

TRIANON, TRIANON! A CENTURY OF REVISIONIST POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY – A REVIEW

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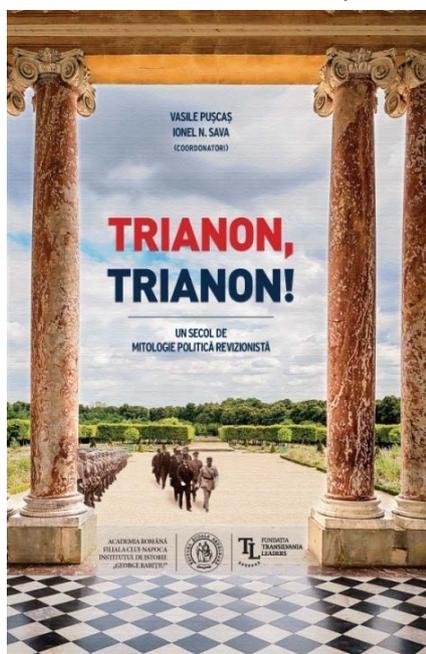
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Trianon, Trianon! Un secol de mitologie politică revizionistă [Trianon, Trianon! A Century of Revisionist Political Mythology] / Vasile PUȘCAȘ & Ionel N. SAVA (coordinators); Școala Ardeleană Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, 404 p.
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INTRODUCTION

The volume coordinated by Vasile Pușcaș and Ionel Nicu Sava includes, in its 404 pages, thematic studies dedicated to the topic stated in the title [*Trianon, Trianon! A Century of Revisionist Political Mythology*] (Pușcaș & Sava, 2020).



As Vasile Pușcaș points out in the preface, the volume aims to introduce the opinions of several experts in the fields of historiography, sociology, law, political science and international relations, etc. “because we wanted to enable an interdisciplinary analysis which connects the historical approach with elements of knowledge and understanding of contemporary phenomena that have been intentionally sensitized by the undisguised politicization proposed by some parties, cultural groups, public figures in search of electoral glory and power built on the skeletons of the past”¹ (Pușcaș, 2020, p. 8).

Starting from this synthetic definition, the studies are introspective on some more general topics, within the context of the peace treaties system at the end of the war. The reason is that the coordinators motivated their approach as a natural consequence of the historiographical production, which began by marking the

¹ English version of the Romanian quotation: „deoarece am dorit să facilităm realizarea unei analize interdisciplinare care să asocieze demersului istoric și elemente de cunoaștere și înțelegere ale fenomenelor contemporane care au fost intenționat sensibilizate de politicizarea nedisimulată pe care au propus-o unele partide, grupări culturale, personaje publice în căutare de glorie electorală și de putere clădită pe schelete ale trecutului.”

Centennial of the First World War (1914-1918), the end of the conflict and the Centennial of the Great Union (1918).

PERSPECTIVES

The first set of historiographical contributions begins with the study written by Gabriel Virgil Rusu who analyses – in a relatively common register – the genesis and the highlighting of a main idea during the development of modern Europe, defined by the identity term of nation and materialized in building the nation-states.

The analysis of the balance between the political and the diplomatic factor in fulfilling and acknowledging the union, due to the career diplomat Dumitru Preda, is a synthesis of the contributions in this field, emphasizing the determination and the action of the two elements, each contributing to the fulfilled dream of all the Romanians.

The impact of the systemic events – the Second Industrial Revolution and the First World War – contributed to the change in the attitudinal pattern of the European 19th century. This process is highlighted by Tudor SalaŃiu who advances this development by the concept of “centre-periphery” to the extent to which Europe – and not only – has “homogenized” the doctrine of post-war organization. The analysis considers both the ontology of the situation and the description of its hierarchies, including the use of mathematical models in the analysis of the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon. The impact was major especially for the so-called successor states – with regard to the term “achievement” - fulfilment – released from the belt of empires, which managed to impose the principle of the nation-states within the system of the peace treaties of Versailles.

