

# THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW LEADERSHIP IN CHANGING TIMES. LOOKING FOR AN IN SITU TRANSYLVANIAN ELITE DURING THE 1918 REVOLUTION

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**Abstract:** The period between the end of October and the beginning of December 1918 was for Transylvania an interval marked by deep instability, generated by a strong challenge to the established authority. Against this background, what has remained in historiography as the national revolution in Transylvania took place, with reference to the transition from the old Austro-Hungarian imperial structures to the Romanian ones. Exploiting the results of a collective interwar survey, our study attempts to determine the profile of the new community leaders emerging in these revolutionary times, the source of their legitimacy and the agenda according to which they act.

**Keywords:** revolution, leadership, 1918, Transylvania

## Revolutionary context

It is generally believed that the revolutions of the non-dominant ethnic groups in Austro-Hungary at the end of 1918 were aimed at the disintegration of the monarchy into several national fragments as a result of the collapse of the imperial authority, which at the end of the war favored nationalist solutions.<sup>1</sup> The term 'revolution' has been applied since the time of the events to most of the peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, who went through relatively identical transitional schemes at the end of the war.

The revolutions that took place in the last months of 1918 were the consequence of several destabilising factors brought about by the military conflagration: the erosion of confidence in the central authorities as a result of physical requisitions and abuses, the growth of state power and government responsibilities and their mismanagement in wartime, the emergence of popular expectations of political change, the formulation of a new political contract on the part of the state, the interaction of several soldiers of different nationalities and the spread of revolutionary ideas that led to the weakening of the old imperial order and created an international forum in which demands for national and popular sovereignty could be articulated.<sup>2</sup>

The Great War, moreover, was, behind huge military confrontations, the most difficult test of legitimacy for the participating states. With the exception of

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Russia, the Allies passed this test, while the Central Powers lost it unanimously.<sup>3</sup> The revolutions that began in the autumn of 1918 were for the ethnic groups within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy real locomotives of the new nation states. In his memoirs, Edvard Beneš described the revolution at the end of the war as a break with the empire and a chance to create an independent Czechoslovak state.<sup>4</sup> The revolutions of 1918 were for most of the leaders of the national groups within Austro-Hungary an interlude, a process of transition from an imperial to a national-state authority.

Just as it happened in the whole former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, also in Transylvania, in the period between the end of October and the beginning of December 1918, a first transfer of power took place through those authority structures with a provisional role, the councils and national guards. Their action was due to a huge mobilization effort that swept the post-war Romanian Transylvanian world. The place left vacant after the collapse of the central authority was occupied by these formulas for exercising power, whose authority was gradually diluted as the strength of the newly emerging nation-states became more deeply established in the area. Although there is an extraordinarily generous bibliography devoted to the subject<sup>5</sup>, there are still issues to be sorted out on how power was actually seized at the local level in the autumn of 1918 through these councils and guards, the effectiveness of these institutions behind the ideological pressures of the historiographical discourse, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary coordination, the political leadership of the period, continuities/discontinuities at the level of the post-1918 elite segment, etc.<sup>6</sup>

### The source

Every revolution is a process that includes both the competition of leaders and the mobilization of the masses.<sup>7</sup> The role of the elite in the production of revolutionary discourse, in the development of oppositional political cultures and subsequently in the management of the memory and legacy of revolutionary events makes its score a determining force in any revolution.

It is precisely for these reasons that a history of the Transylvanian Revolution at the end of the First World War without the contribution of its elite is incomplete.

In 1943, responding to a memorial inquiry, Ion Bianu, a leader of the Târnăveni, Târnava Mică, noted: “As the first-principal of this place [Valea Lungă] I was the first to take over the empire and the leadership of the Romanian administration.”<sup>8</sup> The formula, as used in the above testimony - “taking over the empire” - suggests a personal, subjective action of taking over power in a particular area, bringing to the fore individuals who were charged with attributes previously belonging to the state body. From this point of view, the November-December period of 1918 is emblematic of the emergence of such figures who were forced to be community leaders, to govern and to perform in roles for which they did not have the expertise, the necessary training or the support of the political and military power.<sup>9</sup>

The present study does not focus on the leading political elite, the one grouped around the central structures of the Romanian National Council in Arad<sup>10</sup>, but on the grassroots elite, located in the countryside, obliged to translate the current

political events to a disheartened community, for whom the war was not yet a fully overcome reality at the horizon of November 1918. We are especially concerned with that dynamic elite, who did not stay in the community during the war years, but accumulated considerable symbolic capital on the front (excluding, for example, the clerical elite).

