

7th Annual South-East European
Doctoral Student Conference

Infusing Research and Knowledge in South-East Europe

Edited by:

K. Bratanis, D. Dranidis, P. Koktsidis, L. Lazouras, E. Nikolaidou



SOUTH-EAST
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Between national solidarity and local interests – The pro-governmental political orientation of the Romanians in Hungary (the end of the 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century)

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Abstract. *The signing of the Ausgleich in 1867 had profound effects on the political situation of the nationalities inhabiting the Transleithan part of the Double Monarchy. For half a century, the Hungarian governments in Budapest approached these nationalities by means of a gradual magyarization policy, with different degrees of intensity.*

The nationalities in Hungary reacted to this policy in three different ways. In the case of the Romanians, their political beliefs found expression within three major orientations: national-passivism, national-activism and governmental-activism.

This paper aims to offer an analysis of the latter political orientation (governmental-activism) by outlining its main characteristic elements, and comparing it to the other two Romanian political orientations. Furthermore, the key figures of this orientation will be identified and an analysis of their activity will be supplied.

From a methodological perspective, two major approaches will be employed. Firstly, the pro-governmental political direction will be theoretically analysed and the findings will be corroborated with the factual presentation of its key events. To complement this approach, this paper shall also provide a comparative analysis between governmental-activism and the other political directions in Hungary.

This political direction has been less discussed in the Hungarian historiography and relegated to the periphery by Romanian historians as a result of the “renegade” image associated with its adherents in contemporary scientific environments and during the half of the 20th century. Therefore, the main strength of this

paper lies in the fact that it will provide a novel approach towards this marginalized but nevertheless significant orientation, attempting to fill the historiographical gaps in the subject.

Keywords: *Austro-Hungary, the Romanian national movement, political currents, Romanian governmental representatives, electoral strategies*

1 Introduction. General political background

The establishment of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy as a result of the political compromise between the Austrian and the Hungarian leaders – the only solution to safeguard the monarchy in the context of its political crisis – meant significant changes for the nationalities inhabiting its territories. The situation of the nationalities within Budapest's area of government drastically changed: an involution from the status of local autonomies granted by the legislation passed during the Austrian empire's "constitutional" period (1860-1867) occurred. Owing to the *Ausgleich*, these territories were directly subordinated to the Hungarian government. The relations between the nationalities and the central Hungarian authorities were greatly affected by the latter's magyarization policy, a constant of all Budapest governments which oversaw the Transleithan part of the Double Monarchy for half a century. Despite its constancy, the implementation of this policy was gradual, and the intensity of each stage greatly varied. For instance, at the beginning of the dualist period a series of laws which limited the rights of the nationalities compared to the earlier periods but provided them with some concessions (The Nationalities' Law of 1868) were passed. However, during the latter half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century a set of laws was passed (The Trefort Law of 1883, The Apponyi Law of 1907, etc.) which deeply affected the nationalities' cultural, educational and political development.

The beginning of Kálmán Tisza's long government (1875 – 1890), which had the main goals of stabilising and solidifying the Austro-Hungarian construct, also marked the start of a new period from the perspective of the relations between the central Hungarian authorities and the nationalities. In the first decade since the *Ausgleich* was signed, the Hungarian political life was dominated by a series of personalities such as Ferenc Deák and József Eötvös, who maintained to a policy of cooperation with the nationalities in Hungary.

The nationalities in Hungary sought to react to the newly established political situation, but found themselves hindered by the lack of an experienced political class, and of a necessarily high social, cultural and economic level.

2 Literature Review

The political life of the Romanians in Hungary at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries has been a constant preoccupation of the Romanian historiography. Many works and studies regarding this subject have been written in the period between the two wars or during the communist period. Even after 1989, when the area of available research topics was expanded as a result of the lack of censorship, the abovementioned subject remained an interesting one for Romanian historians.

