

**Nationalism, national movements and the dissolution of the Austro -Hungarian  
Monarchy. Case study: the activity and discourse of the Romanian National Party  
of Transylvania 1900-1914**

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## Introduction

The subject chosen for research has had a turbulent historiographical past, and can be considered quite controversial, in more ways than one. Interpretative strategies of different nationality and political affiliation went about rendering the Romanian political elite of Transylvania in altogether dissimilar fashion. But most agree that their special brand of regionally developed nationalism and political activism were paramount in the developments which took place and reverberated into Hungarian and Romanian history. This generation of politicians was instrumental in the development of a discourse of contestation towards the centre, based on mass politics and territorial nationalism<sup>1</sup>. This dissertation will focus on showing how Transylvanian Romanian nationalism and national-political elite diachronically altered its discourse, spawning, from the same root, ideologies that ranged from dynastic loyalty, to democracy and populist nationalism.

The rendition of the Romanian national movement of Transylvania during its activist phase by Romanian historiography has been plagued by inconsistencies. The official account on the events which ingrained itself after the war in the collective mindset of Romanian historiography was one of unbridled triumphalism, and a vision of solidarity was projected onto the movement on all levels. This interpretation was to be perpetuated by the post-1945 history-writing, with a single, but paradigmatic twist: it gradually phased out the subject. Works such as the would-be *magnum opus* of

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<sup>1</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, New York, Vintage Books, 1980

Transylvanian history, Pascu and Daicoviciu's Treaty on Transylvanian History<sup>2</sup> did not say much on the subject, and the volume's rampant nationalist outlook was to be a hallmark for the historiography of years to follow. The tunnel-vision of the authors, which saw a direct line of continuity and progression between the Memorandist movement and the events of winter 1918 left little open for debate. The activist period, with ideologically dangerous characters in the forefront such as Maniu and Goga was to be relegated, and would remain an almost taboo subject for much time. In later years (until the late 1980's), a mere handful of articles and special works sought to explore the problem, among them Lucian Boia's<sup>3</sup>, Keith Hitchins'<sup>4</sup>, Liviu Maior's<sup>5</sup> and Stelian Mandrut's<sup>6</sup>. The latter two are quite constricted due to ideological pressure, concentrate solely on the factual side of the matter, and present the Romanian elite in an un-contextualized fashion. The problems of this interpretative strategy were threefold: first and foremost, it presents events in an overly nationalistic manner. Secondly, the RNP's

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<sup>2</sup> Daicoviciu, C., Pascu, t., *Din istoria Transilvaniei*, Bucure ti, Editura Academiei, 1960, vol.2.

<sup>3</sup> Boia ,Lucian, *Contribu ii privind criza PNR i trecerea de la pasivism la activism (1893-1905)*, in *Studii de Istorie*, tom 24, nr.5., pp. 963-984, Bucuresti, 1971; Boia, Lucian, *Contribu ii la istoria misc rii na ionale ale românilor din Transilvania în anii 1900-1914*, in *Studii de Istorie*, tom 25, nr.4., pp. 783-801, Bucuresti, 1972

<sup>4</sup> Hitchins, Keith, *Mit i realitate in istoriografia român* , Bucure ti, Humanitas, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Maior, Liviu, *Mi carea na ional român din Transilvania (1900 -1914)*, Cluj, Editura Dacia, 1986; Maior, Liviu, *Alexandru Vaida-Voievod între Belvedere i Versailles*, Bucure ti, Editura Sincron, 1993; Maior, Liviu, *Programul politic al mi c rii na ionale române din Transilvania între 1881 -1914 si lupta pentru realizarea lui*, Cluj Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1980

<sup>6</sup> Mândru , Stelian, *Mi carea national i activitatea parlamentar a deputa ilor PNR din Transilvania între 1905-1920*, Oradea, Funda ia Cultural "Cele Trei Cri uri", 1995; Mândru , Stelian, *Rela ia dintre gruparea federalist a PNR i cabinetul militar al lui Franz Ferdinand (1905 -1910)*, in *Istoria ca lectur a lumii*, 1994, p. 289-99

leading intelligentsia was not depicted as acting in the right context, that of the late Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's political scene ( ideological and language barriers are to blame here, besides the interpretative *lacuna*). Lastly, from a methodological viewpoint, the authors did not attempt to employ any other tools than the empirical ones. The subject is in stringent need of an investigation that would apply novel methods, as those of intellectual history.

The Transylvanian political intelligentsia developed among the many turn -of-the-century nationalist groups of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the internal socio-political conditions formatting its perceptions and *Weltanschauung*. The thesis will show how, through the method of a case study, what was the nationalities groups response to the challenge coming from the centre. The Romanian National Party of Transylvania was a party of this typology, exhibiting nationalist ideology at the level of discourse, making a nationalist cause its sole purpose of being. But what sort of nationalism was it? At a closer examination we can discover that Carl E. Schorske's description of the nationalist discourse in turn-of-century Austria resembles the Romanian one quite well. It is no longer an elitist nation-building mid-nineteenth century nationalism, but a new one, one that is infused with elements of democracy, and mass politics. It no longer took its support from elites of the bourgeoisie, but from masses of disenfranchised would-be citizens that all have almost manifest anti-statal ideas; its activist political tactics between 1900 and the beginning of the World War show this.

The study of the history of a turn-of-the century Austro-Hungarian nationalist movement or party has to take into consideration a variety of factors. In the first place, setting it in the correct political atmosphere and conditions is paramount. This lends to a

much better understanding not only of the activity and reactions of the party as a whole and its individual members, but suggests the motivation behind the actions. Secondly, the correct social-economical context must be laid down. Also, contextualizing the movement in the accurate intellectual-cultural *milieu* is also essential for a nuanced and balanced treatment of the subject matter.

In order to aid this purpose, The thesis will be broken down into three chapters. The first chapter will focus upon a general outline and problematized analysis of the structural problems of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It will undertake a short institutional, political and societal investigation into the ailments of the state, in order to set the correct framework. The perceived problems recognized by society itself, and the proposed solution will be dissected in a synthetic -systematic manner.

The second chapter will describe and analyze the intellectual and mental atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle* imperial society, with a specific focus on the Hungarian side. It will treat the changes in theme and topicality from the 1895 to 1914, when the political crisis of liberalism developed and became acute. The influence upon Romanian thinkers and mentality will be analyzed, and they will be contextually integrated into this larger framework of contestation against the establishment. The complex interplay of influence and imitation of ideas and streams of thought between Romanian, Hungarian and other political thinkers will be researched.

The third part of the thesis will revolve around the concrete political activity of the RNP after 1895. In this period, after the failure of the Memorandist movement, the party entered into a new phase of its existence, in which it repudiated the traditional passivist tactics and engaged in a voluntarist, mass-oriented nationalist-democratic

political agitation, formally known as the “activist period”. In this epoch, they racked up their greatest successes ( such as the 1905 elections), but also fell into a state of deep disunity. While pioneering a new style in politics, they came under criticism from inside their own line, for the circle of “Steely Youngsters” gathered around a young nationalist poet, Octavian Goga. The bitter in-fighting, expressed through the press organs of the two sides, the Tribuna ( later Romanul and others) and the Gazeta Transilvaniei will also be analyzed from the viewpoint of linguistic topography and discursive practices. A seminal analysis of the intellectual sources produced by the contributors to this debate must be done, coupled with a dissection of their political speeches. The concrete factual facet will not be disregarded, it will also be integrated in a problematized fashion into the contents of this chapter.

The interpretative strategy that will be used will combine the methods of political and intellectual history, appending it with the correct factual framework, in order to give an accurate account of the *utilage mentale* of the protagonists. The social provenience of the new nationalists will be analyzed on the broad level of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The social transformations by 1900 lead to a development of a new category of politically educated, mostly urban category. One of the reasons for this was industrialization and the spread of education, coupled with bureaucratization and the development of the varying modes of communication, infrastructure. On a political level, these advances were due to the liberal nationalist elite governing both halves of the Monarchy. As much as they were the initiators of these developments, the liberal elites found themselves close to being displaced through them. At the turn of the century, the whole establishment in Austria and in Hungary came under heavy criticism. The reason

was the barring of the accession to power of large sections of the population, who had newly acquired political conscience. These categories started to view the liberal governments and their ideologies as a - and anti-national, ossified and as a self-enclosed caste. Another ingredient of this dispute was the Imperial House of Habsburg, that tried to make use of the crisis of the establishment, in order to re -legitimate itself on new, mass basis, preaching a direct connection between itself and its subjects.

On the level of ideology and mental mechanisms, there is a noticeable shift from the elitist nationalism, rationality and meritocracy of the mid -nineteenth century towards a more mass-oriented political specter, infused with the influence of cultural circles that preached the resurgence of sentiment. *Fin-de-siecle* populist nationalisms, such as the Romanian one, can be fitted into this milieu, and the change of topicality in discourse thus finds a motivation. The political language on which this political debate between the old and the new was again to be based was nationalism, for it was this ideology that gave the foundation for criticism.

Having already established the main factors of the transition towards the so -called “crisis of liberalism” as being social-intellectual and partly, political, there must be undertaken a seminal investigation of the linguistic *topoi* used by this new political elite. The elements of the meta-language revolved mainly around the old national debates, but were appended with a biological, organic understanding of the nation. Diverse psychological and phenotypical characterologies competed against each other in a social Darwinist scheme, in which all tried to assign themselves the role of the fittest to survive. Diverse component nations and ethnicities of the Monarchy became classified according to these varying and rivaling taxonomies. This discourse was grafted onto previous

schemes that envisaged a Habsburg realm broken up into a federative state. One of the finest exponents of this type of discourse was the Romanian politician and theorist Aurel C. Popovici<sup>7</sup>. His meta-theory is centered around the combination of the federalist and bio-political aspects, both ordered neatly so as to assure a total satisfaction of the needs of his nation (as he saw them) and those of the Imperial centre. It thus comes as little surprise that he was one of the recurring participants of the so-called “Belvedere Circle”, gathered around the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and at the same time, was publicly praised by radical populist nationalists such as Karl Lueger.

Even ideologies that claimed a supra-national or a-national lineage, such as the already-mentioned imperial loyalist *Weltanschauung*, or the socialist one, had to take into consideration the national question. They reinterpreted their discourse in such a way that it would allot sufficient space to ethnicity, and informally recognized it as a dividing factor in society. They tried to appease nationalism through this tactic and use it as a centripetal force, rather than treating it as a centrifugal one.

These main discursive *leitmotifs* formed the core of the political language in which ideology expressed itself around 1900 in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. They combined (at a symbolic level) to herald a new era in politics, epitomized by the entry of the masses onto the political stage with the 1907 law for universal manhood suffrage. The complex interplay between these new nationalisms, the increasingly powerless liberal political elites (who lose all representativity), and the *revanchard* imperial centre format the political discourse between 1900 and the eve of the First World War. By its meta-language, social origin and political affiliation, the RNP belongs to these new nationalist groups, that contributed much to the weakening, at the level of legitimacy and

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<sup>7</sup> A. C. Popovici, *Stat si Natiune*, Bucuresti: Albatros, 1998



perception, of the old power-structure. The analysis of its activity and political vocabulary will correctly situate and contextualize it thusly. This will then lend it self to the formation of a more complete and nuanced picture of the turn -of-the century Austro-Hungarian society, which will correctly situate the Romanian political activity and intellectual production.

The Romanian National Party, in its last phase of existence, provides an excellent case study, that provides much insight into the complex interaction between a nationalist centre and a nationalist periphery. The competition for the preservation and continuation of their respective identities resulted in an pendular motion, bringing them periodically closer, but in the end, resulting in a complete divorce between the parties. This break at the mental level was one of the major factors contributing to the dissolution of the established order of the Dualist nexus at the end of 1918.

# Chapter One

## The Political Crisis of Liberalism in Hungary

### Factors of Crisis

The deep factors that lead to the upheaval on the political level have to be searched for at the social level. It was the disparity between a changing society and a political system unwilling (and partially unable, because of its rigidity) to yield that caused the crisis to occur. The ethnic strife grafted itself over this development, giving the debate a particular, Austro-Hungarian, flavor.

The urbanization process was by 1900 in full swing in Dualist Hungary. A large sector of the population, around a quarter of the total resided in towns or cities by this period<sup>8</sup>. Around 24,2 % of the population was involved in industry, and the percentage of population dependent on agriculture for subsistence decreased from 82 % to 62,4%<sup>9</sup>. Social mobility had therefore increased substantially, resulting at a high level of people available for potential activation in the field of politics. At the same time, wealth was still unevenly distributed among the population. A good example for this was the fact that the top 5 banking and financial holdings controlled over 57% of the industrial capital stock,

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 411

<sup>9</sup> Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945*, pp. 149-152

investing in 220 of the 250 largest companies<sup>10</sup>. Still, improving living standards and medical conditions, alongside the nascent industrialization of the country, resulted in a high rate of social transformation.

The most important development for the problems analyzed in this thesis is the evolvement of public education. The law for compulsory primary education introduced in 1868 had returned impressive results. By 1913, 86% of the children that were of the schooling age were enrolled in some form of educational facility<sup>11</sup>. The majority of these institutions were operated by the state, although confessional schools still held a sizeable share of the whole. The proportion of illiteracy was also reduced, but was uneven; the ethnic divide affected it quite unambiguously. For example, only 20,7% and 17,6% of Hungarians, respectively Germans living on the territory of Hungary were illiterate, to a 30,3% Slovakian and a staggering 66,9% Romanian percentage<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, the schooling system had made important strides, and far overshadowing all of its counterparts in eastern and southern neighbor states. The drive was initially toward creating a moderately literate laboring class, that would respond better to state control. The Hungarian (primary) school system, loosely based on the Humboldtian paradigm, was divided into two levels of basic and intermediate education. Its mission was to spread the “humanist cultural norm” as efficiently as possible. But from the outset, its partition into gymnasiums, which granted direct access to universities, that conferred the voting right- census, and commercial schools, which did not, reflected the fault lines of Hungarian society. However, the simple spread of base knowledge about the functioning of the state, Hungarian history, literature and vernacular were compulsory subjects

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 151

<sup>11</sup> Peter Hanak (ed.), *Magyarország története*, vol. 7, tom. II., p. 424

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 424

throughout, rigorously enforced by the Educational Inspectorates of the state. This was done in accordance with the cultural policies of the liberal state, that wished to forge the nation in its own image, and according to its own value -system. The desire for an ethnically homogenous society was also quite alluring, and was pursued as a desiderate all throughout the period, with the means of educational and cultural policy.

Another factor, in close relation with the latter, was the spread of the means of communication and information, alongside cultural products. Around 1913, there were about 2000 periodicals and newspapers appearing in Hungary yearly ( with around 1500 being in Hungarian)<sup>13</sup>. Information was reaching the masses in increasing numbers and penetrating even the most remote areas. The press, who's themes gravitated almost exclusively around politics, became increasingly a leader and a barometer of public opinion. Other cultural institutions, such as libraries, theaters and cultural associations offered to many the prospect of understanding the intricacies of the political machinery. More and more of the public became available for political mobilization.

The result was an increase in citizens who were ready and able to take part in the political process, but were unable to do so because of the unique nature of the Dualist construct. The outcome of this was the increase of frustration with the social and political system, which did not allow for reform in concert with the social modifications. Since the system, owing to its fragility on ethnic grounds, did not allot for smooth or rapid changes, the public opinion and civil society started to search for radical solutions out of the undesirable situation with which they were confronted. The support for liberalism, especially in urban areas, interestingly, did not decline, but remained at the same levels. It is precisely the level of contestation, also mostly occurring at the urban

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 425

level, that gained considerable clout. Those contesting the establishment on the grounds of social inequity claimed that their solutions would provide an answer to the nationality question as well (sometimes vice versa). The two entered into a sort of symbiotic relationship, each feeding off the other's themes, ending up in a common platform of those socially and ethnically disenfranchised by the system.

### **The political crisis of liberalism in Hungary**

The concept of the crisis of liberalism, so often uttered and utilized, is chiefly associated with late 19<sup>th</sup> and turn-of-the century Austria. It was for this social-political and intellectual context that Carl Schorske put forward this idea. However, this phenomena was not particular alone to the Austrian half of the Monarchy. It had direct synchronicity with a similar course of events in Transleithania, and, as the historian Peter F. Sugar suggest, preceded and may have even kick started the political paradigm shift in the other half of the Monarchy<sup>14</sup>.

