in the publication's discourse. A

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[132] *LB*, 67/20, 14 May 1939, 293.

[133] See Ottmar Trașcă, "Doppelte Loyalität. Die deutsche Minderheit Rumäniens 1933-1940," in *Politische Strategien nationaler Minderheiten in der Zwischen-kriegszeit*, eds. Mathias Beer, Stefan Dyroff (München: Oldenbourg, 2013), 211-239.

[134] *LB*, 68/42, 13 October 1940, 515.

[135] Andreas Schmidt, "Mittler zwischen Großdeutschland und dem befreundeten Legionärstaat," *LB*, 45, 3 November 1940, 551.

[136] Otto Schwartz, "Bauern auf dem Weg," *LB*, 68/41, 6 October 1940, 505.

quantitative indicator of this change in discourse is the more and more frequent reproduction or invocation, starting with September 1940, of Hitler's discourses.[137]

One of the most frequent themes of the publication was Nazi Germany and its relationships with the ethnic Germans in Romania. Germany was described in a superlative manner, as a role model for the Germans in Romania. The articles written during 1935-1939 on this subject particularly highlighted the economic success of Germany, the offered explanation being in one of the articles on the "national socialist revolution".[138] Often times Germany was described when the problem of the relationships between the country and the Transylvanian Saxons was approached. The economic relationships were often times approached, Germany being presented as a market for the agricultural products created in the Transylvanian Saxon households.[139]

Often times Germany was presented as a protective mother of the German minorities in Eastern Europe, often described as victims of the majorities of their states. In this sense, on the 13th of March 1938, the publication mentioned that "Hitler's voice found, among the ten million Germans from the borders of the Reich, an echo full of life".[140] This perspective, which pictured the Germans in Poland and from the South as victims of the national states, was adopted by the publication column entitled "Vom Deutschtum in der Welt".[141] The invasion of Poland was presented as a form of liberation of the German minorities. In some articles, the Germans in the East were interpreted through the myth of the "civilizing Germans, or protectors of the civilization against the attacks of the barbarians,"[142] a discourse which would later on foreshadow the anti-Soviet propaganda.

From the point of view of being assimilated by authors of the Nazi ideology, the articles focused on the theme of antisemitism, which would

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[137] *LB*, 68/38, 15 September 1940, 467.

[138] *LB*, 66/9, 27 February 1938, 103.

[139] *LB*, 66/2, 9 January 1938.

[140] "Hitlers Ausspruch von den 10 Millionen Deutschen, die sich an der Reichgrenze siedeln, hat auch in der Tschechoslowakei ein lebhaltes Echo gefunden," *LB*, 66/11, 13 March 1938, 127.

[141] *LB*, 67/3, 15 January 1939, 36.

[142] "Sie sind das kraftvolle Sinnbild unsers Lebens, da sie davon künden, dass all die notvollen, blutigen Jahrhunderte hindurch gegen die wilden Horden des Ostens der Kampf geführt werden musste, um Arbeit und Gebet zu schützen."; Ernst Jekelius, "Deutsche Bauern und Bauernkirche in Siebenbürgen," *Baltische Monatshefte*, Riga, 3 (1938).

assimilate racist concepts or elements of the Nazi mythology, are very rare in the researched time. In the few articles focused on the anti-Semitic theme, the Jews were pictured especially as "speculating" vendors, who gain profit off of the German peasant's hard work.[143] Even though the articles regarding Nazi Germany became more and more numerous starting in 1938, texts openly praising the political system in Germany are rare, and a possible explanation for this is the censorship activity of King Carol II's regime, whose relationship with Nazi Germany was unsteady. A thorough positive article regarding the Nazi political system was published in February 1938. The article described in a praising manner the concentration of the power in the hands of Hitler, which was seen as a regime of order as opposed to the Bolshevik "chaos".[144] An indicator of the slow Nazification of the publication is also the low frequency of the concepts or of the key Nazi expressions, such as: "Führer", "lebensraum", "Blut und Boden", "Volk und Rasse", these only being scarcely mentioned, especially during 1935-1939.[145]

The concepts of the Nazi ideology started becoming frequent only in 1940, especially in the "Wochenschau" column, where the military actions of Germany were described at length.[146] In the issue published on the 7th of January 1940, there was a text in the "Wochenschau" column containing concepts which had very rarely or never been used beforehand, such as: "vital space" ("lebensraum"), "Jewish international capitalism" ("jüdisch internationale Kapitalismus") or "the new world order" ("neue Weltordnung").[147]

The discourse regarding the role of the peasantry in the new Nazi order was dominated by the "Blut und Boden" myth and by the interest for the peasantry as a social class which conserves the "purity of the race" and as a source of food. This way, the interest for the economic situation in Germany was sometimes manifested especially towards the agricultural segment. In the article "Die gegenwärtige Ernährungslage Deutschlands", the state of the nation's food was discussed, during the first year of war in the context of the Transylvanian Saxons' interest for the German market as an export outlet.[148]

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[143] "Programm zum 6. Reichbauerntag," *LB*, 66/48, 27 November 1938.

[144] *LB*, 66/8, 20 February 1938, 40, 41.

[145] *LB*, 66/9, 27 February 1938, 103.

[146] *LB*, 68/1, 1 January 1940, 7.

[147] *LB*, 68/2, 7 January 1940, 20; *LB*, 68/12, 17 March 1940, 152.

[148] "Die gegenwärtige Ernährungslage Deutschlands," *LB*, 68/26, 23 June 1940, 318.

The concepts developed by Walter Darré, mentioned in the first part of the study, become obviously present beginning with the autumn of 1940. Two publicists involved in the "Peasantry Office" of the GEG, namely Otto Schwartz and Emo Connert, start writing articles for a publication, containing strong Nazi ideological content. In a thorough article (one page and a half long) published on the 28th of July 1940 by Emo Connert, entitled "Zehn Jahre Kampf für deutsche Bauerntum", the Nazi agrarian policy was praised for having helped the German peasants get out from under the control of the Jewish "speculators".[149] And in another article, Otto Schwarz approached from a racist perspective the history of the Germans in Eastern Europe, as he pictured the "Nordic race" as a "race of peasants", and the peasants were seen as the founders of the German society.[150]

Conclusions

The rural population represented a main target of the propaganda for the Nazi movement among the Germans in Romania, taking into account the dominant weight of this category within the whole community. In the case of the Transylvanian Saxons, in spite of a higher proportion of the urban population when compared to other German groups in Romania, the rural population and the agrarian economy prevailed. As it appears from a discourse of Andreas Schmidt with the occasion of the festivity of the German peasants in Romania on the 13th-14th of December 1941,[151] the stake of the peasant-oriented propaganda was not only to mobilize the rural households to produce more for the war effort, but also to deliver soldiers for the German army.

The process of Nazification of the German press in Romania in general and of the rural press in particular largely followed the steps of the Nazification of the political lives of the ethnic Germans in Romania. This way, the Nazification process of the press can be separated into three steps: 1935-1938; 1938-1940 and 1940-1941. During 1935-1941, we

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[149] Emo Connert, "Zehn Jahre Kampf fürs deutsche Bauerntum," *LB*, 68/31, 28 July 1940, 425.

[150] Otto Schwarz, "Bauern vor 4.000 Jahren," in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien* (Hermannstadt: Herausgegeben vom Amt für Presse und Propaganda, Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, 1944), 201-203, 204. "Sie sind nördische Herren Bauern, die Führer ihrer Zeit."

[151] "Den Erbhof aber, den das deutsche Volk als Gesamtheit haben muss, schafft nicht der einzelne, mit einer möglichst hohen Hochzahl die er sein eigen nennt, sondern ihn schaffen die deutschen Soldaten in ihren Kämpfen."

notice an increase in the frequency of the Nazi-inspired themes in the publications targeting the peasantry, but this process underwent a real intensification in 1940 in particular. As for the case study analyzed, the publication *Landwirtschaftliche Blatter* is more of a publication whose Nazification was slow, because the thematic and the concepts of the Nazi ideology were rarely present in the 1938-1940 period of time, and the neglect of the local important figures among the Nazi movement suggest a reluctance which will be paid for in 1941 though the merging of the publication into the new *Südostdeutsche Landpost*. The reduced presence of the Nazi discourse during 1938-1940 can be explained both through the reluctance of the chief editor or of other authors with conservative views regarding the local Nazi movement and through the effects of the censorship imposed by Carol II's regime, which could not tolerate a political movement loyal to an external entity, as the local Nazi movement was.

POLICY OPTIONS OF THE BULGARIANS OF BESSARABIA DURING 1918-1940

IVAN DUMINICA

The problem of the political options of the Bulgarians of Bessarabia in the interwar period is an important topic. Considering detailed archival data and other published materials, we observe how the Bulgarian minority in Bessarabia developed politically. Bulgarians had a significant numerical weight among minorities of the province in the given period. According to the 1930 census, 163,726 Bulgarians were living in Bessarabia (in Greater Romania – 366,384), representing 5.7% of the province's population. Bulgarians lived mainly in rural areas and worked in agriculture – 151,078.[1] But according to the historian Blagovest Neagulov, who relies on contemporary sources, during this period nearly 350,000 ethnic Bulgarians were living there.[2]

Participation in leftist organizations

Within their activity in Sfatul Ţării (National Council), Bessarabian Bulgarians had a cautious stance regarding the unification of Bessarabia with Romania. In the National Council session of 27 March 1918, the Bulgaro-Gagauzian faction declared that they would abstain from voting on the union of Bessarabia with Romania, arguing that this body was not

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[1] Sabin Manuilă, *Studiu etnografic asupra populaţiei României* (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1940), 35.
[2] Благовест Нягулов, "Бесарабските българи във «Велика Румъния»," [Blagovest Nyagulov, *Bessarabian Bulgarians in "Romania Mare"*] *Българите в Северното причерноморие* [Bulgarians on the Northern Black Sea Coast], vol. 1 (Veliko Tarnovo: 1992), 161.

authorized to decide matters within the competence of a future Constituent Assembly.[3]

At the same time, communist propaganda continued to spread in the region, according to which the working class people should form the global "workers and peasants" state. As the communists' followers propagated such ideas as social justice, equal rights and allotment of land to peasants, they easily found their adherents not only among workers and peasants.[4] Some Bulgarians joined that movement. In 1920 the Security Service explained such unfavorable attitude towards the Romanian government by the fact that many officials "allowed themselves to be corrupted in different circumstances when citizens needed them."[5] The behavior of policemen in villages led to the fact that they were not respected by residents. In addition, there were increased living prices for farmers, and simultaneously decreased prices for grain, which was felt by farmers. This is illustrated by the report of the Police Commissioner from the Bessarabian center of Bulgarians – the Bolgrad town from Ismail County, from 25 November 1930 which stated that: "vivid disaffection reigns among the poor and in particular those dealing with agriculture, because the price of grain is extremely low and there is no perspective for its growth."[6] Communist propagandists took advantage of these conditions to agitate people's spirits.