Despite this fact, two issues have enjoyed a more constant attention: firstly, the key moments of the political life of the Romanians in Hungary and secondly, the analysis and interpretation of the two political currents which characterized the national movement (national-activism and national-passivism). The activist-governmental/moderate current has been rarely discussed by Romanian historians. With the exception of a low number of biographies of key personalities which adhered to this current, and its mentioning in general works which discuss Romanian political life in the abovementioned time period, the study of this third Romanian political direction has been relegated to the periphery of the Romanian historiography. One explanation for this phenomenon may be the negative image projected on the adherents of governmental activism during their period of activity as well as by posterity (during the interwar and communist periods). The political compromise between these adherents and the Hungarian governments – in the context of tense relations between nationalities and the central authorities – not only led to their ostracizing, but also determined the indifferent reaction of the Romanian historians towards this subject, both in the past and presently.

Similarly, the Hungarian historiography has focused on the general research of the political life in the territories inhabited by the Romanians during the dualist period, emphasizing the way in which the Hungarian governments related to the nationalities. In this matter, Hungarian historians have underlined the substantial role played by the nationalities in ensuring the electoral success of the ruling Hungarian party, through their contribution to the obtaining of parliamentary majority.

It is precisely because this paper deals with a subject that has not been properly discussed in historiography that a wide array of historical sources will be employed, with an emphasis on archival documentation and the Romanian 19th and early 20th century press which was contemporary to the events presented and analysed. The material from the four archival funds that have been explored, corroborated with the information obtained from the Romanian newspaper articles, will be complemented with general reference works from the Romanian and Hungarian historiographies.

3 Data and Methodology

Taking into account the specific issues arising from the discussion of a less researched subject, this paper will attempt to provide a theoretical analysis of the three political orientations within the national movement of the Romanians in Hungary, with a special emphasis on the pro-governmental current.

Following this theoretical approach, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Romanian activist-governmental faction in Hungary will be provided, in order to present its main political representatives, the degree of their involvement and their role in the Hungarian political life. A comparatively large section of this study will be dedicated to the analysis of the electoral involvement of the adherents to governmental activism. This aspect will be treated by focusing both on electoral strategies and governmental candidatures, as well as on the behaviour of their Romanian electoral supporters.

4 Empirical Analysis

4.1 The political life of the Romanians in Hungary

In the case of the Romanians in Hungary, who amounted to approximately 15 % of its population, several different political orientations were designed and employed by their political leaders, who attempted to adapt them to the geopolitical realities of their respective territories. Thus, in the first years following the signing of the *Ausgleich*, the Romanians organized themselves into two political parties according to the historical region they inhabited. Consequently two major parties were established: firstly, the National Romanian Party of Transylvania (NRPT) which coordinated the political life of the Romanians living within the Carpathian arch; secondly, the National Romanian Party of Banat and Hungary (NRPBH), which coordinated the political life of the Romanians outside the Carpathian arch, who inhabited an area to the West and South-West of the abovementioned region.

The political orientations adopted by these two political organizations differed from their inception, the major factor behind this differentiation being the provisions of the electoral Hungarian law. Thus, for the intra-Carpathian space the provisions of the abovementioned law created a climate which undermined the Romanian nation's possibilities to become involved in Hungary's political life in a manner proportional to their numbers. The extremely high census and the geography of the electoral districts limited the role of the Romanians in the electoral process. Consequently, the NRPT adopted the tactic of national-passivism, abstaining from the appointing of its own candidates and from the participation in the electoral process, as a sign of protest against the political-electoral realities of this area.

As far as the extra-Carpathian Romanian-inhabited territories (Banat, Crişana, and Maramureş) are concerned, they enjoyed the same electoral provisions which applied to the entire Hungarian territory (with the exception of Transylvania). As a result of these provisions, and especially that referring to the lower census, the Romanians in these regions could express their political opinions more adequately. The natural consequence was the adherence of the NRPBH to the political tactic of national-activism.

After a decade and a half of political activity in the Transleithan part of Austro-Hungary, which was characterized by an extremely low amount of accomplishments in the field of national politics, the leaders of the Romanians realized the necessity of creating a single organism that would coordinate their political life in a unitary and

coherent way. Thus, the decision to unite the two Romanian parties was reached at the National Conference in Sibiu in 1881, and the National Romanian Party (NRP) was created. Its political orientation was a hybrid between activism – in the extra-Carpathian areas – and passivism – in the intra-Carpathian areas. Only in 1887 was national-passivism adopted in the entire Romanian-inhabited territory and national-activism renounced, as a result of the intensification of the Hungarian government's policy to electorally subordinate the Romanian counties.

