
The struggle of the Austro-Hungarian romanians for national unification on the eve of and during world war I*

Stelian MÂNDRUȚ

Cuvinte cheie: Primul Război Mondial, Unirea, Monarhia austro-ungară, Conferința de pace de la Paris.

Keywords: I World War; Romanian national Movement; Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; Paris Peace Conferences.

General survey

From the outset, we confess that the topic proposed here is daringly formulated. It is our opinion that the problem of the Romanian national movement within the complex of the dualist conglomerate is much more complicated than the above-mentioned title suggests. The argument we develop below can be situated within the framework and the letter of an acknowledged subjectivism regarding the durability of historical truth. We take into consideration, as well, the antagonisms which arose along with the passing of time and which are relevant particularly for the interval we have delineated here.

Within former, as well as within today's Bukovina, Transylvania, and Banat, have co-existed, and continue to persist, dual relations between specific communities marked by particular sensibilities and ways of thinking, in the context of an accepted multi-ethnic and multi-confessional phenomenon occurring in our geographical-historical space of research. As a consequence, the political has most always manifested itself in an opposing way, because the structure of these conceptions was diametrically opposed to the legitimate laws. The difference between some and others, generically defined within the bracket of the notion of alterity, was and continues to be determined by the common attitude to the environment in which, in fact, they had to coexist. We cannot omit the argument that the Romanian nation, territorially fragmented, evolved constantly in a state of inferiority, exactly because of unfavorable historical circumstances.

The present hermeneutical attempt meant to debate and correct certain ideas/theses connected to issues, clichés, preconceptions inherited and not seriously re-examined, must be necessarily correlated to the past and present historiographical optics of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Particularly because of the fact that the historical thinking present in Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, for example, is still marked by a minimum of interpretative "ballast" which refers to common themes and has immediate reverberations onto the domain of bilateral or multilateral rapports of the area investigated critically.

In the age of the nationalities, the modern roots of the dialogue between "Romanians and the Others" can be found in the failures of the 1848 revolution in Bukovina, Transylvania, and Banat, in the fact that full, mutual equality and the right to self-determination were rejected, especially in the situation of the "forced union" of Transylvania and Hungary. The founding of the dualist system in 1867 resulted in two evident courses of action: a) the relation of the majority population with the dominant political class (Austrian and Hungarian); b) the rapport now exercised in the mental collective, both in the horizontal and vertical directions. We can speak, therefore, about a double impact and reception, which provoked unexpected reactions and led to the development of a conflictual phenomenon in space and time.

* English version of a study published in Romanian in an omagial works dedicated to historian Liviu Maior, see: Călător prin istorie. Omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani. Cluj-Napoca, 2010, pp. 429-440.