In order to identify how a community elite appears *in situ*, its prerogatives and its mode of functioning in a turbulent context such as the post-imperial one, we have made use of the huge research site coordinated in the 1920s by the Transylvanian journalist Teodor Păcățian<sup>11</sup>. At the end of the war, he was commissioned by ASTRA [the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian People]<sup>12</sup> to carry out a wide-ranging collective investigation of the entire Romanian ex-imperial Transylvanian space and the way in which it participated in the Great War and subsequently carried out the national revolution. In addition to some tables that required the completion of headings related to the dead, prisoners of war, orphans, war decorations, etc., each Transylvanian locality had also to submit answers to 4 open questions: 1. What is the approximate value of the voluntary contributions made by the Romanians of the commune in kind during the war? 2. What is the total amount of all the war damage that the commune suffered? 3. Was there a revolution in the commune in the autumn of 1918? How did it come about, how did it develop? Was a national guard formed in the commune? Under whose leadership? 4. How many inhabitants of the commune took part in the great assembly in Alba-Iulia on 1 December 1918, at whose behest and under whose leadership?

For the subject treated here, we will use the answers received by Păcățian to the third question, the one which claimed the most consistent narrative from the respondents.

Officially approved by ASTRA on August 8, 1920, the collection of information for the approach taken by Păcățian will begin only at the end of 1921. The 25,040 printed copies containing a tabular structure designed by the coordinator, which was later to be completed, arrived to the prefectures of Transylvania, from there to the sub-prefectures, then to the town halls of each locality. Păcățian recommended that the respondents to this survey should be members of both the local administrative elite (the mayor, the notary, the secretary) and the cultural-ecclesiastical elite (the priest, the teacher). Gathering this information from all over Transylvania was a huge effort for the initiators.<sup>13</sup> The data, arranged in a tabular system, was subsequently summarised and published in 1923 in the volume *Jertfele românilor din Ardeal, Banat, Crișana, Sătmăr și Maramureș aduse în războiul mondial din anii 1914-1918* [The sacrifices of the Romanians from Ardeal, Banat, Crișana, Sătmăr and Maramureș in the World War 1914-1918].<sup>14</sup>

### **The category under analysis**

Seemingly paradoxically, in the immediate post-war period, a new local elite emerged in the Transylvanian Romanian landscape. A series of individuals have returned from the front with the authority of those who have gone through an overwhelming war experience and hence, as the case may be, a kind of symbolic capital surrounding them. In Western historiography, these military presences, who

soon take on the prerogatives of community leadership, have come to be known as *warlords*, soldiers for whom war has also been a springboard for political advancement.<sup>15</sup> If the political scene was dominated until 1914 by established figures from the intellectuals (priests, teachers, lawyers etc.), at the end of the war these established positions were noisily occupied by a series of new figures returning from the frontline, with the authority of a war experience. The way in which they occupy the space left vacant after the disembarkation of the old imperial elites seems an exercise in 'self-empowerment', as their validation seems an assault on positions of authority overthrown by the new order.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the army, the members of the organisations that emerged ad hoc in the post-war turmoil often have political ambitions and define themselves as "political soldiers", although it is difficult to establish their ideological-political identification.<sup>17</sup> What is, however, easy to grasp is their willingness to be part of a post-war project, perceiving themselves as the nucleus of a 'new warrior society', representing both the values of a nation and of new authoritarian concepts.<sup>18</sup> The myth of the war experience became a powerful driving force in public and personal life as early as November 1918.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the war, ex-soldiers represented a category that held a moral ascendancy over the whole community by having been capable of ultimate sacrifice on the battlefield, thus claiming the right to represent the whole nation.<sup>20</sup> These "wounded patriarchs"<sup>21</sup>, as they have been metaphorically called, are emblematic for the way they manage to bring from the front a series of traumatic experiences together with a great readiness to manifest an ultra-militant masculinity ready to be put at the service of the defence of the homeland.<sup>22</sup>

Returning to the Transylvanian case, the emergence of this new elite was forced by the central organisation of the Romanian National Council (further R.N.C.), which through circulars issued insisted on the emergence from the ranks of leaders who would take on community tasks. On 20 November, the R.N.C. circular from Arad to the Romanian localities in the county stated: "The restoration of order can only be done through a new grouping of the leaders and the people of the commune. In most communes the exponents of the old system of government, the notaries, the sub-notaries, the communal writers, the members of the *antistie* and of the old communal representation are odious in the eyes of the people of the commune and thus unfit for them to be able to take back the leadership of those communes into their own hands."<sup>23</sup> In this vacuum of authority, a new elite was forced to assert itself.