The reasons for this shift in political language and tactic can be traced back to the structure of the polity laid down in 1867, and strengthened in 1875. The Dualist

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<sup>14</sup> Peter F. Sugar, *An Underrated Event: The Hungarian Constitutional Crisis of 1905-1906*, p. 281-282

agreement itself gave birth to the ideology of the political class, instead of it being based solely on social and other realities<sup>15</sup>. Relating oneself towards the *Ausgleich*, whether positive or negative, was to be the directive for the partition of the Hungarian political class<sup>16</sup>. The Liberal (*Szabadelvű*) Party, which supported the Compromise, being favored by the emperor, fashioned for itself a political and electoral system that ensured its comfortable dominance. Inside the legislature, a highly efficient voting machinery, composed of liberal deputies, dubbed “*the Mameluks*” ( because of their dependency on the party chief), was set up by the leading liberal political figure of the period, Tisza Kalman. Due to electoral gerrymandering and the fact that parliamentary debates yielded as the usual outcome the confirmation of the government policy, the opposition was blockaded. The main opposition party, the so-called Independence (*Függetlenségi*) or ‘48-ers, was founded in the same year, 1875, as the liberals. From the outset their political objectives were frustrated time and again by the political framework of Dualist Hungary. Alongside a host of other small parties , as well as the groupings of the various nationalities, they rarely had their voices heard or their plans come to fruition. The electoral procedures and the party politics created by Deak and perfected by Tisza Kalman seemed to be airtight for much of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup>.

Dualist Hungary began to exhibit symptoms of ailment as early as the Banffy government’s tenure in power. Around 1897, a new phenomenon appeared on the political stage: parliamentary obstruction. The political practice and vocabulary had also taken a turn towards a new-found aggression. The catalyst for the apparition of this type

<sup>15</sup> C.A. Macartney, *The History of the Habsburg Empire*, pp. 687-689

<sup>16</sup> Laszlo Peter, *The Dualist Character of the 1867 Settlement*, in Gyorgy Ranki, *Hungarian History- World History*, p. 120

<sup>17</sup> Kozari Monika, *A Dualista Rendszer*, pp. 134-143

of new contestation of the established order was the Quota and the Customs Union. This was, according to the *Ausgleich*, to be renewed every ten years<sup>18</sup>. The parliamentary opposition started to make use of this new tool of obstructing the proceedings of legislature, seeing it as the only avenue of defense against the central authority. The tactic in itself signifies a radicalization of thought. Conjugated with an unprecedented increase of the Independents representation in Parliament after the 1895 elections, it was to be a herald of things to come. Another important factor, highly significant in the area of symbolic capital, was the death of the hero of Hungarian nationalism, Kossuth Lajos, in Italy. With much pomp and pathos, his remains were brought to Hungary, a host of mortuary ceremonies were dedicated to him, resulting in a sort of sepulchral cult, that stirred up nationalist feeling like never before. The emperor refused to acknowledge the event, and also robbed the Liberal party of much needed electoral assets, by forbidding the officials of the country ( ministers, senior civil servants and so forth) to take part in the ceremonial proceedings<sup>19</sup>. This only served to further weaken the already feeble and manifestly artificial liberal dominance over internal matters.

Accompanying his father's cortege was Ferenc Kossuth, also allowed back into the country after sustained campaigning by the 48-er fold. The opportunity provided by the ceremonies surrounding the death of the cult figure of the Hungarian revolution, and the return of his son was masterfully exploited by the Independist opposition in their own favor. He joined the party as its nominal leader in the fall of the same year. To many of the Hungarian electors, it must have seemed as the spirit of 1848 was beginning to be rekindled.

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<sup>18</sup> Poloskei Ferenc, *A magyar parlamentarizmus a szabadságharc után*, pp. 70-76

<sup>19</sup> Peter F. Sugar, *An Underrated Event: The Hungarian Constitutional Crisis of 1905-1906*, p. 284

The Liberal Party was beginning to show signs of evident internal weakness after the retirement of Kalman Tisza. It soon became obvious for the higher party echelon that the position of leader was up for grabs, and they started vying for it. This, in turn, led to instability and lack of efficient support for the governmental policy in the latter part of the party's existence. The party voting and propaganda machinery started to function erroneously, and cracks, visible to the public, appeared in the party authority. Moreover, men such as Albert Apponyi, who had their endeavors at leadership frustrated by the strong-hand tactics of Banffy and later, Istvan Tisza, broke away from the party, with a significant amount of followers. They would go on to form the conservative wing of the Coalition government, continuously gravitating between '67 -er and '48-er attitudes and discourses.

The stage was thus set for the beginning of what was appropriately dubbed by Hungarian historiography "the years of obstruction". The parliamentary opposition, by way of loud diversions or other devices, unleashed a fierce campaign of impeding the proceedings of the legislative body. The result was that important acts, that had to be voted by parliament, such as budgets, not to mention the above-mentioned Quota agreements and army recruiting bills, could not be passed. The country found itself after 1898 effectively in an *ex lex* situation. The forceful tactics of the Banffy government did not yield any positive results. The opposition profited from the fall of the Badeni administration in the Austrian half, and the fact that the negotiations for the 1897, effectively concluded, were not ratified by the Reichsrat. The Independists declared the pact as to be null and void, and the customs union between the two halves of the Monarchy dissolved. All that Banffy could do, as one of his last acts, was force through



parliament an extension of the 1887 agreement for one more year, before he was ousted from office.

The term in office of Szell Kalman was accompanied by high hopes for peace, and he soon became known by the epithet “the great leveler” or the “peacemaker”<sup>20</sup>, due to his conciliatory strategy. His tactic to revitalize the deadlocked politic machinery was to initiate negotiations with the leading members of the opposition, and offer various concessions, in exchange for passing the needed legislation. Another successful move by him was to bring Apponyi’s group back into the fold. He was temporarily pacified by appointment to the chair of the Lower House of the Hungarian parliament. But this temporary success did not count for much, since some months earlier, another significant group of dissidents appeared, and ostentatiously broke with the party on the ground of the wrangling over the Quota. This faction, of 32 deputies, led by count Andrassy Gyula Jr., began to bolster the bulwark of the opposition from 1899 onwards.

Under the leadership of Szell, the liberals gained victory and an increase of seats in parliament after the elections of 1901. However, as the Hungarian historian Istvan Dolmanyos points out, the increase was rather artificial ( even under the factitious conditions of the dualist electoral system), and can be attributed mostly to the former National Party electorate of Albert Apponyi<sup>21</sup>. This fact, conjugated with the uneasy partnership with Apponyi’s group, resulted in Szell’s administration lying on quite shaky foundations. In fact, his political support actually decreased rather than multiplying, as the results of the elections seemed to have indicated.

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<sup>20</sup> Poloskei Ferenc, *op.cit.* , p. 100

<sup>21</sup> Dolmanyos Istvan, *A magyar parlamenti ellenzék történetéből ( 1901 -1904 )*, p. 129-130

The term in office of Szell brought many promising and necessary reforms in the social, agricultural and financial areas; out of these the agricultural minister, Daranyi Ignac's achievements were the most significant. A consummate technocrat, he engineered a series of reforms that greatly contributed to the modernization of the country's backward agricultural system. However, in the eyes of the public opinion and civil society, there was no room for acknowledging these feats. The political imaginary of Hungary was still gripped by the ominous constitutional question. In this area as well, Szell's mandate debuted with a measure of success. He managed to squeeze out of the Austrian government a more favorable Tariff and Trade agreement in 1902. But for the opposition, which was going through the final phases of radicalization of political language and thought, it was too little too late. The strong obstruction they unleashed in parliament blocked the ratification of this agreement, and it never was never put into practice<sup>22</sup>.

Another important factor that undermined Szell's authority at the head of the state and the party was the emergence of an alternative political leader, representing an alternate path to quell protest: Istvan Tisza and his forceful method. His refusal to debate on the terms of the opposition, and his resolve to break obstruction by any means necessary or available<sup>23</sup> alienated many (such as Andrássy Jr.'s faction), and widened the gap between government and opposition.

The very fact that Szell attempted a reconciliation and gravitated back and forth between concessions to Hungarian nationalism and to the Compromise, brought about his downfall. The attempt to uphold the Dualist framework, while stretching it to its very

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<sup>22</sup> Sugar, *op. cit.*, p. 286

<sup>23</sup> Gabor Vermes, *Istvan Tisza*, in Bodó Pal (ed.), *Hungarian Statesmen of Destiny 1860-1960*, p. 83 and Poloskei Ferenc, *Tisza Istvan*, p. 84

limits via skilful legislative trickery and half-measures that satisfied no-one, was a temporary solution at best. The final blows to Szell's administration were given by the heated debate that broke out around the army question in 1902 -03. Linked to the previous financial conundrum, the recruiting and army budget contributions, army instruction language and so forth, were brought to the fore. The opposition, owing to its nationalist lineage, demanded nothing more than the extension of the rights of the Honved army (then a sort of national guard) to the extent that it would result in a separate Hungarian army of its own. Among other demands was the introduction of Hungarian as the language of instruction and drills in the Hungarian contingents of the army, the stationing of Hungarian troops on home soil, and the insignia used, which were deemed to be "un-Hungarian". While Szell attempted to wrangle some halfway solution out of the central authority, the opposition again, by the means of obstruction, succeeded in having the new limited military bill to be non-ratified. Hungary was again in an effective *ex lege* situation, and Szell resigned. His successor, the former ban of Croatia, count Karoly Khuen-Hedervary, had little more success in resolving any of the contested matters. The emperor dealt him and the 67'-er camp a hard blow by the notorious Chlopy declaration of 1903, in which he reinforced his unequivocal dominance over military affairs. The liberal party now was a shadow of its former dominant self, and was open to no other avenue of political tactic and language than Istvan Tisza's forte solution.

His first term in office was to be marked by unprecedented measures taken against the opposition. His proposed bill for new internal norms of orderly conduct in the Lower House was met by the fiercest obstruction of the period; the votes were passed by his supporters waving handkerchiefs instead of the usual method. The bill passed under

the ill-boding name of lex Daniel ( after the nominal author of the proposal for the law) and allowed for deputies to be forcefully pacified or even removed from the chambers, if necessary. All of this resulted in little more than a Pyrrhic victory, since it deepened the chasm between the few defenders of the Ausgleich and its contesters. After a three week recess, at the reopening of parliamentary proceedings, a new event put its mark on Hungarian political life. It was the entry of violence into the field of politics. The opposition entered the chambers of the Lower House on December 13, 1904 and physically destroyed much of the interior of the house, as retribution for what they perceived as the manifestly unlawful act from three weeks prior. This event did much to discredit the value of the parliament and indeed, the political class in the public eye of the time, but this will be addressed later. The direct result of Tisza's actions was an internal consolidation achieved by the most forcible methods. The other, more important side of this coin was represented by an unprecedented internal weakening of the Liberal Party, to the point of its passing into non-existence. As stated above, Andrassy Jr. had already left the party and Apponyi had reconstituted his National party by this time. A host of other small parties joined the '48-ers camp, such as the Ugron-Party or Nandor Zichy's Catholic People's Party and last but not least, the nationalities, hoping for more rights for their respective electors. All that Tisza's hard-line strategy achieved was the strengthening of the rank of the opposition, which associated into what became known as the "Coalition". The final nail in the coffin of the Liberal Party was the call for elections in early 1905, in which the newly-formed Coalition obtained a resounding victory. The Independence Party carried the day, obtaining a staggering 166 mandates, over a lowly 159 of the once all-encompassing Liberals. Other members of the Coalition, with the

support of nationalities parties, such as the newly -reformed Romanian National Party (8 mandates) and the Slovak People's Party ( 2 representatives), brought the number of the pro-change camp up to 241 . The Liberal Party was subsequently dissolved and Tisza took a step back from politics, for a period at least.

The new parliamentary dominance could not be translated into a government and a policy, as far as the emperor was concerned. In Franz Joseph's eyes, this would have been tantamount to the dissolution of the Dualist framework he had so long protected. But it also provided a novel opportunity for him; it brought forward the possibility of doing away with the constant annoyance of the Hungarian political class, and direct interaction with his subjects through a centralist reign. After the appointment of baron Geza Fejervary ( a staunch loyalist) as prime minister, he toyed for a while with the idea of introducing universal suffrage into the Hungarian half of the Monarchy, a thought he let transpire through the discourse of his Hungarian Minister of the Interior, Jozsef Kristoffy. But this course of action would have meant a complete jump into the darkness, and an experiment in governance that the head of the imperial household was not yet prepared to make, and was not convinced would yield favorable results. Instead, he used this threat quite efficiently in his discourse in order to tame the resistance of the Coalition, and coerce it into a compromise that would leave the Dualist superstructure intact. The promise of universal vote goaded the opposition into submission, and brought the aureola of a populist kingship back onto the person of the emperor, for a period.

The moment Kossuth Ferenc conceded to accept the demands of the emperor, and form a Coalition government that left in place the *Ausgleich* system, the days of the Coalition were numbered. Parliamentary elections were decreed for the spring of 1906,

which the Coalition won hands down. The Coalition formed a government under the guise of Sandor Wekerle, dropping all claims that were deemed taboo by the emperor. The very act undermined everything that the Independence and the other parties had been upholding. They were forced into the confines of the very structure they had been denouncing for years on end as unjust and illegitimate. The leaders of the opposition now found themselves in power, having to pursue a conciliatory and moderate policy. Having been swept into office on the basis of a wave of nationalistic and chauvinistic slogans, they had to make a significant discursive shift. The target of the Dualist framework had become unavailable, and had to be replaced by an equally significant *thopos* in the public discourse. Their answer was to target the nationalities with new pieces of restrictive legislation (such as the ill-famed Apponyi Law for education) and to impede their participation to the political system, to which they had gained access in unprecedented numbers. The masses were also accorded larger and larger sections of the political discourse, that started aiming at them as the desired target and recognized them as sources of legitimation. This signified their entry in the field of politics, but as an unruly actor to whom concessions had to be made in order to keep it in check at all times.

## **Consequences and the backdrop of the Constitutional Crisis**

The first and foremost consequence of the crisis of political liberalism that started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and ended with Istvan Tisza's second mandate as prime minister

(in 1910-1918), and the disappearance of it, was the loss of credibility of Parliament, and further on, the political class. From the late 1880's on, there is a gradual, but noticeable decrease of civility in the political etiquette in the parliament, that coincides with the loss of control of the Liberal Party over the institution itself. There are numerous cases of aggressive accusations launched by some representative toward another, involving personal immorality or cases of corruption<sup>24</sup>. Most of these were gratuitous and had no other scope than to discredit an opponent that could not be subdued through rational argumentation. Violence entered into political life through another avenue, as most of these disputes ended up in duel, a practice that the authorities were powerless to prevent. More and more, radical solutions were favored over legal ones and aggression seemed to gain a role as a legitimate course of action. This all led up to the crescendo symbolized by the tactic of obstructing the legislature, that became after 1897 an almost day -to-day occurrence. The deadlocked parliament offered a tragicomic spectacle to the public opinion, peppered with numerous ridiculous scenes. The legitimacy of representative government in the existent conditions soon became to be questioned by a number of political commentators, and members of the intelligentsia, such as Ady Endre, Oszkar Jaszi and others. A significant part of the intellectual class turned against the establishment after the turn of the century. The entire institution offered a chaotic image, culminating with the symbolic act of physical destruction of the interior of the Lower House by the opposition representatives in 1904. Among them there were numerous notable former liberals, such as Banffy Dezso; afterwards, they proudly posed for pictures among the remains of the damaged furniture. The epilogue of this course of events was the forceful ejection of unruly deputies by police at the order of Tisza in

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<sup>24</sup> Andras Gero, *Az elsopro kisebbség*, pp. 213-215

1912<sup>25</sup>. The events had come full circle, and the mask of civility, rationality and legitimacy fell away. This, combined with the fact that ever since the age of Kalman Tisza, there emerged fewer and fewer political personalities worth mentionable for their skill and rhetoric prowess, resulted in further perceived illegitimacy of the present political order. The institution of parliament became synonymous with a giant voting machine that served no other end than enacting the will of the few party leaders. The lack of an equitable electoral system also chipped away at the image of the legislature. All roads seemed to be leading to the same destination: doing away with this form of representation in favor of forte, or mass solutions, or perhaps a combination of the two.

### **The loss of the crowd**

Another important effect of the crisis was the emergence and growing support for an alternate political class. These were various groups that demanded radical measures to reform the political system (and social measures as well), among them the most important being universal suffrage (this is the motif that is common in all their discourses). In the radical discourse, this took on the role of a panacea that would heal all the ailments of the dualist framework. Out of the political parties that campaigned for it

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<sup>25</sup> Andras Gero, *Modern Hungarian Society in the Making. The unfinished experience*, p. 163



the most important were the Socialists, the left wing of the Independence Party (at times), peasant parties such as Achim's, radical groups of the intelligentsia (Jaszi) and the nationalities groups. They had the unmitigated support of the crowds behind them, but had access to little or no official political representation. But this also was a quite heterogeneous coalition of momentary vested interests. However, the mass support they mustered influenced those in power to also make a shift in their discourse and political vocabulary, in order to divert some attention away from them. Because most of this crowd was perceived to be nationalized, radicalization of this discourse was the preferred option.