Among the legal organizations, the Communist Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (a Romanian Communist Party organization created for participation in the elections of 1926) was active in Bessarabia, led by the Bulgarian G. Ganev. Its committees existed in several Bulgarian communes: Selioglo, Camcic, Doluchioi. The Tvarditza commune, Tighina and Taraclia counties, and the Cahul district voted for this bloc.[7]

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[3] Arhivele Naționale ale Republicii Moldova, Chișinău [National Archives of the Republic of Moldova] (hereafter NARM), Collection 727, inventory 2, file 55, f. 129 verso.

[4] Oleg Bercu, "Opțiuni politice ale populației găgăuze din Basarabia în perioada interbelică," [Political Options of Gagauz Population in Bessarabia during Interwar Period] in *Spațiul românesc între democrație și totalitarism* [Romanian Space between Democracy and Totalitarism], eds. Adrian Vițalaru, Iulian Ghercă, Liviu Cărare (Iași: Junimea, 2011), 190.

[5] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3194, f. 114.

[6] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3507, f. 26.

[7] Яков Копанский, *Деятельность комитетов Рабоче-крестьянского блока в Бессарабии (1925-1933)* [Yakov Kopanskiy, *Activities Committees of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc in Bessarabia (1925-1933)*] (Кишинев: Штиинца, 1984), 38, 42, 100, 143.

The Social Democratic Party (PSD) of Romania was popular, too. The Congress of this party took place on 17 September 1933 in Bolgrad. PSD deputy Ion Mirescu[8] spoke in front of the inhabitants. Before the general elections from 12 December 1937, the party held a public meeting in the same town. In Cahul county in the spring of 1936 propagandist activity was held by a student from Bucharest, M. Iagolnitza. According to Security data, due to these propagandist actions "only minority elements" adhered to the movement: Gagauzians and Bulgarians from Cairaclia, Cazaclia, Taraclia and Cubei villages. The Head of the local chapter of the party in Cubei was Petre Trufchin.[9]

In turn, illegal Communist organizations continued to spread their proclamations in Bessarabia and carried on campaigning against the Romanian state, calling for Soviet transformations. Already in the autumn of 1918, such an organization had started its activities in the Bulgarian-Gagauzian village Cubei in Akkerman County. Its leader was Nicolai Shishman (nickname – Afanasiev). Along with seven members of this organization, he was arrested and held in Akkerman. Being released shortly afterwards, N. Shishman returned to his native village and continued his revolutionary activity.[10] The organization spread Bolshevist propaganda using different methods. For example, in 1920, local activists took advantage of the Resurrection feast, celebrated on the night of 11 to 12 April, the event which gathered a lot of people in the local church.[11] Propagandists brought Bolshevist leaflets into the churchyard. Another group was discovered in Cubei on 2 May 1923. It is known that 37 persons took part in its formation. Under these circumstances, N. Shishman was forced to immigrate to the USSR.[12]

In Bolgrad, administrative center of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia, was another Revolutionary group. Security Services found traces of its activists in May 1919, and some of those persons were arrested in Leova. They denounced the Bolgrad resident Petrov. But no compromising documents were found in his home, because he kept all illegal literature in a secret box. After his release, Petrov didn't abscond, and the next day he

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[8] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3643, f. 7.

[9] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 155.

[10] *Красная Бессарабия*, [Red Bessarabia] Москва, 12 (1935), 46.

[11] NARM. C. 680, inv. 1, file 3194, f. 908.

[12] Иван Грек, Николай Червенков, *Българите в Украйна и Молдова. Минало и настояще* [Ivan Grek, Nikolay Chervenkov, *Bulgarians in Ukraine and Moldova. Past and Present*] (София: ИК „Христо Ботев", 1993), 164.

was arrested again, for this time some proclamations were found in his home.[13]

In the summer of 1918, a Bolshevist committee was set up in Comrat, the largest Bulgarian-Gagauzian city in Tighina County. Dementiy Gavriliuc, a native of the same settlement, was appointed head of the committee. The organization's goal was to establish the Soviet regime in Bessarabia, but the Committee was discovered on 31 May 1919 and 19 people were arrested. The arrests took place in the villages Chirsovo, Tvarditsa and Valea-Perjei. Sailor Semyon Radov (b. February 16, 1895), group leader of Bolshevists from Bulgarian-Gagauzian village Chirsovo, and his brothers Churshunji and Raşev were accused of distribution of leaflets. The judgment from February 24, 1920 sentenced S. Radov to seven years of forced labor.[14] Following these arrests, Romanian authorities published a booklet entitled "The Bolshevik Plot in Comrat". In this booklet were photos of Bolsheviks who carried weapons, noting that they planned diversions in southern Bessarabia.[15] After the arrest of the majority of the Bolshevist members from Comrat, by way of revenge, those who remained turned to diversion. Thus, in 1921, the group led by Vasilii Arabadji and Savelii Gavriliuc blew up the police station in Comrat.

It should be noted that one more subversive Bolshevist group was enabled in Comrat. It had connections with the secret services of the USSR. The leader of this group was Piotr Châlcic, native of Chirsovo (b. 1890). He was arrested in October 1931 and died in the Ocnele Mari prison, Vâlcea County, in 1936.[16]

A similar Bolshevist structure was established in Leova in May 1919. Affiliates of this organization began to appear across Cahul County. One was established in Sărăteni. Most members of this organization were Bulgarians. This new Bolshevist organization was discovered shortly after its foundation.[17]

Local populations also manifested their dissatisfaction with the new regime in other Bulgarian villages. On 19 March 1919, Anadol villagers, from Ismail County, started a rebellion. The angry crowd disarmed and

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[13] Владимир Травушкин, *Болград* [Vladimir Travushkin, *Bolgrad*] (Одесса: Книгоиздательство, 1963), 54-55.

[14] Георгий Стойнов, *Кирсово 180 лет Башкӱÿ: в прошлом и настоящем* [Georgiy Stoynov, *Chirsovo 180 Years Bashkiu: Past and Present*] (Кишинев: Картя Молдовеняскэ, 1990), 49.

[15] Степан Булгар, *История города Комрата* [Stepan Bulgar, *History of Comrat*] (Кишинэу: Reclama, 2008), 108.

[16] Булгар, *История города Комрата*, 114.

[17] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 722, f. 175-177b.

beat the policeman Gheorghe Antici and the soldier Ion Avram, then entered the mayor's office and destroyed the census lists where the riots were registered. They shouted "Hurrah for Russia! Down with Romania!" The uprising was suppressed after the intervention of military troops and 24 locals were arrested.[18]

In July of the same year, in the village of Taraclia, Akkerman County, Petre Galev, 29, a teacher of Bulgarian origin from the village of Cod Chitai, was arrested, being accused of spreading false information. The notary of the village, Radion Terzi, characterized him as "an ardent Russophile Bulgarian". He told his fellow villagers that Bolsheviks would be coming soon and Bessarabia would become a part of Russia.[19]

In 1920, in Bulgarian village Doluchioi, Ismail County, Ștefan Tanger and sanitary agent Andrei I. Clujnicov formed a communist revolutionary committee composed of five people. The organization was subject to the Central Committee from Ismail. According to the instructions, the committee should be made up of five people, including a president, a secretary and three members, and when the Bolsheviks would come, the committee chairman would become a mayor, the secretary the Secretary, and the member counsellors. Some of the inhabitants refused to participate in the illegal organization. For example, Gh. M. Marinov (b. 1897), carpenter, left the room after visiting the first session. But a few days later, under threat of death, he was prevented from disclosing information about the revolutionary committee.[20] Meetings took place in the shop of D. Gradinaru, which was in the house of Șt. Tangher. During these meetings, Clujnicov read Russian newspapers to members and supporters, calling Bessarabians to rebel against Romania. The chairman was giving instructions and members of the organization had to propagate among the villagers from surrounding areas and to form one communist committee in every commune.[21] In the process of looking for suitable persons, preference was given to those who had participated in the Revolution of 1918. As a result, such a structure was formed in the Bulgarian village Cairaclia. The organization was under the leadership of Stefan Ivanov. A committee was also formed in Cishmeaua Varuita, headed by Dumitru Chiriacov. After the formation of these organizations, each member was to form another committee of 4 people.

In 1920, a large gathering was organized in the town of Ismail, led by Clujnicov. In his speech, a certain Sevov, representative of the Communist

[18] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 704, f. 9-9b.
[19] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 38, f. 19-20.
[20] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 4125, f. 15b.
[21] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 4125, f. 9.

Center from Chișinău, declared that committees should be formed as tightly as possible and must be kept secret so as not to be revealed.[22] After this meeting, Clujnicov was arrested, and after him other members of the committees were trapped.

Bulgarians were spreading Bolshevist propaganda in Moldovan villages, too. For example, Ivan Petrov (b. 1886), residing in the village Trusheni, Chișinău County, who in December 1918 was working in a stable of Vasile Neamtzu, from the commune Cojushna, began to spread propaganda among its residents in order to incite them to riot. He used Bolshevist proclamations in Russian, reading leaflets publicly urging peasants to take up arms and chase the Romanians. The raid carried out at his home did not find anything, but witnesses said they saw him at three proclamations. On being questioned, the defendant declared that he met craftsman Vladimir Lobanov in Chișinău, who gave him two proclamations. Also Lobanov informed Petrov that soon "Ukraine will join with Bessarabia and Romanians will be banished".[23]

Bulgarians and the Tatarbunar uprising

Several Bessarabian Bulgarians participated in the biggest uprising in interwar Bessarabia, which took place in Tatarbunar in 1924. The major battle between rebels and Romanian gendarmes occurred near the Bulgarian village Camcic. Revolutionary organizations from villages Caragaciul Nou and Culevcea awaited the right moment to join the rebels. Archival data show that after the revolt many residents of Bulgarian villages were arrested: 29 in Caracurt, 25 in Doluchioi, 59 in Cishmeaua-Varuita, etc.[24] In connection with the events of 1924, two teachers from the village Ciișia, Akkerman County, drew the attention of Security Services. One of them, Ivan Hinev, was shot when he tried to escape from escort, and the other, Teodor Penkov, was severely beaten and died in 1934.[25] Other rebels managed to escape to Soviet Russia, where they settled in Moldavian Autonomous SSR (MASSR, modern-day Ukraine).

During the same period, in the village Selioglu, the revolutionary organization "Союз революционных крестьян" (Revolutionary Peasants Union) began to operate, supporting the participants in the Tatarbunar rebellion and planning to organize a new uprising. The organization

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[22] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 4125, f. 10b.
[23] NARM, C. 738, inv. 1, file 676, f. 41-41b.
[24] Измаильский архив [Archive of Ismail], C. 312, inv. 1, f. 81, f. 5-6.
[25] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 483.

worked for three more years until, in April 1929, the authorities managed to arrest seventeen of its members. Then a party cell was opened in Bebeli village, at the head of which was S. Celac.[26] After the Tatarbunar uprising, Bolshevist movements slowed down, but illegal organizations continued to function. On August 14, the Security Services managed to track down another illegal group from Cubei village and arrested five people.

Despite the raids and arrests, some Bulgarians continued to aspire to communist ideas. Interestingly, the report of the General Police Directorate from 6 March 1937 communicated the fact that Bulgarians from Cahul county villages had resumed activity by organizing new cores. These conclusions were based on the discovery that most of them were regularly reading Soviet newspaper "Известия" (News), some subscribing to the publication and others buying it.[27] This newspaper spread intense propaganda on the progress made by the Soviets.