Even if the collapse of the front constituted a ferment of revolution in all ethnic groups in the Empire, the mood brought from the front by the Transylvanian Romanian soldiers was radicalized when they encountered the traumas and the misfortunes felt at home. Having gone through the hell of the trenches, they encounter at home an apocalypse in progress, which was hard to bear for the families who have had to endure severe requisitions, abusive measures by the authorities, lack of manpower, poor harvests, etc. during the years of military conflict.<sup>24</sup>

There is a first level of demonstrations in the Transylvanian villages at the end of October 1918, largely determined by the increasingly precarious socio-economic situation: the food stores of the town halls were attacked, wood was cut massively from the state forests, food was stolen from the warehouses of the town halls, the

animals of the small and large rural owners were stolen, pubs and breweries were devastated. The people at whom the revolutionaries' fury is usually directed are the same in all accounts: the mayor, the gendarmerie, the notary, the large and small landowners, symbols of a regime that had behaved authoritatively during the war years and who had to be removed in accordance with "a peasant mentality that greatly personalizes social relations - it is not the state that is responsible for the disaster, but the human hand through which the state imposed its policy."<sup>25</sup> However, there are some clues relevant to the social-national mix that set the Transylvanian villages in motion. For example, in Poiana Ilvei, Bistrița-Năsăud, the respondents to Păcățian's survey declared: "There was no devastation in the commune, nor any significant damage. Traces of Hungarianisation were smashed from the communal chancellery, the portrait of the king, the primate, etc."; and in Măgura Ilvei, the same county: "The revolted spirits smashed traces of Hungarianisation in the commune and in the chancellery of the municipal secretary, the portrait of the Hungarian king, the heir to the Hungarian throne, the sub-prefect and the primate. They destroyed all the foreign national flags as well as the Hungarian inscription on the schools and the secretarial chancellery." The destruction of the imperial portraits, of the symbols of the old power, announced the passage of impulsive, instinctive, momentary manifestations towards the stage of a political-national revolution.

Against the backdrop of a crisis of sovereignty on the ground, these uprisings escalate into a revolution with leaders, programme and ideology. The rebels only become revolutionaries when their struggle is to seize power in the state.<sup>26</sup> For the Romanian political elite in Transylvania, this was certainly the major objective of mobilising all possible human and material resources at the end of 1918. The place left vacant after the collapse of Austro-Hungarian authority is occupied by the councils and national guards whose authority will gradually be diluted as the strength of the new nation-states becomes more deeply established in the area.

The establishment of power structures based on ethnic criteria was an essential stage in the takeover of Romanian power in Transylvania. Without this process of segregating power in the territory - which also meant the pulverisation into several structures of control such as Romanian, Hungarian and German national councils and guards - the completion of the transfer of power from the Hungarian to the Romanian authorities with the arrival of the Romanian army in Transylvania would have been a much more difficult process, complicated by pressure from internal and external power centres.

When asked about the Transylvanian revolution, many respondents of the investigation led by Păcățian recall former military officers taking over the leadership of guards or councils. Although the name of the guard leader is not always accompanied by his military rank, there are nevertheless enough examples of the type: "the national guard was formed under the leadership of second lieutenant Ion Medrea"<sup>27</sup>; "The guard was established and led by Achim Munteanu, a former sergeant in the Austro-Hungarian army"<sup>28</sup>. In some answers an important detail is specified: the leaders of the guard were war invalids: "The Revolution was extinguished by the formation of the national guard under the leadership of priest Valeriu Vertic and invalid reserve second lieutenant Viorel Drăgan."<sup>29</sup> ; "The national

guard was formed under the leadership of Mihaiu Moș, invalid”.<sup>30</sup> The fact that some war invalids were able to set themselves up as community leaders reveals part of the source of their authority and public recognition. The Necopoi, Sătmar, respondents mention Demetru Boitor as the leader of the national guard, “a former guard in the Russian prisoner army”<sup>31</sup>. The military experience in such distant lands, in Russian captivity, where Romanians were organized in volunteer corps, contributed to the prestige reserved for these individuals. In other answers, former soldiers returned from the “Italian captivity” are nominated. They also enable group fascination and easily set themselves up as organisers of the power structures on the ground.