The American historian Alice Freifeld launches the concept of the loss of the crowds to characterize this process. The urban masses are the principal agent in this progression, taking on more and more the role of a legitimate participant on the political scene. As early as the late 1890's, the urban crowd began to make its voice heard, participating in demonstrations and marches that supported universal suffrage and social reform. Mayday manifestations became a yearly occurrence in Budapest and other major cities<sup>26</sup>. The opposition itself sparked off this evolution, by actively asking the masses to promote "national resistance" during the Fejervary government. But it was an element it could not control after 1906, and sought to repress. Violence and street clashes after strikes and manifestations happened more and more often as it soon became obvious that the Kossuthites did not want to enact the sweeping reform plans that were expected from them. The "chastened crowd"<sup>27</sup> of the old establishment eroded so much a few years after the gaining of power by the Coalition that it could only call upon students and a few other

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<sup>26</sup> Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary 1848-1914*, p. 260-261

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161

petty bourgeois elements for support<sup>28</sup>. Simultaneously, public celebrations of nationalism, such as March 15, or the opportunity brought about with the reburial of the remains of the historical hero Rakoczi, became more and more important. Their social role was to express unity and integrate the crowd seamlessly into the body of the nation. In the nationalities camp, a similar “turning towards the masses” can be perceived. For example, the newly-reformed Romanian National Party’s strategy was to actively campaign among its own ethnic constituencies, in order to “civically educate” them. Mass rallies became usual practice. Cultural activism also accompanied political propaganda in an effort to gain some measure of autonomy from the official discourse.

### **The challenge answered: remodeled nationalism**

There is a pregnant, noticeable evolution of discourse and ideology from the latter years of the nineteenth century, leading all the way up to the Constitutional crisis of 1905-1906. During this period Hungarian nationalist polity radicalized its discourse and political practice and also became more and more populist. This was all done in a bid to control the above-mentioned amorphous, looming element represented by the masses.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 297

Fervent nationalism characterized the public debate, and themes such as the Common Law question, education, military and financial problems to be settled between Austria and Hungary were the ones that dominated. These motifs towered over all others and lead to the crisis described above. Many of them preexisted the 1905 -06 events, and were products of the ideological paradigm of 1867. It was only natural for them to gain preeminence in the turn of the century years, as the grip of the liberal elite on the reins of power loosened significantly. The real paradigm shift occurred after the seizure of power by the Coalition ( although there were indicative symptoms even before), by the means of a compromise with the emperor. Since the political language that most of the groups that formed the Coalition operated with was that of activist nationalism, they could scarcely afford a reversion toward a more moderate discourse. The heterogeneity of the coalesced oppositional forces and the emergence of alternate parties, that started preaching with more and more vigor the virtues of mass politics, asked for a reorientation of nationalist devoutness. It was within these boundaries that nationalist rhetoric had to be reinterpreted towards a new common goal. The new formula that the ruling elite stumbled upon, partially in order to divert attention from its own bungling and nascent social -political demands, was the reemphasis of the nationality question. It was at this point that the nationality problem really entered into the public debate. In the past, it had always taken a back seat in front of the all-encompassing Public Law debate, and was treated more or less with deference. What also helped this along was the entry of the representatives of the nationalities ( in parliament, they formed the so -called “Nationalities Club”), with a significant enough amount of deputies so as to be vocal. They had, in the beginning, high hopes from the new order of things to act in accordance with its staunch legalist discourse

and consequently enforce the application of the 1868 Nationalities Law to the letter. For example, the seconding motion on count Banffy's speech that denounced the appointment of the Fejervary government and the prorogation of parliament in 1905 was made by a Romanian National Party representative, Aurel Novacu. Banffy's address reads:

“The legal state is the aim, but with this question we can only concern ourselves when we have already assured the national state...Hungary's interests demand its erection on the most extreme chauvinistic lines.”<sup>29</sup>

In other words, the national agenda has preeminence in front of the upholding of the law.

The entry of the nationalities representatives and their sudden (at least that is how they seemed to be to the governance) claims to their share of equal rights lead them to be perceived by the ruling Coalition as agitators and deemed untrustworthy. On many occasions during parliamentary debates, they were qualified as “disloyal to the Hungarian state” and a threat to the integrity of it. The dominant perception was that with their new-found activist methods, they spread distrust of Hungary, and its government among otherwise peaceful citizens, in order to undermine its authority. Therefore, new pieces of legislation started propping up in order to prevent the further spread of this agitation, and curtail the success of it in the future. It was the government's outspoken wish to forge a new, trustworthy, and more importantly, Magyar, citizens' class. Ergo, institutions had to be Magyarized and to Magyarize. I have identified two examples of laws that were meant to accomplish this desiderate, and adequately characterize the political agenda. The first is the already-mentioned *Lex Apponyi* for public education. Without going into its fine details, its provision for the salaries of the teachers, and introduction of Magyar as a

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<sup>29</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians*, p. 419

compulsory subject that required educational staff that had proved its mastery of the language, went against cultural autonomy. The law stipulated:

“dealing with the cooperation of supervisory school authorities with activities hostile to the state and giving the highest educational authorities the means - in the case of these anti-state activities- to root out the evils that are extremely widespread.<sup>30</sup>”

This meant that the state arrogated itself the right of interference in education at all levels. Those conspicuously targeted were the educational facilities of various religious and nationality groups, in particular.

The other law was the *Lex Kossuth*, championed by the leader of the Independence Party. Its most important provision was the obligatory mastery of Hungarian by the railway employees and auxiliary staff on the whole of the territory of Hungary, including Croatia. This served to further alienate the already wavering Croatian support for the *Nagodba*.

“Only an individual who is a Hungarian citizen and has mastered the Hungarian language can be employed by a public power-driven railroad company operating in the lands of the Hungarian Holy Crown. On the territory of Croatia-Slavonia those employees who during their service on the railroad come in contact either with the passengers or the local population must also be familiar with the Croatian language.<sup>31</sup>”

At the influence of neo-conservative intellectual streams of thought, such as those of Rez Mihaly, Zsolt Beothy and Gusztav Beksics, Hungarian political intelligentsia

<sup>30</sup> Hanak, *The nationalitätenfrage...* apud. Peter F. Sugar, *op. cit.*, p. 300

<sup>31</sup> Peter Hanak (ed.), *Magyarország története*, vol. 7, tom. II., p. 641

started to perceive and treat the other nationalities as dangerous. The above quoted pieces of legislature were nothing more than an attempt at their suppression. Also, they saw the whole political process of nationalization as a competition between ethnic groups, that Hungarians had to win by all means. This attitude filtered down to some nationalities' thinkers as well, the most prominent being Aurel C. Popovici. The radicalization of discursive practice resulted in a widening chasm between the two political elites and later on, in the practical impossibility of reconciliation.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Hungary's fin-de-siecle intellectual background and atmosphere**

#### **Oszkar Jaszi and the Huszadik Szazad group.**

#### **The leftist response to the nationality problem**

As a result and congruent to the factors and events described in the first chapter, a new phenomena began manifesting itself in Hungary after the turn of the century. This was the transfiguration of intellectual life and trends. New currents of ideas began to emerge, incipiently most unbeknown to the establishment. There was a novel response to the perceived crisis in which Hungarian society and political life found itself after 1900. The solutions offered (as we will see) were radical to the measure that the problems themselves were regarded as being at the same level. The receptiveness of the urban public opinion to novel and revolutionary answers assured the growing support for this and others such groupings. Jaszi's most important feat is the mediatory role, which he fulfilled with more or less success, between nationality, social-democratic, and leftist Independentist circles. This was achieved through grouping them around a few common

discursive themes and ideological elements on occasions such as campaigns for universal suffrage and so forth. The new parties and political formations of the sort began, after the 1908-09 apparent failure of the Coalition government, to quickly format themselves as an alternative power structure to that of the establishment. A second Coalition was formed that, although never formally paraphed, started to attack the establishment on a common platform of contestation. It was held together with loose strings, the most important of which was Jaszi and his Civic Radicals. It operated on a principle of vested interests, and sought more or less the same immediate goal: a democratized Hungary, based on mass political participation. However, this also meant that the seeds of dissent were sown. The heterogeneity of this second coadunation of oppositional forces was to manifest itself in 1918, with disastrous after-effects for the fabric of the Monarchy.

### **From the Sociological Society to the Civic Radical Party**

The Sociological Society ( Tarsadalomtudományi Társaság) began as a platform designed to bring together scientifically-minded, but also ( less visibly), socially militant youth. The intellectual roots of those that went on to form the Society and the Huszadik Század review came from the Budapest University's Faculty of Law. Here, the newly -emerging theories of and about society and its functioning, and nascent sciences, most important of which was sociology, began to find a niche. Instrumental in the development of the new generation of Hungarian intellectual radicalism and sociology were two men:



Gyula Pikler and Agost Pulszky<sup>32</sup>. The two were a part of the Law department at the university, and frequently lectured on themes such as philosophy of law, state and society. Their exposes encapsulated novel theories on society, such as Herbert Spencer's, and also the idea that society, like nature, functioned according to strict laws<sup>33</sup>. This was, of course, a manifestation of the European influence of positivism. But their students took these ideas even further, developing an original synthesis of conjecture and new scientific methods, with which they aimed to cure the ailments of Hungarian society and state.

The small groupings of reformist youths began to form debate circles and to organize themselves in semi-official clusters under different names more and more intensely after the turn of the century. The new logical step for them was to gain a voice for themselves inside the Hungarian scientific and public debate by means of a press organ. The *Huszadik Szazad* periodical fulfilled two exigencies: the need to publicize the opinions of the group, but also to crystallize it further. It also provided a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding societal mutations and the possibility of scientific remedy. From the outset, two different currents of ideas began making their voices heard from within the framework of the publication. The liberal-reformist-moderate trend was championed by Gusztav Gratz, while the radical-leftist one was represented by Oszkar Jaszi<sup>34</sup>. The first edition facilitated the first conflict, relating to the placement in the body or on the cover of the journal of a ( mildly) congratulatory letter by Herbert Spencer. Jaszi was to have his way, symbolically for the future of this dispute, and the letter was to headline the first issue of the new periodical. But the fact that diverging systems of ideas

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<sup>32</sup> Litvan, Oscar Jaszi, p. 6

<sup>33</sup> Attila Pok, *The Social Function*, p. 267

<sup>34</sup> Pok, *The Social Function...*, p. 270-271

existed within the *Huszadik Szazad* editorial board did not lead to a divorce between them until late in the life of the journal. This was due to the flexibility of it, and, more importantly, to the lack of dogmatism which characterized its members ( especially Jaszi). It was indeed an unconfined forum for the exchange of ideas. The other factor was that, although having a definite core of theory and belief -system, the faction's ideas were in continuous flux, both influencing and being influenced by other parallel streams of thought. They continuously engaged in debates, both direct and indirect, with currents of ideas such as the new nationalism of the Independence Party, the dogmatic Marxism of social-democrats, populist-authoritarian tendencies of the Court, the new conservatism of the men sponsored by Tisza Istvan, and others.

The narrative concerning the life of the review and the formation of the different political and civic organizations through which the group manifested itself is of little concern to this thesis. The formation of the Sociological Society, the *Huszadik Szazad* in 1900, and the Civic Radical Party in 1912, as well as the different groupings spawned by these, such as the *Martinovics-lodge* and the *Galileo circle* are the few significant events worth mentioning. Instead, a treatment of the salient elements of Jaszi's and the group's ideology and intellectual contribution to the fin-de-siecle Hungarian milieu is more compelling.

In the beginning, Jaszi and the group formed around the review advocated a staunch adherence to science and a total non-involvement in politics. This anti-political viewpoint was espoused in a concordant manner by all of the contributors to the journal. The reasons behind this decision were twofold: on the one hand, the political scene was seen as the appanage of a socially backward, unprogressive caste, and a stage that did not

take into account scientific-rational views. The second cause was expressed best by Szabo Ervin, who in an article in 1906, put forward the idea that any attempt at application by a political body of an abstract meta-theory will result in the inevitable corruption of it. The editorial board of the *Huszadik Szazad* and its columnists thus set forth to break new ground in social science. Their activity gravitated around the investigation of the laws which governed the functioning of society, dedicating special attention to Hungarian and Austrian societies, and their internal mechanism, particularities. To realize this aim, their research tackled a variety of subjects, contingent to that of sociology. For example, Jaszi, Bodog Somlo and Ervin Szabo all published works on historical materialism. Foreign articles on ground rent theory by Henry George, on the contemporary ideological trends in the labor movement, and the sociology of aesthetics ( Allen Grant, Guyau, Ernst Grosse)<sup>35</sup> were all included in the editions of the journal between 1900 and 1905. All of these fields were linked to that of sociology by deriving their roots from the laws of social mobility.

The political isolationism professed by the circle did not last long. As early as 1903, Bodog Somlo lectured at the Sociological Society “On the Theory of Social Development and a Few of Its Practical Applications”; in the course of this expose, Jaszi put forward his views, regarding:

“the exposition and propagation of new ideas in the fullest possible manner to be the most useful for society as a whole, but I regard the freedom of political agitation to be the best guarantee of development<sup>36</sup>”.

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<sup>35</sup> Pok Attila, *The social function of sociology in fin-de-siecle Budapest*, in Gyorgy Ranki (ed.), *Hungary and European Civilization*, p. 269

<sup>36</sup> Gyorgy Litvan, *A Twentieth-Century Prophet: Oszkar Jaszi 1875-1957*, p. 27

Jaszi soon came under fire from many of his supporters who did not view the field of science and that of politics to be irreconcilable, but to be congruent. The apolitical stance was derived in the beginning from a sense of a lack of a lternative in politics. In 1904-05, with the outset of the political crisis, and the Fejervary government, an opportunity became available. Upon his return from Paris, Jaszi organized his followers in a moderate support for this new administration. The the n-Minister of the Interior, Jozsef Kristoffy, began championing the cause of the introduction of extended, perhaps, universal suffrage. He also actively sought out and cultivated relationships with leftist circles such as Jaszi's and the Social-Democrats. In response, the Sociological Society inspired the creation of the League for Universal Secret Suffrage ( Altalanos Titkos Valasztói Jog Ligája). It still advocated a supra-politic attitude, appealing publicly to all citizens, irrespective of political adherence, to join the League. Among the public signatories of the appeal, and members of the organization were the poet Ady Endre, and Oszkar Jaszi <sup>37</sup>. The latter soon pulled out of the project, as it was too closely associated with the schemes of the Fejervary government. Not long after, the League disintegrated, not being able to successfully convey its ideas to a Hungarian public opinion which was outraged at the foreign and treacherous character of the administration. The organization's first political project was thus unsuccessful. But its main discursive thopos was kept, and actively propagated throughout the 1905-1918 period: universal suffrage. This type of radical electoral measure was set in place as the main objective of the group. It was seen as the main reform that would insure smooth political transition and the easing of the social and ethnic tensions existent in the country. Universal suffrage was the stepping -stone towards a free, legalist, rational, democratic, mass Hungary.

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<sup>37</sup> Richard E. Allen, *Oscar Jaszi and Radicalism in Hungary 1900-1919*, p. 110-111

Another of the Sociological Society's important and influential moves was to set up a number of seminars to educate young intellectuals and members of the working class in the new doctrines and sciences, such as sociology. The Free School of Social Sciences was founded in 1906-07, and the contributors to the *Huszadik Szazad* journal and the scholars of the Sociological Society all contributed with lectures on various scientific and political subjects. This was a novel approach to politics, ushering in the method of direct activism and propagation of new ideology among the electorate, and of alternative political education. The Free School and the cultural associations of the nationalities, such as the Romanian ASTRA mutually influenced each other's methodology.

By 1905-1906, Jaszi's theories and *Weltanschauung* began to enter into their final phase, that of being mature enough to withstand political activity. The main works of his scientific *oeuvre* were to still lie ahead, but his intellectual prowess and influence were already great. His greatest addition to the political debate was most probably the ability with which he forged together apparently disparate themes. Social, political and national problems found a common solution in Jaszi's project:

“ the interests of Hungarian, Slovak, German, and Romanian proletariat are the same...and they have no interests in conflict with the sovereignty of the Hungarian state or the historical leadership role of the Magyar element...Only through a socialist policy can the Magyar element defend its existence vis-à-vis the nationalist agitators<sup>38</sup>”

In his two letters to Ervin Szabo in 1904, he continues, stating:

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<sup>38</sup> Allen, p. 178

“ there is no more anti-socialist thought than the desire to break-up already evolved national units into their components. Accordingly, the Hungarian state’s survival s in the interest of socialism<sup>39</sup>”.