Romanian authorities saw the threat in the spread of communist ideas, arriving not only from Soviet Russia but also from Bulgaria. In October 1930, the Romanian authorities signaled that a secret communist organization, the Bulgarian division of the international "Anti-Imperialist League" in Sofia had printed 200,000 copies of incendiary manifestos, some of which were to be distributed in Romania. These manifestos were in an eight-page booklet format addressed "To the Bulgarian masses in towns and villages". In its texts addressed to "subjugated workers, craftsmen and peasants," it was explained that "today, Russia... is the only state fighting for all nationalities across the globe, seeking their freedom and independence only through the self-government of nations." At the same time, they criticized Romanian political parties. Especially Bulgarian peasants were told that the National Peasant Party (NPP) was not a left-wing party, because its activity demonstrated that it was an "established platform for imperialism, supporting terror, violence and the destruction of the constitutional rights and freedoms of the people."[28] Based on this and other critiques, communists were urging those who shared anti-imperialist ideas to establish committees and branches of the division and to address the central committee for information and interaction when needed.[29] Some Bulgarian subjects suspected of Bolshevist activities were expelled from the country. Spiridon Podicov, for example, suffered this fate in

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[26] Грек, Червенков, *Българите в Украйна и Молдова. Минало и настояще*, 164.
[27] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 352.
[28] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 107.
[29] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 113.

1922. Before being forced to leave Romania, he had worked as a civil servant in the Bolgrad town hall.[30]

National movement for the establishment of a Bulgarian minority party

In the late 1920's, Bessarabian Bulgarians laid the foundations for a national legal movement. One goal of this movement was to form an ethnic Bulgarian party. At first the Bulgarians chose to form an "organization" with the stated cultural purpose. The initiator of this movement was a Bulgarian intelligence group from Akkerman, headed by Todor Uzunov, Ivan Fitov, Vladimir Diordiev and Ivan Stoyanov. In order to attract allies from Akkerman County, they published a call in the Russian newspaper in Chişinău "Бессарабская воля" (The Will of Bessarabia). A similar invitation manifesto was published in Bulgarian. It declared: "The time has come when Bulgarians must unite in a national organization. No party in the country, no matter how democratic it may be, can satisfy all nationalities, because political parties pursue first of all the purpose of the whole country; they have too many common problems, so the needs of national groups remain secondary priorities."[31] The next step in the actions of Bulgarian leaders was to conduct a county congress, which took place in the Bulgarian village Ivanovca on December 29,

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[30] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, C. 3507, f. 7. It should be noted that the Romanian state had an applicable attitude regarding its Bulgarian subjects in Bessarabia. It is known that the communist movement in Bulgaria was very strong. The Bulgarian Social Democratic Revolutionary Party was one of the founders of the Third International in 1919. Romanian Government suspicions were strengthened after the Bolshevik uprising in Bulgaria, which was crushed in September 1923. As a result, many political emigrants settled in the USSR. Some of them (in 1924, 202 people) found shelter in Odessa (modern Ukraine), near southern Bessarabia. This was to be a springboard to launch the process of spreading communist ideas among the Bessarabian population. At the end of 1923/beginning of 1924, the Internationalist Club in Odessa opened a Bulgarian section. It dealt with the creation of national administrative districts which included Bulgarian villages in southern Ukraine, schools that teach in the Bulgarian language, etc. These achievements could not have passed unnoticed by Bessarabian Bulgarians (Михаил Дихан, "Дейността на българските политически емигранти в Южна Украйна през 1925-1929 г.," [Mihail Dihan, *Bulgarian Political Immigrants in Southern Ukraine in the Years 1925-1929*] *Исторически преглед* [Historical Review], София, 4-5 (1967), 121).

[31] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 3192, f. 90.

1929.[32] 600 delegates were involved. As a result of the discussions, it was decided that certain cultural issues should be resolved. For example, delegates agreed to work towards the introduction of the Bulgarian language in primary schools, the foundation of new schools and on the issue of secondary education for Bulgarians.[33] From the political point of view, the participants decided to organize a bloc, for supporting candidates of any government, urging them to satisfy Bulgarians' needs in exchange for their votes. The party would still submit, however, its own candidates in the upcoming elections, to gain representatives in Parliament, County Councils, etc. It was specified that all national and political interests, such as, for example, the struggle for the introduction of the minority law, "will be most vividly echoed in this organization".[34] It was also decided that a committee composed of three people would be established in each community, and on the future congress, these committees would co-opt other members for the management board. For this bloc's efficiency it was decided that a newspaper in Bulgarian, "Нашият глас" (Our Voice) would be published.[35] In this context, teacher G. Dimitrov mentioned that he dreamt of forming a powerful Union of the Bulgarians from Bessarabia.

In order to implement these plans, an Executive Committee and a Central Committee of the organization were elected. The first organ included: chairman T. Uzunov, deputies Iv. Stoyanov, P. Derliev and D. Vodicear, secretary V. Deardiev, lawyer, assistant secretary N. Cischinov, and treasurer H. Cischinov. The Central Committee brought together 25 people, representing 17 Bulgarian communities.[36] In the appeal to their brethren in Akkerman County, they stipulated that these committees would be provisional.

Bulgarians continued efforts towards the formation of an organization (Bloc) to unite all their brethren of Southern Bessarabia. Importantly, one issue of the newspaper "Нашият глас" from 1930 repeatedly highlighted the organization's founding. It was claimed that "it will do less politics and take care of us like a mother".[37] At the same time, Bulgarians were asked to leave the Romanian parties, because "in those political parties, the Bulgarian does not do what his voters ask him to, but what party leader

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[32] Благовест Нягулов, "Българският конгрес в Ивановка Българска," [Blagovest Nyagulov, *Bulgarian Congress in Ivanovca Noua*], Родно слово [Native Word] Кишинев 8 (1993), 3.

[33] Нягулов, "Българският конгрес в Ивановка Българска," 3.

[34] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 90.

[35] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 88-89.

[36] Нягулов, "Българският конгрес в Ивановка Българска," 3.

[37] Нягулов, "Българският конгрес в Ивановка Българска," 3.

orders him". Bulgarians' interests could be guaranteed only by uniting in a "strong drive". According to B. Neagulov, these ideas were identical to those announced by their comrades from Dobruja, fighting for the establishment of a minority political party.[38] In the end, Bessarabian Bulgarians failed to create a proper political project. This failure was due to several factors. First, the idea of creating a Bulgarian minority bloc did not attract the attention of state authorities in Bulgaria, who were more concerned with the political organization of Bulgarians in Dobruja. Secondly, most Bulgarians from Bessarabia were enlisted in other political parties and, having their own personal interests or for fear of being accused of Bulgarian irredentism, tended not to want to unite into a separate organization. Despite this, Bulgarian leaders in Bessarabia were confident in their actions, an attitude which is reflected in a letter by T. Uzunov, who wrote the following: "I believe that when these difficult times pass, the seed of national movement we have planted will bring forth fruit."[39]

Some attempts to revive the idea of forming a Bulgarian party in Budjak came from Dobruja. Thus, in September 1935, Stefan Penacov, former deputy of the National Peasant Party of Durostor, ideologically and financially motivated by the government in Sofia, went to Silistra and tried to attract Bulgarians expelled from the NPP to establish a political party. With no support, he said he would form a party in southern Bessarabia and from there start the political struggle. The Romanian General Police Division presented information according to which the idea of this party came from former Bulgarian plenipotentiary minister in Bucharest K. Ivanov, who, for this purpose, handed over to Penkov 500,000 levs, an amount dictated by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[40] The available data does not indicate any successful mission of this Dobrujan in Bessarabia.

State Security Services suspected Ivan Jeleazcov (b. 1884), a lawyer from Bolgrad, former deputy of the National Liberal Party, of the hidden initiative to form a Bulgarian minority party. This was apparent from the fact that, in autumn 1934, he founded "Българско общество – Болград" (Bulgarian community – Bolgrad).[41] Its "Act of Organization" and

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[38] Нягулов, *Бесарабският българин*, 166.

[39] Нягулов, "Българският конгрес в Ивановка Българска," 3.

[40] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 258.

[41] Благовест Нягулов, "Бесарабският българин Иван Желязков и българското малцинствено движение в Румъния," [Blagovest Nyagulov, *Bulgarian Ivan Jeleazcov and the Bulgarian Minority Movement in Romania*] in *Българите в*

"Regulations" were authenticated at a public notary in Bolgrad on 29 October. Ivan Jeleazcov, Feodor Caramanov and Evgeny Cuclin were chosen for the Management Board for a term of three years.[42] In total, 23 people were registered as members of the committee. The statute provided that this organization would have the right to establish branches, subsidiaries and representative offices in the counties of Cahul, Akkerman, Ismail and Tighina. It was specified that the purpose would concern "spreading of culture among Bulgarians of Romanian citizenship".[43] In order to achieve this goal it stated that "the Society" would organize schools teaching in Bulgarian, societies for education, music and sports, libraries and reading rooms, folk conferences, parties and social evenings for mutual understanding of different nationalities in the city. The creation of this organization sparked harsh criticism in the Romanian press. The newspaper "Curentul" called it "the Bulgarian political party" and alerted the Minister of Public Education C. Angelescu about the fact that Jeleazcov, being the chairman of the school committee of high schools for girls, was spreading a pro-Bulgarian spirit among youth.[44] The criticism continued in "Universul," which named the party an "irredentist Bulgarian nest".[45] At the end of 1935, this publication wrote that the local population is satisfied with his work and "even talks about forming a party of the Bulgarian minority".[46] Regarding Bulgarians' interest in this organization, an informative note from 28 January 1936 stated that two locals from Calceva village, Petre and Ivan Naydenov, had come to Bolgrad and were asking about the organization on the part of Calceva villagers. The informer stated that, from discussions with members of this society, Boris Echiscelii learned that I. Jeleazcov was spreading propaganda through Bulgarian villages. According to his statements, the association was planning a boost that spring when Jeleazcov would receive financial funds and 20,000 volumes of books from Bulgaria. In conclusion, the denunciation stated that "first, the association will come into being under the title of *cultural association*, then they will set up a Bulgarian party, they will unite with those from Dobruja, and will pursue revisionist and irredentist goals."[47]

Северното причерноморие [Bulgarians on the North Black Sea Coast], т. 2 (Велико Търново: 1993), 237.
[42] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 216-217.
[43] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 226.
[44] *Curentul* [Current], Bucharest, 2450, 27 November 1934.
[45] *Universul* [The Universe], Bucharest, 79-80, 21-22 March 1935.
[46] Нягулов, *Бесарабският българин*, 242.
[47] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 229.