Indeed, tremendous was the admiration with which the community received those returning from the war with a military rank, a detail that provided tremendous social validation. At Săsciori the national guard was initially led by the communal mayor Zaharie Moga. Only one day later, second lieutenants Grigore Morariu and Viorel Moga returned from the war and took over the leadership of the guard “with the help of the town hall”. The old mayor realised that the prestige of those who had returned from the war was incomparable to his own, so he agreed to a peaceful transfer of power. Such episodes are not unique and suggest that there was such a dynamic of revolutionary leadership: if initially the national guard or council was led by individuals who were in the community at the end of October 1918, when community members loaded with military symbolic capital return from the front, they take over from the old leaders and set themselves up as the leaders of the respective locality.

However, even when it was a former military officer, the head of the guard acted in symbiosis with the village priest, suggesting that there was collaboration between the old and new leaders, with the investigation documents recording no cases of major fractures between the two categories: “The guard was formed under the leadership of Ioan Bidianu, a colonel leader who took an oath to uphold order in the hands of the local Romanian parish priest.”<sup>32</sup>

In many accounts it was possible to identify the head of the 1918 National Guard with the mayor who in 1922 signed the reply to the ASTREI inquiry: “it was a guard founded by the former colonel David Bera, the present mayor”<sup>33</sup>; “the National Guard was formed under the leadership of Dumitru Calborean, presently municipal mayor.”<sup>34</sup> The leap is relevant to the way these characters knew how to convert the experience of war into political gain: first as leaders of the national guards and later, through electoral validation, as mayors of the respective localities.

It is not only in the office of mayor that we find the leaders of the guards over the years, but also in that of the notary: “The revolution was extinguished by the establishment of the National Guard at the urging of Leon Mihăeș, the current second county notary.”<sup>35</sup> ; “The next day the Romanian National Guard was formed under the leadership of Aurel Pinteș, today a notary in Ormeniș”<sup>36</sup> In the villages of Arad, Donceni, Ignești and Prăjești, the leaders of the guard became, after only a few years, clerks at the Romanian Bank in the town on the Mureș. Valeriu Popoviciu, the commander of the guard in Mișca, in the same Arad county, was, in 1922, the prefect of the Cluj police. Cherechean Aurel, head of the guard in Galșa (Arad) had meanwhile become captain of the Romanian army.

The guards became political figures also as a result of some specific situations: after asking Hungarian officials to swear an oath of loyalty to the Romanian government and after they refused the procedure, they were removed from office and the leaders of the guards became prefects.<sup>37</sup>

These and many other examples of the same type suggest that the validation in the position of leader of the guard represented a socio-professional locomotive for many (“The revolution was extinguished by the formation of the national guard whose commander was Valeriu Popoviciu, who is now the prefect of the police in Cluj.”<sup>38</sup>). This authority acquired in the interwar period is one of the reasons why the respondents of the survey perform real exercises of admiration when describing the head of the guard. Here is only one case relevant to this situation: “There would have been bloodshed, but early the revolution was extinguished by the commander and leader of the national guards Mr.Dr.Hetco Aurel, lieutenant, [now] first prefect of Jibou, who through bravery with the national guard, chosen and trained by him, countless communes escaped fire, damage and bloodshed. The so-called leader of the national guards saved millions of lives at the expense of the Romanian population during the revolution, for these beautiful and unforgettable deeds the whole people is forever indebted to him with unceasing love and great gratitude.”<sup>39</sup>