The political programme of the newly-established national party was created during the national Conference that took place in Sibiu in May 1881. This was divided into nine programmatic points. The first referred to the party's intention to militate in favour of the regaining of Transylvania's autonomy (the intra-Carpathian territory inhabited by Romanians), which had been lost at the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian dualism. Owing to the inclusion of this provision, the NRP's programme overtly contradicted the terms of the *Ausgleich* and the notion of a unitary state. The other provisions concerned the following issues: the use of the Romanian language in administration and justice within the Romanian-inhabited territories; the increase in the number of Romanian clerks employed by the state; the modification of the 1868 Law of Nationalities and its appropriate application; the protection of the Romanians' ecclesiastical and educational rights and the extension of the right to vote.

Significant modifications were brought to it only in 1887, when passivism was extended to the entire territory inhabited by the Romanians, and in 1905, when the Romanians' political orientation was drastically changed through the implementation of national-activism. For more than 35 years, the NRP adopted an attitude that directly contradicted the Budapest governments' magyarization policy. The NPR leaders believed that, due to the political requirements they had formulated in the national political programme, they could not adopt a position similar to that of the Hungarian governments.

The political divergences between the NRP and the government culminated in the moment of the so-called "memorandist" action at the beginning of the 1890s. Having adhered to passivism, the Romanians' national leaders relied on the writing of petitions which listed their claims (*petitionalism*) as a political tactic. Thus, it was decided that a document entitled "Memorandum" would be created and personally delivered to the emperor-king Franz Joseph I.

Franz Joseph I considered that the matter of the Romanians' requests did not fall under his jurisdiction and consequently sent the document, unopened, to the Hungarian government in Budapest. This authority returned the sealed document to the NRP. The Hungarian authorities believed that by requesting national autonomy, the authors of the "Memorandum" had actively contested the validity of the union between Transylvania and Hungary. In addition, the dissemination of such a document was considered a crime, for which the authors were tried. At the conclusion of the trial in May 1894, 14 leaders of the NRP were sentenced to incarceration. In January 1895, the NRP was dealt a new blow by the Hungarian authorities, when it was outlawed through a decree of the minister for internal affairs. The negative effects of the *memorandist* movement led to an internal crisis in the NRP, which persisted until 1905, when the NRP began a new stage in its political evolution, that of national-activism.

The divergences between the Hungarian authorities and the NRP allowed for the assertion of a category of Romanian politicians who embraced moderate views and were willing to collaborate with the Budapest government. In the beginning of the 1880s, the idea of establishing a new political party, with a distinct program, which would promote the collaboration between the Romanian and the Hungarian nations in order to better the former's social, cultural and economic conditions, came to the fore. This idea originated within a significant segment of the Romanian political leadership, in the context of the NRP's discussions regarding the appropriate tactic for the newly-established party. This type of collaboration (which was rejected by the NRP) was seen as viable only if the Romanian political leaders who envisaged cooperation managed to obtain the support of the Liberal Party (*Szabadelvű Párt*), which was governing Hungary. This type of collaboration with the central authorities was not a novelty from the perspective of the Romanians' political life in Hungary: several Romanian leaders had adopted this type of attitude in the first decade and a half since the signing of the *Ausgleich*, without being politically organized.

After a first failed attempt in 1881, the Romanians who had activist-governmental views managed to organize themselves into a new party before the parliamentary elections of 1884. The party's meetings were only permitted during the electoral campaign period, as per the provisions of the XXXII/1874 Electoral Law. The MRP was established as a result of the conference of the Romanians in Budapest (March 1884), which also designed and adopted its political programme, elected the members of its central committee, and was presided over by the Romanian Metropolitan of Sibiu – the highest hierarchical level within the Romanian Orthodox Church in Hungary. The Romanian representatives in the Budapest Parliament and administrative county clerks were found among other members of the central party committee. The party was self-dissolved in 1885. Negotiations were held between the Hungarian political parties and the leaders of the moderate-governmental faction in order to re-establish this party at the beginning of the 1890s – before the 1896 elections – and at the end of the first decade of the 20th century – before the 1910 elections. Even after 1905, when the NPR reinstated its activist orientation, the adherents to governmental activism still won representative offices on behalf of the Romanians in the Budapest Parliament.