Here, his arguments seem to be inspired by austro-marxist influence. The nationality problem also fits smoothly into the proposed plan:

“The nationality policy of the Social-Democratic Party must be based on the enforcement of the Nationality Act of 1868....administrative, judicial, and economic policy which will meet the most vital interests of the nationalities ( I’m speaking always of the proletariat) in their own language. <sup>40</sup>“

“the Magyars...must assimilate in fraternal fashion through [ their superior] economic and cultural strength....this assimilation would only be in the benefit of the nationality millions<sup>41</sup>”

By means of injection of the social question into the core of the national one, Jaszi hoped to successfully defuse it. His plan suffices many ends: consolidation and maintenance of the Hungarian state, its national coherence, rights to the disenfranchised, whether they be discriminated against on ethnic or social basis. This framework also assured, at least on a theoretical level, the smooth integration of nationalities into the body of the dominant nation, via voluntary means. By offering a political understanding of the nation and citizenship, versus the predominantly ethnic understanding of it, Jaszi was able to successfully reconcile the diverging forces of contestation towards the established order.

Jaszi’s understanding of the nation developed via a multitude of different and diverging opinions, out of which a remarkably original synthesis resulted. As we have

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 178

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 179

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 179

already seen, his immediate answer to the demands voiced by the leaders of the nationalities was inspired by very traditional sources, namely Jozsef Eotvos and his *oeuvre*. He understood the nation as being composed of good citizens, forged through an unwritten social contract between the state and them. In a lecture entitled “The Nationality Question and Hungary’s Future” given at a meeting of the Galileo circle in 1911 he put forth his ideas on the emergence of nations and the nationality question.

“do not view the [nationality question] as is fashionable in Hungary today, as the machinations of a few agitators and enthusiasts. The nationality question is a universal historic movement, appearing wherever certain economic, historical and psychological conditions of social development appear.”<sup>42</sup>

Jaszi viewed the emergence of nations as a natural, and necessary step in societal development, and alongside it, the nationality question as a congenital symptom. The only way through which society could surpass this stage was to harness the innate energy of nationalism, which had to be institutionalized. The nationalities were to melt into the greater body of the nations, in one way or another, because of the unalterable laws of social and economic development. His thinking seems to be highly influenced by a hybrid Marxian-Spencerian theory of organic social evolution. But he did not see this unavoidable evolution as necessarily favorable to the current ruling nations, and Hungarians. As he announces in his most well-known work, *The Development of Nations and of the Nationality Question*, only through the strict application and extension of the 1868 Nationality Law could the Hungarian state assure its continued rule. Good schools, good administration, a benign cultural policy, and an equitable justice system, all in the native languages of the nationalities, could secure their allegiance to Hungary. Otherwise,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 183

they would fall prey to their own nationalist intelligentsia, those small clusters made up of reactionary classes, that steered them toward national conflict. As early as 1907, he publicizes this point of view, while reviewing a book of Emil Babes, a Romanian National Party leader. He praised his and his party's newly adopted legalist standpoint. He also began actively cultivating relationships and corresponded with various nationality politicians and activists<sup>43</sup>. The plan was to convince them to coalesce with the left and the radical Hungarian groups, and join the struggle for the achievement of a Hungarian *Reichstaat*, a democracy which would yield to most of their demands.

Although he was greatly influenced by Marxism and especially by the Austrian stream of it, his innate nationalism made him enter into a conflict with their proposed solutions. Also, he had a hard time espousing the inherent centralism of the Viennese project with his own desire to maintain the fabric of the Hungarian state. The plan of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, promoting nationality belonging at the level of the individual, was castigated by Jaszi as being "in this day and age....more or less utopian". The criticism went against the integrative tendency of the austro-marxist scheme and the fact that its imposition would be tantamount to a toppling-over of statehood. Jaszi also firmly declared that he negated any kind of "constitutional-territorial policy, in fact my whole conception is directed against it". His feeble collaboration with the Left Independents of Justh and Karolyi depended on this. Instead, he preferred an attempt to coagulate the forces of the Hungarian opposition and the nationalities around the idea of universal suffrage, the only universal political remedy for the country's remedy.

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<sup>43</sup> Kemény, Gábor G., *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában*, Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1966-1985, vol.3, p. 623



The problem with Jaszi's scheme was precisely that he was not in a position to offer anything. The only thing he managed to do for the advancement of the nationality problem, "the Archimedean point of Hungarian democracy", as he called it, was to promote a stream of thought that favored compromise between the nationalities and the establishment. This was to be mirrored in the attempted negotiations between government lead by Tisza Istvan and the Romanian National Party in 1912 -13. The rather late formal entry of Jaszi and his collaborators into politics also robbed the moderate wing of the nationalities of a viable partner, resulting in growing distrust of the Hungarian political class. The formation of the Civic Radical Party in 1912 came at a time when RNP leaders Maniu, Goldis and Vlad were attempting to strike a deal with Tisza and failing. They thus fell back into a position of faltering and bided their time until more radical solutions could be implemented. The plea of Jaszi for a renewed community of interests was to eventually languish because of this misdoubt, and its attempted implementation in 1918 was to fall on deaf ears.

## **New Hungarian Radical Nationalism and Conservatism.**

### **Ethnic understandings of the nation**

Hungarian nationalism, at the intellectual and conceptual level, also suffered a significant mutation around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Influenced by new streams of thought, coming from the scientific and aesthetic realms, it would offer a new, alternative concept of the nation. This novel understanding of the nation would begin operating with powerful ethnic stereotypes, as well as seeing the nations as separate, irreconcilable units. It would shore up its position with a flurry of pseudo -scientific and historical arguments, designed to act as a bulwark against any possible contestation. Its significance lies in proposing a fresh ethnic apprehension of the nation, an alternative to the consecrated liberal one. It favored a discourse on race and racial struggle, instead of constitutionalism, historicism and legalism, promoted by the 1867 generation.

In order to correctly characterize this group of intellectuals, and owing to the dimensional limitations of this thesis, I will sketch their broad ideological outlines and their contribution to the nationality question via a brief archaeology of their intellectual sources. For this purpose, I have identified three main exponents of this current of thought, due to their significance and popularity in the period. They are Beksics Gusztav, Rez Mihaly and Rakosi Jenő. All were highly influential publicists of the era, and advisers of the strong man of Hungarian politics, Tisza Istvan.

Beksics Gusztav was a Hungarian publicist, journalist and legal expert. From the mid 1880's onward he became well known for his nationalist rhetoric in his articles, writing for all the main Hungarian newspapers of the period. From 1884, he managed to get himself elected to the Lower House of the Hungarian parliament, owing to his pro-governmental standpoint. He was well-known for his works on constitutional history, in which he glorified the value of the Hungarian doctrine of the Holy Crown and that of the rights of the Hungarian nation (and consequently of Dualism, its greatest achievement), to be above even of British value- and institutional system<sup>44</sup>. For him, and his peers, Hungarian cultural and institutional supremacy was equal to none, and a given.

This idea was to become the base for his later works that dealt with races and racial strife Central and Eastern Europe. This shift in his discursive strategy and the sudden displacement of his argumentative focal point, from constitutional to nationality problems, was typical for the 180 degree turn that Hungarian politics would make in just a few years. What is interesting and quite representative as well is that this conversion was made in just a matter of two years (the Dualismus tortenete appeared in 1893, and his next work, *A Roman Kerdes es a Fajok Harcza*, was published in 1895)<sup>45</sup>. The Hungarian Coalition government went from an anti-1867 reformist position in 1905 to a repressive Magyarization policy in 1907, mirroring the same displacement. Dualism was to be upheld utilizing a new ideological toolkit.

His ideas transpire best in his book entitled *A Roman Kerdes es a Fajok Harcza Europaban es Magyarorszagon* ( *The Romanian Question and the Fighting of Races in*

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<sup>44</sup> Gusztav Beksics, *A dualismus tortenete, kozjogi ertelme es nemzeti torekveseink*, Budapest, Athenaeum, 1893

<sup>45</sup> he had tackled the topic before, in 1883, in a less influential work, entitled *Magyarosodas es Magyarositas*, but went back to publish works on constitutional matters

*Europe and Hungary*). In this *magnum opus*, Beksics pioneers a new idea on social organization and mechanism. He puts forward a new understanding of history, in which the prime agency belongs to races. The mechanism through which history evolves is racial struggle. At this point, it is important to pinpoint what Beksics understood through the concept of race. For him, it was a set of characteristics, customs and traits that were common to all peoples; it is closest to our contemporary definition of an ethnic group. Races were distinguished through these stereotypical features, and each member of a race was naturally compelled to fight for their sustainment. These “races” ( *fajok* ) were therefore engaged in a dialectic struggle for survival, out of which only the stronger races would emerge as victorious. This teleological construct reflects a combination of intellectual influences, containing elements of Darwinism ( the natural struggle of species and the survival of the fittest), Malthusianism ( population growth, the resulting penury of material resources and the competition to control them), Spencerianism ( the organic evolution of society), and also of the thought of early racial theorists as Gumpłowicz. Ironically, through this endeavor to establish concrete law for the functioning of society and history, Beksics seems to have the same goal and come from the same school of thought as his adversaries of the time, Oskar Jaszi and the radicals . They both utilized science as a way to market their ideology, and had a dialectic explanation for the evolution of society. The initial positivist and liberal provenance was to lead them towards separate, fully antagonistic political positions, that of leftist democracy and neo-conservatism. This is somewhat similar to the Austrian case, where the liberal clubs were the birthing place of both Renner and Bauer’s austro -marxism and Lueger’s Christian socialism<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna*, p. 119-120

Gusztav Beksics identified four main forces that he thought maintained the identity and continuity of a race. They are religion, the national idea, culture and capital. There are several others, congruent to these four, such as women or the power of urbanization, but these four are always existent and determinant in the competition of races. Out of the four, the most important element is culture. Beksics concludes, through a historic and aesthetic investigation, that the Hungarian race is in possession of the greatest amount of culture in the region, and is logically, the dominant race. Other races, such as the Romanians, are to be absorbed into the body of the Hungarian race, through what is a wholly natural process<sup>47</sup>. Magyarization was the tool to accomplish this cultural assimilation of the Romanian brood. The Romanian race itself is characterized in a surprisingly overtly positive way, as having a host of redeeming qualities, versus other inferior races, such as Slavs. However valiant the efforts of the Romanians though, they are to be assimilated to the Magyars, because of the superior power-position in which the latter find themselves.

Another of the quintessential qualities which assure the vitality of a race, according to Beksics, is its ability to assimilate. Strong races, he argues with the aid of a historical overview, have always been those who absorbed weaker ones, and incorporated their best abilities. The Romans, Beksics argues, was such a race, which through adaptability and assimilatory tactics, forged an empire of unparalleled size and strength. It was only at the time when their doctrine stiffened and they lost the all-important quality of assimilation that they lost the whole of their accumulation and became a footnote in the annals of history<sup>48</sup>. The Hungarian race has this power of assimilation as

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<sup>47</sup> Beksics, *A Roman Kerdes*, p. 45; p. 132

<sup>48</sup> Beksics, *A Roman Kerdes...*, p. 127-128

well, the author argues, exhibited via its mixed origin, but maintained and transmitted throughout the generations its vigor and set of abilities. Interestingly, this argumentation, owing to the same intellectual sources, and of similar rhetorical lineage, was to be turned on its head by a Romanian political thinker, Aurel C. Popovici, who argued that the mixing of races in Hungary would lead to an eventual corruption and weakening of them.

Another emblematic thinker for the new ethnicist nationalist current was Rez Mihaly. He also had a background of journalism and similarly to Beksics, was educated as a legal expert. His conceptual framework is mostly in the same line as the latter's, with the sole exception that Rez was perhaps more radical. This author, in works such as *A Magyar Fajpolitika* and *A Magyar Uralma es a kor szelleme*, took the racial discourse even further, advocating a more radical social Darwinist standpoint. As he claimed, "the nation itself is a biological race, a participant in the perpetual struggle for life"<sup>49</sup>. This racial definition of the nation, bordering on the side of biology, carried within it the congenital conclusion that racial conflict was inevitable. Indeed, Rez proclaimed that "past nations should die to make room for the newcomers; we know this is the perpetual law of progress". The conflict was not to be forceful or to be conducted through violent means. Rez trusted Hungarian racial supremacy to the fullest, as did the laws of racial progression that would ensure the assimilation of lesser races. Forcing the laws of evolution would have been tantamount to rushing the inevitable<sup>50</sup>. He denounced movements such as the Social-Democratic to be anti-Hungarian and opposed to social progress. Instead, he proposed a plan of Hungarian self-preservation, centered around the endowment of the gentry with political power. A number of nationalist measures in the

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<sup>49</sup> Turda, *The idea of National Superiority*, p. 133-134

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 135-136

field of politics, alongside the favoring and protective policy toward the Hungarian gentry and upper middle class were to assure a degree of autarchy and oil the machinery of internal assimilation. Magyarization was also hailed to be a legitimate, and seemingly the only valid course of action available. Believing that the Hungarian racial situation and the Magyar's status as a race was not yet a stable enough platform for a leadership role in the region, Rez supported the Ausgleich. He also abhorred any federalization plans of the Monarchy and other measures of subversion, such as the introduction of universal suffrage. Through this opinion, he reflected the official standpoint of the establishment, and of Istvan Tisza, who's circle of advisers he belonged to.

Jeno Rakosi was made famous by his frequent use in his articles of the slogan "a Hungary of 30 million Magyars". In this short phrase lies his most important contribution to the ethnic-nationalist camp's discourse. Echoing the ideology of Beksics and Rez, he was a highly-read and popular publicist, who frequently engaged in debates with the leftist contesters. Interestingly, he began as a supporter of the Independence Party, and its right-wing, and publicly opposed the Compromise. But soon he also would shift his attention away from the debate around the Public Law. He championed the idea of an integrative Hungarian nation, on a holy mission to civilize the lesser peoples of the east. Magyars were to transmit the knowledge and value-system of the West by any means, Magyarization being the most important one<sup>51</sup>. In 1899, he writes:

"the unending conflicts around the constitutional question must be avoided; they achieve nothing more than to consume the vital energies of the nation...instead, our goal must be the realization of a Hungary of 30 million Magyars...in an instant all of our troubles would be solved...all of Eastern Europe would be

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<sup>51</sup> Turda, *The idea of National...*, p. 139-140

ours...this goal can be attained only through relentless work...each Hungarian should therefore become a staunch Magyar chauvinist...on the flag of each Hungarian, be him a politician or not, should be inscribed the goal of a Hungary of thirty million...”<sup>52</sup>.

Rakosi argued that his goal could be achieved through cultural and linguistic conversion of the various nationalities living on the territory of Hungary. He became a supporter of a conservative statecraft solution to fuel the internal imperialist drive of the Magyar people, in its bid to become a significant regional power.

The significance of the thinkers described above in the field of politics is twofold. First of all, they had a sizeable amount of influence on the politicians of the period, especially of Tisza Istvan's National Party of Work. They supplied the newly reformed pro-Compromise conservative camp with an ideological backbone and a discursive strategy. The core of this strategy was, as I have already stated, to divert attention away from the Constitutional question and, more importantly, the social and electoral matters, and substitute them with the nationality problem. The rhetoric argued for a period of internal consolidation, achieved through conservative means. Secondly, by pushing a novel apprehension of the nation, they broke with the intellectual traditions of Hungarian liberalism ( while the politicians sponsoring them broke with liberal political practices). These discursive strategies ( and their political application ) resulted in a growing distrust of the nationality elite in the Hungarian polity, and would lead in a breakdown of communication between these two parties.

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<sup>52</sup> Gratz, Gusztáv, *A dualizmus kora*, Budapest, Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1934, vol. 2. , p. 5-6



## The Great Austria movement and Aurel C. Popovici

In the turn-of-the century intellectual debate, as we have already seen, supra-national and national schemes confronted each other, in an attempt to impose their respective projects as the sole cure for the ailments of Austro-Hungarian society. Into this classic right-left controversy, a third, alternative political option injected itself, attracting many supporters. It was this plan for the overhauling of the Monarchy which was most typical for the Austro-Hungarian political tradition. Its special character was made up of a combination of elements taken from regional patriotism, *Kaisertreue*, leftist-populism (the possibility of the introduction of universal suffrage), catholic conservatism and flavored with novel elements, such as ethnic nationalism. It successfully espoused the nationality and social problems and demands, steering their energies toward a centralist solution.

The most discussed and analyzed embodiment of this new centralist political avenue is the Great Austria movement. Generally, its ideology and activity are associated with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his political ambitions. However, upon further examination, one can discover that the whole of the dynastic institution experimented with new centralist options after 1903. Franz Joseph, for example, was the driving force behind the Fejervary administration in Hungary, which attempted (more or less

truthfully) to introduce universal suffrage and disseminated propaganda concerning this matter. In Cisleithania, he formed an almost manifest alliance with the Austrian left, and introduced universal suffrage in 1907 in an essay to circumvent the existing political machinery.