A character like Aurel Hetco, a lawyer-officer, completes the perspective on the socio-professional profile of these chiefs of guard. Born in 1884, Aurel Hetco was 34 years old when he returned from the war and led the national guards in Jibou, he was a doctor of law at the University of Cluj and a well-known lawyer in Jibou. He is not limited strictly to a professional consecration, but has ambitions as a cultural animator, being one of the main organizers of the Jibou branch of ASTRA, and from this position he has organized a series of cultural events in the area - evenings, conferences, speeches, theatrical performances, etc. At the time of the outbreak of the war, Aurel Hetco already possessed sufficient public recognition in Jibou and the surrounding area that it cannot be said in this case that the war experience alone provided him with the necessary stamp of confidence in the community that supported him as head of the National Guard. Of course, his arrival home with the rank of lieutenant, the experience of the front in Serbia, Galicia, Italy, completed this profile of the pre-war local leader, giving him the very piece that was missing from the puzzle – the military authority.<sup>40</sup> Even Traian Mager, the leader of the guards in the Hălmagiu region, cannot be said to have been entirely a product of the war in terms of his image capital at the time of 1918. Born in 1887, Traian Mager was 31 years old at the time of the Transylvanian Revolution and was a teacher in Lazuri, Arad, with a rich cultural, pedagogical and journalistic activity. Despite this, he was not skilled in the requirements of public speaking, as he himself confessed in his memoirs. However, at the end of the war, he had a national exuberance which, reinforced by the endorsement of the Central Romanian National Council in Arad, made him tackle such scenarios when he arrived in the villages he had to bring to order:

“[...] the next moment I get into my carriage. Standing up, I raise my gun in one hand and my cap in the other and start shouting: ‘Long live Romania the Great!’. This theatrical way of stepping caught the attention of the crowd. Everyone is now looking at me. The shooting stopped and I arrived in the middle of the tumult. I

recognized friends who explained the situation. At the station, people were looting the food depot. The soldiers, some boys from the commune led by Aurel Catană, were chasing the people gathered from the villages out of town, for fear that they would join in the looting. They shot at the air, just to scare them. For the first time in my life, I spoke in public. The irritation of the previous moment had loosened my tongue, and I succeeded in reassuring the people who had now surrounded me. Keeping pace with the tumult that had taken over after the carriage, we entered the city. In the square - assailed by crowds inflamed by the thrill of revolution and eager for news - I read the proclamation I had brought before an increasingly large audience, concluding with 'Long live Greater Romania!'"<sup>41</sup>

Traian Mager has several attributes that justify his position in the political events at the end of 1918: he has a profession that is respected in the Romanian communities, that of a teacher, he has the experience of war and from this comes a certain martial nature that he assumes, he is a representative of the R.N.C., an envoy of the only Romanian central power structure in the region and this gives him the necessary official validation.

An exercise in prosopography applied to the leaders of both the guards and the councils could reveal the profile of the local Transylvanian Romanian elite, the resources of authority and the mechanisms through which it was able to position itself as leader in the complicated context of the end of 1918.

Returning to the investigation led by Păcășian, from other survey responses it appears that there was a significant sample of peasants who put themselves at the head of these power structures. For example, in Bologa (Cojocna) we are told that the guard was led only by "smarter peasants"<sup>42</sup>, in Ardan (Bistrița-Năsăud): "National guards existed and were led by the ploughman Bor Petre [...]"<sup>43</sup>. Here probably worked a good image among the community, that of an honest householder, probably combined with a personal charisma of the one in question.

In addition to these peasant leaders, the answers also record the presence of Romanian lawyers or notaries (in some cases including law students)<sup>44</sup>. This rich case history reflects the changes that the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought to the vocational horizons of young Transylvanian people. From eminently humanistic careers (priests, teachers, writers), characteristic of national romanticism, there was a shift from the last quarter of the 19th century towards pragmatic career paths. The growing number of Romanian students enrolled in law faculties in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy suggests a maturing of the Transylvanian Romanian national project, but also the formation of a middle class.

Indeed, the lawyer or the notary were figures constantly nominated in ASTREI's answers as community leaders. It can be retorted that this was a local elite even before 1918, so there is no change in perception of this character. Although an authority in the pre-war Romanian world, when we use the label 'new leaders' we have in mind the exercise of a public leadership function of a military nature, as head of the guards, or a political one, at the head of the national councils. More often than not, however, in the survey responses, the community leader is a "notary returned from the front", an important clue that can locate the source of his additional legitimacy.