Resuming a topic approached during the 20th century for various reasons, academics Vasile Puşcaş and Vasile Vesa analyse attitudes, positions, and evidences of the Romanian public opinion towards the Paris Peace Treaties. Although published in a first version in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* periodical. *Historia* (Puşcaş & Vesa, 1987), this topic is extensively examined here. The key feature in this context was that of the defeated powers’ attacks and victorious defence. By this dichotomous analysis, the authors show that the works of the Paris Peace Conference tried, for the first time, to impose – according to a later established formula – “the force of law”, “the law of force.” Within this context, the positioning of the public opinion of the Romanian unitary nation-state in the first inter-war decade manifested itself with “an intensity that it probably did not have until then compared to any internal or external event”² (Puşcaş & Vesa, 2020, p. 156). Resuming the appreciations of the historians Ion Calafeteanu and Liviu Maior, the authors converge towards the idea that the attitudinal manifestation of the Romanian public opinion was the expression of the fact that it reflected the ideal of a generation who felt that the time had come to carry out a national project which had been supported by the generations after 1848. Under these circumstances, the general idea was that the public opinion judged the peace treaties in relation to the international legal sanctions of the union acts signed in Chişinău, Cernăuţi and Alba Iulia in 1918, which led to the fulfilment of the process of establishing the Romanian unitary nation-state.

² English version of the Romanian quotation: „o intensitate pe care probabil nu a mai avut-o până atunci față de vreun eveniment intern sau extern.”

The two professors of law, Codruța-Ștefania Jucan-Popovici and Mariana Narcisa Radu, talk about a topic that has been debated since the period immediately following the safeguarding of peace. Benefiting from numerous approaches over time – we mention only the contributions of the inter-war period due to George Sofronie (Sofronie, 1936) and Aurel Gociman (Gociman, 1934) – they analyse the principle imposed by the peace treaties, the fundamental right to life and to have a nationality. The analysis is carried out by employing specific methods of public international law regarding the signatory parties: the conditions, the allies, Hungary, the succession of states, the content and the structure, the borders, the ratification procedure, and the space-time effects. The conclusion is that the principle was enshrined due to the citizens' will, through the process of self-determination, strengthening the assertion of George Sofronie, that "the right to self-determination is a legal corollary of the nationality principle"³ (Jucan-Popovici & Radu, 2020, p. 184), which was thus enshrined in international law.

Veronica Turcuș proposes an interesting pageant, otherwise necessary, in rendering the avatars of the recovery of the archival heritage from the Romanian territories united with the Kingdom of Romania. In this respect, the legal frameworks of the terms regarding the physical and spiritual culture records, the actions and the expected results are analysed. Everything (was) decanted through the population interference with a well-identified national profile: Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons and Székelys in Transylvania and the highlighting of the archives created by the main institutions of the province. The author emphasizes the dual mechanism of the relationship between this and the higher authorities; on the one hand, the Viennese Court, on the other, the proximity of Budapest. The analysis of the provisions under Article 175 of the Treaty of Trianon which obliges Austria and Hungary to "return all acts, documents and art pieces and antique objects (artefacts) and all the scientific and bibliographic resources collected from the occupied territories to the Allied and Associated Powers, either that those objects belonged to or were in the possession of the state, provincial, communal, charitable or ecclesiastical administrations or other public or private institutions"⁴ (Turcuș, 2020, p. 221) suggests a beneficial solution to the problem. In reality, decades have passed and, in some cases, the odyssey of the archives has not ended, although their relevance has been emphasized by experts in the field if we were to mention the study of Virgil Zaborovschi about the Archives of Vienna (Zaborovschi, 1924-1926) or those of Ștefan Meteș (Meteș, 1936-1937) and Virgil Șotropa (Șotropa, 1922). From this perspective, Veronica Turcuș's summary of David Prodan's article of 1934 (Prodan, 1934) becomes relevant. An up-to-date radiography can be detected both in the content of the two volumes edited by The National Archives of Romania (coordinated by Ioan Drăgan, 2018, 2019) or in the attempts – still uncertain – to publish *Ghidul bilingv al fondurilor arhivistice din Transilvania până la 1918* [The Bilingual Guide of the Archival Funds in Transylvania until 1918], including the description of the archival funds held by Hungary and Romania, in partnership with the two managed institutions.