Concrete plans for the looming institutional and perhaps, administrative reorganization of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy are few and far between. The Archduke purposely kept close a variety of politicians from different pedigrees. In his camarilla there were nationality politicians, such as Aurel C. Popovici and Milan Hodza, german neo-conservatives (Karl Lueger), and traditional loyalists (Alexander Brosc h). This ideological fluidity was intended to fuse together this heterogeneous amalgam. In fact, among the few common points that the group had was its stalwart opposition against the Dualism and the “disproportionate” influence of Magyars and the desire for a strong, centralized authority-figure. The only clear-cut, instrumentalized project of imperial reform in existence was that of Aurel C. Popovici. He is considered by many historians therefore to having been the closest as there ever was (although from their correspondence, it is clear that Franz Ferdinand disagreed with several of his points) to an ideologue of the Great Austria camp<sup>53</sup>.

Popovici’s importance is twofold. Primarily, as stated above, he offered a potential plan for the future revamping of the imperial superstructure. Secondly, he offered his Romanian constituency (and to other nations as well) a fresh apprehension of the nation, one that imbued the idea of dynasticism with modern ideas of ethnicity. He was the lynchpin which held together the disenfranchised nationalities and the Crown. It

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<sup>53</sup> Kann, *The Multinational Empire*, vol.2., p. 197-198

is through this conceptual binom his intellectual contribution is best understood and integrated in the larger scape of the turn-of-century debate.

In order to understand better the motivation lying behind his proposed plan, one must begin with a short overview of the latter. Popovici's idea of the nation was based upon the respective nation's ethnic character. In this respect, he can be included (with some reserves) in the same school of thought as the above-described Hungarian intellectuals of neo-conservative lineage. His intellectual influences are a mosaic comprised of different notions of such scholars and political thinkers. Among these were Ludwig Gumplowicz, Houston Stewart Chamberlain (of both he makes lengthy and lofty quotations in his works), and Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau; he made use of their ideas on ethnicity and race. Popovici also borrowed concepts to back up his argumentation from Edmund Burke, and Herbert Spencer, and from German and English utilitarianism. He was also under the sway of the Vienna circle of neo-conservative politicians and their greatest representative, Karl Lueger, especially after his forced exile. From 1893 to 1908 he lived in Vienna and took a stake in the ongoing debates concerning the future of the empire, siding with the conservatives. But he was far from being a conservative himself. Coming from a liberal background, he developed a sophisticated modernist critique of modernity of sorts. He combined the emerging, yet murky idea of race with a contestation against the liberal order, developing a future project of traditionalist social organization and ethnic differentiation. In his later life, he was an avid contributor to the populist-nationalist Romanian journal "*Sămănătorul*" ("*The Sower*"), lead by the nationalist historian Nicolae Iorga. In his second most important theoretical work, *Nationalism sau*

*Democratie ( Nationalism or Democracy)*, published in 1910, he advocates an elitist notion of the societal edifice<sup>54</sup>.

Popovici made frequent use of “race” as the provider of the basis for the nation. He himself defines race as “nationality”, a loose grouping of such attributes as a common background of language, culture and heritage, but also, most significantly, a strong sense of belonging to a community. “Romanianness” was the self-conscious result of the cultivation of this national feeling, which resulted in the appearance ( and maintenance) of the Romanian nation. This integral definition of the nation brought together in one community all those who shared the same ethnic conscience. It was obligatory to translate this sentiment into political reality, in order to assure the continuity of those who spawned it<sup>55</sup>.

All races, for this Romanian political thinker, had a particular set of distinguishable features which set them apart from others. The stereotypical ethnic repertoire which he operated with produced radical affirmations. For example, on numerous occasions in his oeuvre, he declares that Hungarians are “all the same” or are “animated by the same spirit”, while alluding to their ambiguous relationship with Jewry. The differences of race were a product of nature itself in Popovici’s opinion, and resulted in each ethnic group having rights and indeed, a necessity for a well-defined habitat. The struggle for these was also an organic competition, and the very force that pushed forward the evolution of society. Races were locked in a continuous fight for survival. Here, he mirrors the ideas of Gumpłowicz ( the synegetic nature of race) , Spencer

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<sup>54</sup> Turda, Aurel C. *Popovici’s nationalism and its political representation* , p. 54-55

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 58-59

(organic evolution ) and Knox ( the superiority of race)<sup>56</sup>, but also of other contemporary thinkers, such as Gusztav Beksics, with who's work he repeatedly engaged into polemics. But where he swerves off the thought of Beksics is the question of race dynamics. Where Beksics extols the value of combination and the ability to assimilate of a race as its greatest asset, Popovici considers the mixture of ethnicities to be the key to their downfall. The preservation of race and its qualities through autarchy is the cornerstone of Popovici's thought. This is an element appropriated from Gobineau, and tailored to fit the logic of his argument ( his concept of racial degeneration is dynamic, as opposed to Gobineau's irreversible atrophy). The hybridized nature of the Hungarian race therefore would lead to its inevitable downfall, especially after its latest incorporation of a large number of Jews.

This ethnic underpinning of society, in Popovici's *Weltanschauung*, would be transposed into concrete form in his *magnum opus*, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Gross-Oesterreich* ( *The United States of Great Austria*), appeared in 1906. He put forth a plan which linked together federalist and centralist tendencies, all the while jealously safeguarding his beloved concept of ethnic separatism. Although at first appearance, the project seemed to belong to a by-gone era, it was not rooted in traditional politics. Popovici, as did his whole generation, broke with the idea of the historically -based federalist makeup of the Habsburg Monarchy. The reinstatement of the pre -1867 Transylvania would not have resulted in an ameliorated state for Romanians. Hungarians dominated even before that, and the lesson was not lost on them. What was needed instead, Popovici claimed, in the spirit of equity, was an ethnically -based reconfiguration of the imperial crown lands. Accordingly, he developed a federal structure, composed of

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<sup>56</sup> Turda, *The idea...*, pp.144-148

15 provinces, each circumscribed to a more or less well defined ethnic dominance. These were:

1. German Austria. Composed out of the alpine regions of inner Austria, the Burgenland, German southwestern Bohemia, and southern Bohemia
2. German Bohemia. The north-western part of Bohemia, alongside the region of Tratenau
3. German Moravia (Silezia). Approximately all of German Silezia with parts of German Bohemia and Moravia
4. Bohemia. All of the remaining Czech region of Bohemia, Moravia and Silezia
5. Western Galicia. The Polish-inhabited part
6. Eastern Galicia. The Ruthenian part of the region, with the Ruthenian parts of Hungary and Bucovina
7. Transylvania with all the Romanian-inhabited regions of Hungary and Bucovina
8. Croatia with Dalmatia, Croatian Istria, and Fiume
9. Kraina. It would encompass all the Slovene lands
10. Slovakia
11. Voivodina. The Serbian-inhabited part of Southern Hungary
12. Hungary proper
13. Szekler Land
14. Tirol
15. Trieste. With Italian Gorz and Italian Istria”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Aurel C. Popovici, *Stat si Natiune. Statele Unite ale Austriei Mari*, transl. C. Schirfinet, Bucuresti, Albatros, 1997, pp. 279-280

This construct would be governed by a federal government, which would exercise total power in matters relating to civil and criminal legislation, foreign policy, customs and currency, health, and justice. The legislature's lower house was to be elected on the basis of universal male suffrage (ideas of mass politics began to seep somewhat into Popovici's scheme as well). The upper house would bring together the elites of the nations of the Empire, appointed upon a quota basis, and corporatism<sup>58</sup>. Besides Popovici's scheme being socially orthodox, he allowed very little space to maneuver to all nationalities, including his own. Solving the nationality conflict seemed to hold the candle to all other issues, as far as the Romanian politician was concerned. But even in this matter, his plan was not ideologically uniform. His Romanian nationalism led him to conceive a maximalist plan for autonomous Transylvania, including many ethnically mixed regions. He also seems to have favored German domination in some regions, and in some respect, over the whole empire. German would have become the *Reichssprache* and Vienna the capital. He also exhibited a fairly unambiguous contempt for Slavs, and considered them a danger because of their vulnerability to Russian Pan-Slav propaganda. Thusly, he carved up many new provinces to favor Germans, Italians or his fellow Romanians rather than Slavs. These double standards did not bring him much popularity among nationality politicians. The other problem in which Popovici did not fully live up to his own standards was assimilation. His views are somewhat duplicitous when small enclaves of nationalities in his newly-crafted counties are concerned. Theoretically, he sketches for them a certain amount of rights and protection, mainly in the cultural and educational field. Each of the Crown Lands would, in this respect, draft a Law similar to

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<sup>58</sup> R. A. Kann, *The Multinational Empire*, vol .2., p. 202

that of Eotvos' 1868 one<sup>59</sup>. But, in many places in his *United States of Great Austria* and other works, he openly admitted that the fate of these small units is to be swallowed up by the larger ones, as a natural process. By this statement, he temporarily circumvents his own advocacy of the Gobineau-inspired degeneration theory. The assimilatory tactics so abhorred in Magyar hands, seemed acceptable, once the tables had been turned.

Despite its shortcomings, the plan gained a significant amount of notoriety, and remained until the last days of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, one of the most important schemes for its renovation. It held the upper hand in many circles over projects such as Renner's or Jaszi's because of its safe social platform and ease of conception. Because of this, it seemed to many, for a long period, to be the only feasible project, and the most certain to be implemented, under some form or another by the heir presumptive, Franz Ferdinand.

The intellectual streams presented in this chapter were the most significant novel apprehensions and contributions to a problem which they themselves brought to the foreground of Hungarian, and indeed Austro-Hungarian discourse: the nationality problem. Pushed profusely by the Hungarian and intellectual elite ( alongside its own ethnicizing nationalism), in order to eschew social and constitutional matters, it became in a short while the dominant *thopos* of the Hungarian political debate. Along with it came the estrangement of the already jaded nationalities living on the territory of Hungary. They began perceiving themselves as being in a competition for their very existence, one that they could not hope to win if they resorted to traditional tactics. As a consequence, in political activity and discourse, they became more and more militant and open to radical solutions. The Dualist framework became infused in their imaginary with

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<sup>59</sup> Popovici, *Stat si Natiune*, p. 258 and *infra*.



a symbolism of oppression. All those who promised quick deliverance were heeded to. In the following chapter, I will document how a movement of a disenfranchised nationality, the Romanians, went through a gradual ideological and discursive transformation, toward a final divorce with Dualism.

## **Chapter three**

### **The Romanian National Party 1903 -1914**

#### **Postmemorandism: towards a new ideology**

Before one can embark on the journey of illustrating the ideology, discursive and political practice of the Romanian National Party in its last, activist phase, the roots have to be traced. It is vital for the understanding of the motivation lying behind the new political tactics to have an accurate picture of the prehistory of activism among Transylvanian Romanians. I will therefore concentrate on isolating the few salient factors and moments that contributed toward the reconfiguration of the Transylvanian political outlook.

The most important external factors and influences have already been roughly sketched (as much as the confines of this thesis allow) in the first two chapters. It is within the shifting Hungarian political life and discourse that the RNP also undertook a decisive renovation of its own ideological underpinnings. In this respect, the Romanian party's activity is highly contextual, having its own well-defined niche inside the Hungarian political spectrum. If carefully analyzed, its evolution parallels the major internal mutations of Cisleithania, the watershed moments being also reflected in RNP party life. It was precisely this aspect that Romanian historiography overlooked, in most cases, consciously. Historians wanted to obscure dangerous aspects of party strategy from the point of view of the nationalist *vulgata*. In-fighting among party factions was downplayed, as an unimportant aspect of the continuous fight against Hungarian oppression. I hypothesize that it is exactly this aspect that is most important, since it links the RNP into a greater context, leading to a better understanding of its history and contribution to the social debate inside the Monarchy.

Methodologically, my analysis will rely upon the method of Rogers Brubaker. He makes use of a triadic nexus of interwoven relationships between the “nationalizing nationalism” of the states, the defensive nationalism of the minorities within them, and the transborder nationalism of the kin states, in order to explain the activity of the minority political groupings<sup>60</sup>. In this case, the “nationalizing nationalism” is represented by the Hungarian state and its cultural and educational policy. The minority concerned, is, obviously, the Romanians of Transylvania (among others). The activity of the kin state is embodied most clearly by the activity of the Cultural League For the Unity of All

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<sup>60</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed. Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 4-5

Romanians. It is the complex interplay between these three major categories of factors that determine the evolution and progression of Romanian political discourse at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As this chapter of the thesis aims to be a microcosm, reflecting the matters already treated in the first two parts, I will begin again by underlining some of the social substratum. The latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century meant, for Transylvania, as it did for Hungary, a fast-paced social and economic advancement. Without going into details, as these problems are not of special concern to the topic of this thesis, it is important that this development was concentrated regionally in a few geographic centers, and concretized through urbanization. The most significant industrializing effort was projected onto the Banat region of Transylvania, an important mining and commercial node. It is therefore not surprising, that the new political elite of the RNP was composed mostly of men from this region. Here, an entirely new echelon of values dominated, opposed to the traditional line upheld by Transylvania proper. A young, economically self-sufficient and socially emancipated class of Romanian petty bourgeois politicians felt that the old ways did not serve the best interests of the nation. The new generation developed around such financial establishments as the *Victoria* bank in Arad or the *Ardeleana* bank in Orastie, the second and third richest after the *Albina* of Sibiu<sup>61</sup>. They themselves, dealing with Hungarian politicians and businessmen successfully on a daily basis, felt that the system could be reformed from within. All that was lacking was political will.

There are two major milestones in the chain of events that lead toward the ideological dislocation of passivism. The first is the establishment of the journal

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<sup>61</sup> Liviu Maior, *Miscarea nationala romana din Transilvania 190-1914*, Cluj, Dacia, 1986, p.51, p. 59

“*Tribuna*” ( “*The Tribune*”) in Sibiu/Nagyszeben in 1884. With this new press organ, the fledgling Romanian urban intelligentsia began conveying their ideas to a larger audience. The newspaper’s tone, however, differed significantly from the traditional thematic pushed by established Romanian publications, such as the *Gazeta Transilvaniei* ( *The Transylvanian Gazette*). In its inaugural number, it declared “the necessity of establishing a *modus vivendi* for all the nationalities living on the territory of Hungary”<sup>62</sup>. It also set forth to reinterpret the immediate value of the passive standpoint, urging the leadership of the RNP to engage in more than declarations of principle and small cultural undertaking. It set in perspective the option of future revision of the value -system of political passivity; in this sense, the influence of the kin state, Romania was decisive. The *Tribuna* mirrored the cultural, political and aesthetic revolution that was taking place in Romania at the time at the hands of Titu Maiorescu and the *Junimea* generation. Also, the contribution of Ioan Slavici, the aesthete returning from Romania, was decisive. With the help of the *Liga Culturala pentru Unitatea Romanilor* ( *The Cultural League for the Unity of all Romanians*), bankrolled from Bucharest, he successfully gathered around him a number of Romanian nationalist youth, who were not members of the RNP. Dynamism, a turn toward autochthonous tradition and the Romanian constituency, instead of an aping of Czech and Hungarian tactics, seen as bankrupting political will, were proposed.

The change of the topicality and volume of political discourse urged the RNP leadership and dr. Ratiu, its president, in particular, toward some sort of action. This was to be crystallized through the so-called “Memorandum-movement” of 1891-1892. The party elite embarked on a year-long propaganda campaign in press and through other

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<sup>62</sup> *Tribuna*, Ioan Slavici (ed.), Sibiu, 1884, nr.1., p. 1

channels, in order to promote the text of a memorandum concerning the demands of the Romanians, that was to be submitted to the emperor Franz Joseph. It declaimed the cultural and electoral practices of Hungarian dualism, appealing to the highest authority for a revision of the entire framework. In this way, the RNP leadership sought to elegantly bypass its own vow of passivity and circumvent the Hungarian legal framework, at the same time. Beyond the mere details of this undertaking, its significance lies in a few symbolic results. On the one hand, it was the last great project of traditional politics of appealing to the imperial centre, and it ended in failure (the emperor denied them an audience). This was the symbolic breaking-point between the Romanian elite and Franz Joseph, and dashed hopes of imperial intervention. The myth of the “good emperor”, was, for all thoughts and purposes, effectively dead from 1893 on. On the other hand, it was the first political operation that made use of a completely new tactical and discursive toolkit. The vigorous press campaign, the numerous speeches, the unprecedented state of political mobilization (the delegation which went to Vienna in 1892 had a number of peasant leaders in its composition, for example), all heralded a future permutation of party politics. The ensuing press trials and political conflict kept a large part of the Romanian citizenry in a continuous state of political mobilization. The RNP-lead Nationality Congress of 1895, in Budapest, also ending without concrete results, was the last nail in the coffin of passivism.

