

BRIEF CONTENT ANALYSIS REGARDING THE CIUC-ODORHEI-TREI SCAUNE REGION IN THE 1936 ISSUES OF THE INTERWAR NEWSPAPER "NEAMUL NOSTRU"

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Abstract. *The present article focuses on one of the few publications that addressed the Romanian public from the Ciuc-Odorhei-Trei Scaune region in the interwar period. Familiarizing the general public with the issue of the local Romanian minority from Harghita-Covasna-Mureș counties is a long and arduous process, fact proven by the present state of the topic in the public sphere: even nowadays their problems and the challenges they face are still under-reported, both by mass media and elite discourse. From this perspective, the article aims to highlight some of the main ideas promoted in the "Neamul nostru" newspaper, to get a better understanding of the type of interethnic coexistence between Romanians (dominated local minority) and Hungarians (dominant local majority) that took place in the interwar timeframe. From a methodological standpoint, the newspaper was filtered with the help of content analysis instruments and the conclusions prove to be useful for the present day understanding of the relationship between the two ethnic groups in Transilvania and also the (low) quality of the state intervention in the area.*

Keywords: content analysis, local minority, dominant minority, Transilvania, interethnic coexistence

1. An introduction to the Romanian publishing from the Ciuc-Odorhei-Trei Scaune region

Until the Great Union on December 1, 1918, the Romanian communities in the former Szekler seats did not have their own publications in the Romanian language. Information about the daily life of Transylvanian Romanians and those over the mountains could only be found in newspapers and magazines printed in Sibiu, Brașov, Blaj, Arad, Pesta s.a., among which we note:

- Telegraful Român [The Romanian Telegraph]
- Gazeta Transilvaniei [The Transylvanian Gazette]
- Tribuna [The Tribune]
- Luceafărul [The Evening Star]
- Românul The Romanian
- Observatorul Observatory
- Federațiunea [The Federation]

The articles were largely signed by local priests and teachers, who often used pseudonyms to escape the dire consequences they could face for their actions from the Hungarian administration.

The first publications in Romanian or bilingual (Romanian-Hungarian), published in 1922 were the newspapers, monitors or bulletins of Treiscaune, Ciuc and Odorhei counties:

- "The official gazette of Treiscaune county" (bilingual, 1922-1926),
- "The official monitor of Treiscaune county" (1926-1938),
- "The official gazette of Ciuc county" (1922-1924),
- "The bulletin - respectively the official Gazette of Odorhei county" (1923-1925).

The first real newspapers in Romanian appeared later. In the former Treiscaune county, today Covasna County, respectively in Sf. Gheorghe, appeared:

- "Here - in Treiscaune county" (1932-1934),
- "Our Nation" (1934-1936),

- "The Oituzul" (1935-1938),
- "Courier of grafts" (1936-1937),
- "New Era" (1933-1940), monthly magazine edited by the Association of Teachers from Treiscaune county,
- "The ASTRA Bulletin" (1938-1940), edited by the Central Department of Treiscaune County,
- "Flux" - Monthly (monthly) literary and critical (1934) - appeared in the town of Covasn

2. The "Neamul nostru" newspaper

It appeared in the period 1934-1936 and it was founded by I.N. Țuțuianu and directed by PhD I. Roșu. The publication had a weekly appearance regime (Sundays) and contained four pages per issue. Its motto was: "Weekly sheet of Romanians from the Szeklerized land for national propaganda, culture, science and art".

3. Methodology

The hereby analysis is centered upon the first issue available online, more precisely the first number published between January and May 1936, which are available in the Newspaper and Magazine Collection on the Eurocarpatica - Digital Library website.

The interwar newspaper content database includes an average of 25 entries (articles/columns) per issue, which generated a database with more than 470 items.

The method used was content analysis focused on the following coordinates:

1. Correlating article categories and perspective with frequency and size of columns
Identifying citations relevant to columns
2. Identifying the keywords of the headings
3. Identifying the perspectives of the authors present in the articles
4. Identifying the main ideas promoted regarding interethnic coexistence in the area

There were several types of articles which we identified within the newspaper:

1. opinions and analysis
2. local reports
3. religious clarifications
4. call for reflection
5. call to action
6. poems and literary fragments
7. monographs and scientific research
8. orthographic - grammatical correction
9. useful tips in the household
10. Christian calendar
11. advertisements

Regarding the size of the articles, we have created a list of categories, with corresponding text coverage:

1. schematic (several lines) (37,50%)
2. short (<1 column) (20,83%)
3. medium (1-2 columns) (37,50%)
4. long (2-3 columns) (8,33%)
5. extended (>3 columns) (none)

4. Obtained data with corresponding text coverage (%)

1. Identified perspectives and associated quotes

A. The ethnic perspective

- oppressed Romanians (4,17%)

