

***NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM IN THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT OF THE ROMANIANS FROM AUSTRO-HUNGARY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY***

**Cornel Sigmirean, Prof., PhD, "Petru Maior" University of Tîrgu Mureş**

**Abstract:** *In the context of the nineteenth century, the century of nations as it was named, which led to the birth of modern nationalism, the study follows the way in which the intellectual elites of the Romanians from Austria-Hungary interpreted the concept of nation and the way they saw the solution of equality among the empire's nations. The representative intellectuals whom we chose for our subject are Aurel C. Popovici and Iosif Pop, representatives of the European nationalism, and Vasile Goldiș, adept of the Austrian-Marxist theory of nation. Regardless of the foundations of their philosophical works, the Romanian elites identified themselves with their nation, living with enthusiasm the national sentiment, assuming the political elites' political-national projects.*

**Key words:** *nation, nationalism, national equality, Austria-Hungary, end of the empire.*

The modern nation, according to the majority of historians, was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century, during the Napoleonic wars. As Napoleon's armies were conquering a great part of Europe, the old continent's peoples discovered their own identity<sup>1</sup>. This occurred with the Germans, dispersed at that time in numerous political units, although they spoke the same language, shared the same culture, and had common customs and traditions. They were among the first who defined themselves as a nation. Philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), concerned by the victory of Napoleon's armies over the Prussian army in 1806, published in Berlin the study *Addresses to the German Nation (Reden an die Deutsche Nation)*, in which he claimed that the individual finds a great part of life's sense and value in belonging to the nation in which he or she was born. Johann Gottfried Herder, another great German philosopher, offered one of nation's first definitions. In his study *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheits*, Herder considers that the nation constitutes a living organism, a world in itself, with its values, with a personal way of thought, with costumes, ideas, spirit that must not be altered<sup>2</sup>. Also, according to Herder, each people has their own unique collective soul, *volkgeist*, which manifests itself through popular creations, through the common individual's songs, poems, and stories. The German philosopher's work, which highlighted the language's role in defining the nation, represented a true pedagogy of nation formation in the former Habsburg Empire and South-Eastern Europe: Hungarians, Czech, Slovaks, Poles, Romanians, Serbs and other peoples from the Central and South-Eastern European space claimed their status as nation.

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<sup>1</sup>Terence Ball, Richard Dagger, *Ideologii politice și idealul democratic (Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal)*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2000, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibidem. Nicolae Bocșan, *Ideea de națiune la românii din Transilvania și Banat (secolul al XIX-lea) / The Idea of Nation and the Romanians in Transylvania and Banat (Nineteenth Century)*, Banatica-Reșița, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1997, p. 31.

The birth of the modern nation did not have however a universally valid model. Even today one would ask the same question, what is a nation? Which are the defining elements of its birth: race, ethnicity, traditions, culture, language, religion, customs or history? Nevertheless, with all the difficulties in defining nationbuilding, people are led by the national feeling and they define themselves in terms of nationality. Beginning with the nineteenth century, people ceased being called to be faithful to one person, a noble or a king, but they had to be instead loyal to their people's traditions, to history, to the idea of fraternity<sup>3</sup>. Everywhere, regardless of the nation's genesis, people lived the enthusiasm of identifying with their nation, with their historical past, with the political elites' political-national project. Two tendencies dominated however the national debates and projects: a) the tendency of freeing oneself from a state where the government belonged to another nationality and then the freed nation to form its own national state and b) the tendency of reuniting populations of different nationalities into a single state.

Rising in the first half of the nineteenth century, nationalism will undergo an unprecedented ascent in the second half of the nineteenth century, culminating with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The phenomenon was stimulated by the development of education and press, by the democratization of political life, which engaged, especially during elections, large masses of people, mobilized by the "patriotic" discourse<sup>4</sup>.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, having European ideology as a landmark, the concept of nation will also meet a doctrinaire development for the Romanians in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The doctrine debates were mobilized around the concept of "political nation", as it was defined in the *Nationalities Law*, adopted by the Hungarian Parliament in 1868. The Romanians, Serbs, Slovaks, peoples that after the 1867 political division of the empire belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary, did not accept to be part of the Hungarian political nation, claiming a status equal to that of the Hungarians. The law was thus criticized and contested, the politicians pertaining to the nations in Hungary noticing its contradictions. The law used both the term of "nation" and that of "nationality". Several times they would point out the incompatibilities arising from the existence of a sole nation (in the understanding of the law, the Hungarian one) and of nationalities, the plural marking the existence of several nations and not only one<sup>5</sup>: *All the citizens of Hungary form in conformity with the fundamental principles of the constitution, from a political point of view, one nation,*

