

Dumitru Suciu, *Soldați fără uniformă și starea protopopiatelor ortodoxe din Transilvania după Războiul Național din 1848-1849* [Soldiers without Uniform and the State of the Orthodox Protopresbyterates in Transylvania after the National War of 1848-1849], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Argonaut, 2011, 313 p.

The events of the years 1848-1849 in Transylvania and Hungary represent one of the topics to which the Romanian historiography has paid substantial attention. This is attested by the large number of works dedicated to them, as well as by the diversity of the historiographical species involved: memoirs, collections of documents, biographies, monographs, programmatic analyses, etc. The historical importance of the moment, its role as a landmark in the genesis of national identity and in the evolution of the Romanians' political programs in the Habsburg Monarchy have undoubtedly contributed to the interest manifested by the historians. The extreme violence of the armed confrontations and, especially, of the reprisals against civilians engendered a further attraction. On one hand, the phenomenon of violence has, at all times, fascinated both those who write and those who read history: without acts of aggression, we would not have the archetypes of victims, heroes or saviours. On the other hand, being accompanied, in this case, by strong ethnic polarisation, violence was - from very early on - elevated to the rank of an argument in the socio-political Romanian-Hungarian polemics.

It is to this long historiographical tradition that the most recent book written by the historian D. Suciu belongs, even though his approach differs from those of his predecessors in several fundamental respects. This work - which contains the Orthodox ecclesiastical reports on the human and material losses during the years 1848-1849 - represents the continuation of a volume of documents that has been awaited for much too long in the autochthonous historiographical space.¹ The completion that will be provided by the publication of the similar Greek-Catholic reports will give a precise overview of these losses in the Romanian communities and will pave the way for much more in-depth analyses.

The fundamental thesis the author advances (also expressed in the introductory study of the volume of documents) is the need to reconsider the terminology of the 1848-1849 "revolution" for the particular case of the Romanians from the Great Principality. D. Suciu starts from the observation that between March-September 1848, following the revolutionary events in the capital of the Empire, the dualist formula at work here was designed to counteract the rise of the nationalities and to ensure internal stability and unity.² However, the rift between Budapest and Vienna led to a redistribution of the political roles and the beginning of a period that D. Suciu calls the stage of "national wars" (p. 16). Whether as allies or as enemies of the Viennese Court, the peoples of the Monarchy engaged in these conflicts hoping to achieve some national goals, their primary target being that of obtaining political autonomy. From the perspective of the author, insofar as the Romanians are concerned, the events and the semantics of this period can hardly be classified under the idea of a "revolution." As a result, D. Suciu accepts the existence of two revolutions - the Austrian and the Hungarian revolutions - but rejects the

¹ *Revoluția transilvană de la 1848-1849. Date, realități și fapte reflectate în documente bisericești ortodoxe*, edited by Dumitru Suciu (coordinator), Alexandru Moraru, Iosif Marin Balog, Diana Covaci, Cosmin Cosmăța, and Lorand Madly, Bucharest, Editura Asab, 2011, 588 p.

² The idea is not new; it was expressed by the historian from Cluj in his previous works, which successfully argued that the origins of the *Ausgleich* must be sought in the relations between the Habsburgs, the Hungarian aristocracy and the other nations of the Empire starting from the eighteenth century on. Dumitru Suciu, *Antecedentele dualismului austro-ungar și lupta națională a românilor din Transilvania 1848-1867*, Bucharest, Editura Albatros, 2000, p. 5-96.

association between the Romanian actions and this term, advocating the use of the concept of “national war” (pp. 228-229).

To support this idea, he resorts to a selection of the material offered in the volume of documents. One by one, all the protopresbyteriates about which information has been preserved are analysed, emphasising the role of the Romanian population in the military actions or in the resistance against the Hungarian independentist army. The Romanian territories outside historical Transylvania are referred to first, because here, more frequently than elsewhere, ethnicity was not always identical with ideological affiliation - important representatives of the Romanian elite adopted and promoted the cause of the Hungarian “war of independence,” and a large number of Romanian soldiers were recruited in the revolutionary army units. However, alongside these, D. Suciú presents the examples of the priests and the peasants who resisted conscription or even supported with information the armed resistance from the Apuseni Mountains. The documents indicate only the names of those sentenced to death, imprisonment or corporal punishment, but suggest, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the existence of a strong counter-current among the Romanians outside the Grand Principality. Its foundations must be sought both in the nationalist consciousness that reacted against the Hungarian “revolutionary” otherness and the Romanians’ philo-dynasticism.