"Because being a correspondent for a national paper in the era of Hungarian rule meant: "Always a candidate for the Szegedin prison" as a sacrifice for the great national cause. At that time the slogan was: "A Romanian editor must write with the criminal code in front of him and knowing that the gendarme is behind him". (Fundeia, 1936: 1)

- union as a millennial dream (4,17%)
"The past is the foundation on which our nation is built today. It is the steel pedestal on which the brothers, who are returning to their motherland today, raise trivets of worship and glorification of the eight hundred thousand heroes who fell on the altar of the homeland, for their liberation and the realization of our millennial dream". (Tuțuianu, 1936: 2)
- Hungarians regarded as brothers (4,17%)
"And the Minorities and native Romanians live on the same lands. And both receive from the good God the same rains, the same snows, the same amount of sunshine. The zephyr or the harrier likewise blows over them. And if nature brings them so close to reconciliation, why should we humans be envious of them?". (Tepeș, 1936: 1)
- the enemy beyond the borders (4,17%)
"Who will benefit from this feud? Who else but the external enemies of our borders, which are common borders, because they also decide the glia from which the Romanians get their piece of bread, and the glia from which - quietly - the Minorities also get what they need for themselves and their families. ... All currents contrary to this solidarity are hostile to the homeland and must be fought with energy". (Tepeș, 1936: 3)
- forgetting the past to achieve national solidarity (12,50%)
"What was ... for us is gone forever, and the wound until you were still bleeding closed, together with the forgetting of the past". (Tuțuianu, 1936: 1)
"The press in the annexed lands must have the general characteristics of the press from all time and be a creative force, but it must also have a character specific to the readers it addresses here, a character of solidarity, of reconciliation based on deep conviction. ... This solidarity is a national, imperative and absolute necessity". (Hațegan, 1936: 1)
"And to those who forget how noble the Romanian is, how forgetful of the pains of the past he is, how lenient he is, the press from the annexed land has the duty to remind them at any given time: solidarity is today our gospel; solidarity requires clear thinking, common aspirations, equal rights, equal duties and above all strength of character". (Tepeș, 1936: 1)

B. The institutional perspective

- equality in rights and duties (4,17%)
"And the Romanian, the Szekler, the Saxon, and the Jew are equal before the laws - they have the same rights and the same duties. And one and the others have the right to multiply their family, according to God's command, through honest work, through economy, through respect for the laws... What is asked of them in return? The same duties to some and to others. As faith is claimed to M.S. The king or any Romanian, the same is required of any Minority. As loyalty and obedience to the laws of every Romanian is required; the same is required of any Minority." (Tepeș, 1936: 2)
- institutional stuttering (4,17%)
"The ministry took the right to advertise the confessional school back in 1930 [it did not meet the requirements of the law]. However, the confessional school continues to operate without any right, because the same Ministry, by other counter-orders, grants the school the right to operate. Or one of two: either the school has the right to advertise and then it can function, or it doesn't have this right and then on what basis does it function". (Stroiescu, 1936: 3)
- recorded acts of treason (12,50%)

"here in Transylvania, freed from the Hungarian yoke for 17 years ... even though "Speak Romanian" is written on the walls of all our authorities, there are still today many civil servants who - forgetting how much blood was spilled to have the freedom to speak Romanian to our mother, forgetting that in the old days you had to hide from them and tremble in order to be able to find freedom and sing a Romanian doina, today, in the hearing of everyone, defying the high sense of Romanian dignity, I speak Hungarian even at official banquets, and these potentates of the day, out of a desire to flatter yesterday's master, slander themselves in the Hungarian language without blushing". (Fundea, 1936: 2)

C. The perspective of the role model

- great Romanians / models (4,17%)

"Once upon a time, Dr Valer Branișce was the editor of the newspaper Dreptatea from Timișoara, a newspaper where many enthusiastic students worked, only for the love of being called "correspondent", based on a certificate given by the newspaper's management... it was a semi-title of nobility, in the legion of Romanian fighters, from Transylvania, on national soil... But the Hungarian anger from that time was not appeased. It was smoldering in the ashes and one day Dr Valer Branișce is sued for many articles... He is advised to answer the judges in Hungarian - which he knew perfectly... - with the assurance that if he speaks in Hungarian will be given the least punishment. Outraged by the proposals made to him by both the investigating judge and the prosecutor whom he knew, Dr. Valer Branișce ... presented himself before the jurors at the final negotiation unyielding and dignified, even though he knew that his fate was in their hands...". (Fundea, 1936: 1)

- local facts of ordinary people (12,50%)

"Baptized Gheorghe, spontaneously took out and gave for these hungry Bessarabian Romanians the sum of 5 lei, which he had for that day's bread. This thought was immediately followed by another 15 pre-military young men who collected on the spot the sum of 86 lei, as much as they had... Although it is a small amount for us who have a bread to eat, it is big for our poor brothers across the Prut who they don't even have a "polemunk shell" to appease the hunger of thousands of starving children". (Ionescu, 1936: 2)