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<sup>3</sup> Leon P. Baradat, *Ideologiile politice. Origini și impact (Political Ideologies. Origins and Impact)*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2012, p.69.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Era imperiului 1875-1914 (The Age of Empire)*, trans. Florin Sicoe, București, Editura Cartier, 2002, pp.185-196.

<sup>5</sup> Luminița Ignat-Coman, "Identitate reprimată. Legislație și deznaționalizare în Transilvania dualistă" ("Repressed Identity. Legislation and Denationalization in Dualist Transylvania"), in Gidó Attila, Horvát István, Pál Judit, *140 de ani legislație minoritară în Europa Centrală și de Est (140 Years of Minority Legislation in Central and Eastern Europe)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Minorităților Naționale Kriterion, 2010, p.121.

*the Hungarian nation. After which, in the same paragraph, it is claimed: All the citizens of the homeland, regardless of their nationality are equally entitled members of these nation*<sup>6</sup>.

Important contributions to the development of the concept of nation and to the rights that are inherent for a national community in a democratic state were brought by the Romanian intellectuals Aurel C. Popovici and Iosif Pop – representatives of the European nationalist movement, and Vasile Goldiș – representative of historical materialism, as it was illustrated by the Austrian-Marxists Otto Bauer and Karl Renner.

Aurel C. Popovici, licentiate in medicine at the University of Graz, in his famous study *The United States of Greater Austria* (originally *Die VereinigtenStaaten von Gross-Österreich*), published in Leipzig in 1906, stressed the idea of ethnicity in the representation of nation<sup>7</sup>. However, until the publication of the famous volume, Aurel C. Popovici had already distinguished himself as one of the Romanians' most original political thinkers in the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire. He was the author of the *Response of the Romanian Academic Youth in Transylvania and Hungary to the "Reply" given by the Hungarian Academic Youth to the "Memorandum of the University Students from Romania"*, a political document appreciated by the American historian Keith Hitchins as being one of the most important documents issued by the Romanian political movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, the expression of the second large trend of Romanian nationalist thought<sup>8</sup>. In 1893, after he had been convicted by the Court of Clujto four year imprisonment, as author of the *Response*, Popovici found refuge in Romania. On January 30<sup>th</sup> 1894, at V.A. Urechia's invitation, Aurel C. Popovici held a conference at the Romanian Athenaeum on the principle of nationality theme. In February he published the conference entitled *The Principle of Nationality*<sup>9</sup>, where he debated the problem of defining nation in European philosophy and the way it could be solved in Hungary. After having stated the basic identity principles, capable of defining the nation – the common origin, language, religion, political community, and territorial community – Popovici reached the conclusion that none of the aforementioned elements could absolutely establish a nation's foundation. The German philosophers underline linguistic unity, but we have an Irish nation that lost its language, Celtic, speaking English,

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<sup>6</sup> Teodor V. Păcățian, *Cartea de Aur sau luptele politice-naționale ale românilor de sub coroana ungară (The Golden Book or the Political-National Struggles of the Romanians under the Hungarian Crown)*, vol. IV, Sibiu, 1906, pp.791-793

<sup>7</sup> Among the most recent studies dedicated to his life and works we mention those by Marius Turda, "Aurel C. Popovici's Nationalism and its Political Representation in the Habsburg Empire (1890-1910)", in *The Garden and the Workshop: Disseminating Cultural History in East-Central Europe. In Memoriam Péter Hanák* (Budapest, Central European University – Europa Institut, 1998), pp. 49-75; "Aurel C. Popovici and the Symbolic Geography of the Romanians in the Late Habsburg Empire (1890-1910)", in *Revue Roumaine d' Histoire*, t. XXXVI (1979), vol. 1-2 (January-June), p. 97-121; A very good study about the origin of Popovici's political thought see Răzvan Pârâianu, "Înțelesul "culturii" în politica lui Aurel C. Popovici" ("The Understanding of "Culture" in Aurel C. Popovici's Politics"), in Aurel C. Popovici, *Polemici cu naționaliștii (Polemics with the Nationalists)*, București, Editura Do-MinoR, 2006, pp.5-27.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Mit și realitate în istoriografia română (Myth and Reality in Romanian Historiography)*, trans. Sorana Georgescu-Gorjan, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1997, p.51.