In the ASTREI survey testimonials, as in the one in which Aurel Hetco is mentioned, it can be noticed that the profession is always indicated in proximity to that of former military officer<sup>45</sup>. This intertwining of the two instances (man of the law/man of the military sphere) validates enormously in the Transylvanian horizon. The same is true of the teachers who lead the national guards and whose professional quality is always doubled in their answers by the military one: “The guard was formed under the leadership of the teacher Liviu Olosutean, a former reserve flag bearer.”<sup>46</sup> The same intersection of skills worked here.

But the survey responses favour a range of justifications for how these new leaders are being propelled. In some responses such as: “The commander of the National Guard was lt. Șofron Sângeorgean”<sup>47</sup>, the author does not even mention the fact that he was a lawyer, suggesting that his wartime experience was relevant to his position and not his pre-war professional experience. Respect for military rank is even more visible in such reactions: “The National Guard, which was established on the third day after the outbreak of the revolution and which at first consisted of 24 individuals, was placed under the leadership of Emanoil Murășan, a 41-year-old man and former corporal in the Austro-Hungarian army. Later, however, out of respect for the young Septimiu Pop, a former student, platoon leader in the Austro-Hungarian army and now a second lieutenant in the Romanian army gave him this rank pro forma, but in fact he was also the leader of the guard, as Em. Murășan.”<sup>48</sup> Not even the criterion of age stood in the way of a higher military rank, even if only when appearances had to be kept up.

Other testimonials from the same investigation insist on the leadership capacity of some military-students (“The National Guard was formed under the leadership of second lieutenant Bodea Lazăr, student.”<sup>49</sup>), in which case the above explanation of the military halo that brings high levels of social prestige also works. If during the war years the future leaders of the councils and national guards stood out in the uniform of the K.u.K. army, after December 1918 they would serve in the Romanian army: “Upon the arrival of the Romanian troops, the commander of the national guard, subloc. Opriș handed over the guard to the Romanian commander, and he forced himself to do his duty further by entering military service with the Romanian Reg. 81.”<sup>50</sup>; “The guard was formed under the leadership of Alesandru Iufărean, a former sergeant in the Austro-Hungarian army, now a sergeant in the Romanian Gendarmerie.”<sup>51</sup>

There were cases, however, when the heads of the guards were neither priests nor lawyers, nor did they enjoy any particular military rank, but were simply characters whose charisma was considerable among the community. How else could we interpret the case of the guard of Măgura (Bistrița-Năsăud), led by Macedon Cozac, a photographer?

Of course, there are also evasive answers from the investigation, under the umbrella of which a lot of community voices can hide. For example, those from Calbor (Brașov) declared that the guard was formed by “elements of order” from the locality...

What is certain is that the succession of those who rose to the top of the Romanian power structures at the end of the war confirms Szász Zoltán's

considerations regarding the political activation of a Romanian middle class at that time.<sup>52</sup> The Romanian lay leaders, who were limited in their pre-war reactions and had a narrow range of expression, appeared with extraordinary spontaneity in the period from November to December 1918. Without an official mandate from a state institution, they are validated by the community and subsequently or simultaneously by the central C.N.R.C. organisation.

Their exit from the scene offered by the Transylvanian revolution was consummated with the Order-in-Council number 39 of 26 December 1918 of the Governing Council<sup>53</sup>: “All officers in reserve and in the ranks, of any category, such as the *amploniații*, who are not applied to enter the active service of the army and have in their civilian life a career or a position that ensures their livelihood, for example: lawyers, teachers, engineers, bank *amploniați* etc., young men who wish to continue their university studies are invited to return from the service of the Romanian National Guards on 15 January 1919 and to devote themselves to the career they had or to which they are dedicated.”<sup>54</sup> It was the entrance to another stage for this emerging elite of the war and revolution.

These new leaders emerging at the dawn of the Transylvanian revolution attest to the fact that this was also a social movement that transferred groups from the fringes of the social system to its very core.<sup>55</sup> Thus, these revolutionary times become true “incubators of leaders”, i.e. of key figures in the elaboration of the narrative, the definition of strategy and the commitment to action.<sup>56</sup>

There is not only an internal recognition of these new leaders, but also an exogenous one, as they are recognized even by the Hungarian elites who intervene to ensure their personal security and that of their property.