Romanian authorities were taking seriously the possible transformation of the "Community" into a party, and worked to prevent this through various methods. Thus, on 16 February 1935, the County Court of Ismail refused its registration as a legal entity. Jeleazcov appealed the decision at the Court of Appeals in Galați. In order to give the judges no motive for refusal, he developed a new status, following the example of the Bulgarian community in Galați, which in 1933 was registered as a legal entity. But here the case was not resolved, being delayed until the spring of 1937. Meanwhile, security authorities were pressuring members of the community, coercing them to withdraw their signatures on the memorandum of the organization. The chairman of the party was "advised" to abandon the idea of registration. According to B. Neagulov, the Bulgarian community did not receive the requested status and slowed its activity.[48]

It should be noted that Bulgaria actively pleaded in favor of political unification of the Bulgarians from all over Greater Romania. As a result, in early 1930, friendly relations between Bulgarian deputies in Bessarabia and Dobruja in the Romanian Parliament were established. During the Extraordinary Congress of the European Minorities in Geneva, the delegate from Dobruja, Todor Toshev, was also representing his brethren in Bessarabia.[49] From 21 to 22 May 1936 the First Extraordinary Congress of Bulgarians in Romania was held, attended by 62 delegates. Ivan Jeleazcov was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee and his second was Bessarabian representative T. Uzunov. Here, again unsuccessfully, they discussed the issue of creating a "political party organization" of all Bulgarians in Romania.[50]

The issue of creating a Bulgarian minority party fell within the interests of Romanian Security Services, which in April 1937 signaled that they intended to merge the Bulgarian community from Romania to form a Bulgarian minority political party, and to establish a strong popular bank with Bulgarian capital. According to the competent bodies, the political union of Bulgarians was created in response to the cultural connection "of Bulgarians from Southern Bessarabia and Bulgarians discovered recently in Banat – from Binga and Besheneul Vechi villages".[51] In June of the same year, it was pointed out that "elements of the Bulgarian community in Dobruja roam southern Bessarabia, spreading propaganda to attract adherents and to form a minority bloc as strong as possible". Subsequent

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[48] Нягулов, *Бесарабският българин*, 238-239.
[49] Нягулов, "Бесарабските българи във «Велика Румъния»," 166.
[50] Нягулов, "Бесарабските българи във «Велика Румъния»," 168.
[51] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 354.

investigations have not confirmed this information.[52] In April of the same year, the local secret services reported that they had detected no signs of the formation of such political parties in Budjak. It was mentioned that "at present, the Bulgarian population is enlisted in the Liberal and National parties of Peasants". However, given the fact that Southern Bessarabian Bulgarians had close links with Bulgaria and their fellows in Romanian Parliament, "formerly leading members of the irredentist movement" it was decided that Security bodies would continue overseeing Bessarabians' actions.[53]

After the installation of the dictatorship of King Carol II, The National Renaissance Front was formed on 16 December 1938. Representatives of all minorities entered the Supreme Council. Bulgarians were granted three seats and Bessarabians hoped that at least one of them would be occupied by their representative, but all three went to Bulgarians from Dobruja. In protest, lawyer Ivan Jeleazcov went to Bucharest, but he was told that the interests of Bessarabian Bulgarians were represented by the lawyer Encio Nicolov from the town Bazargic (today Dobrich). Then I. Jeleazcov met E. Nicolov, who confirmed that he was a member of the Board of Governors. The deputy assured Jeleazcov that he would give him power of attorney from the Interior Ministry, so that Jeleazcov could act in his name for the Bulgarian cause in Bessarabia. But because Nicolov did not keep his promise, Jeleazcov worked in Bessarabian villages almost illegally, being practically always threatened with arrest by gendarmes.[54]

It should be noted that in southern Bessarabia existed Bulgarian societies which intended to work with the Romanian parties and in exchange for campaigning in favor of the latter, they demanded some favors for locals. One example is the Sports society "Ialpug" from Bolgrad.[55] According to a complaint to the Security Services, it had two departments: espionage, headed by Ivan Nazliev, and the political side, headed by local high school teacher Gheorghy Dimov. This last department took action in the parliamentary elections in December 1928 by organizing meetings in the home of Senator Hristofor Hristoforov. Public meetings were held in Bolgrad, Curci, Bulgarica, Cishmeaua-Varuita, etc. At these meetings, Hristoforov and Dimov usually gave speeches. Both demanded that the peasant population support the national government, which, according to them, intended to take care of the ninth

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[52] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 361.

[53] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 363.

[54] Централен държавен исторически архив [Central State Historical Archive of Bulgaria], C. 166, inv. 4, file 8, f. 11.

[55] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 126.

region, headquartered in Bolgrad. Locals were promised that, after the election of NPP, all public functions would be occupied only by Bulgarians.[56]

The Society "Future Bulgaria" had a similar purpose, established in the fall of 1930, with headquarters in the house of Dr. Andrei Culev, and from 1932 in the house of priest Michael Novacovici. This political direction was led by Hristofor Hristoforov.[57] The Management Board of this society included: Dr. Andrei Culev, high school teachers Afanasii Melnicov and Iambulova Alexandrina, and others.

It should be noted that these organizations also included Bulgarian personalities who were part of the Romanian parties; for example, Hristoforov was in the National Peasants Party. In 1928, after NPP came to power, he conducted extensive propaganda in elections to Parliament in villages with Bulgarian populations. He was elected as senator on the party lists.[58] The same party was represented by Gh. Dimov, N. Pamucci and B. Camburov. In turn, Ivan Nazliev believed in National Liberal policy, but I. Jeleazcov, A. Melnicov and A. Culev were members of NPP.

The local intellectuals' tactic of asking favors, through societies, from Romanian parties in exchange for support in parliamentary elections paid off. In 1928, all institutions in Bolgrad were occupied by Bulgarians: B. Camburov was appointed mayor, V. Melnicov director of the high school for boys, Rampel chief doctor, Stoicev school inspector, and in the General State Security organs in Bucharest worked Rusev from Bolgrad, etc.[59]

The Romanian parties in the Bulgarian atmosphere

Out of hostility toward the Romanian state in the first years after unification, Bulgarians were passive in electoral ballots. Interesting in this regard is the Security Services' finding dated 12 January 1920, which stated that in the last election, the majority of people of all social classes were indifferent towards elections. On minorities, it was stated that, "Bulgarian and German settlers, who together with the imperialists dream of returning to Russia, even abstained from voting."[60] But later the situation would change and Bulgarians would become more active in Romanian political life.

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[56] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 127-128
[57] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 127.
[58] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 122b.
[59] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 132.
[60] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3194, f. 114b.

The National Peasant Party, which defended the rights of peasants in its program, enjoyed popularity among Bessarabian Bulgarians. One document from 1926 addresses how propaganda and promises convinced the Bulgarians to vote for the NPP. According to this text, former notary Stepan Parteni was spreading propaganda among the people in commune Chibabciu, telling them that "it would be much better if the Peasant Party came to power ... it would be better for the population, it would give us land and lower the heavy taxes taken by the state."[61] This convinced the farmers, who according to Security Services data "refused to pay taxes to the state ... in the hope that there would be a new form of government which would exempt them from taxation."[62] (Annex 1)

In the town of Reni, Ismail County, Bulgarians and Gagauzians were leading the NPP. In 1928, the chairman of the local chapter was deputy Stefan Constantinov.[63] The Bolgrad chapter of the NPP was headed by I. Chioibash and Gh. Popescu. In the village Doluchioi, the chairman of the Committee was Ivan Ciolac. In Erdec-Burnu the head of the chapter was Andrei Culcena.[64]

The NPP also enjoyed support in Comrat, Tighina county. The founding meeting in this town, which was held on 2 February 1932, was attended by 400 people from both the settlement and the neighboring villages. Both Romanian and Bulgarian politicians gave speeches. Haralambie Draganov, former mayor, welcomed the attendees in his opening address. In turn, the lawyer Topalov from Tighina explained in Bulgarian the advantages of choosing NPP representatives in Parliament.[65] The party secretary of Akkerman county was Bulgarian Stoicov. His name was linked to a scandal in June 1929. A Soviet agent caught by Bessarabian authorities, P. Talmuzan, confessed that for two years the USSR had been sending large sums of money to Stoicov. He, in turn, would distribute the money to the agents and spies. The wife of the accused confessed during interrogation that Stoicov was chief of the revolutionary organization from Akkerman.[66]

In 1927, NPP lost some of its members, headed by Nicolae Lupu, who constituted a dissident wing of the left, which was reflected in the situations of local chapters. Thus, in Comrat, Lupu was supported by Haralambie Draganov, who then was appointed head of the local chapter of NPP - Lupu. After Lupu's return to the NPP in March 1934, local

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[61] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3405, f. 141b.
[62] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 161b.
[63] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 46.
[64] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, f. 46.
[65] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3456, f. 55.
[66] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3405, f. 204.

chapters were forced to fuse again. To this end, a party meeting was held in Comrat on 29 April 1934, attended by 600 delegates from the surrounding villages. The meeting was attended by Lupu's supporters, led by Draganov, and Peasants, led by local lawyer Romulus Rădulescu. The event was also attended by prof. Stefan Ciobanu, NPP chapter head from Tighina County, Demetrius Brătănescu, vice-president of the same chapter, and the lawyer Stefanescu, party member. All attendees supported the fusion at the national level and recommended local chapters do the same. Because of the disagreements between Rădulescu's and Draganov groups, however, it was not possible to form a joint committee for municipal elections that day.[67]

In turn, the Radical Peasant Party enjoyed massive support from Bulgarian intellectuals in Akkerman, headed by the lawyer Todor Uzunov. With his support, a party congress was held there on 21 November 1937, attended by 150 people. Within the congress, Uzunov declared that the only party he represents "is a democratic party fighting for working-class and peasants, lifting them to the level of life they deserve."[68] In some cases, party propagandists in Bulgarian villages were Romanian teachers themselves. Through their work, they convinced the local populations to support a particular party. So, for example, we learn that in Chirsovo commune, Tighina County, one fierce supporter of NPP – Lupu was the schoolteacher Dumitru Sotirescu.[69]

Bulgarians supported the National Liberal Party, too. The chairman of the Ismail chapter was Vasile Tomov, who "enjoyed great sympathy from the county's population"[70]. He was elected as a deputy and senator in the Romanian Parliament. One of the Bulgarian deputies (years 1922-1926, 1927-1928) on the Liberal Party lists was Ivan Jeleazcov. In the legislative body, he addressed the various issues related to the rights of Bulgarians. Thus, on 23 May 1923, he criticized the gendarmes of Ismail and Akkerman counties, who shot some locals only because they were accused of "Bolshevist activity". His position was not regarded favorably by parliamentary opposition, or by the leadership of his party. The newspaper *Universul*, which was close to NLP, criticized the Bulgarian lawyer, and as a result he was forced to leave the political party.[71]

The majority population did not overlook the activities of other parties. The People's Party, led by Marshall Alexandru Averescu, was also active

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[67] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3591, f. 44.
[68] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 1313.
[69] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3591, f. 44.
[70] *Бессарабское слово* [Bessarabian Word], Кишинев, 3200, 17 ноября 1933.
[71] Нягулов, *Бесарабският българин*, 233-234.

in southern Bessarabia in the early 1930's. We find out about party members from the list of Tighina county representatives who attended the congress in Bucharest in May 1930. From the city of Tighina participated Dumitru Topciu, Afanasie Gagauz, Gheorghe Artănov, and Dumitru Vragalev. The representative delegation came from Lunga commune. It was formed of 31 people.[72] A prominent representative of this party was Haralambie Mitanov. In the period 1921-1927, he served as deputy in the Romanian Parliament.[73]

In April 1932 Octavian Goga split off from the People's Party and founded the National Agrarian Party. Some members of the former ruling party also joined this party. The party was present in almost all Bulgarian and Gagauz settlements in Bessarabia. This was due to the vigorous activity of party representative Dumitru Topciu. Originating from Tomai commune, Tighina County, he was aware of all the needs of the peasants. Practicing law, Topciu fought for farmers' rights. He was elected several times on party lists as deputy in the Romanian Parliament. Topciu managed to attract many of his brethren to the party.[74] After the party's merger with the National Christian Defense League of A.C. Cuza, in July 1935, Topciu continued to lead the party cell in all of Tighina County. In his memoirs, Gheorghe Cuza recognizes that D. Topciu provided the party with massive support from the minority population of the county.