<sup>9</sup> Aurel C. Popovici, *Principiul de naționalitate (The Principle of Nationality)*, București, Editura autorului, 1894.

but representing a distinct nation. The Swiss speak three different languages, even four, but they are a nation. In accordance with the Italian philosopher P.S. Mancini's idea, enounced in the study *Diritto internazionale*, published in Naples in 1873, Popovici considers that the defining element is national consciousness and love for everything that represents "a people's glory and pride"<sup>10</sup>. In the second half of the nineteenth century the consciousness and will to be a nation represented the dominant idea of the European political philosophy to which Popovici unreservedly adhered. This spiritual element is the foundation of the feelings of love or hate, anger, which characterize a people in a certain moment, especially when its rights are infringed. *The power of a people* –Rudolf de Ihering considered– *equates with the power of its sense of entitlement*<sup>11</sup>. Assuming Ihering's appreciation, Popovici underlines the fact that anger has its origin in the *ethical power of entitlement*.

National consciousness is also an evidence of a people's degree of culture, proof in this sense being the fact that national sentiment is the highest expression of patriotism. But one cannot require a "nationalist" to be a patriot if *the state represents the denial of one's nationality*<sup>12</sup>. The concrete means of developing national consciousness are in every state school, literature, history, the press, public associations and meetings. They, Popovici says, *awaken peoples oppressed by foreign rule and raise them to the consciousness of their own nationality*<sup>13</sup>. If these rights are not recognized, *each people that is conscious of its nationality living in a compact territory has the right to constitute itself, according to its own will, in the form of an independent state or to unite with another state on basis of their national communion*<sup>14</sup>. Such theories, which motivated the nationalities' right to break away from the state that does not respect their nationality, Popovici took them from the Italian juridical school, represented by Mamiani, Albicini, Mancini, Cesare Balboa and Luigi Palma.

In Popovici's conclusion, grounded on the time's political philosophy, the principle of nationality contains two tendencies: building a state on the basis of nationality or the political union of nations dismembered from the state that is hostile towards them<sup>15</sup>. Reviewing the different ways of nation building, he shows that nations are the result of assimilation policies over the course of several centuries. This cannot occur at the end of the nineteenth century when nations are conscious of their identity, their national consciousness being the most resilient form of defense against assimilation. Popovici points out the fact that disregarding their rights, despotism and violence against nationalities undermine the states' power itself<sup>16</sup>. Motivating his assertions on Spinoza's famous phrase, *everyone has as much right, as they have the power to exercise*, A.C. Popovici considers that if a nation's rights are injured, it is entitled to revolt. In order for each nation to reach an understanding of its cause, it must reach a high degree of culture, acquired through the assimilation of universal culture, *to understand several nations' high culture, to choose models of civilization, to adapt them to its*

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

<sup>11</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 33.

*specific nature and, thus to nationalize them*<sup>17</sup>. The idea of culture played a special role in Popovici's work. An elitist par excellence, he believed in the power of culture opposed to new forms of modern civilization<sup>18</sup>. He nevertheless believed in a high culture, reserved to elites, nationality in his view being an aristocracy. While he was a student in Graz, Aurel C. Popovici addressed his colleagues in Vienna, recommending: *Read, prepare yourselves! We were estranged from our aristocratic class. You need to replace it. A nation's progress depends on the quality of its aristocracy. The more we have talented men, well trained and active, the more our nation will actually progress faster. Aristocrats are the best power, this is decisive. The crowd is the clot, the cement...*<sup>19</sup>

A.C. Popovici ends his study with the trust in the triumph of the nationality principle, *because its basis is culture, and its allies are the iron laws of nature!*