The post-memorandist political lexicon was, from 1895 onward, replete with new themes. The topicality revolved mainly around the necessity for pragmatic politics, and the validity of the maintenance of political idleness. The subsequent debate between disciples of Ratiu and those gathered around the defunct “Tribuna” was a reproduction of

the inter-party dialectic of Romania proper. Both factions found backing from D.A. Sturdza's Romanian Liberal Party (Tribunists) and the Conservatives (Ratiu and the Popovici camp). The two sides soon engaged in a bitter ideological conflict. The first episode of this rivalry was represented by the wrangling over the control of the "Tribuna". Ioan Ratiu and the editor of the Tribuna, Russu-Sirianu faced off, while the Romanian exiles, Eugen Brote (Tribunist) and Aurel C. Popovici, provided external support. The old guard was to come out on top, after Sturdza withdrew his formal backing after 1895 (the Liberals had seized power in Romania, and had to back away from the open support of the national movement, in virtue of Romania's diplomatic pact with Austria-Hungary)<sup>63</sup>. The "Tribuna" editorial board was to be taken over by Ratiu's faithful after a shrewd maneuver that took away the support of the publishing house from Brote's men.

This victory, however, proved out to be only a Pyrrhic one, in the long run. The ex-Tribunists, with the help of Brote and less outwardly, the Bucharest Liberals, reformed their lines. They founded a new weekly, mirroring the name of the old, called "*Tribuna Poporului*" ("*The People's Tribune*"). The name was chosen in order to take legitimacy away from the opposing side, and show the popular roots of the movement. Quite significantly, the newspaper was based in Arad, at the core of the most socially-mobile Romanian geographical area. Soon, the conciliatory tactics toward the Hungarian authorities of Brote and company came under heavy fire from Aurel C. Popovici. He denounced Brote as "a traitor", divulging the details "of a plan to organize the Romanian constituency into a Hungarian governmental party", and accused him of

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<sup>63</sup> Lucian Boia, *Contributii privind criza Partidului National Roman si trecerea de la pasivism la activism (1893-1905)* in *Studii de Istorie*, tom 24, nr.5., Bucharest, 1971, p. 967

“playing the interests of the Romanian minority in Hungary onto the hands of the Romanian Liberal Party<sup>64</sup>”.

The faction lead by Russu-Sirianu, Eugen Brote and the archbishop Vasile Mangra developed a program in response to Popovici's allegations. This was to mark their wholesale abandonment of passivity, and the beginning of the attempt to coagulate all the forces of the party around them. The first step of this plan was the forsaking of the tactics of political isolation. The second, to formulate a fresh political credo, with a de-emphasis of the 1 and 9 articles of the 1881 RNP program (the repudiation of Dualism and the claim to Transylvania's autonomy). The third would be engagement in political life and laying to rest the Romanian-Hungarian conflict. Other points, such as the smooth cooperation with other nationalities living on the territory of Hungary, and possible coadjutation with the Hungarian opposition, were also high up on the list<sup>65</sup>. This set of principles, brimming both of pragmatism but also of militant, integral nationalism, began to shift the balance of power from Sibiu to Arad. Most regional groups (like Mocioni and Vincentiu Babes') made unenthusiastic declarations of principle in favor of the party elders, since the prestige of dr. Ratiu was still overwhelming. But the vitality of these was decreased and the *Tribuna Poporului* soon gained the upper hand. It spawned a number of satellite publications and political groupings, such as those gathered around the *Revista Orastiei* or the later *Libertatea*. A number of political figures, who would later on become of consequence to the RNP, such as Aurel Vlad, Ioan Mihu or Alexandru Vaida-Voievod, emerged from these activist partisan circles.

<sup>64</sup> *Tribuna*, XIII, 1896, 25-29<sup>th</sup> of February and 8-12<sup>th</sup> of March issues

<sup>65</sup> Brote to Roman Ciorogariu, 1902.5.11., *apud*. Boia, *Contributii privind criza Partidului National Roman si trecerea de la pasivism la activism*, p. 972



The discourse of the activist camp is quite conspicuous right from the outset. The headline of the first edition of the newspaper reads “*Actiune!*” ( “*Action!*”). The article declaims the lack of activity, the decay of political life among Romanians, and shifts the blame for the party disunity squarely on the Sibiu men <sup>66</sup>. Brote also publishes a proposal in 7 points, entitled “*Puncte de orientare*” ( “*Points of Reference*”) in which he underlines the changes happening in Hungarian political life. He states the opportunity that is presented to the Romanian fold to broker a significant improvement of their status<sup>67</sup>. Between the years 1898-1899 a number of attempts of reconciliation, such as the Mangra-initiated party gathering at Cluj or the petition of Iuliu Maniu and Aurel Vlad, met with the stubborn resistance of Ratiu and his shrinking cluster of stalwarts.

The elections of 1901 for the RNP meant another step towards the scrapping of traditional politics. The new obvious crisis of Hungarian political life and the opportunity for reform were by then hard to ignore. Still, Ratiu managed to squeeze a declaration of abstinence from the party assembly, in the program of 1901<sup>68</sup>. It solemnly declared “not to have our fate fall pray to the enemy, to be debated or negated, and to adhere to the values of our nation and our past achievements<sup>69</sup>”. This however, was to be the last utterance of political autarchy. In the same year, Brote makes an open plea for activism, publishing an article entitled “*Puncte noua de orientare*” ( “*New Points of Reference*”). He declares:

“Let us admit that the policy of passivity has not managed to attain any of the goals proposed, desired and expected...the current of thought created from 1894

<sup>66</sup> *Actiune!* in *Tribuna Poporului*, I, 1897, nr.8.

<sup>67</sup> *Puncte de orientare* in *Tribuna Poporului*, I, 1897, nr. 19

<sup>68</sup> The electoral appeal of the RNP committee for the 1901 elections, 1901. sept. 5., in Kemeny G. Gabor, *Iratok a nemzetisegi kerdeshez*, Budapest, Tankonyvkiado, 1964, vol .3., p. 175 ( subsequently INK)

<sup>69</sup> INK, vol.3., p. 177

onwards in the midst of the Romanian leadership for the abandonment of the politics of passivity only grows...Our organization was founded on the basis of the spreading of the ideas of the Memorandum. This idea ( goal) was also realized and the leadership of our national political life did not know what other goal to give to an already waiting and disciplined army. First, the army waited, then it fell into disorganization, because it lacked a political idea<sup>70</sup>,”

A year later, he declared:

“There is only one choice remaining that will guide us to the desired goal: the Constitutional fight. We do not delude ourselves, and realize that this will be a hard-fought and bitter struggle, but not one that cannot be won. With a well-developed and disciplined political organization, the Romanians can send a considerable number of deputies into the Hungarian Chamber.<sup>71</sup>”

The Tribuna Poporului group also began to play the card of public opinion and *vox populi* in order to get the better of the RNP chiefs. It published articles with opinions of peasants that proclaimed:

“we have had enough of passivity and want that you, leaders of the towns, come among us and together with the people let us try another political course, because passivity is getting us nowhere<sup>72</sup>”.

It was not long before these new discursive blueprints yielded the expected results. The supporters of the official RNP party line were few and far between. The passivist line was ebbing away. The Tribuna Poporului men scored victory after victory. First, in 1902, after the passing away of Iosif Goldis, the activists lobbied for Vasile Mangra to fill the

<sup>70</sup> Tribuna Poporului, V, 1901, 20<sup>th</sup> of October

<sup>71</sup> Tribuna Poporului, VI, 1902, 8<sup>th</sup> of January

<sup>72</sup> Tribuna Poporului, V, 1901, 29<sup>th</sup> of September

vacant bishop's seat. They succeeded, drawing considerable clerical support. The death of Ioan Ratiu in the same year removed the last bulwark of political passivity, and left the road open for the activism. The "Tribuna" of Sibiu ceased to appear in April 1903. The Tribuna Poporului changed its name to "Tribuna" in the spring of 1904. The cercle was complete.

The catalyst for the adoption of activism was the formal declaration in favor of this strategy by the Arad organization and the subsequent candidature of Aurel Vlad. He ran in 1903, without the approval of the party hierarchy, for the vacated deputy man date in the Dobra/Hajdudobra county. Using the new methods of rallying and propaganda, he achieved an unexpected success. This was a great coup for the Tribunists, and was fully exploited in the columns of the journal. It was a symbolic victory, which showed that electoral gerrymandering and the inequity of the Hungarian voting system could be transcended. Activism quickly swept away the last remnants of resistance. The Tribuna Poporului declared: "the victory at Dobra leads us to hope that in the upcoming general elections we will succeed in sending to Parliament at least 10 or 15 deputies<sup>73</sup>". The lines were ironically prophetic, since the RNP would succeed in gaining a number of 16 mandates in the 1906 elections. The Arad politicians then pushed for a national conference of the RNP, confident in the fact that their point of view would carry the day. The conference was to be held in Sibiu on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1905, and sealed the triumph of the new party line. This was the watershed moment, marking the entry of the Romanian elite into Hungarian political life. The ideological changes, reflected through a new political vocabulary and the use of a fresh discourse concerning the nation, were manifold. The party had turned toward its electorate more directly, attempting to employ

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<sup>73</sup> Tribuna Poporului, VII, 1903, nr. 96, 28<sup>th</sup> of May

up-to-date methods of political mobilization. The practice of mass rallies, for example, was pioneered in the 1903-1904 years in the Dobra and Nadlac/ Nagylak electoral campaigns. The RNP attempted to draw legitimacy from popular support, and was thusly pushed in the direction of becoming a mass party. The example of the socialist movement and other leftist agrarian movements from fin-de-siecle Hungary was obviously quite influential. Moreover, the RNP began to show careful interest toward cooperating with these and other opposition movements of Hungary, the exchange of opinions leaving the mark on their discourse as well. In the following subchapters, I will analyze the topicality of the Romanian nationalist discourse in the period of activism, alongside the transplantation of it into practice on the field of politics.

### **The period of participation (1905-1910)**

The era of activity officially debuted in the beginning of the year 1905. The RNP members called for a general conference of the party to be held at Sibiu, the traditional capital of Romanian polity. The venue was symbolic for the passing of the torch from the men of central Transylvania to those coming from the Partium and Banat. Only 97 circumscriptions actually managed to send a delegate to the party gathering, opposed to

the near 300 that participated in the last congress, in 1893, before the Hyeronimy -ban<sup>74</sup>. This goes to show the measure of disorganization and chaos the intestine struggle produced. Nonetheless, the adoption of the new party line passed overwhelmingly with 79 votes to 12, and 6 abstentions. A new party president was elected in the person of Gheorghe Pop de Basesti. In view of the upcoming elections, an Electoral Committee was set up, consisting mostly of young activists: Vasile Lucaciu, Teodor Mihali, Ioan Suci, Aurel Vlad, Iuliu Maniu and others. The new party program<sup>75</sup> preferred to shelve the first and ninth articles of its 1881 correspondent, and instead tackled a variety of political, and increasingly, social and cultural demands. The second article underlined the party's adherence to the famed 1903 Chlopy declaration of Franz Joseph, and called for an united army, in which every regiment would make use of its own language of instruction and command. This would prove out to be a significant matter in the party schedule, since it was one of the breaking points with the Coalition government. Subsequent articles asked for a full application of the 1868 Nationalities Law of Jozsef Eotvos. A new desiderate was introduced, in the form of a demand for universal, secret suffrage and a reorganization of the electoral circumscriptions. Also, for the first time, the social sphere gained inclusion into the agenda. A reform of the taxes on land, according to property size and more importantly, a sweeping land reform were proposed, through which peasant would be bestowed property from the estates of the authorities. Increased healthcare and the provision of measures of social security for urban workers were also listed among the goals to be attained. The party therefore, was clearly under the intellectual convergence of political nationalism and populism, in linking the social and

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<sup>74</sup> the Minister of the Interior of the Banffy -era, Karoly Hyeronimy, had outlawed the party in 1895, because of its activity during the Memorandum movement

<sup>75</sup> *Tribuna*, IX, nr. 3., 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1905

the national questions. Similarly, identical solutions to settle both problems were suggested: land reform, universal, secret suffrage, an overhaul of the political and institutional system, the strict application of the 1868 Nationalities Act. The points of view of the Hungarian left and the nationalities began to converge on several points.

Before proceeding to illustrate and analyze the RNP in the 1905-1910 parliamentary session, one important episode has to be taken into account. This was the beginning of preliminary discussion between the RNP militants and count Istvan Tisza, during his first term as prime minister. In 1903, he began to maneuver toward the nationalities, by a series of speeches announcing that “the winning of the trust and respect of our non-Hungarian language citizenship is one of the most worthy national causes and is a question of lively importance both for this category of non-Hungarians and for ourselves as well”<sup>76</sup>. Tisza was following the politics of pragmatism that would make him famous in latter years, and employed a clever “carrot and stick” policy toward his opponents. The parliamentary obstruction he sought to break through force, and the nationalities he set out to appease. Of course, he did not mean to give rights to all nationalities. The Romanians were the privileged choice, due to their numerical size and highly effective political organization. The men chosen to broker the talks were the bishop Vasile Mangra and more importantly, the prominent banker and up -and-coming politician from the Orastie activist cell, Ioan Mihu. His boldness in 1902, when breaking the party code, he denounced points 1 and 9 of the 1881 program as anachronic, and his proclivity toward compromise got him noticed by Tisza. Once he took office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1903, the Hungarian prime minister began initiating talks through unofficial

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<sup>76</sup> Zoltan Szasz, *A Roman kérdés Tisza Istvan első kormányának politikájában (1904)* in *Történelmi Szemle*, 1968, XI, nr. 3, p. 257

channels. The *Tribuna Poporului* hailed the declarations of the head of the cabinet as the signs of a new era and proclaimed “we acknowledge without reservation the existence of a Hungarian state that respects our rights as citizens...because the existence of a strong central European Habsburg state is more insurance for the future of our nation than any dreams of Dacia Traiana could ever hold<sup>77</sup>”. On the other hand, the only parliamentary representative of the Romanians at that time, Aurel Vlad, declared that he could not give Tisza’s intentions his vote of confidence, since “neither Tisza’s past, his character or his program promised any solution to the problem”. Nonetheless, it seemed that a compromise would soon ensue. These hopes from the Romanian side were soon dashed, as it became obvious that Tisza was playing a double-handed game, enticing both opposition and nationalities to give up some of their liberty and join the Liberal Party. The parliamentary instability, the violent reaction toward the strong-arm tactics of Tisza in the Chamber, would see his government fall and the attempt at rapprochement flounder. Still, the channels of communication between the two camps remained established and would go on to be the foundation for the revival of the talks after 1910.

The Liberal Party came up short in the 1905 elections (and soon dissolved), but the Coalition and the nationality parties recorded their first big success. The RNP managed to send 8 delegates to the Lower House of the Hungarian parliament, its biggest success to date in the post-1867 era. The anti-Viennese stance of the Independence Party convinced the emperor of the necessity and opening for an alternative political choice, and the legislature was soon prorogued. The RNP, through the voice of its representatives, wavered between the throne and the newly-attained political representation. Aurel Novac openly protested against the suspension of parliamentary

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<sup>77</sup> *Tribuna Poporului*, 1903, 10<sup>th</sup> of November

proceedings. An overall tone of neutrality was proclaimed, but it soon it became obvious that the question cut right across the party line. In the campaign of passive resistance trumpeted by the Coalition to hinder the activity of the Fejervary -cabinet, 9 out of the 20 Romanian-dominated circumscriptions made the choice to obstruct<sup>78</sup>. The party showed considerable skepticism towards the efforts of the “League For Universal Suffrage” as well, although it was clearly influenced by its ideas and propaganda techniques.

The electoral campaign for the 1906 elections saw the RNP employ a new ideological toolkit. For the first time, it set out to organize major rallies and go into rural areas in order to drum up support for its cause. A good example for this campaigning amongst the crowd was the gathering of 10 thousand Romanian electors, many of them peasants in Lugoj, in late 1905. Also present was the Romanian nationalist historian and politician Nicolae Iorga, whop urged men such as Valeriu Braniste ( editor of the *Drapelul*) to rally in favor of the 1905 points. The last pockets of resistance were thus ly liquidated and the RNP was on its way to becoming an integral mass party.

The 1906 elections, the first to be held in an atmosphere of relative freedom, brought with them the biggest success of the nationality parties to date. The Hungarian minorities managed to elect 26 delegates to the Lower House, out of which 14 were Romanians. Immediately, they were invited by opposition leader, Ferenc Kossuth, to join the ranks of the “national opposition”. The RNP, through the voice of one of its deputies, Teodor Mihali, refused. This, cumulated with the neutral attitude exhibited by the nationalities during the Fejervary administration, was the starting point for the mistrust projected against them. Soon, appellatives such as “traitors”, “agitators”, and “rebel

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<sup>78</sup> Stelian Mandrut, *Miscarea Nationala si Activitatea Parlamentara a Deputatilor Partidului National Roman 1905-1910*, Oradea, Fundatia Culturala “Trei Crisuri”, 1995, p. 86



rousers” became commonplace among the Coalition deputies when referring to the Nationality Club. The two sides soon found themselves locked in a brutal rhetorical showdown, centered around citizen’s civil, political, economic rights and responsibilities. These clusters of dispute culminated with incidents, such as the forced eviction of Romanian deputy Alexandru Vaida-Voievod from the Chamber by his Hungarian colleagues, after a particularly fiery speech.