Documents attest that the supporter of the Bloc of Citizens for Homeland Rescue was Professor Andrei from Bolgrad. We find that, on 8 October 1933, he sent 20 newspapers entitled "New Way" in Ismail, but they did not reach their destination because they were seized by police.[75]

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[72] NARM, C. 1672, inv. 1, file 1, f. 39.

[73] The Security Service's reports from 1933 characterize him as "an ardent Bulgarophile", who, together with his activists, urged local residents not to send their children to Romanian schools, but to enroll them in Bulgarian schools. He sent numerous requests to the Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Chişinău demanding he recognize their right to establish a Bulgarian University in Bolgrad, a district court, Bulgarian high schools and primary schools. Moreover, Mitanov pleaded for autonomy of Southern Bessarabian Bulgarians in the so-called "Bulgarian Ethnic Hold" (NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3192, f. 19; Петр Шорников, "Болгары Бессарабии межвоенного периода (1918-1940)," [Petr Shornikov, *Bessarabian Bulgarians in the Interwar Period (1918-1940)*] in *Relaţiile moldo-bulgare. Personalităţi marcante. Învăţământ şi ştiinţă* [Moldovan-Bulgarian Relations. Striking Personalities. Education and Science] (Cahul: 2011), 258-259).

[74] NARM, C. 1672, inv. 1, file 1, f. 39.

[75] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3643, f. 9.

Other Romanian parties were seeking their adherents among minorities, too. For example, in October 1935, student Peter Trufchin of Cubei village, Cahul county, received a letter from the organization "Federation of Peasants from Romania". The young man was asked to contribute directly to the establishment of a branch of the organization with a member in the county. Trufchin rejected the proposal because he belonged to the Social Democratic Party.[76]

The interest of the Bulgarian peasantry was directed towards **extreme right parties**, such as: National Christian Defense League (president A.C. Cuza), the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Iron Guard (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu). This was due to Legionnaires and Cuzist activity in southern Bessarabia. Many Bulgarian peasants were attracted by the Legionaries' propaganda, which bandied the common idea that after coming to power, the land would be expropriated and later divided equally between all males.[77] In some cases, the ideas of anti-Semitism and allotment of land were mixed. In January 1931, the legionary organization from Tabacu village, Ismail County, spread the rumor that, after the devastation of Jewish property, it would be divided between poor inhabitants. At the same time, they promised that they would take land from rich residents and divide it among the poor.[78] In turn, Romanian nationalists' interest in Southern Bessarabia was the result of their understanding that this territory is the most exposed to Bolshevist propaganda, being close to the borders with the USSR. The opposition parties exploited public discontent over Romanian government abuses. The Orthodoxism of the radical right played a major role in attracting members and supporters among these parties. The program of A. Cuza promised to grant numerous rights and freedoms for "Christian minorities," hoping to get background information for identifying anti-Semitic elements among their ranks.[79] One positive moment in this respect is the fact that some rightist parties "in order to avoid confusion and

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[76] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 155.
[77] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3589, f. 23b.
[78] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 434.
[79] Bercu, "Opţiuni politice ale populaţiei găgăuze," 197; Viorica Nicolenco, *Extrema dreaptă în Basarabia (1923-1940)* [The Extreme Right in Bessarabia] (Chişinău: Civitas, 1999), 50; Horia Bozdoghină, "Liga Apărării Naţionale Creştine şi problema minorităţilor în anii 20," [The National Christian Defense League and the Issue of Minorities in the 1920s] in *Partidele politice şi minorităţile naţionale din România în secolul XX* [Political Parties and National Minorities in Romania in the 20th Century], vol. III, eds. Vasile Ciobanu, Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Editura Techno Media, 2008), 122.

misunderstanding" conducted their agitation in people's specific mother tongues. For example, the National Christian Defense Leagues' Programme of Action from 1929 was published in Bulgarian. In January 1932, representatives of this organization in Cahul County formed nests with centers in the communes of the Bulgarian and Gagauzian population: Vulcaneşti, Taraclia, Cairaclia and Tatar Copceac.[80] In the county of Ismail, the Cuzist nest was working in Tabacu commune. It included about 100 members led by George Bujilov, who initiated bringing a flag from Vulcăneşti on 4 January 1931 and the consecration of the local church. But, according to the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the meeting was adjourned.[81] Such nests worked in the communes Curci, Cuza Vodă, Caracurt, Bolboca and Etulia. Then another nest of Cuza followers was discovered in the commune of Tashlic, Akkerman. One of its members was Bulgarian Ştefan Gancev.[82] In October 1937, leaflets of NCDL were spread in the village of Taraclia in order to make electoral propaganda for the additional communal elections which took place on 8 October (Annex 2). The leaflets, written in Bulgarian with Latin alphabet, were spread by the lawyer Ionel Gheorghiu, head of the organization in this county. In these leaflets, the local population was urged to support the party candidates.[83]

A congress of all NCDL members, which took place on 10 November 1935 in the village Minciuna, Tighina County, involved 600 participants from Akkerman County and "in smaller number were Bulgarians". One year later, at a party meeting in Tighina town on 12 September 1936, "30 residents of Bulgarian and German minorities" participated. Subsequently, at the party's national congress in Bucharest on 28 October 1936, led by heads of village committees Cristian Teslaff, Flegel Natanail and Ivan Cuncev, "20 members of German and Bulgarian origin" participated.[84] Among the active members of this party in the county of Tighina we encounter many Bulgarians. So, for example, farmer Michael Panov was the organizer and propagandist of the party branch in Bascalia commune; Pantilie Ianioglo, farmer of Gagauz origin, led the organization in Cioc-Maidan. These people managed to mobilize voters around the NCDL. 20 supporters of the party were identified in 1938 in Bascalia, and in Cioc-Maidan, 240. In the summer of 1937, M. Panov was elected Chairman of the Joint National Christian Committee in Bascalia village. In January

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[80] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 505.
[81] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 434.
[82] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 499b.
[83] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3810, f. 611.
[84] NARM, C. 2081, inv. 1, file 97, f. 31.

1938, when the National Christian Party came to power, he was appointed mayor of the village. He was an ardent anti-Semite, forcing Jews to display in their shops party proclamations regarding measures to be taken against the Jews.[85] Another asset of Cuza's was Pantilie Ianioglo. In the summer of 1937, he was appointed head of the Joint Committee of the National Christian Organization from the village Cioc- Maidan. In the same year, he abandoned his candidacy for municipal elections and was elected mayor under the liberal government. After coming to power in the National Christian Party, Ianioglo retained his position as mayor. In June 1935, Ivan Cuncev joined the party. Using propaganda, he managed to form a committee consisting of 50-60 members in the village Petuşti. It should be noted that, after the election, many persons left party ranks because they had joined with personal interests and did not get the desired results.[86]

A group of Cuza followers existed in Bolgrad, Ismail County. Its leader, Nicolae Stanescu, was a landowner, and its other member was Afanasie Popov, a teacher at the school for boys No. 4. From the documents we learn that, in December 1936, priest Avakum Rusu, the county party leader, was in Bolgrad, where he made contacts with members of the local organization, and urged them to recruit new adherents, especially from rural communities.[87] Such an organization existed in Tvarditza commune, Tighina County. Moreover, on October 10, 1937 there was a meeting under the chairmanship of Advocate Dumitru Topciu, head of the county organization. He gave instructions to intensify electoral propaganda and to establish many local organizations.[88]

The Legion of the Archangel Michael, led by Corneliu Codreanu, conducted intensive propaganda across southern Bessarabia. In April 1930, an "Archangel Michael" legionnaire nest was founded in the town of Bolgrad.[89] It was headed by six young men, natives of the city. However, due to pressure from local police, in order to stop any anti-Semitic disturbances in the spring of 1931, we find that "this nest was almost inexistent".[90] In November 1930, about 40 locals established a strong nest of this organization in the village Vulcaneşti, Cahul County.[91] In 1932, its mayor, Onofrei Tanase, noted that the Iron Guard could take 60% of the

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[85] NARM, C. 2081, inv. 1, file 97, f. 57.
[86] NARM, C. 2081, inv. 1, file 97, f. 55.
[87] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 603; file 3817, f. 310b.
[88] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 1276.
[89] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 22.
[90] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 22.
[91] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 417.

votes in the elections that followed. The head of the organization was Ion Popozol.[92] We must note here that, according to the 1930 census, this commune held 109 Bulgarians and 5263 Gagauzians.[93] In December 1930, the Guard's nests were formed in other Bulgarian and Gagauzian villages: Caracurt, Vaisala, Calceva, Bolboca, Împutzita, Etulia and Slobozia.[94] Young legionnaire Ivan Caragancev (b. 1912) worked very actively in Comrat, Tighina County. On 6 August 1930, he was arrested for having pasted a manifesto signed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu on a fence of a local cinema.[95] After the raid at Caragancev, instructions for organizing nests of the Iron Guard, an issue of the newspaper *Pământul strămoşesc*, and seven sheets which contained the song "Spre ideal" were found. On being questioned, the young man said that, in the fall of 1929, he had left home and was determined to live in the city of Galați, where he worked at a grocery store. There he was enlisted in the Galați Battalion of the Iron Guard. Being a member of the organization, he received instructions. Afterwards, receiving authorization from Codreanu, he came back to his hometown in order to form a nest.[96] Soon Caragancev was released, which allowed him to continue Guardist operations. This time he was settled in Basarabeasca, where he organized meetings in a rented building from the railway station, adhering young activists. To hide the activities of the organization, meetings were held under the pretense of organizing "instrumental music concerts".[97]

In 1931, chiefs of Legionnaires' nests in Cairaclia commune, Cahul county were Constantin Horozov, Ion Grecov and Ivan Moşneag; in Bolgarica commune they were Sava Parus; in Taraclia, Ivan Neiculov and Ivan Chirov; in Brânza, Constantin Stanciu.[98]

For effective propaganda, the head of the movement, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, personally visited Taraclia village, Cahul County on 10 July 1933. Here he met the lawyer Simion Lefter, who was head of the territorial organization of the Iron Guard in Cahul County. On July 14,

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[92] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 507; Oleg Bercu, "Opţiuni politice ale populaţiei găgăuze," 199.
[93] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930. Neam, Limbă maternă, Religie*, Vol II [The General Census in Romania, December 29, 1930. Ethnicity, Native Language, Religion] (Bucharest: 1938), 102.
[94] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 417.
[95] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 385.
[96] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 385b.
[97] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 385b.
[98] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3433, f. 507b.