In another study, *The Issue of Nationality*<sup>20</sup>, published in Sibiu, in 1894, Popovici resumes the debate on the nationality principle, *the pre-eminently modern political idea, consecrated by the French Revolution, which was born from the revolution's ideals of liberty and equality, through the subsequent differentiation of these general ideas about liberty and equality*. Analyzing the issue of nationalities at the level of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, especially in Hungary, Popovici designates the main threats to the state, caused by postponing its resolution. The solution would be a politics of state decentralization, without thereby threatening the Empire's unity: *Today in every state there are strong trends of decentralization on all lines. One cannot claim today that the state unity would depend on the multitude of centralized affairs. Political unity exists completely as soon as in a decentralized state there is a parliament entirely elected by its citizens, a central-common government with all its state organs, more or less, it does not matter, and a common judiciary power. State sciences have made in earlier times significant progress in this regard, therefore, today no man with instruction in this matter will not say that in Germany, Switzerland or Northern America there are nopolitical unity moments*<sup>21</sup>. He pleads for the Empire's federal organization, a political formula that is increasingly supported in England, Spain, Austria and the Balkan Peninsula. Almost imperative, Popovici considers that *the federal state is entirely unitary* and that federalism represents the strongest shield of freedom and a means of culture and consolidation. In antithesis with the centralized state, Popovici offers the example of Italy, being, he says, *on the verge of decadence*<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, he proposes the federalization of Hungary, through the assignation of nationalities to a compact ethnic territory where the Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, Ruthenians live. Each nation should have its own governance and a juridical power. In Budapest the Federal Chamber should be elected through universal, direct and secret vote, by all the citizens and a central government, elected

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibidem*, p.39

<sup>18</sup> R. Pârâianu, op. cit. pp. 16-19.

<sup>19</sup>Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii (Memoirs)*, vol.I, Edited and prefaced by Alexandru Șerban, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1994, p.68.

<sup>20</sup> Aurel C. Popovici, *Chestiunea naționalităților. Modurile soluționării sale în Ungaria (The Issue of Nationalities. The Ways of Its Resolution in Hungary)*, Sibiu, 1894.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibidem*, p.37.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibidem*, p.39.

from the representatives of all the “national governments”<sup>23</sup>. A large part of the theories will be found in his study *The United States of Greater Austria*, which brought him notoriety among politicians around Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, adept of Austria-Hungary’s federalization.

Iosif Pop, former judge at the Hungarian Royal Curia, *Knight of the Order of Leopold*, proposes a juridical analysis of the national issue and on its relevance in Hungary, in the study *The Juridical Concept of Nation-Nationality*, published in Vienna in 1885, and subsequently in a new study, *The Romanians and the Dacian-Romanianism. Political Studies*, which appeared in Budapest in 1910. Building on Alfred Kremer and Rudolf Herrnit’s ideas, he developed the concept of nation on the basis of the nations’ ethnic or genetic individuality thesis, as the author called them<sup>24</sup>. The first mistake made by the Hungarian politicians, from Kossuth to Justh, then Khuen-Hédervárz and Tisza is that they consider the Hungarian political nation to be formed by the homeland’s citizens of different languages and not by all the homeland’s nations. Grounded on Alfred Kramer’s work, *The Idea of Nationality and the State*, Iosif Pop considers that Hungary cannot call itself a homogenous state from an ethnical point of view, but a mixed national state<sup>25</sup>. Based on the study of Professor Rudolf Herrnit from the University of Vienna, Iosif Pop presents the nation’s main interpretations: the French consider that the French nation is formed by all the homeland’s citizens, while the Germans consider that the French nation is composed inclusively by the French speaking Walloon Belgians and Swiss<sup>26</sup>. Iosif Pop observes that in the case of Hungary one generally operates with the concept of political nation, which embraces all the homeland’s citizens. In Hungary, historical circumstances have contributed so that the Hungarians, who are a minority, represent the political nation, and Hungarian is the country’s official language<sup>27</sup>. The Hungarian state and the Hungarian political nation are, according to the author, created through laws. Analyzing all the national doctrines, the Romanians are also a nation, with a very developed national consciousness, with around 10 million people, proud of their Roman origin, who respect the Hungarian language, as a state language, but they *stick to their language as a matter of life*<sup>28</sup>. Quoting the historian A.D. Xenopol, jurist Iosif Pop shows the Romanians manifest strong conservatism and they do not let themselves assimilated by other nations, but, on the contrary, they assimilate fractions of other nations that have settled among them<sup>29</sup>. Consequently, the national problem in Hungary cannot be solved unless taking into account *the interests of the nations that form together the Hungarian state* apart from the state’s large interests. Overviewing the most important moments of the Hungarian state politics regarding the Romanians and the cultural links between the Austrian-Hungarian Empire with those of the Romanian Kingdom, Iosif Pop addresses the problem of Hungary’s