The continuity of the idea of a moderate party can be explained thusly: the late 19th century and early 20th century Hungarian governments felt a strong necessity to collaborate at a political-electoral level with the moderate elements from within the other nationalities in order to obtain the highest possible number of representative offices in those counties which had a majority of non-Hungarian inhabitants. Such compromises were established before parliamentary elections between the central authorities in Budapest and certain political factions which held pro-governmental views, as for instance certain leaders of the Serbians or the Saxons in Hungary. The efficiency of such an approach is evidenced in the high number of offices obtained in the areas inhabited by other nationalities (approximately 2/3 of the Hungarian ruling party's representatives were elected in electoral districts where the majority of the population was not of Hungarian nationality).

4.2 Definition of the activist-governmental current and its main characteristics

Governmental-activism was one of the three political currents to which the Romanians in Hungary adhered during the dualist period (1867-1918). This current was characterised by a series of elements that manifestly distinguished it from the other two Romanian orientations – national-activism and national-passivism. The main distinguishing characteristic was its acceptance of the political realities extant within the Double Monarchy as a result of the signing of the *Ausgleich*, particularly the union between Transylvania and Hungary and the resulting loss of the province's autonomy. Governmental-activists believed that only by placing themselves in a constitutional framework would they be able to organize their political activity without constantly being the object of the state's judicial inquests and denunciations by the Hungarian political class. In this respect, the activist-governmental movement was characterized by openness to collaboration with the Hungarian government, an element which was seen as fundamental for the accomplishment of their political goals. It was believed that only through a policy of compromise would the Romanian nation be able to evolve educationally, culturally and economically, and to protect the ecclesiastical rights it had obtained during the liberal period (1860-1867).

More exactly, the movement's representatives vowed to adopt a supportive attitude in regards to the Hungarian governments' state-wide political projects, in exchange for certain concessions at a local, county level. One of the main distinguishing elements of governmental-activism was precisely that of the political approach towards the national Romanian "question" in Hungary: while the NRP favoured the fulfilment of nation-wide objectives, the priority of governmental-activists was the resolving of localised issues. It should however be mentioned that governmental-activists as well as the adherents of national-activism and national-passivism were similarly preoccupied with the development of the entire Romanian nation in Hungary. The difference between these two currents was visible however in regards to the direction that the proposed betterment of the situation of the Romanians should take: from general (the Romanian nation) to local (the Romanian communities within each county) – the NRP's objective; from local to general – the governmental-activists' objective. In the latter's opinion, beneficial local developments at a community level would have eventually been reflected in the state of the entire nation. Moreover, these objectives were seen as easier to achieve, due to the Hungarian authorities' greater availability to make concessions for smaller areas. This greater availability stemmed from the fact that such policies did not contradict the Hungarian governments' general objectives and also protected them from vehement reactions from the opposition parties, which militated for the acceleration and amplification of the magyazation process.

To a certain extent, the governmental-activist movement had also gained the approval of the Bucharest governments, which were interested in the improvement of the political relations between the Kingdom of Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. A release of tension in the relations between the Budapest governments and the Romanian nation in Hungary was seen as beneficial to the accomplishment of the Romanian Kingdom's external policy objectives.

4.3 Political orientations within the movement

The governmental-activist movement had a gradual evolution, and was heterogeneous. Within it three different political orientations coexisted, during the entire dualist period: that of the governmental-nationals, that of the governmental-moderates and that of the governmental-‘renegades’.

The least represented group was that of the *governmental-nationals*. This was constituted of those elements that accepted the necessity of collaboration with governmental authorities in Hungary in order to accomplish national Romanian objectives, but were not open to compromising on the issues of the national programme, and vehemently reacted to any action of magyarization. This orientation was closest to the national-activism promoted by the NRP, as its name indicates. Only a limited number of representatives of the activist-governmental movement adopted this type of political orientation. The Hungarian government gradually refused to collaborate with the representatives of governmental-nationalism and as a result, its adherents left the activist-governmental movement.