Codreanu met with the heads of the organization from Chirsovo commune, Tighina County.[99]

After the dissolution of the Iron Guard on 9 December 1933, and especially after the assassination of Prime Minister I.G. Duca on December 29 the same year, many legionnaires were subjected to raids and arrests. In Taraclia commune, Cahul county Petre Casă, Simon Stoyanov and Peter Neiculov were arrested. At their houses were found campaign literature, leaflets, proclamations, newspapers and wall calendars entitled *Biruinţa*, and correspondence with lawyer S. Lefter.[100]

When legionnaires returned to the political arena under a new name, "Totul pentru Ţară" (Everything for the Country), they easily found adherents among former members of the Iron Guard. In the county of Cahul, the party was founded on 2 June 1935 and was led by lawyer Simion Lefter. The movement enjoyed strong popularity among Gagauzians but less among Bulgarians.[101] In 1936, in the commune Slobozia in Ismail County, frequent meetings were held at the house of Ion Culev where participants "discussed the Capitan and the Legionnaires and sang Legionnaire songs".[102] In Bolboca commune in the same county, in 1937, Andrei Culioglu was arrested numerous times. He spread corporate calendars with pictures of the Guardist chief and commanders.[103] A fierce supporter of this organization in Tighina was Boris Tucan, and in Ismail, priest Ioan Hadji. In the party organization entitled "Brotherhood of St. John from Suceava Cross," along with other students of Akkerman High School for boys were enrolled Bulgarians Nicodemus Grincev, 8th grade, Ion Cevdari, 8th grade, Anatolie Uzun, 8th grade, and Nikolai Nikolaev, 7th grade.[104] Students were initiated by crafts teacher Petre Antonescu. They talked about the topic "Why I am a nationalist". (Annex 3)

After the establishment of authoritarian royal regime in 1938, followed the prohibition of political parties, and the extreme right movement suffered as a result. After the night of 29 to 30 November, authorities shot Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and 13 activists of this movement, and in response Legionnaires assassinated many prominent state figures. On 20 September 1939, Armand Calinescu, Council of Ministers Chairman, was killed.[105] This assassination triggered a harsh attitude on the part of the

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[99] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3640, f. 23, 64.
[100] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 4859, f. 7.
[101] Bercu, "Opţiuni politice ale populaţiei găgăuze," 202.
[102] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 22.
[103] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 36.
[104] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 258.
[105] Bercu, "Opţiuni politice ale populaţiei găgăuze," 202.

state towards members of the extreme right. Arrests of Legionnaires began immediately throughout Romania. Those in southern Bessarabia also suffered. On 21 September, several people were arrested in Tighina County.[106]

On 22 September, according to the order for execution of 3 Legionnaires in each district, were shot "ardent Legionnaires" of Bulgarian and Gagauzian origin, from Comrat, Constantin Căldare and Ion Caraghencev. They were executed at 7:20 am, near the Hebrew cemetery in Comrat, after which their bodies were transported to the main square and put on public display for 24 hours with the inscription: "From now on, this will be the fate of murderers and traitors of the country".[107] Damian Culioglo, from village Dumitreşti, Akkerman County, suffered a similar fate.[108] Following these oppressions, extreme right movements practically ceased operations in southern Bessarabia.

Participation in the elections

According to archival data, we can say that Bessarabian Bulgarians participated in all elections that took place in interwar Romania. According to the Electoral Decree Law of 14 November 1918, every Romanian citizen was entitled to vote and be elected.[109] Each county represented a constituency which had to delegate deputies and senators in Parliament. According to the Decree Law of 2 April 1920, one deputy could be elected for every 30,000-50,000 voters and one senator for every 60,000-100,000 voters.[110] Thus, the counties of South Bessarabia could delegate 20 members and 9 senators: Cahul County, four deputies and two senators; Akkerman, seven deputies and three senators; Tighina, five deputies and two senators; Ismail, four deputies and two senators. Bulgarians were concentrated in four constituencies: Cahul (28,565 Bulgarians), Akkerman (71,227), Tighina (19,599), and Ismail (43,375).[111] Their massive presence at elections provided them only one deputy for Ismail, and two deputies and a senator for Akkerman. This is further proof that it was impossible to act only with their own powers. For this reason,

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[106] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3845, f. 7.

[107] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3845, f. 10.

[108] Bercu, "Opţiuni politice ale populaţiei găgăuze," 203.

[109] Svetlana Suveică, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic (1918−1928): Modernizare prin reforme* [Interwar Bessarabia in the First Decade (1918-1928): Modernizing through Reform] (Chişinău: Pontos, 2010), 57.

[110] Suveică, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic*, 86.

[111] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României*, 100, 124, 264, 462.

many of them campaigned on Romanian parties' lists. In turn, voters were
hoping that these political parties would give supporters some political
dividends, especially for Bulgarians, who demonstrated a high voter
turnout. As for the arguments, we can see the statistics report, which came
out during the overall situation of the regional elections for the Senate and
the Chamber of Deputies in spring 1922. It noted that, in Bessarabia, in the
elections for the Chamber of Deputies, voted a total of 380,360 people
(78.2%). At the same time, it was stated that the highest proportion of
voters (87%) was from Akkerman. The Statistics chief warned that, in
general, in the south of the province, the proportion of voters was higher
than in the north and center. In his opinion, this was due to foreign settlers
"whose members have a little more culture than the rest of peasants, so
they are more aware of the debts they owe to society."[112] He also
mentioned another issue of the participation of the poor populations in
other counties, namely that, during the elections, the ground was very
muddy in north and central Bessarabia, so transportation with carts in
some places became almost impossible. On the other hand, due to
epidemics, the Bessarabia Health Service took steps for villagers in the
affected communities not to attend the elections.[113]

In the parliamentary elections of March 5 to 7, 1922, Bulgarians found
themselves on the lists of party candidates for the Chamber of Deputies. In
Tighina County, lists for the Bessarabian Peasants' Party (Ion Inculetz
group, their sign being the scythe and rake) included Serbinov Chiril, and
the Peasant Party's list (their sign being a sickle) included Zenovii Şupac
(originally from Tvarditza commune, Tighina County). On the list of the
National Liberal Party from Comrat was inscripted Cathedral priest Iulian
Artânov and Bulgarian Gheorghe Friptu. The Priesthood Party was
represented by priest Andrei Sibov. Many Bulgarians and Gagauzians
were enlisted in the People's Party (with a star as its sign). First on the list
were Topciu Dumitru, Gagauzian from Tomai, Tighina County, and
Bulgarians Nicolae Petrov and Iacov Cunev, the last originating from
Tvarditza. The Independence Party (their sign being a Bull head with a
star between its horns) included Dionisie Genov, and the Independent
Party (their sign a sheaf of wheat) had Ştefan Balamez. For Akkerman
County, the Bessarabian Peasants Party lists included Constantin
Iordanov, the Priesthood Party included priest Gheorghie Popov, the list of
the Democratic Bessarabian League of Order and Law (their sign a sheaf
of wheat) included Mihail Rusev, Ştefan Aftudov, Ivan Cevdari and priest

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[112] NARM, C. 742, inv. 6, file 38, f. 11.
[113] NARM, C. 742, inv. 6, file 38, f. 11.

Vasile Ciaicovschi from Taraclia. The Local Independent group (their sign a plow) was represented by Alexander Arnautov and Panaiot Vasilioglo. In Ismail County, on common lists of the National Liberal and Peasant Bessarabian Party were present Ivan Jeleazcov and Petre Misir, and in the Bessarabian Bloc, Ivan Fitov.[114] At the same time, the lists of candidates for the Senate include the following names: in Ismail County, the National Liberal Party nominated Basil Tomov and the Bessarabian Block nominated Andrei Culev; in Tighina County, the National Liberal Party nominated Teodor Artânov and Cara Sava participated as independent candidate; in Akkerman County, the Local Grouping Akkerman nominated Panaiot Vasilioglo. In the county of Akkerman, following a political struggle, a Liberal Party representative – a German – Liudwig Danus (18,122 votes) was sent to the Senate against a follower of the Averescu Party, Romanian-Bessarabian Sergiu Nitza (1,043 votes) and a Peasant Party member, Bulgarian Avtudov (8,316 votes).[115]

Statistics show that in 1922, in the counties where large numbers of Bulgarians lived, like Tighina, the Bessarabian Peasant party, led by Ion Inculetz, and the Peasants party, led by Pan Halippa, enjoyed great popularity. The first accumulated 94,531 votes in this county, while the second, 75,048. In Akkerman County, Local Group Akkerman had a high popularity rate – 22,750, and the National Liberal Party, 330,892. In Ismail County, the Bessarabian Democratic League of Order and Law garnered 46,470 votes and the Bessarabian Peasants Party took 38,529; in Cahul County, the Peasant Party took 68,014 and the Bessarabian Peasant Party took 30,680.[116]

From the above information, we can clearly conclude that, in order to receive the support of the local population, Romanian parties attracted into their ranks people who had great authority among locals. So, for example, in the 1920s, a teacher named Stanev who was "very popular in the Bulgarian district" belonged to the NPP chapter in Akkerman. But in October 1931 he left the party ranks.[117]

At the general elections of 25 to 28 May 1926, the population was polarized between the Liberals and the Peasants. Bulgarians, being for the most part peasants, supported the latter party. Almost all Bulgarian and Gagauzian villagers from the Traian chain, Cahul County (Cubei, Taraclia,

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[114] NARM, C. 742, inv. 6, file 38, f. 65-66b, 70.

[115] NARM, C. 742, inv. 6, file 38, f. 45.

[116] NARM, C. 742, inv. 6, file 38, f. 15.

[117] *Бессарабское слово* [Bessarabian Word], Кишинев, 2452, 17 October 1931.