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<sup>23</sup>*Ibidem*, pp. 39-40

<sup>24</sup> N. Bocşan, *op.cit.*, pp.210

<sup>25</sup> Iosif Pop, *Conceptul juridic de naţiune-naţionalitate în Ungaria (The Juridical Concept of Nation-Nationality in Hungary)*, Wien, 1885, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibidem*, p15.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibidem*, p.19.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibidem*, p.19.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, *Românii şi daco-românismul. Studii politice (The Romanians and Dacian-Romanianism. Political Studies)*, Budapest, 1910, p.20.

federalization. He shows that the idea of the state's federalization, imputed by the Hungarian politicians to the Romanians, Horvath's case, which creates autonomous national territories, is not included in the Romanians' political program. More moderately instead, he requests the recognition of the Romanians' nationality, all political programs' fundamental idea.

Vasile Goldiș, culturally acquainted with the Hungarian bourgeoisie radical circles grouped around Jászi Oszkár's *Huszdik Század* magazine, with the "Darwin" Circle from Oradea and with the "Galilei" Circle in Budapest, promoted the idea of the nations' cultural autonomy considered communities resulted from the interaction of individual characters and destinies<sup>30</sup>. Vasile Goldiș formulated his theory of nation in his study *On the Question of Nationalities*, written at the invitation of the Oradea Darwin Circle, branch of the Hungarian Association of Freethinkers<sup>31</sup>. Influenced by the materialist-historical vision promoted by the Austrian-Marxists Otto Bauer, Karl Renner and Rudolf Hilferding, according to Hajós József, Vasile Goldiș offers an ambiguous theory of nation, betraying a terminological indecision<sup>32</sup>. He either speaks about the "communion of characters", or the "unity of numerous peoples' destinies living in the same place". Under the influence of Otto Bauer, Vasile Goldiș describes the nation as a social phenomenon. The basic idea of V. Goldiș's theory is that of the nations' autonomy in their quality of communities resulted from the interaction of the individuals' characters and destinies. What creates the community of characters and destinies is *lineage, language as a means of communication and cultural, territorial communion, religion and above all the communion of economic destinies. In short, one can say indeed that nation formation is the result of the struggles against nature by people who live in the same place, and the national character results from the fact that the communion of destinies with all the other members of the nation determines the direction of each member's will individually*<sup>33</sup>. Convinced that each nation has its own individuality, he drew the attention toward the danger which overlooking the nations' rights represents for the Hungarian state: *With the improvement of communication between the states, the consciousness of spiritual homogeneity has increasingly consolidated in different nationalities. Regardless of where they live, all cultured Romanians recognize themselves as members of the same nationality, and everybody will find it natural if the Romanians in Hungary follow with a warm interest the development of the Romanian national state and the fate of their brothers in Romania and Bucovina. Taking into account the union of language, the longing for cultural unity is very natural as well*<sup>34</sup>. As a hypothesis, Vasile Goldiș cautioned the Hungarian political class that national ideology has rooted so deep that the Romanians *would wish their annexation to Romania even in the case of certitude that there would be a worse state than in the Hungarian state*. Surely, Goldiș was not a visionary, being conscious that the unification of the

<sup>30</sup> N. Bocșan, *op. cit.*, p. 215

<sup>31</sup> Vasile Goldiș, *A nemzeti Kerdesrol (On the Question of Nationalities)*, Arad, "Concordia" Publishing House, 1912. The study *Despre problema naționalităților (On the Question of Nationalities)* was published in Romanian in 1976, by Editura Politică, translated by Gelu Peteanu, with a preface by Andrei Oțetea and with an introductory study by Hajós József. From this point on, the notes will refer to the Romanian edition.