The second orientation or group - that of the *governmental-‘moderates’* - was more in tune with the general characteristics of the movement. Its adherents had constantly manifested their support for the governments’ political programmes, while in exchange for this support they had requested both local-level and nation-wide concessions for the Romanians in Hungary. They attempted to temper the process of magyarization by suggesting compromise solutions or by requesting concessions in other domains which were essential for the well-being of the Romanian nation. The governmental-moderates laid the foundations of the only party that reunited the adherents of the activist-governmental current in a singular political organisation, distinct from that of the governing Hungarian party - in the ranks of which they were always included. The structure of the new party was exclusively Romanian. In some periods of the dualist epoch, the governmental-moderates manifested their openness to a potential collaboration with the NRP national-activist branch, in order to accomplish common goals.

The so-called *governmental-‘renegades’* comprised the third orientation within the movement, which distinguished itself through a complete openness to the collaboration with the Budapest governments. They had local-level objectives and were strictly preoccupied with the improvement of the Romanian nation within those administrative units which they represented or inhabited. Their goal was to obtain educational, cultural and social concessions without negatively reacting to the authorities’ magyarization tendencies. An eloquent example of their attitude in this respect is that regarding the issue of the Romanians’ educational improvement. They militated both for an increase in the number of state-institutions providing education in the territories inhabited by Romanians, and the improvement of the level of education offered by these institutions. Their request was that of free and unrestricted access to these institutions for young Romanians. They believed that, despite the fact that courses of study were offered only in Hungarian, the possibility of receiving an education (ranging from primary to secondary and university level) represented a fundamental gain for the Romanians in Hungary.

4.4 The stages of development of the activist-governmental current

Within the development of the activist-governmental current three stages can be identified, as a consequence of the pre-eminence of one or another of the above-mentioned orientations: the stage of the forerunners, that of the 'moderates' and that of the 'renegades'.

The forerunner stage (1867 – 1881) can be placed chronologically between the signing of the dualist agreement and the year when the creation of a Moderate Romanian Party was first attempted. During this stage the three orientations found a quasi-balanced expression in the context of a relatively confused Romanian political class. The main issue was that of finding a suitable approach for the new political realities created by the establishment of the Double Monarchy. Varied solutions were suggested, due to the fact that the Romanians' political organisation was still in an incipient phase, characterised by the disunity between the actions of the intra-Carpathian and the extra-Carpathian political class. Moreover, during this period the Romanian political environments were dominated by the intensely-promoted idea that the *Ausgleich* was ephemeral, and that a return to the previous liberal state was inevitable. In this context, it was difficult to clearly and precisely frame a Romanian politician's activity within a specific current. This attempt was further hindered by the increased and intense mobility between political circles.

There were however Romanian political leaders who promoted solutions which were close to those proposed by governmental-activists. Two of the most remarkable representatives of this category of leaders were the Orthodox Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna and the magnate Emanuil Gojdu. Both militated for collaboration with the Hungarian authorities for the benefit of the Romanian nation. Their Hungarian homologues were equally distinguished politicians, such as József Eötvös and Ferenc Deák, who shared their ideas and believed that Romanian-Hungarian cooperation would be advantageous to both nations. It should also be noted that during the entire dualist period, the Hungarian governments that supported the Romanian activist-governmental current emphasized the need to promote this cooperation in the context of the geopolitical realities that had placed the Hungarians and the Romanians in the midst of several Slavic nations.

The stage of the 'moderates' (1881-1905) can be placed, from a chronological perspective, between the moment when the first projects to establish a Romanian activist-governmental party were devised, and the moment when the NRP adopted national-activism. During this period, the 'moderates' dominated not only the activist-governmental current but also the entire political life of the Romanians in Hungary from the perspective of parliamentary activity. They were superior from a quantitative standpoint and managed to successfully impose their political ideas. In the above-mentioned timeframe, during 7 parliamentary cycles, 65 representative mandates were won, averaging over 9 mandates per electoral cycle. If the fact that the Budapest Parliament was comprised of 413 elected representatives is taken into consideration, the percent of activist-governmental mandates only slightly exceeds 2%. Despite this limited representation, the number of representatives was sufficient to support the political tactic of the moderate-governmental orientation, namely that of militating for the improvement of the Romanians' situation at a local level that would eventually improve the nation-wide situation.