In this period, the rhetorical scheme of the RNP was aggregated around a few major themes. The first and foremost characteristic of their discourse was legalism and the correct and equitable application of the existing framework of jurisprudence. In his opening speech to the Lower House, RNP deputy Alexandru Vaida-Voievod made a plea for the observing of the provisions of the 1868 Eotvos Law. His interpellation reads:

“our political line is decided by the internal political line of Hungary. If this internal policy goes against the rights of the public and citizenry, then we will be forced to combat the politics of the government, and we will do this... we will serve any political right that helps with the emancipation of our electorate...but we cannot be accused of treason and the upholding of Germany’s *Drang Nach Osten* policy...”<sup>79</sup>,

The RNP therefore presented itself as an element of normality in a political and legal framework gone wrong. On many occasions, in parliamentary speeches and press articles, they underlined the fact that they are fighting against a political system that does not even abide by its own rules. The RNP, as the flagship of the Nationality’s Club in the parliament, situated itself on a platform of popular and law-abiding organization, locked

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<sup>79</sup> Alexandru Vaida-Voievod and Milan Hodza’s interpellation and response to count Batthyany Tivadar’s speech on the Croatian question, 1906. Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup>, in INK, p. 7-8

in an almost dichotomical struggle against a tyrannical adversary. This strategy was not something new, not even for the Hungarian public opinion, since it had just been avidly used by the Hungarian opposition forces that went on to form the Coalition government. The RNP now turned this discourse on its head, placing itself on the vacated seat of the contender. Moreover, as Alexandru Vaida-Voievod in one of his speeches pointed out:

“the public opinion of the country itself asked for a revision of the electoral system, and the demand had been so strong because the heads of the present government, the leaders of the Coalition incited it. It still vividly remains in our memories how the sons of the Coalition, under the Tisza - and Fejervary-days, toured the country, denouncing the unconstitutional nature of the state...<sup>80</sup>”

This brings us to the second most important *thopos* in the ideological apparatus of the RNP in the phase of activism. The metonymy of “constitutionalism” was also used in frequent association with that of electoral reform. This quickly transmuted into an advocacy of the introduction of universal suffrage. Vaida-Voievod continued, stating:

“(after being accused by Kallay Lipot of demagogy) ...There is a type of demagogy, honored House, that is saint. Do not misinterpret my words...when Apponyi toured the country to agitate for this idea, he brought it to the lowest categories of the population...can the work of the government be so monumental that it cannot devise a law similar to that in the other part of the Monarchy took only a month and a half to draw up?...instead, the House wastes its time with the

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<sup>80</sup> *the interpellation of Vaida-Voievod and the response of prime-minister Sandor Wekerle concerning the Bill for the introduction of “universal, secret, equal and county-wide voting rights”, 1906 Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, in INK, p. 13*

Law for the Millimeter, and God only knows what else...all the while, the ideas of universal freedom have captured the hearts and minds of millions...<sup>81</sup>”

The new populist direction was beginning to make considerable headway and the party soon looked toward other potential partners, beyond the traditional other nationality collaborators. In 1907, a new journal, entitled “*Lupta*” ( “*The Struggle*”), was launched, in order to further propagate the ideas of the party. In its inaugural issue, it declared that “the Romanian people had never risen against the Hungarian people in its history, since it had been subject to the same feudal Hungarian oppression<sup>82</sup>”. As early as 1903, Vasile Goldis was quoted in a Hungarian paper, saying he saw “no danger from socialism from the point of view of Romanian interests<sup>83</sup>” and “was in favor of an alliance with the social-democrats for the introduction of universal suffrage<sup>84</sup>”. The appearance of a Romanian section within the Social-Democratic Party prompted the RNP leadership to infuse its discourse with even more demands for social and economic reform, in order to maintain the cohesion of its urban electorate. The Romanian section constituted the lynchpin which brought together the two camps. Points 1,4 and 6 of the Socialist agenda contained a clear RNP influence in asking for suffrage reform. The two parties soon began collaborating in a number of common rallies for universal suffrage<sup>85</sup>. In parliamentary addresses, on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1906, Iuliu Maniu declared the social-democratic program’s article referring to citizen’s rights as virtuous and set in perspective a possible future cooperation on its basis. This motion was also supported by Coriolan Brediceanu’s talk; Vasile Goldis then underlined the common elements between workers’

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem.*, p.13-14

<sup>82</sup> *Lupta*, I, nr. 1., 1<sup>st</sup> of Januray 1907

<sup>83</sup> *Tribuna Poporului*, 1903,VII, 7<sup>th</sup> of May

<sup>84</sup> *Tribuna Poporului*, 1903,VII, 7<sup>th</sup> of May

<sup>85</sup> Stelian Mandrut, *op.cit.*, p. 123

and peasant movements, while Vasile Lucaciu accused the government of a policy of oppression against both workers and nationality peasants, in the Banat region <sup>86</sup>. The League for Universal Suffrage was formed in cartel with the socialists, and many common rallies and talks in the Romanian counties that supported the alliance with the socialists became commonplace after 1907.

The party not only made strides to reduce the gap toward the left, it also adopted a number of ideological traits from the kin state. The influence, both direct and ideological - discursive, of the National Liberal Party of Romania, upon the fledgling activist dogma, was considerable. A good amount of the National-Liberal paraphernalia was imported and made use of in the struggle against the Sibiu old guard. The premier issue of the *Tribuna Poporului*, for example, read: "Only through ourselves can we succeed". This diatribe, of course, was the age-old slogan of the Romanian Liberals. It was soon adopted as official party motto, heralding the prestige of Bratianu Jr.'s party among the PNR fold. The proclivity toward a compromise with the left was also a trait taken from the Regat <sup>87</sup>, not forgetting it swallowed up its autochthonous socialist movement in the late 1890's. The organization on a local level, into clubs, or at the centre in a party divided into press, economic, social, cultural and so forth departments also mimicked the liberal division. The subsidies that the cultural organization "ASTRA" and the party itself received via the Bucharest-based "Cultural League" were also an instrument of control in the hand of Bratianu, Stere and company. The frequent student protest organized by the same institution in favor of some or other of the RNP's demands also served greatly to help the Romanian common imagined community perceive itself as a whole.

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 123

<sup>87</sup> i.e. Regat=Romanian Kingdom

An important milestone of the relationship between the Hungarian authorities and the nationality parties was recorded in 1907. The Coalition Government, following along the line of an overly nationalistic rhetoric, felt it needed to Magyarize and to Magyarize quickly. The instrument to achieve this goal, and put to rest the vilified minorities and silence their claims was to be the famed Lex Apponyi. This law, focusing on the pay of teachers, sparked a lively debate in the parliament and the press, and went on to be one of the causes of discord between the Coalition and the Nationalities Club. The law's flagrant anti-minority stance gave a chance to the RNP deputies to showcase their skills as advocates of the cultural liberties of the disenfranchised. It was an opportunity for the party to present themselves in a dual role. On the one hand, they presented themselves as victims of inequity and lawlessness, while the flipside of the coin was their righteous fight against an overbearing establishment. This second part, was played out quite successfully, and brought the party much of the mass support it yearned for. Vasile Goldis' speech as a reaction to the proposed bill was:

“(after an expose showing that the very idea that stands behind the Bill contradicted the 1868 Law and the spirit of Deak, Eotvos and Andrassy Sr.)...this Bill...does not fulfill the requirements of popular education. It chips away at the autonomy of religious schooling, and eliminates it altogether in many circumstances; it contradicts the very principle of popular education -believe me- even politically it will not attain the goal proposed for it, that is to bring together the peoples of the Monarchy. Instead, it sows the seeds of severance, because it

pits against one another the interests of the state and those of the Church...for all the reasons stated above, I cannot accept this proposed Bill <sup>88</sup>,”

The parliamentary grouping of the nationalities, spearheaded by the RNP delegates, prepared a motion to suppress the Bill, stating:

“owing to the fact that the Bill contradicts much of the basic laws of the country and circumvents their very spirit, upon the successful passing of the law through the legislature, to authorize the Minister for Education and Culture to prepare another, replacement Bill, that would underline the remaining provisions of the laws still not broken by the Apponyi Bill <sup>89</sup>,”

To this was added an interpellation of RNP speaker, Stefan Cicio Pop, in which he stated that the Romanians wanted only to live by the “*neminem laedere, suum cuique tribuere, honeste vivere* principle<sup>90</sup>”, but was hindered in its attempt to do just this by the Hungarian nationalist educational policy “*that robs us of the very right to educate our youth*<sup>91</sup>”. After this and bitter daily wrangling over censorship and particular cases of minority rights infringement by government officials, the RNP began to gradually turn away from the Coalition and in on itself. It hoped that a future change of administration would result in a turn for the better, and concentrated its efforts to rekindling of cultural and political rights in its hinterland. The failure of the Wekerle government to carry through the expected electoral reform also lead to the Coalition to be perceived as

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<sup>88</sup> Vasile Goldis’ reaction and counter-proposal to the Bill for Education, 1907 April 5<sup>th</sup>, in INK, vol. 5., p. 148

<sup>89</sup> Alexandru Vaida-Voievod and his nationality colleagues bill proposal, 1907 April 8<sup>th</sup>, in INK, vol. 5., p. 149

<sup>90</sup> Stefan Cicio Pop’s reaction in the debate concerning the Apponyi Bill, 1907 April 9<sup>th</sup>, in INK, vol. 5., p. 150

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem.*, p.151

duplicitous and untrustworthy agent. It certainly was not fit for the role of a level-headed talking partner that the activist politicians yearned for. Both the upholders of the Hungarian Ancien Regime and the opposition that took their place had compromised themselves in the eyes of the Romanian elite. What was left was the search for radical solutions, possibly outside the parliamentary framework.

Alexandru Vaida-Voievod's activity at the chancellery of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was such an alternate option. The trust in an imperial strong hand solution, that would finally enfranchise and emancipate the Romanian constituency, had still some support among the RNP electorate. It was animated by the remains of the loyalist feeling, that had characterized Romanian proto-nationalism<sup>92</sup>, and still had some pull in the early twentieth century. The initiator of the talks between the RNP representatives and the camarilla of the Archduke was Aurel C. Popovici. Upon completion of his magnum opus, *The United States of Great Austria*, he felt a need to bring it to the attention of both the representatives of the nationalities and the heir presumptive, as the targets his ideological product was geared toward. He called upon Teodor Mihali and Alexandru Vaida-Voievod to travel to Vienna and mitigate the transmission of his book to the chancellery of the heir to the imperial throne. The group soon established a lively relationship with future Austrian prime minister, the baron Beck, a close associate of Franz Ferdinand. The inaugural meeting was held in Beck's residence, who asked the politicians present to aid the relationship between the archduke and the nationalities. The medium chosen by him was regular reports on party and Hungarian political activity. The three representatives treated the matter with a fair amount of skepticism, and Vaida declared: "Considering the fact that, at the moment, my nation is in no immediate threat...I decline the audience with

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<sup>92</sup> Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identitatii nationale...*, p. 8 and *passim*.

your Imperial Highness...and reserve my right to ask for audience at the time when the Hungarian government would get ready to deal the Romanians a death blow<sup>93</sup>”. The book was remitted to Franz Ferdinand, who expressed sentiments of encouragement, although not agreeing with all of Popovici’s opinions. Though at this point, the rest of the Romanian politicians broke contact with the Belvedere circle, Vaida stayed on, and agreed to submit regular reports to the military chancellery. The reasons behind this decision were the Romanian politician’s strong loyalist sentiment, and the conviction that the favorable solution would come from Vienna (he himself was educated in the Austrian capital).

The publication of Popovici’s work facilitated a strong campaign for the spreading of its ideas. Vaida also took part in this undertaking, publishing a number of commentaries in the columns of his journal, the “*Lupta*”. At this time (1906-1907) he also engaged in a number of parliamentary allocutions, in which he made public his pro-dynastic stance. He declared: “the belief of the Romanians toward the throne is traditional” and “tell his Majesty that we have always been loyal subjects...and tell him to remember us not only when making speeches like that at Chlopy...but also when dealing out rights and freedoms in this country<sup>94</sup>”. In the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1907, Vaida makes a fiery speech in the Lower House, commenting on the Lex Apponyi, and the danger of the introduction of Hungarian in the army as an official language of command. He publicly asked the emperor not to sanction the laws on education, threatening his

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<sup>93</sup> Liviu Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voievod între Belvedere și Versailles (insemnări, memorii, scrisori)*, București, Editura Sincron, 1993, p. 99

<sup>94</sup> *Tribuna*, XII, nr.245



party would not vote in the military budget<sup>95</sup>. This show of force and vigor prompted the archduke to call upon Vaida, through his chief of staff, Karl Brosch. Vaida was granted an audience, at the end of which he enthusiastically declared: “this is what Joseph the II must have been like<sup>96</sup>”. He then embarked on a furious campaign to popularize the person of the archduke among his fellow Romanians. The headlines of the “*Lupta*” read: “Franz Ferdinand! A name, a symbol. The symbol of the future, the symbol of hope, for all the nations of the Habsburg Monarchy. Especially for us Romanians, for whom the present holds no reward for the acrimonies of the past; we, are advised to hope the best from the future and with great attention do we set our eyes upon our grand old emperor, and upon our future monarch”. Systematic and periodical articles are published, having as subject the person of the heir to the throne, his participation to military maneuvers, his ideas on state reform ( “*The Rebirth of Austria*<sup>97</sup>”, “*The Archduke and the Coalition*<sup>98</sup>”), his proclaimed sympathy for the cause of the Romanians ( “*The Archduke Franz Ferdinand among the Romanians. Remembrances*<sup>99</sup>”) and so forth. The topos of the heir presumptive as a continuator, indeed, a second Joseph II, was profusely utilized. Vaida - Voievod also brokered the entry of Slovak politician and fellow colleague in the Nationalities’ Club, into the Belvedere circle. This was done in accordance with the idea of establishing a direct contact between the emperor and his subjects. Also, the idea of a state of readiness on the side of the nationalities in case of the impending succession to the throne of Ferdinand, was pushed. Vaida also sent Miron Cristea and Augustin Bunea,

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<sup>95</sup> Liviu Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voievod intre Belvedere si Versailles (insemnari, memorii, scrisori)*, Bucuresti, Editura Sincron, 1993, p. 55

<sup>96</sup> Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voievod intre Belvedere si Versailles (insemnari, memorii, scrisori)*, Bucuresti, Editura Sincron, 1993, p. 56

<sup>97</sup> *Lupta*, nr. 113, 1908

<sup>98</sup> *Lupta*, nr. 54, 1907

<sup>99</sup> *Lupta*, nr. 56, 1907

members of the Greek Catholic clergy, to meet with the archduke, in order to “have men ready for when the time comes”. Another important moment was the visit of the archduke to Romania ( 1909), in the organization of which Vaida took a large share. He published an article entitled “The heir commeth” in which he declared: “A decisive individual on the throne of the Habsburg- this meets with our sympathy. This is undoubtedly a great change and we have had enough of all the “fortwurstelen” and an imagined generosity, which was really translated into our sacrificing<sup>100</sup>”. The infusion of traditional politics with novel motifs, such as the yearning for a forte solution is clear. Vaida also saw the imperial solution as the sole viable one because of his obsession with the Russian and Pan-Slavic danger that threatened Romanians on both sides of the Carpathians. This apparently is an element originating from Hungarian political theorists, such as Beksics or Rez.

But Vaida’s stream of thought never managed to become mainstream, even within the confines of his own party. He was practically its only major representative, although the leadership fueled his attempts in Vienna. This was done by Maniu, Pop de Basesti, Goldis and the others in order to have “a foot in each boat”, of sorts. In the unlikely case that Franz Ferdinand would really decide to embark on a pro -nationality course of action, the RNP wanted to have a man close. Otherwise, the party never gave its full vote of confidence neither to the archduke or his chancellery. The reasons were manifold. The erosion in the trust toward the dynasty has already been treated. To this, the ambiguous and duplicitous behavior of the heir presumptive, was added. For example, cases such as that in 1908-1909, when after the fall of the Wekerle government, Vaida, Hodza and the others tried to persuade the archduke of the necessity of the forcible introduction of

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<sup>100</sup> *Lupta*, III, nr. 80, 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1909

universal suffrage, and he wavered in support, did not help his case much. Also, the lack of an openly declared set of aims or a concrete plan for the future, was reproached. The fact that the archduke rarely preferred to grant a direct audience to the nationality politicians, and conducted his talks through third parties, in secrecy, offered little guarantee for the future, as far as RNP officials were concerned. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914 finally eliminated this high centralist option from the schedule of the RNP.