<sup>32</sup> Hajós József, *op. cit.* p.40.

<sup>33</sup> Vasile Goldiș, *op. cit.* p.92

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p.137.

Romanians with the Romanian Kingdom could only occur in the event of Austria-Hungary's collapse, which was then difficult to anticipate. The viable solution was *all the peoples' culturalization in their own language, the administration in their language and legal prosecution in their language, namely through persons qualified for this and who know the people's habits, character and spiritual universe thoroughly, or are even integrated into this*<sup>35</sup>. He saw the national question solved in a constitutional frame and not through resolutions and social unrest, which would bring the nations' cultural autonomy.

The theory of Vasile Goldiș was not shared by the Romanian intellectuals of his time. In the *Luceafărul* magazine, a reading note on the volume *On the Question of Nationalities* (originally *A nemzetiségkérdésről*), shows that the study is based on approaching the national issue from the perspective of historical materialism, substantiating on Otto Bauer's study „Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie”, published in Vienna in 1908<sup>36</sup>. It was considered “*a good, but incomplete abstract*” on the national issue in Austria-Hungary. Vasile Goldiș considered that *the interest of the Habsburg monarchy, of the dynasty, of Hungary and of the Hungarian nationalities is for Hungary to guarantee non-Hungarian peoples' national culture, political liberty and material advancement through special institutions*. The reading note's author however considers that ... *historical materialism does not enlighten and does not completely explain the issue. Besides the economic life factors there are spiritual life factors that contributed to the formation and development of nationalities*. The author expressed his hope that in the future he would be able to broadly explain the meaning of the *spiritual factors in the question of nationalities. The awakening of the national consciousness for instance cannot be explained only through historical materialism. It results from a specific spiritual process, coordinated with the economic life process*.

Later, in the framework of World War I experience, the shock of modernity, as it has been also called, V. Goldiș's opinion will evolve to the formula of self-determination, based on the idea of equality between nations. According to him, one could not take into account the existence of nations without history, as some politicians or historians from the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire attempted to accredit. There are no conquering nations, there are no privileged nations building the state, just as there are no inferior nations. National liberty, Vasile Goldiș said in 1918, is conditioned by the “*equality of life conditions for each individual of any nation*”.

National ideology was shared by the best part of Romanian elites in Austria-Hungary. Inclusively the Romanian social-democrat leaders, Ioan Flueraș, Iosif Jumanca, Ioan Mișu, in the fall of the year, opted for the self-determination formula. Iosif Jumanca, first secretary of the Romanian section of the Hungarian Social-Democrat Party Executive Committee, despite the fact that he claimed that socialism is foremost a working class movement, based on the struggle between classes and not nationalities, convinced his peers in the autumn of 1918 of

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<sup>35</sup>*Ibidem*, p.148.

<sup>36</sup>*Luceafărul (The Evening Star)*, XI, vol.II, nr.33, 16 December 1912, p.781-782.

the necessity to create a Romanian social-democrat party, distinct from the Hungarian one<sup>37</sup>. After a time of hesitations, when they still hoped that Hungary could become a possible “Switzerland of the East”, in the autumn of 1918 six social-democrat leaders entered the Romanian National Council, participating at the political power takeover in Transylvania. At the Alba Iulia National Assembly, where the Romanians in the virtue of the self-determination principle, decided Transylvania’s unification with Romania, the social democrat leaders supported Transylvania’s autonomy from Bucharest, until there were guarantees that Romania would become a democratic country and its leaders would adopt those constitutional and agrarian reforms that would allow the people to administer their own affairs<sup>38</sup>.

In conclusion, the Romanian elite in the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire, although it sometimes had its own interpretations on defining the nation and on the solution to the national issue in the former empire, at the end of 1918, with the Danubian monarchy’s collapse, it opted for the national solution, supporting the separation from Hungary of the territories mostly inhabited by the Romanians and their unification with the Romanian Kingdom.

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<sup>37</sup> Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.* p. 187.

<sup>38</sup><sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p.193.