Bulgarica, Cairaclia, Tatar-Copceac, Cazaclia and Baurci) voted for the NPP.[118]

In the elections for Agricultural Chamber of Tighina in June 1929, the NPP obtained a landslide victory. This success was due to the presence on its list of Bulgarians and Gagauzians (P. Stamatovic, C. Paşalî, N. Zlatov and A. Avramoglu), who persuaded their fellows to vote for this party.[119]

In the parliamentary elections of December 1933 to the Chamber of Deputies, the NPP lists included Salachin from Reni, and to the Senate, Hr. Hristoforov and former prefect of Ismail Ştefan Constantinov.[120] During the Communal Council elections of November 8, 1937, in Tvarditza, Tighina County, NPP's interests were represented by Alexei Pisov candidates Pashov Ivan, Ignatii Sheremetiev and Ivan Britcov.[121] In this commune such NCDL candidates as Zinovia Shupac, Zaharia Pashkov, Michael Diulgher, George Popazov and Iov Cara stand out.[122] (Annex 4) The concerned party had candidates in local elections in Taraclia commune, Cahul County. The local population was urged to support NCDL candidates Olimpi Rabadji, Ioan Gh. Tulush, Dumitru V. Caireac, A. Zlatanov and Semion P. Vitcov.[123]

In the 1937 election for the Chamber of Deputies, Bulgarians from Akkerman County were included on party lists, too. NLP listed Tivcev Petre, a landowner from Taşlâc village; NPP listed merchant Luca Custurovş the National Christian Party (NCP) listed farmer Dumitru Boşcov and landowner Constantin Stoicov; the Agrarian Party listed Grigori Ohanov; the People's Party listed farmers Nicolae Stoilov and Lazar Stoyanov. In Akkerman County, the Radical Peasant Party was the only party in which Bulgarians occupied almost the entire list. There were several prominent personalities such as lawyers Todor Uzunov and Leonid Crocos, teacher Gheorghe Stanev and farmer Ivan Topalov.[124] Bulgarian presence on this list secured 3,632 votes for the Peasant Radical Party and fourth place in the county after NLP (20,014 votes), NPP (14,622) and NCP (9,229). Security organs considered that "compared to the weak political activity that Todor Uzunov has realized so far, the number of votes is quite high".[125]

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[118] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3405, f. 141b.

[119] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3405, f. 415.

[120] *Бессарабское слово* [Bessarabian Word], Кишинев, 3199, 16 November 1933.

[121] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3810, f. 673b.

[122] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3810, f. 673.

[123] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3810, f. 611.

[124] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 1380.

[125] NARM, C. 680, inv. 1, file 3817, f. 1381.

Conclusions

Thus, we can sum up that, among Bessarabian Bulgarians, Gagauzians and their counterparts evolved an active political life in the interwar period. Their political choices were divided into four areas: participation in legal and illegal leftist organizations, the national movement towards the establishment of a Bulgarian minority party, participation in elections on the list of mainstream parties such as the NPP and NLP, and supporting organizations of the extreme right. As a result, many Bulgarians were elected as deputies and senators in Parliament. Most of them became the "bullhorns" of Bulgarian peasants in leading institutions of the Romanian state. At the same time, Bulgarians were attracted by some political ideas, especially those promoting the assumption of equality for all and allotment of land. Therefore, Bulgarian peasants were closer to the ideas promoted by National Peasants' parties. Being mostly farmers, Bulgarians were attracted by the promises of NPP representatives, who said that if the party came to power there would be cheap bread, lower prices for basic necessities, and a new law of expropriation, after which peasants would receive lands. Meanwhile, some ideas of the extreme right parties also found adherents among the Bulgarian peasants. So, for example, the promise of tax cuts was attractive to farmers, raising the price of agricultural products and lowering the price for fabrics, the establishment of rural cooperatives with state financing, and the expropriation of lands from the Jewish population, which would then be passed to Christian farmers. They also promised the cancellation of forestry contracts with Jewish companies and the release of forests for communal use, etc.
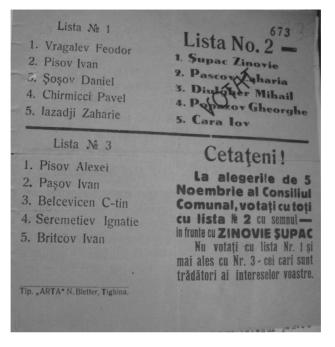
Annexes

Annex 1: Political Manifesto of NPP in Russian, 1929 (NARM. F. 680, inv. 1 f. 3405, t. 32).

Annex 2: Political Manifesto of NCDL in Bulgarian (written in the Latin alphabet), 1937 (NARM. F. 680, inv. 1, f. 3810, t. 613).

Annex 3: Electoral leaflet of the party "Totul pentru Ţară [Everything for Country] widespread among Bulgarian peasants, 1937 (NARM. F. 680, inv. 1 f. 3818, t. 123).

Annex 4: Electoral list of NCDL (No. 2) for the Communal Council elections of November 8, 1937 in Tvarditza commune, Tighina County (NARM. F. 680, inv. 1 f. 3810, t. 673).

CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel BRETT – Associate lecturer at the Open University in the United Kingdom. He has written on contemporary politics and society in Eastern Europe and on historical democratisation and rural politics and society among which: *Fiddling while Rome Burns: Institutional Conflict and Party Politics in Romania since 2007*, and *Mobilized but Not Organized: Peasant Voters, Party Politics and the Expanding Franchise in Europe after World War One*. He has contributed to *Südosteuropa*, *Electoral Studies* and *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*. He is currently preparing a monograph entitled: *Democrats in an Age of Extremes: Politics and Society in Europe 1850-1950.*
E-mail: d.c.brett@open.ac.uk

Ovidiu BURUIANĂ – Ph. D., Associate Professor at the Faculty of History at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi (Romania). His domain of competence includes the political and social history in Interwar Romania, political culture in Modern Ages Romania, the issue of democracy and liberalism in European peripheric societies. Some of his recent research includes *Construind opoziţia. Istoria politică a Partidului Naţional Liberal între anii 1927 şi 1933* [Building the Opposition. The Political History of the National Liberal Party between 1927 and 1933] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013), and *Liberalii. Structuri şi sociabilităţi politice liberale în România interbelică* [The Liberals. Political Structures and Sociabilities in Interwar Romania] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013).
E-mail adress: ovidiu.buruiana@uaic.ro

Vasile CIOBANU – Scientific researcher at the Institute of Socio-Human Research of the Romanian Academy in Sibiu (Romania). Areas of interest: the history of Romania in the 20th century, the history of national minorities, the history of Germans in Romania, the history of economy, the history of the press, the history of cities. He is the chairman of the Committee of the History of cities in Romania and editor-in-chief of the *Historia Urbana* journal. Latest publications: *Germanii din România în anii 1918-1919* [The Germans in Romania during 1918-1919] (Sibiu: Editura Honterus 2013); *Identitatea culturală a germanilor din România*

[The Cultural Identity of Germans in Romania] (București: Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române, 2013); *Enciclopedia Română coordonată de Corneliu Diaconovici. Corespondența Biroului redacțional de la Sibiu cu colaboratorii* [The Romanian Encyclopedia coordinated by Corneliu Diaconovici. The Correspondence of the Editorial Office in Sibiu with Collaborators], Vol. I: 1895-1896*. Documents edition, in collabora-tion with Alexiu Tatu (Sibiu: Editura Armanis, 2015); "Cronologia germanilor din România," [The Chronology of the Germans in Romania], in *Cronologia minorităților naționale din România* [The Chronology of national minorities in Romania]*, ed. Gidó Attila (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2016).
E-mail: vasileciobanu47@yahoo.com

Ivan DUMINICA – PhD in History, Faculty of History, University "St. Kirill and Methodius", Veliko Tyrnovo (Bulgaria), with the thesis *Българските преселници в Бесарабия в края на XVIII − първата половина на XIX век в историографията* [Bulgarian emigrants from Bessarabia at the end of 18ᵗʰ c. – beginning of 19ᵗʰ c. in historiography]; Researcher at the Institute of Cultural Heritage of the Academy of Science of Moldova. Areas of interests: history and culture of Bulgarians from Bessarabia in the 19ᵗʰ-20ᵗʰ centuries. Recent publications: *Храм Успения Божией Матери села Кирсово. Исторические* [Church of Assumption of Virgin Mary from Chirsovo Village. Historical Aspects] (Chisinau: S.Ș.B., 2012); *Тараклии – 200 лет* [Taraclia – 200 Years] vol. I, 1813-1940 (Chisinau: S.Ș.B., 2013), in collaboration with Nicolai Cervencov; "Межвоенный период," [Interwar Period] in *Петро-Павловская церковь села Чийшия (Городнее)* [The Church of St. Peter and Paul in Chiishyia (Gorodnee) Village], ed. Nicolai Cervencov (Chisinau: S.Ș.B., 2013); *Българските преселници в Бессарабия в края на XVIII – първата половина на XIX век в историографията* [Bulgarian Emigrants from Bessarabia at the End of 18ᵗʰ c. – beginning of 19ᵗʰ c. in Historiography] (Chisinau: S.Ș.B., 2015).
E-mail: duminicaivan@yandex.ru

Gábor EGRY – Senior research fellow and director-general at the Institute of Political History, Budapest (Hungary). His main research field are history of nations and nationalism in modern East Central Europe, politics of identity, everyday ethnicity. He held numerous fellowships, among others at the New Europe College, Bucharest, Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena, Center for Russian East European and Eurasian Studies, Stanford University, Institut für Ost und Südosteuropa, Regensburg. Currently he is

principal investigator of the research project *Negotiating post-imperial transitons. A comparative study of local transitions from Austria-Hungary to the Successor States 1918-1925.* He is editor of the journal *Múltunk* [Our Past], *New Perspectives. Interdisciplinary Journal of Central & East European Politics.* Latest publications: *Etnicitás, identitás, politika. Magyar kisebbségek nacionalizmus és regionalizmus között Romániában és Csehszlovákiában 1918-1944.* [Ethnicity, Identity, Politics. Hungarian Minorities between Nationalism and Regionalism in Romania and Czechoslovakia 1918-1944] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2015); *Memory and Memorialization of WWI in Eastern and Southeastern Europe* (special issue of *Múltunk*, editor); "New Horizons from Prague to Bucharest: Ethnonational Stereotypes and Regionalist Self-Perceptions in Interwar Slovakia and Transylvania," *Historie – Otázky –Problémy* 2 (2016).
E-mail: egrygabor@phistory.hu

Cornel MICU – Lecturer at the Faculty of Letters at Bucharest University (Romania). He graduated in history and political sciences at University of Bucharest and has a PhD from Jena University (Germany). He was a fellow of New Europe College in Bucharest (2011-2012) and Imre Kertesz College (2012). His fields of interest are social and economic history, the transformation of social structures following Europeanization, urbanisation from a historical perspective, agricultural history, regional integration in the contemporary world and common policies of the European Union. Publications (selection): "Professionals, Pseudo-Professionals or State Servants? The Professionalization of Romanian Agriculture (1919-1989)," in Dietmar Müller, Hannes Siegrist (eds.), *Professionen, Eigentum und Staat, Europäische Entwickulungen im Vergliech (19. und 20. Jahrhundert)* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2014); "The Agricultural Policy in Twentieth Century Romania Between Desiderate, Technical Possibilities and Social Realities," in Hannes Siegrist, Dietmar Müller (eds.), *Property in East Central Europe: Notions, Institutions, and Practices of Landownership in the Twentieth Century* (London, New York: Berghahn Books Verlag, 2014); *From Peasants to Farmers? Agrarian Reforms and Modernisation in Twentieth Century Romania. A Case Study: Bordei Verde Commune in Brăila County* (Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Vienna: Peter Lang, 2012).
E-mail: micucornel@yahoo.com

Florin-Răzvan MIHAI – Researcher at the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, Bucharest (Romania) of the Romanian Academy and editor-coordinator of History collection of Corint House Publishing.