Șerban Turcuș argues the position of the Holy See in disproving the myth of the Hungarian Crown within the context of drafting peace treaties. Although the papacy failed to participate itself in the conference, it watched over through all sorts of Catholic negotiators and benevolent non-

³ English version of the Romanian quotation: „dreptul la liberă determinare este un corolar juridic al principiului naționalităților.”

⁴ English version of the Romanian quotation: „restituie fiecăreia dintre puterile aliate și asociate toate actele, documentele și obiectele (artefacte) de antichități și artă și întreg materialul științific și bibliografic ridicat din teritoriile ocupate, fie că aceste obiecte aparțineau sau erau în posesia statului, administrațiilor provinciale, comunale, de binefacere sau ecleziastice ori a altor instituții publice sau private.”

Catholics and managed to influence the policymakers, especially through debates in cardinal congregations. Their result, equal treatment for all Catholic ethnic groups – including the Greek-Catholic Romanians (and, implicitly, the Orthodox) in Transylvania, was a beneficial gain in the conclave of those who decided the future European destiny.

The following studies introduce us to current issues. The first, conducted by Florin Abraham, introduces the development of the revisionist political mythology, with focus on the Hungarian one by a past/present “mirroring” analysis. Within the same context, Ionel Nicu Sava approaches another topical issue, defined as the European dilemma of Hungary at the time of the Centennial of the Treaty of Trianon and, interpreted by the interdependence of attitudes from political nostalgia to cultural trauma.

Relatively following this direction, the sociologist Vasile Sebastian Dâncu performs an “online” radiography of the current regime in Budapest, led by the Prime Minister Victor Orbán. Although liberal as a political foundation, the Budapest government follows the same past behavioural trends regarding Romania, by manifesting the spirit of the “Trianon syndrome” and the support of the ethnic parallelism in Transylvania.

Vasile Pușcaș’s conclusions fill the content of the volume and highlight both the general features of the peace system at the end of the Great War, but also the attitudinal consistency of Hungary’s foreign policy, dominated by frequent referrals to the Treaty of Trianon which requires the enhancement of the fact that, if Romania continues to plead for the “spiritualization of the borders” with Hungary, Budapest only wants to take advantage to temper its historical trauma related to Trianon.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysed through the lens of each study that makes it up, the volume is presented as a well-defined historiographical reference. The coordinators gathered the opinions of some specialists from “Babeș-Bolyai” and “Dimitrie Cantemir” universities, “George Barițiu” Institute of History in Cluj and from the university and the National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest.

Developed mainly due to Vasile Pușcaș’s not only academic, but also political experience, the present volume reflects current points of view and approaches of Romanian historiography. Obviously, the coordinators chose the contributors, among whom some are partly involved in the effervescence of the Romanian socio-political life. Therefore, perhaps, some approaches depend on such positions and induce the influences of their activity areas. This is acceptable, if we consider the introductory statement, that “the initiative to publish this volume sprang from the interest shown by students, but also by the general public opinion who had been delivered the topic of the Trianon Treaty (1920) launched by the media debate”⁵ (Pușcaș, 2020, p. 7).

⁵ English version of the Romanian quotation: „inițiativa editării acestui volum a venit dinspre interesul manifestat de studenți, dar și de opinia publică generală care a receptat din mass-media lansarea subiectului Tratatului de la Trianon (1920).”

Therefore, the volume aimed to reflect the historiographical views – generally expressed by professionals – to “reach the general public with historiographical or social opinions that provide readers with support for rational thinking”⁶ (Pușcaș, 2020, p. 7).

To what extent the coordinators and authors have succeeded remains to be validated by those interested in reading it. But, at the same time, its purposeful enumerative-repetitive subtitle *Trianon, Trianon!* implies that “wakefulness” state conveyed by the forebears, and which is always topical.

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⁶ English version of the Romanian quotation: „a veni spre publicul larg și cu opinii istoriografice ori ale științelor sociale care să ofere cititorilor puncte de sprijin pentru gândirea rațională.”