"After a program composed of various songs, the innocent children went through parks and cemeteries where they threw seeds and small cakes, food for the poor birds shriveled by the cold. Nice initiative". (s.a., 1936: 1)

D. The scientific perspective

- literary (16,67%)

"You have been spoiled by bearish mistresses/A pleasant life like no other under the sun/That's how it will be, and I swear it,/That she's only old, and good as a grave". (Joantă, 1936: 1)

"Romanian language lessons ... for Romanians who know how to read and write in Hungarian and want to learn to speak and write Romanian". (s.a., 1936: 3)

- religious (8,33%)

"And then will our deed be Christian? ... Isn't szekely close to the Romanian and the Romanian close to szekely? Then - for God's sake - why should we become enmity, why should we hate each other, why should we use any occasion to pit one against the other?". (Țepeș, 1936: 2)

- everyday philosophy (8,33%)

"In the age of light and materialism, when we all seem to be possessed by a cold haste, we don't think anymore, it seems we don't have time to think about a true friendship... not interest is the basis of a friendship, but the matching of souls... And it seems to me that this is a justification, because friendship is also a form of love". (E.R, 1936: 1)

- historical arguments and monographic extracts (4,17%)
"The historical past of the Valcele Spa is a living testimony for anyone and everyone that the Valcele Baths stand at the head of all other similar Baths in the country and abroad; and Valcele mineral water is one of the most radioactive mineral waters in Europe, as university professors Teposu and Campeanu express with all their competence. Through all the scientific researches, Valcele waters are indicated in all diseases of eating, stomach and digestion". (Păstina, 1936: 3)

E. The organizational perspective

- commercials
"Read and Spread Our Nation" (at the end of each edition)
- obtaining support for the appearance of the newspaper
"What remains now is for all good Romanians to appreciate the selfless work done in the interest of the nation and by paying their obligations towards this advertising organ, they should all be in debt". (N.N, 1936: 1)
- call to action / reaction
"The county committee of the Anti-revisionist League asks this or all the presidents of the newly established mesh committees and communal sub-committees to send by January 15 the minutes of establishment of the respective committees... for the preparation of the annual report of the county organization". (s.a., 1936: 1)

5. Main conclusions

The idea that the geographical region ("land") in question is a Szeklerized one is a recurring reference within the newspaper's pages, and also highlighted in the front-page motto which is published in each issue. This is an attitude totally opposite to today's perspective, when the expression Szeklerland is promoted both through ignorance and through "programmatic language" in the public sphere.

Here, a difference must be made between the action (Szeklerized land) component indicated by the Romanian point of view versus the identity one (Szeklerland) promoted by the Hungarian side. The first expression reveals a forced external action that has a transformative capacity on a Romanian space, while the second one shows an identity brand that wants to be established through both external and internal factors.

The analysis and opinions written within the newspaper regarding the quality of the interethnic coexistence in the area can be split into five categories:

- The first one is focused on the need to forget the sufferings endured in the past by Romanians in order to achieve the ultimate ideal - national solidarity -, both of the natives and of the minorities
- The second one it promotes the idea of equality in rights and duties, regardless of ethnicity
- A third category is the religious perspective that dictates the love towards the other
- The fourth category is the one that identifies the Romanians as a constant disturbing factor, a sort of the "enemy outside our borders" feeling created by their elites by "segregating their community" and the constant refusal attitude for the fact that they are living in the same space with the Romanians.
- Last but not least important , the fifth idea promotes the model of great personalities or those remained unknown who showed national dignity and acted accordingly to their ideals versus blaming the behavior of the those dilemmatic Romanians who, even more than 15 years after the liberation of Transylvania, proved a behavior of servitude towards the Hungarian elites.

Articles focused on the religious, literary or scientific perspective have a deep educational undertone. Thus, the newspaper not only reports, but also educates the public through its appearances. From this perspective, the publication contains:

- Grammar lessons that are bilingual "for Romanians who know how to read and write in Hungarian and want to learn to speak and write Romanian", out of the desire to correct the facts of the past (school education of Romanians exclusively in the Hungarian language)
- Excerpts from the Gospel, reproduced at length and then "interpreted" in the meaning of the common man, to strengthen the Christian religious feeling at the local level
- Relevant extracts from local monographs of Romanian villages, made to a good extent by priests and teachers, who want to remind the reader of the antiquity and specificity of the Romanian element in the area
- Poems or literary fragments signed by local or national authors, introduced to strengthen a general culture of the reader
- Opinion articles or reports that bring to light old historical facts and events 1) that disadvantaged the Romanians in the region during the Hungarian regime 2) that demonstrate the antiquity and native status of the Romanians, intended to increase the sense of dignity and ensure the continuity of a memory local collectives.
- Paradoxically, although they remind the reader, the authors of the articles also urge to "forget" in order to achieve the feeling of national solidarity at the local level, regardless of ethnicity

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