For a clearer image regarding the pre-eminence of the ‘moderates’ over the other two orientations between 1881 and 1905, it should be mentioned that, from the total of 65 mandates obtained by governmental-activists, more than 80% were held by this orientation’s adherents. Moreover, the ‘moderates’ were also supported by the Orthodox Metropolitans of Sibiu, Miron Roman and later Ioan Meşianu, and by an important segment of the Romanian Orthodox clerics. In the initial years of this stage, the governmental-activists attempted to and were partially successful in collaborating with the activist-nationals. A result of this common action was the establishment of the Romanian Moderate Party (1884). This organisation was dominated by the adherents of the moderate orientation within the governmental-activist orientation, but also comprised adherents of national-activism and even some elements of the governmental-‘renegades’. Their political platform was not significantly different from the NRP’s programme. The first point of the former platform specified that the RMP’s members were under the obligation to conform to the provisions of the Hungarian constitution. Thus, the idea regarding Transylvania’s autonomy was abandoned and the 1867 *Ausgleich* was recognized. A significant distinction could be observed in the matter of electoral provisions. The NRP’s programme promoted the introduction of the universal vote, while the RMP’s platform only supported an extension of the Hungarian electoral provisions to the intra-Carpathian territory inhabited by Romanians (Transylvania). The other programmatic provisions contained goals similar to those expressed by the NRP.

However, the RMP’s existence was brief. Shortly after the conclusion of the 1884 parliamentary elections, the Hungarian government retracted its support for the party leaders. The goal of the government presided by Kálmán Tisza, that of obtaining of a parliamentary majority in order to implement his political projects, had been accomplished. This was made possible by the nationalities’ wide support, among which the Romanian voters with governmental-activist views were extremely significant. The majority of the Magyar Liberal Party’s mandates were won in those electoral circles in Hungary that were preponderantly inhabited by non-Hungarians. In the circles where the Hungarian population was in majority, the opposition parties managed to win most of the parliamentary seats. This type of situation was a constant of the Hungarian political life during the entire span of the dualist regime. The governmental party won the majority of its parliamentary seats in the electoral circles dominated by non-Hungarian voters. This explains the Hungarian political leaders’ receptiveness towards and support of the Romanian activist-governmental current. In exchange for the Romanian voters’ pro-governmental attitude, the government offered the Romanian activist-governmental candidates between 1 and 3 representative mandates per county. These were offered mostly in those counties from the extra-Carpathian regions inhabited by Romanians, where the activist-governmental current was especially well received.

Despite the party’s dissolving at the beginning of 1885, several projects to re-establish it were devised in the mid-1890s (during the NRP’s crisis provoked by the memorandist action) and in the early 20th century (in the context of the Hungarian parliamentary crisis). These attempts took place preponderantly during the parliamentary elections, were based on the 1884 political platform created in Budapest and gathered relatively the same Romanian political circles.

The *'renegade' stage* (1905-1918) was the final period of the Romanian activist-governmental movement. It was chronologically delimited by the moment when the NRP's leaders adopted national-activism and the end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy as a result of the First World War. During this stage, the adherents of the activist-governmental current were characterised by a greater openness towards the Hungarian governments' policies, and by mainly localised goals. This stage was dominated by the representatives of the so-called governmental-'renegade' group.

These were named 'renegades' because they were placed in direct opposition to the NRP's activist-national representatives by the contemporary nineteenth-century Romanian public opinion. With the exception of national-activism any other political current was seen by an important part of the Romanian public opinion as anti-Romanian. The NRP was supported by the majority of the Romanian newspapers in Hungary, and consequently, a wide-ranging and significant press campaign directed against the adherents of the activist-governmental current, and particularly against the 'renegades' was organized. Taking into account the major influence of the articles which appeared in the national press, the reaction of the Romanian public opinion towards the activist-governmental current was understandable.

During the 1905, 1906 and 1910 parliamentary elections, the national-activist candidates managed to win over 25 mandates, while at the 1906 and 1910 elections, the activist-governmental candidates only won 14 mandates, 10 of which were obtained by the adherents of the 'renegade' orientation. On numerous occasions, the adherents of both currents competed against each other within the same electoral unit. This determined the aggressive reaction of the Romanian press against the activist-governmental candidates during the electoral campaigns. However, these candidates were continually supported at a local level, a fact which is especially reflected, for instance, in the intermediary elections that took place in 1909 in the electoral circle of Oravița. During these elections, the NRP president, George Pop of Băsești ran against one of the main representatives of the governmental-'renegade' orientation, Iosif Siegescu. The mandate was won by the activist-governmental candidate with a striking majority: 66, 46% of the votes went to Siegescu, while only 33, 54% of the votes went to Pop of Băsești.