Continuing his analysis with the territory of Transylvania, the author presents successively, following the structure of the protopresbyteriates, the data referring to the Orthodox Romanians killed in battles against the Hungarian army, or executed as a result of their participation in military actions. D. Suciú insists from the start on the impossibility of making accurate quantitative assessments, the reason being the incomplete nature of the sources and the lack of uniformity in the data they contain. Even so, there are also arguments for the inclusion of those mentioned in what might be called a Romanian *Landsturm*: mentioning the units, the leaders of the regular army who took over the command of the Romanian troops conscripted at a regional or local level, of military ranks associated with the dead. Of course, the organisation of the Romanians into legions, the existence of a military hierarchy and the history of armed clashes with the Hungarians have been well-known in the historiography of the subject, but no work has reached the level and extent of the details provided in D. Suciú’s book so far. Through it, the historical information on the Romanian military actions from the years 1848-1849 descends from the level of the units and the heroes to that of the ordinary soldiers, bringing both the victims and the survivors out of anonymity.

Also worth highlighting is the balance of the narrative and the historical perspective, which takes distance, to the extent that the subject allows it, from any accusatory statements. D. Suciú emphasises that although he presents only the Romanian perspective, atrocities were committed on both sides (thus, he describes cases in which Hungarians were the victims). He insists on the different versions of quantitative estimates regarding human losses, without, however, becoming associated with any of them. He also mentions the existence of local non-aggression pacts that ensured the life and wealth of several mixed communities (pp. 23-24). From a methodological standpoint, the author suggests that the research could be furthered through the prosopographic method (although he does not explicitly mention it), which would result in obtaining extremely valuable statistical data for future approaches. The possible extensions to the field of historical demography and economic history are also mentioned (p. 133). He does not forget to develop a critique of the documentary sources, emphasising their shortcomings (not mentioning the dead without descendants nominally, the impossibility of remarried widows to prove their husbands’ death), the inequality of the information, but also the “extreme” information contained therein (the presence of very old peasant-soldiers, some over 70 years of age).

The fiercest criticism to which the last part of the work is devoted focuses on the use of the term “revolution.” The author points out that the Romanians and the Slavs fought against the Hungarian revolution, even though the social, civic, cultural and spiritual freedoms they demanded were identical. What essentially divided them, determining them to join the imperial troops, was the *essential and fundamental national problem* (p. 234), namely the belief that without it, the premises of any freedoms were flawed. For this reason, D. Suciuc does not uphold the idea of a “counterrevolution” either, opting for that of the “national war” and supporting his choice through the necessity of explicitly expressing the character and the nature of the violent phenomena, spurred by the desire of political freedom based on national criteria. Given the fact that the representatives of several nations took part in the events, each with their own political agenda, the need to avoid the term “revolution” is further substantiated (pp. 233-238). The final argument brought by the author concerns the definition that those who experienced the events provided. Analysing the historical and memorialist discourse, D. Suciuc notes, in line with the studies signed by N. Bocșan, that the nineteenth-century Transylvanian Romanians did not talk about themselves as participants in the “revolution,” and when the term appeared in the documents, it was explicitly associated with the Hungarians: the *Hungarians’ revolution*, the *Hungarian insurgents*, etc.

The debate, in our view, remains open. The work of the historian from Cluj is an important step towards re-thinking the historical moments to which the historiographical context has attached simplistic labels, in accordance with the ideological requirements and the depth of analyses in one period or another. The first arguments towards eliminating the term “revolution” have been exhibited; it remains to be seen whether the research on similar Greek-Catholic documents will confirm or refute this view. In the second stage, the entire argumentative scaffolding will have to be gathered in a work whose explicit purpose will be to identify the most appropriate choice of terminology regarding the involvement of the Romanians from the Habsburg Empire in the events of 1848-1849. The comparisons with the state of the problem in the Serbian, Croatian, Slovak and Hungarian historiography, as well as with the level of international knowledge of this theme will be vital. Of equally great importance will be the reference to theoretical research on the history of revolutions.³ Only such an effort can cast, on the intellectual market, a product that will be strong enough in order to shatter entire decades of terminological immobilism, perpetuated both in research and in education.