He is interested in domains such as Romanian history in the 20th century, history of the political parties, and history of minorities in the interwar period. He is editor of the journal *Arhivele Totalitarismului*. Latest publications: *Viaţa lui Ceauşescu* [Ceauşescu's Life], vol. 3: *Tiranul* [The Tyrant), 2015 (in collaboration with Lavinia Betea and Ilarion Ţiu); *Die Deportation der Deutschen aus Rumanien in die Sowjetunion: Landsmannschaft der Banater Schwaben e.V.*, 2015 (in collaboration with Lavinia Betea and Ilarion Ţiu). Member of research grants (such as the grant *Parliamentary Elites and Electoral Dynamics (1919-1937)*, 2007-2008, and *Remembering the Forced Labour of German Ethnics from Romania Deported to USSR*, 2011-2012).
E-mail: mihai.florin.razvan@gmail.com

Valer MOGA – Associate professor in the History Department of "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia (Romania). His research work deals with 20th century Romaian political history, focusing on the history of politically-motivated culture and social history. Latest publications: *Problema Transilvaniei în discursul politic de la sfârşitul Primului Război Mondial* [Transylvania's Question in the Political Discourse at the End of the First World War], edited in collaboration with Sorin Arhire (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2009); *Economy and Society in Central and Eastern Europe. Territory, Population, Consumption* (Wien, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013), edited in collaboration with Daniel Dumitran.
E-mail: valermoga@yahoo.co.uk

Gabriel MOISA – Professor habil. at the University of Oradea (Romania), vice-dean of the Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Science and Communications Studies. His fields of research contain history of historiography and contemorary Romanian history. He is a chief editor of the journal *Crisia* and *Analele Universităţii din Oradea. Seria Istorie-Arheologie*. Latest publications: *History, Ideology and Politics in Communist Romania 1948-1989* (Budapest: "Eötvös Lorand" Kiadó, 2012); *Cultura şi istoria românilor din Ungaria* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2013); *Structuri anticomuniste din vestul României. Grupul Adrian Mihuţ* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura MEGA, Cluj-Napoca, 2012); *"Doar nu e Nicolae". Nicolae Coroiu între mica şi marea istorie* (Oradea: Editura Universităţii din Oradea, Editura Muzeului Ţării Crişurilor, 2015), and a number of scientific studies in publications from Hungary, Italy, France, Moldova.
E-mail: gabimoisa@hotmail.com

Corneliu PINTILESCU is researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities Sibiu of the Romanian Academy (Romania). He has a PhD in history from the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca with a dissertation entitled: *Judicial Mechanisms of Political Repression in Romania (1948-1956). Case Study: The Military Tribunal in Cluj.* He authored two books and published over 30 articles and studies in various scientific journals and collective works. His research interests include military justice and political repression in communist Romania, the nationalities policy of the Romanian state during the post-war period (with a focus on the German minority), and the politics of memory in post-communist Romania. Latest publications: "«Wer gegen uns ist, ist gegen das Reich.» Die NS-Propaganda in der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen landwirtschaftlichen Presse (1935–1944)," *Spiegelungen. Zeitschrift für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas* 11, 1 (2016); "Problema «Naţionalişti Germani» în activitatea Securităţii (1948-1964)" [The so-called "German Nationalists" Issue within the Activity of the Securitate] in Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu (eds.), *Identităţi sociale, culturale, etnice şi religioase în comunism* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2015); "(Im)Permeability of the Border in Late Socialism: the Small Traffic Phenomenon on the Romanian-Yugoslavian Border," (with Lavinia Snejana Stan) in Katarzyna Stokłosa and Gerhard Besier (eds.) *European Border Regions in Comparison: Overcoming Nationalistic Aspects or Re-Nationalization?* (London: Routledge, 2014).
E-mail: pintilescu2001@yahoo.com

Vlad POPOVICI – Lecturer at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca (Romania). His scientific interest lies with Romanian history of the 19th and early 20th centuries – in particular history of Transylvania –, history of elites, and employment of computer science in historical research. He led two research grants: a postdoctoral grant focusing on the Romanian political elite in Transylvania and Hungary prior to 1918, and a "Team of young researchers" grant: *Collective Actors in Modern Age Transylvania (1850-1918). Romanian Elite Groups in Historical Pers-pective.* Within the framework of the latter he is currently building a database of Romanian upper- and middleclass representatives involved in politics, banking system, scholarly and cultural societies, church and school life, in an attempt to recreate as much as possible of the social networks that cemented the Romanian civil society in Transylvania and Hungary before 1918. Among his latest publications worth mentioning is a volume co-edited with Judit Pál (*Elites and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe (1848-1918),* Peter Lang, 2014), and an extensive prosopographical and

election results catalogue to which he is co-author (Judit Pál et alii, *Parliamentary Elections in Eastern Hungary and Transylvania 1865-1918,* Peter Lang, 2017).
E-mail: vladutpopovici@yahoo.com

Sorin RADU - Professor habil. at "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu (Romania), dean of the Faculty of Social and Human Science and head of the Research Centre of Heritage and Socio-Cultural History. His fields of research contain Romanian history in the 19th and 20th centuries, history of the political parties, political culture and modernisation in modern and contemporary Romania. He is a convenor for Romania at the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions, member of the European Information and Research Network on Parliamentary History and member of the European Rural History Organisation. He is the chief editor of the journal *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historica*. Latest publications: *Parliamentarism and Political Structures in East-central and Southeastern Europe in the Interwar Period* (editor in collaboration with Hans-Christian Maner), 2012; *The Countryside and Communism in Eastern Europe: Perceptions, Attitudes, Propaganda* (editor in collaboration with Cosmin Budeancă) (Wien, Zürich, Munster, LIT Verlag, 2016) and a number of scientific studies in publications: "Revista istorică" (Bucharest); "Slovanský přehled" (Prague), "Bulgarian Historical Review" (Sofia), "Historicky časopis" (Bratislava), "Kwartalnik Historyczny" (Warsaw), "The Historical Review/La Revue Historique" (Athens).
E-mail: sorin.radu@ulbsibiu.ro

Oliver Jens SCHMITT – Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Vienna and the head of Institute for East European History (Austria). Also, he is a full member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. His main research areas are: Fascist Movements in Interwar Romania; Society and Economy of the Venetian Overseas Empire in Southeast Europe; Late Medieval Balkan History; Albanian Society and Culture in Southeast Europe. He has coordinated several research projects, such as "The society, statehood and religion at the fringe of the late medieval Balkans: Case studies from Dalmatia", part of the grant "Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400-1600 CE) (VISCOM)", Austrian Research Foundation. His latest publications are: *Die Albaner – eine Geschichte zwischen Orient und Okzident* (München, 2012); *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts. Die „Legion Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien*

1918-1938 (München, 2013), ed. with Armin Heinen; *Das Südosteuropa der Regionen* (Wien: 2015), ed. with Michael Metzeltin; *Căpitan Codreanu. Aufstieg und Fall des rumänischen Faschistenführers* (Wien, 2016).
E-mail: oliver.schmitt@univie.ac.at

Valeria SOROSTINEANU – Lecturer PhD at "Lucian Blaga University" of Sibiu (Romania), at the Department of History, Patrimony and Protestant Theology. Her research areas are the following: history of Romanians in the 18th and 19th century, history of rural Romanian space in Transylvania, Church and society in modern and contemporary Romania. She is member of Society of Historical Demography of Romania. She attended international conferences organized by the International Institute of Social History within the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts: 2012 in Glasgow, 2014 in Vienna, 2016 in Valencia. Among the last representative publications, we mention: "Mixed Marriages in the Orthodox Deanery of Sibiu (1860-1918)," in *Community and Law in Intermarriage throughout History*, ed. Luminita Dumanescu, Daniela Marza, Marius Eppel (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2014; "And It Was Still War. Transylvania of 1915 between Propaganda and Donations," in *The First World War. The Other Face of the War*, ed. Ioan Bolovan, Rudolf Graf, Harald Hepner, Oana Mihaela Tamas (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitara Clujeana, 2016).
E-mail: valeria.sorostineanu@ulbsibiu.ro

Svetlana SUVEICA – Researcher at the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) Regensburg (Germany); associate professor at Moldova State University in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova). She received her Ph.D. in history from "Al. I. Cuza" University in Iaşi (Romania) in 1999. Taught undergraduate and graduate courses at universities in Chisinau, Timisoara, Regensburg and Leicester. She benefitted from several prestigious research fellowships, such as Humboldt fellowship (IOS Regensburg, 2012-2014), Fulbright fellowship (CREEES-Stanford University, 2009-2010) and Carnegie CASE fellowship (Chisinau/Minsk 2006-2007). She also participated in international research joint projects, supported by Geschichtswerkstatt Europa (2012), Jean Monnet-LLP, EU (2011-2013) and CEU-OSI Budapest (2006-2009). She authored two monographs and published a series of articles on post-World War One reconstruction of Eastern Europe, state and nation-building in interwar Romania, local public institutions in Bessarabia, recent political and social transformations in the Republic of Moldova (*Südost-Forschungen*; *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society*; *Jahrbücher für Geschichte*

Osteuropas; *Journal of Civic Commitment*; *Holocaust. Studii şi cercetări*). Her current research, supported by Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, focuses on institutional changes in Bessarabia and Transnistria during World War II.
E-mail: suveica@ios-regensburg.de

Stelu ŞERBAN – sociologist at the Institute for South East European Studies, Bucharest (Romania). He holds a PhD degree in political sciences, University of Bucharest, 2003, with the work *Ideological Rearrangements of the Political Class in Interwar Romania*. His research interests cover the topics like post-socialist transformations in South East Europe, everyday life in rural societies in South East Europe, long-run political modernization in a comparative perspective, ethnicity, political ecology. He has conducted fieldworks in various areas from Romania (Maramureş, Covasna, Bacău, Constanţa, Teleorman), as well as in Bulgaria (Pleven, Varna, Vidin). Revolving around these research fields he has carried out projects that were financed by Soros Foundation (Bucureşti and Timişoara), Research Support Scheme (Prague), Romanian Academy Grants, Ethnographical Association Kriza János (Cluj Napoca), Center for Advanced Studies (Sofia), Department for Allover Romanians (Romanian Government), New Europe College (Bucharest), UEFISCDI (Romanian Government). He is a member in the advisory board of International Association for Southeast European Anthropology. He participated at international conferences in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, and authored about forty articles
E-mail: steluserban@yahoo.com

Szilárd TOTH – senior lecturer at "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj (Romania). His fields of research contain history of the Hungarian minority in Romania, history of Romania in the 20th centuries, history of the University of Cluj, history of international relations and international organizations, Cold War history, methodology of teaching history. Latest publications: *A hidegháború története. Kultúra, propaganda és stratégiai politikák* v [History of Cold War. Culture, Propaganda and Strategic Policies] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014); *Nemzetközi intézmények és szervezetek* [International Organizations] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2012); *Istoria Universităţii „Babeş-Bolyai"* [History of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University] (Cluj-Napoca : Editura Mega, 2012), coauthors: Ioan-Aurel Pop, Doru Radosav, etc.; "The Romanian Electoral System, Electoral Traditions and the Chances of the National Hungarian Party in Parliamentary Elections in the Interwar Romania," in *State and*

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E-mail: tszilard22@yahoo.com