4.5 The political representatives of the activist-governmental current

The political representatives of the current can be divided into two major categories: the *secular elite*, which comprised the parliamentary deputies, and the *ecclesiastical elite*, which comprised the Romanian Orthodox and Greek-Catholic metropolitans and bishops.

The activity of the latter category was less visible from the perspective of the direct involvement in the activist-governmental actions. However, they expressed their viewpoints during the sessions of the Superior Chamber of the Budapest Parliament, and also distinguished themselves through their attitudes during the electoral campaigns. This segment of the elite constantly militated for the extension and protection of the ecclesiastical and educational rights of the Romanians in Hungary. During the elections, they expressed their support for the government candidates, especially for those of Romanian origin. As a concretisation of their beliefs they sent

out encyclicals towards priests, encouraging them to support the governmental candidates and to capitalize on their influence over the Romanian voters, especially in the rural areas.

Their position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and their financial dependence on the state authorities made them adopt this type of position, in accordance with the ideas of the activist-governmental current.

The most visible representatives of the current were the Romanian activist-governmental deputies in the Budapest parliament. Between 1881 and 1918 they won no less than 79 mandates, although they never held more than 2,5% of the total number of seats during a parliamentary cycle. They based their political activity on the characteristic ideas which have been outlined in the previous subchapters. However, they did not distinguish themselves through a vast parliamentary activity. During the 9 parliamentary cycles in the above-mentioned period, the activist-governmental representatives rarely held speeches or intervened in the debates. They were however part of several parliamentary committees, and in this quality were often able to resolve individual issues or community matters for the Romanians at a local level. It is in this aspect that the results of their political activity are most visible. They distinguished themselves through the following: the directing of governmental funds intended for the building of secondary-level educational institutions towards the Romanian-inhabited areas; the extension of the railway lines in the same territories; the obtaining of licences for the practice of different trades and the release from the payment of taxes for their co-nationals; the awarding of scholarships for young Romanians; the protection of the interests of the Romanian Greek-Oriental and Greek-Catholic Churches.

The Romanian activist-governmental representatives were recruited from the main Romanian socio-professional categories: lawyers, professors, clerics, administrative clerks. What is especially interesting in this respect is the fact that all three Romanian professors who chaired the department of Romanian language and literature studies at the University of Budapest from its establishment in 1863 until 1918 were activist-governmental representatives.

4.6 The adherents of the activist-governmental current

In regards to the adherents of the activist-governmental current, a multilevel analysis must be made, focusing on the following issues: their social background, the reasoning and justification for the adoption of this current's principles, and their political and electoral behaviour.

Firstly, it must be noted that this current spread among all of the Romanian social categories in Hungary. During the second half of the 19th century most of the Romanians in Hungary were *small landowners*, whose base occupation was agriculture. Only a limited part of the Romanian nation was middle-class. These constituted the so-called *Romanian intelligentsia*, namely those persons who had benefitted from a secondary- and university-level education and who were employed as priests, professors, teachers, lawyers and administrative clerks. The Romanian intelligentsia was especially influent in the rural environment, where the population's overall level of education was extremely low.

Despite the fact that some differences in regards to the motivation behind their adherence to the principles of the activist-governmental current can be observed when comparing the two categories of voters, their behaviour is similarly framed. The elections were seen by a considerable part of the Romanian electorate as a means of obtaining different types of benefits. Most of these benefits were financial: for instance the bribes offered by governmental electoral agents in exchange for votes given to the candidate they represented – a wide-ranging practice in dualist Hungary. The amounts offered varied between 1 crown and 100 crowns, depending on the voter's importance within the local community and his degree of influence. Other benefits comprised personal favours for voters, as for instance the expediting of retirement procedures, the appointment in administrative offices, the concession of the rights to the exploitation of natural resources, the awarding of scholarships for voters' sons, etc. Potential benefits for local communities included: the granting of the right to pasture on a certain area, the release from the payment of taxes for a period of time, etc. It is therefore possible to discuss these motivations in terms of an electoral opportunism, that was characteristic to the adherents of the activist-governmental current and that was manifest during the entire period between 1881 and 1918.