In parallel, beyond the major historiographical stakes involved, the project launched by D. Suciuc and the team he leads is likely to turn into long-lasting undertakings, with significant results for several research areas. Compiling a prosopographic dictionary of the victims of the revolution is a project advanced by the author and it would be an extremely useful tool - especially to the extent that it might transgress ethnic boundaries. Studies on the amplitude of the demographic effects triggered by the revolution will certainly develop around the volumes of published documents. Research on economic and social history will also find useful information in the sources mentioned. Last but not least, the historians of mentalities might feel inclined to approach these volumes, especially since they are related to their predilect subjects, such as the revolutionary mentalities or the sentiment of insecurity.

In conclusion, D. Suciuc’s study and the volume of published documents it starts from represent two welcome historiographical works. The nature and quantity of the information

³ For a theoretical analysis of the applicability to which the concept of revolution lends itself, see Ela Cosma, “Trei națiuni, trei revoluții în Transilvania la 1848,” in *Călător prin istorie. Omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani*, edited by Ioan-Aurel Pop, Ioan Bolovan, Cluj-Napoca, Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2010, p. 215 sqq.

provided, the absolutely necessary semantic problematisation and the lines of further investigation opened thereby grant this study a prominent place in the historiography of the subject. Finally, both *Soldați fără uniformă* and the volume of documents it is based on demonstrate the enormous potential that documents - as primary historical sources - continue to have and the need to resort to archival sources for a correct understanding and interpretation of historical events.

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Veaceslav, CIORBĂ, *Biserica Ortodoxă din Basarabia și Transnistria (1940-2010)* [*The Orthodox Church in Bessarabia and Transnistria (1940-2010)*], Chișinău, Ed. Pontos, 2011, 460 p.

The work elaborated by Fr. Veaceslav Ciorbă, with a preface signed by Fr. Acad. Mircea Păcurariu, represents the revised and enlarged version of a doctoral thesis entitled *Istoria vieții bisericești din stânga Prutului, din 1940 până în zilele noastre* [*The History of Ecclesiastical Life Left of the Prut River, from 1940 until Today*], which was publicly defended at the Faculty of Theology from "Lucian Blaga" University in Sibiu in 2007.

The book published now provides a monographic overview of the Orthodox Church left of the Prut, focusing on a period that has so far been (more or less) obscure to the researchers.

The volume begins with a timely review of both the Romanian and the Soviet/ Russian historiography of the problem (pp.14-30), summarising then the main periods in the history of ecclesiastical life in Bessarabia and left of the Dniester prior to 1812 (pp. 31-34), from 1812 to 1918 (pp. 34-56) and between 1918-1940 (pp. 53-73). Ecclesiastical life in Transnistria around the year 1941 is briefly depicted (pp. 73-75), emphasising the destruction of 235 churches from this area and the existence of a single serving priest in Odessa (in 1941).

Church life in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, newly established within boundaries set by Moscow, and the terrible persecution launched in July 1940 are suggestively illustrated between pages 76 and 106, the interpretive approach also focusing on the amputated territories of Bessarabia which were included in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

It is entirely natural that the liberation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, as well as the conquest of Transnistria in 1941 led to the enthusiasm of the local population, to the re-establishment of ecclesiastical life, important chapters being dedicated here to the restoration of the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia and the role of the Romanian Orthodox Mission in Transnistria (1941-1944) (pp. 107-122, 123-132). The author's attention remains focused not only on the clergy (bishops and priests), but also on the religious press, theological education and the inherent works of charity.

The reinstallation of the Soviet occupation resulted in the resumption of not only religious, but also ethnic persecution, the Church going thus through an unimaginable ordeal.

Important sections address the policy adopted by the Soviet authorities towards the Orthodox Church in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (pp. 133-172), the attitude of the (Russian speaking) hierarchs and their concrete activity (pp. 172-192), the situation of the clergy (pp. 193-212), the state of monastic life (pp. 213-242), special attention being also given to the mode of operation of the KGB officials, of those entrusted with the supervision of the cults, as well as of the various types of atheistic propaganda.

The chapter dedicated to the restoration of church life after 1989 offers significant references up until the year 2010 (pp. 243-266), highlighting, thus, the re-launching of the