In fact, the establishment of national councils and guards practically signified the professionalization of the members of the revolution. The future Transylvanian local elite of Greater Romania certainly has its roots in the fermentation of the revolution at the end of 1918. The continuities in the local elite structure between November 1918 and post-December 1918 constitute a generous subject for in-depth reflection and analysis.

Summarising, the interval that ensures the first transfer of power in the Transylvanian areas, from the Hungarian to the Romanian authorities, a particularly complex one, still often neglected, treated as a footnote to a broader narrative, nevertheless gives rise to exciting interpretations after more than a century of historiographical accumulation. The public perception is that at the end of the war, the Romanian community in Transylvania stepped directly into the fervour of the celebrations of the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia. However, up until 1 December 1918, there was a spectacular journey that this region was going through, one of redoubtable political and social effervescence, in which multiple scenarios were being considered and the national projects of all ethnic groups were intersecting in a huge laboratory caught between two worlds.

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- <sup>8</sup> Vaida Voevod, M., Neamțu, G., *1 Decembrie 1918. Mărturiile ale participanților*, II (Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2008), 40.
- <sup>9</sup> The post-war period is considered to have been extremely fruitful in terms of the emergence of community leaders throughout the ex-imperial space. A broader analysis in Egry's study already mentioned. Egry, G., (2018): 15-42.
- <sup>10</sup> In Transylvania, the Romanian power organizational scheme was as follows: at the end of October 1918 the Central Romanian National Council, the supreme structure of the political leadership, functioned in Budapest, and from November 2 in Arad. In every Transylvanian locality, Romanians were encouraged to set up local national councils, and at county level, county national councils.
- <sup>11</sup> Teodor V. Păcățian (1852-1941), journalist, historian, editor-in-chief of the *Tribuna* newspaper in Sibiu, director of the *Telegraful român*, prolific cultural activist at the beginning of the 19th-20th centuries in Transylvania.
- <sup>12</sup> ASTRA [the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian People] was founded in Sibiu in 1861 and played a significant role in the cultural and political emancipation of Transylvanian Romanians.
- <sup>13</sup> The limitations of the investigation led by Păcățian have been addressed in the studies: Dăncilă Ineoan, A., “Investigating the First World War through the prism of an interwar survey”, *ASTRA Sabesiensis*, 2, (2016): 193-202; Dăncilă Ineoan, A., “Requestioning the Revolution from Banat at the end of the Great War”, *Banatica*, 25 (2015): 417-430.
- <sup>14</sup> The work appeared both as a separate volume in Sibiu at the ASTRA's publishing house in 1923, but was also included in the pages of the journal *Transylvania* 1-2/54 (1923): 32-54.
- <sup>15</sup> Suhrke, A., “The Peace in Between”, in *The Peace in Between. Post-war violence and peace building*, eds. A. Suhrke, M. Berdal (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), 1-24; Böhler, J., “Generals and Warlords, Revolutionaries and Nation-State Builders: The First World War and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe”, in Jochen Böhler, Wladzimirz Borodziej, Joachim

von Puttkamer, *Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe's First World War*, eds. J. Böhler, W. Borodziej, J. von Puttkamer (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Gerwarth, R., "Control and Chaos. Paramilitary Violence and the Dissolution of the Habsburg Empire", in *Control of Violence*, eds. Heitmeyer, W., Haupt, HG., Malthaner, S., Kirschner, A. (New York: Springer, 2010), 530.

<sup>17</sup> Gerwarth, R., Horne J., "Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War. An Introduction" in *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, eds. R. Gerwarth, J. Horne (Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

<sup>18</sup> Gerwarth, R., "Fighting the Red Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the Defeated States of Europe", in *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, eds. R. Gerwarth, J. Horne (Oxford University Press, 2013), 59.

<sup>19</sup> Mosse, G., "Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience", *Journal of Contemporary History* 21/4 (1986): 492.

<sup>20</sup> Leed, J., E., *No Man's Land. Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 196-204.

<sup>21</sup> Healy, M., *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 260. Sieder, R., "Behind the Lines: Working-Class Family Life in Wartime Vienna", in *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, eds. R. Wall, J. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 109-138.

<sup>22</sup> Gerwarth, R., "War in Peace. Remobilization and National Rebirth in Austria and Hungary", in *Sacrifice and Rebirth: the Legacy of the Lost Habsburg War*, eds. M. Cornwall, J.P. Newmann (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 40-41; 47.