In the 1905-1914 period, the Romanian National Party, besides its political activity, undertook a new approach to politics, and concentrated a considerable amount of effort and resources on extra-parliamentary tactics. These were the publishing of an increased number of press material, engaging in various cultural activities, and the attempt to secure financial autonomy for the Romanian minority. They, alongside the participation at the high political tier, were hailed as being equally important. The new tactics were declared to be necessary in order to create and maintain a state of constant and growing political awareness and mobilization, which would be the key to emancipation in all areas. The spread of “political education” was also important, as it was seen as a way to raise the level of “political and national consciousness”. The RNP, therefore, wanted to create for itself a growing, vocal and stable electoral basis, that would ensure its subsistence in the future. The economic institutions, such as banks, increased in number and efficiency in this period, to the traditional Albina of Sibiu others such as Victoria and Ardealeana were added. Their internal departmentalization and organization were modeled on the highly successful Raiffeisen Creditanstalt. The new banks were geared toward offering credit to the smallholders, thereby nationalizing their

efforts. They themselves were usually under the patronage of the leading figures of the RNP, the likes of Ioan Miha or Aurel Vlad. The association between the political and the economic-social effort was therefore obvious to all. The economic struggle was politicized. Cultural institutions also grew in number, under the aegis of the party or the *Tribuna*, and always under the auspices of the Cultural League, which contributed material and resources. An increasing number of cultural and scientific products of the Regat traveled to Transylvania via the mediation of the League -RNP tandem, reaching a growing audience.

The party itself wanted to appeal to a broad electorate, and aimed to be recognized by all social strata as their legitimate leaders. As extensive platform it had socially, it was proportionally narrow ethnically. The RNP aimed to be a party of Romanians, and Romanians alone. Gone were the days of Mocsary's election from a nationality district. The ideas of ethnic autarchy and separation of Beksics and others made a clear impact upon the political conception of Romanian leaders as well. The party press organ declared in 1905: "we want all Romanians to join, from *badica* (Sirs) to *opinca* (the wearers of boots i.e. peasants)...in other words, a completely democratic organization<sup>101</sup>". The most important social category, because of its size, for the RNP, was, however, the peasantry. As a virtually uneducated social class, it had to be outfitted with a basic national-political toolkit, in order to survive assimilation. In this respect, party activists and leaders were sent out to "connect with the people" in various electoral tours and mass rallies. The peasantry was regarded as the backbone of the movement, the repository of ancient traditions, but at the same time, to be still too politically immature to stand by itself. It could easily fall prey to the demagoguery of some Hungarian peasant

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<sup>101</sup> *Tribuna*, XII, nr.29, 1908 and XII, nr. 31, 1908

party or the Magyarizing tactics of the government itself. It therefore needed the guidance of the urban categories, the bourgeoisie. This division of classes was less important for the national ideologues of the Transylvanian Romanians, as ethnic belonging transcended all. This ethnicist background was to be the basis of the contestation which grew up within the party ranks, after 1908. It would serve to push the party's discourse toward a further radicalization, in an effort to maintain cohesion.

### **Conflict and rapprochement. Octavian Goga versus Tisza Istvan**

In 1907, a new element appeared among the of Transylvanian publicists. The journal "*Tara Noastra*" ( "*Our Land*") was the spearhead of a new generation of politically-minded aesthetes. Its leaders proclaimed they were continuing the tradition of men such as Ioan Slavici, that mixed literary and political activities, all in accordance with the national project. The most prominent representatives of this new stream of thought were Octavian Taslauanu, Ilarie Chendi and Octavian Goga. They began their

careers in virtual anonymity, but quickly gained adherence, especially among youth and student groups in Vienna and Budapest. They owed their success to their virulently nationalistic and autochtonist rhetoric. They espoused criticism of the Dualist nexus with a denunciation of the valor of activism and parliamentarism. Their instruments were the political journal “Tara Noastra”, and the influential literary review, the “*Luceafarul*” (“*North Star*”).

The main ideologue of the faction was the poet Octavian Goga. Coming from a rural background, and educated in Budapest, he can be considered as a classic example of the conceptual category advanced by Peter Hanak, “the culturally creative social marginal<sup>102</sup>”. Goga’s self-perceived alienation toward everything cosmopolitan and Hungarian permeates all through his literary activity. Opposed to the activist line, he violently rejects this world, divinizing instead the simple value -system of the rural areas. In fact, this is one of the main ideological *locus* of the new generation, that called itself “*Tinerii Oteliti*” (“*Steely Youth*”). They professed a return to the ethnic and traditional instead of a self-compromising attempt toward rapprochement with the degenerate political centre. The intellectual influence of Romania, through the Samanatarist (“Sower”) circle, lead by nationalist historian Nicolae Iorga, is clear in this respect, but also the ethnicizing nature of fin-de-siecle Hungarian aesthetics. A need to maintain the link with the peasantry, the lifeblood of the movement, was hailed as a life and death matter<sup>103</sup>. The RNP leadership and its conciliatory policy was seen as “selling out” the Romanian nation. The movement instead had to be transformed into a populist, true mass movement, that would rescue the nation from the hands of peril.

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<sup>102</sup> Hanak, *The Garden and the Workshop*, p. 147-148

<sup>103</sup> “*Tara Noastra*”, I, nr.1, 1907

The other important discursive element of Goga's Steely Youth movement was the intermingling of aesthetics and politics, to a level where they were undistinguishable. A speech had to be at the same time, politically relevant and literarily palatable. The Youth saw itself as the true leaders of the national movement, beyond its bourgeois, urban parliamentary delegates. The leading role of the intelligentsia was extolled over and over again in the columns of the "Tara Noastra". The article of Goga in one issue of the *Luceafarul* expressed an almost obvious contradiction between "men of law", the past leaders of the RNP, and "men of letters", his compatriots. The former had only "morals at a face value" as opposed to the latter who carried within them the best autochthonous qualities of the nation. The activism of recent years was reevaluated, Goga concluding:

"not only the writers' attributions are restricted, but even the notion of "politics" is reduced to microscopic proportions. Instead of designating to this word the manifestation of multiple forces that contribute to sustaining, strengthening, and guiding people, ....many of our "good leaders" reduce politics...to this most narrow area. They see in politics only the trifle harassment of our gigantic relentlessness for the affirmation of the nation...they only see the isolated blazes...forgetting all the bulk of the soldiers from the valley, those who want to take part and could decide the fight...these people will not ever understand that in the fight for national revival of an oppressed nation, cultural propaganda that opens the words of writers [to the masses] is a decisive political act, more important than the improvised words of Hungarian oratory...the man with the leading role in our 'politics' will despise from the depth of his soul the role of literature, being entirely convinced that the talent of a writer weighs ten times less

than the mouth of a good lawyer who in impeccable Hungarian could ruin the policy of Tisza<sup>104</sup>”.

The group around the “Tara Noastra” aggressively lashed out against the established leadership, publishing a series of articles with titles like “*A False Coriolan*”, “*What is the Tribuna of our days?*” or “*A man has died. Ioan Slavici*”. They diminished the valor of the political activity in the Hungarian parliament in the 1905-1910 period. This strategy seemed to pay increasingly more dividends, especially after the frustration of the RNP in the 1910 elections. The article of Taslauanu, “*Two cultures. The culture of gentlemen and the culture of peasants*”<sup>105</sup>, opposed the Romanian constituency and its political representatives. The greatest coup of the Steely Youth was the seizure of the main party press organ, the *Tribuna*, in 1911. This gave them a wide forum for their exegesis of their ideology. One of the main themes was a fiery criticism of former activist politician, Bishop Vasile Mangra, now turned Hungarian government deputy. This was in the character of activism, Goga claimed. The attack of the aesthetes on the party apparatus prompted the activists to react. An aggressive polemic ensued, in the pose -counter pose article-series’ between the “Tribuna” and the “Lupta” ( later “Romanul”). Alexandru Vaida-Voievod was the main debating partner of Goga, in his article “Tisza, Mangra and the Tribune” slamming the youth formation for its political immaturity and lack of vision. The divorce between the two sides was almost complete and highly visible, in spite of the fact that Goga’s camp was never more than a fringe organization. The rapprochement between the two was only realized only in late 1912, with the mediation of Bucharest, through its representative Constantin Stere. The settlement, known under the designation

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<sup>104</sup> Octavian Goga, “*Ce este Tribuna zilelor noastre?*”, 1912 ( the translation belongs to Razvan Paraianu)

<sup>105</sup> *Tara Noastra*, nr. 24, 1911



of the “Stere-Peace”, saw the Steely Youth return to the fold, and the “Tribuna” and “Romanul” merge.

The conclusion of the debate was twofold. On the one hand, the moderate group of RNP leaders saw their discourse altered, and pushed toward a further radicalization, in the columns of the “Romanul”, in an effort to outbid the opposition. More elements that fused ethnic nationalism and social radicalism were introduced, gaining access to the mainstream. Secondly, the symbolic value of Stere’s action was momentous: the influence and arbitration of the kin state was the supreme authority. The Transylvanian Romanian no longer looked toward Vienna or Budapest as providers of solutions to their issues, but toward Bucharest. The weight carried by Bratianu’s opinions and political options was paramount.

The final landmark that was to seal the fate of Hungarian-Romanian reconciliation was the second act of the negotiations between prime minister Istvan Tisza and the leaders of the RNP. It underlined the incapability of finding common ground, because of the refusal of the participants to yield or compromise. Upon the return of Tisza to power, at the head of his National Party of Work, he immediately reactivated his connections with Ioan Mihu. He favored a policy of appeasement and outlined a future plan for the gaining of a measure of rights for the Romanians to Mihu, in their first meeting, in July the 23<sup>rd</sup> in Budapest. Tisza’s main discursive *thopos* to convince the Romanians of the necessity of a compromise was the “Slavic and Russian danger”<sup>106</sup>. He also praised the organization of their National Party, and expressed hope that at the bottom of their hearts, the Romanians wanted to remain within the confines of Dualist Hungary. Mihu, enthusiastic about the possibility of rapprochement, then contacted

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<sup>106</sup> Mihu, *Spicuirii...*, . 139

Alexandru Vaida-Voievod and Iuliu Maniu, and conveyed Tisza's proposal to them. Not surprisingly, the Hungarian minister's designs produced nothing more than careful appreciation. The Romanian leaders viewed Tisza, already known for his strong -arming of the Parliament, as a duplicitous negotiating party at best. Nonetheless, in early September, the RNP committee decided to engage in talks with the leader of the Hungarian cabinet. The text of a memorandum was drawn up, and presented in the proceedings. It contained 23 points, at its core being demands for a degree of political autonomy ( the right to formally organize into a political party, rather than a parliamentary club), the introduction of a sizeable suffrage reform, appointment of Romanian officials in Romanian administrative areas, Church and educational liberties<sup>107</sup>. It is easily ascertainable that this was a rather maximalist plan, mirroring the fact the radicalization of political language the party was going through, and also the lack of trust it had in the sincerity of the Hungarian authorities. Tisza, after a preliminary rebuff of most of the point exposed in the project, presented his point of view to the Romanian delegation ( Mihali, Maniu, Vaida). The Romanians could have, in his opinion, a degree of linguistic and cultural autonomy, in the exercise of justice, the field of education and Church., but nothing more<sup>108</sup>. This was the most his conservative statecraft permitted. Though Miha continued his work of persuasion, the meetings were suspended for a period of two years. The parties were now at a standoff.

The final episode of the talks was consumed between January 1913 and February 1914. It was to proceed mostly along the lines of the first two attempts, with Maniu and company presenting a maximalist plan, Tisza refusing to back down and Miha playing

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<sup>107</sup> Hitchins, *Mit si realitate...*, p. 71-72

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 74

the loosing role of mediator<sup>109</sup>. Tisza proposed to the Romanian delegation a number of reasonably satisfactory measures, such as educational autonomy and no further intervention of the state into ecclesiastic matters. However, the fact that the talks took place in an atmosphere of semi-secrecy prompted the RNP members to ask for a public guarantee of the advanced plans<sup>110</sup>. This they could not get, since Tisza was afraid of the reaction from the right wing of the parliament, where the Catholic People's Party and the right fringe of the Independence Party were quite vocal. The RNP itself was between a rock and a hard place, catching a considerable amount of flak from the up-and-coming faction of the Steely Youth. The two camps were therefore put in a situation where both wanted to downsize some of their ideological capital, but could not do so, due to the pressure of the extremes. To engage in possibly compromising negotiations with the vilified "other" of both nationalist ideologies would have been tantamount to political suicide. It would have robbed both the RNP and Tisza of important amounts of political legitimacy, and this they could not allow. The negotiations were concluded in early 1914 without any concrete result, or a formal caesurae, to await a more favorable time. A time that never came, because of the upheavals at the political level.

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<sup>109</sup> Mihu, *Spicuri...*, p. 178

<sup>110</sup> Hitchens, *Mit si realitate...*, p. 78

## Conclusions

The Romanian National Party's activity and ideology, transpiring through its discourse, in the 1903-1914 period, is part of a greater pattern, observable all throughout the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It is a product of the changing political framework, that opened up for a short period, in connection with the crisis of liberalism that engulfed the Hungarian society. The established political order that was the maintainer of the Dualist system, came under heavy fire from both the left and right of the political spectrum. Traditional liberal nationalism stepped off the pedestal of the leading ideology of Hungary, making room for new streams of thought, such as ethnic nationalism and civic radicalism, that vied for supremacy. This was translated into political action with the dissolution of the Liberal Party, that had become synonymous with the Compromise. This political and discursive shift, with the sudden multiplication of political languages, gave an opportunity to nationality parties for participation. It sparked an internal political debate, between adepts of political passivity and activism; this process is easily observable not only in the case of Romanians, but in that of Slovaks, Serbs and a host of other minorities. An important contributor to this internal dispute was the Hungarian fin-de-siècle intellectual scene, which provided a significant palette of political options and

discursive tools to be reutilized in the RNP political lexicon. The ferment of the intellectual background saw the ideologues of the Transylvanian Romanian nationalism adopt concepts such as the ethnic underpinnings of the nation, and the understanding of the inherent competition and separation between them. This was taken for granted, adding to the breakdown of communication between centre and periphery.

As the thesis showed, there were three main internal political options available to the RNP at the turn of the century. One was to hope change would come from the emperor, in a form or other of federalism. This carried within it the inherent possibility of forcible centralization, and bureaucratic-autocratic rule, an option less than palatable for the middle-class political elite of the RNP. After 1914, and the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, this option was for all thoughts and purposes, dead. The participatory avenue was another choice, before 1905 many Romanians being convinced that some sort of compromise could be coerced out of the Hungarian establishment. The change expected from the Coalition did not happen, and after 1907-08 it was clear for the majority of Romanian public opinion that both Tisza and Kossuth's politicians did not desire a favorable reconciliation with the nationalities. Instead, the staunch anti-nationalities stance of the Coalition era, and the subsequent milder attempts by Tisza, were perceived as being aimed at assimilation. The nationality question was in the limelight of the political debate after 1906, and remained so until the last days of the Monarchy. Initially introduced to reorient the attention of the nationalist energies toward a new goal, it displaced the debate around the Compromise, and monopolized the political imaginary of Hungary. It was precisely this phenomena that was responsible for the alienation of the nationalities. The Hungarian politicians turned their attention toward

the minorities, and made their suppression their primary goal. This produced a high level of distrust in government in general, and in Hungarian politics, in particular. The third option open was the rallying to a radical leftist project, such as that offered by Jaszi at an intellectual level, and by the Socialists and Left Independents at the political tier. The problem of the adherence to this generic “second Coalition” of opposition forces, which had, nonetheless, many backers in the Romanian camp, was twofold. On the one hand, it offered rights as a means toward integration, and also threatened the leaders of the nationalities from a social perspective (seeing them as “backward classes”). The other, more pragmatic side of the coin was that this option only became politically viable at a time when more attractive perspectives were available- late 1918.

The last, less conspicuous alternative was represented by a turn toward the kin state. Romania and the Ionel Bratianu’s National Liberal Party progressively increased its political influence over the RNP, formatting its ideology. Supplying it with a political and cultural model, the kin state gradually “Romanianized” the Transylvanian elite. The aesthetic and cultural models imported from the other side of the Carpathians also carried a significant amount of weight. At the dual influence of both Hungarian and Romanian nationalism and aesthetics, the RNP policy turned progressively toward a populist and ethnicist rhetoric. The initial liberal ideology was displaced by one that favored mass politics and the rejection of the Dual framework. In 1918, between adherence to a novel democratic Hungarian system, that offered no trustable guarantees of social and national rights, and a merge with Greater Romania, the RNP chose the latter. This was a symbolic act of divorce with the establishment of Dualism, in favor of the full realization of the precepts of the national project.

The Romanian National Party, in the studied timeframe, can be considered a typical example of the nationalities response to the political and discursive shift taking place in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy after 1900. Faced with the perceived choice of being assimilated and to assimilate in the future, the intelligentsia of the nationalities chose the latter. The failure to achieve an equitable rapprochement between the nationalities and the political centers was one of the major factors contributing to the decay of the framework enacted by Deak and Andrassy through the 1867 Compromise.

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