The voters' electoral behaviour was also influenced by the pressures coming from the Hungarian authorities, who were preoccupied with the promotion of the governmental candidates' interests. The most vulnerable voters to this type of pressures were the socio-professional categories who were directly depended on the Hungarian state: the priests, the teachers and the state clerks. The refusal to adopt an appropriate electoral attitude in accordance with the government's wishes could lead to unwanted consequences for these categories. Most clerks risked losing their jobs, while priests and teachers could be deprived of state financing, which formed the basis of their annual incomes. Among the small landowners, pressures were likely to turn into the oftentimes violent abuses of the local authorities. Therefore, the second significant component of the activist-governmental electoral behaviour was characterized by corruption, abuses and the electoral fraud of the governmental candidates' agents.

5 Conclusions

In the final section of this paper, we will attempt to draw a series of conclusions concerning the reasons which have led us to see the political action of the activist-governmental representatives in terms of a distinct current which was well represented at the level of the Romanian nation in Hungary.

Starting from the opinion that governmental activism did not represent a niche-current in the general framework of the political options of the Romanians in Hungary, we will attempt to infirm the arguments advanced by the Romanian historiography of the interwar, communist and even contemporary periods, which claimed the opposite.

Firstly, one of the arguments that previous historians had advanced was the fact that there was a very limited number of parliamentary representatives that had won their mandates by running on a activist-governmental programme. Concerning this

aspect, it should be noted that the average of number of mandates won by the activist-governmental representatives for each parliamentary cycle is very close to that of the mandates won by the NRP's adherents after national-activism was adopted. Therefore, the parliamentary representation of the two currents was at least similar, if not equal. It must also be noted that during the entire period between 1887 and 1903, the activist-governmental deputies constituted the Romanians' only delegates in the Budapest Parliament. On the other hand, the NRP's political activity during this time was more or less theoretical. Consequently, this activity lacked the expected results for the betterment of the situation of the Romanian nation in Hungary.

Secondly, it was also stated that there was a lack of support from adherents that would legitimize this current. This issue should be better nuanced. The Romanian voters constantly supported this current during the entire dualist period. We cannot however disregard the factors on which this support was based. It is an undeniable truth that, behind this endorsement were the voters' opportunistic motivations and the electoral pressure exerted by the Hungarian authorities, within the wider context of a Romanian nation which lacked an adequate electoral organisation. Despite this fact, Romanians who had the right to vote accepted the existing situation and learned to use it to their best advantage. They weighed the political options they were given by the Romanian political class and concluded that by adhering to the activist-governmental current they could contribute to the cultural, education and economic development of the Romanian nation.

The Romanian historians have refused to see the adherents of the governmental type of activism as representatives of a third political current. This opinion has been justified by the assertion that the adherents of governmental-activism denied their Romanian ethnic origins by adopting a position which seemingly contravened that of the national movement, represented by the NRP. In order to contest this opinion, we may bring as proofs the electoral speeches held by the activist-governmental candidates. They constantly declared their ethnic Romanian background as well as their intention to act for the benefit of the Romanian nation. A denial of their ethnic background would have shown a complete lack of political tact, as most of the voters in the electoral circles in which they had ran for office were Romanians. Moreover, despite the fact that they had won their mandates by running on the ruling Hungarian party's lists, the Hungarian politicians saw them as parliamentary representatives of the Romanian nation. These arguments are only two examples which can advanced in order to justify the need for a hystoriographical re-evaluation of the activist-governmental current, in its Romanian manifestation.

The main goal of this study was to provide a broader perspective of the political events in Hungary at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, from the viewpoint of the relations between the Hungarian governments and the Romanian nation, through the detailed discussion of a political current that has been marginalized by both the Romanian and the Hungarian historiographies, for different reasons. In addition, by studying the role that the political adherents to the activist-governmental current played in the political life of the Romanians in Hungary, we hope to have recovered an important component of a larger theme for the Romanian historiography, which will provide a more coherent narrative for the period and region in question.

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