<sup>23</sup> Romanian National Archives from Bihor, fund Moise Popovici, file 2, 9-16 apud. Roz, A., *Consiliul Național Român Central și Gărzile Naționale Române din Arad 1918* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1993), vol. I, 266-267.

<sup>24</sup> Galántai, J., *Hungary in the First World War* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989), 83-84; Haselsteiner, H., "The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Mobilization and Food Supplies", in *East Central European Society in World War I*, eds. B. K. Király, N. F. Dreisziger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 95-98.

<sup>25</sup> Bârlea, E., *Perspectiva lumii rurale asupra primului război mondial* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2004), 267.

<sup>26</sup> Foran, J., *Teoretizarea revoluțiilor* (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 27.

<sup>27</sup> All the quotations in this study that refer to the answers to T. Păcățian's enquiry can be found in National Archives of Sibiu County, fund ASTRA\1922, 1063\1921. The names of the villages and counties respect the organization existing in Transylvania at the beginning of the 1920s. Strei, Plopi, Hunedoara.

<sup>28</sup> Brateiu, Târnava Mare.

<sup>29</sup> Mocod, Bistrița-Năsăud.

<sup>30</sup> Almășel, Hunedoara.

<sup>31</sup> Necăpoi, Sătmăr.

<sup>32</sup> Nușfalău, Solnoc Dăbâca.

<sup>33</sup> Chergheș, Hunedoara.

<sup>34</sup> Coșca Mare, Târnava Mare.

<sup>35</sup> Salva, Bistrița-Năsăud.

<sup>36</sup> Dâmbu de Câmpie, Cojocna.

<sup>37</sup> The case is extensively described in the manuscript "Scurt istoric asupra înființării și funcționării Gărzii Naționale din Alba Iulia/A short history of the establishment and functioning of the National Guard in Alba Iulia", signed by Radu Nicodim in 1968 and in the possession of the National Union Museum, ms. 6647.

<sup>38</sup> Mișca, Arad.

<sup>39</sup> Garoșlăul de Someș, Sălaj.

<sup>40</sup> Biographical information on Aurel Hetco is taken from Pop, M., “Aurel Hetco (1884-1967) - a prominent personality of the generation of the Great Union”, [Online] Available via <https://www.egco.ro/2020/07/16/aurel-hetco-1884-1967-personalitate-marcanta-din-generatia-marii-uniri/>, cited 22.03.2021.

<sup>41</sup> Mager, T., “Gărzile Naționale Române în Ținutul Hălmeagului 4.XI.1918-16.II.1919”, [Online] Available via <http://www.darnick.com/halmagiu/garzilenaționale.html> cited 22.03.2019.

<sup>42</sup> Bologa, Cojocna.

<sup>43</sup> Ardan, Bistrița

<sup>44</sup> For example, in Santau, Sălaj, the leader of the guard was Cucuta Ioan, a law student; in Nemșa, Sibiu, Romul Aron had the same status.

<sup>45</sup> In Hususău (Alba) the national guard was under the leadership of “Mr. Dr. Ioan Bianu advocate and former second lieutenant, later lieutenant.”

<sup>46</sup> Mănășturul Românesc, Cojocna.

<sup>47</sup> Cherechiu, Arad.

<sup>48</sup> Vaidasig, Turda Arieș.

<sup>49</sup> Dezna, Arad.

<sup>50</sup> Buciumi, Sălaj.

<sup>51</sup> Ormeniș, Turda-Arieș.

<sup>52</sup> Szász, Z., “Revolutions and National Movements after the Collapse of the Monarchy (1918–1919)” in *History of Transylvania*, ed. Z. Szász, III (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 766-768.

<sup>53</sup> The Dirigent Council (in Romanian, Consiliul Dirigent) was a provisional political body with limited legislative, executive and administrative powers active in Transylvania between 2 December 1918 and 4 April 1920.

<sup>54</sup> Rustoiu, I., Cristea, M., Roșu, T., Zgârciu, L., *Garda Națională Română de la Alba Iulia* (Alba Iulia: Cognitiv, 2019), 37.

<sup>55</sup> Sava, I. I., *Sociologia mișcărilor sociale. De ce se revoltă oamenii?* (București: Nemira Publishing House, 2014), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Sava, I. I., (2014), 6.