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**The Romanians of Austro-Hungary and the  
Habsburg Dynasty  
(1867-1918)**

- Ph.D. Thesis -

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**Key Words:** the Habsburg Dynasty, Romanians, Austro-Hungary, loyalty, Franz Joseph, Franz Ferdinand, the Habsburg Empire, dynastic loyalty.

## Resume

The present thesis presents the evolution of dynastic loyalty in the collective mentality of Romanians in Austro-Hungary in the period from the signing of the dualist Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867) and the end of the First World War (1918), when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy is dissolved, closely followed by the unification of Romanians in Austro-Hungary with “Motherland” Romania.

In order to finalize this thesis, we have used a diversified area of bibliographical sources, mainly the Romanian press of the period, but also archive sources and written sources, such as the correspondence of some Romanian political leaders. Alongside these sources, we have also used memoirs of the period’s personalities, papers with a special character, referring mostly to Romanians’ dynastic loyalty in Austro-Hungary, the Habsburg Dynasty, and the problems of Romanians in Austro-Hungary.

Though quantitatively reduced, but qualitatively rich, the bibliography used in making this thesis, proved highly useful, offering a valid starting point in our research on the evolution of dynastic loyalty for Romanians in Austro-Hungary in the period 1867-1918.

Alongside these specialty works, out of which we would like to mention the works of Liviu Maior *Habsburgi și români: de la loialitatea dinastică la identitate națională; Români în armata Habsburgică: Soldați și ofițeri uitați; Alexandru Vaida-Voevod între Belvedere și Versailles*; etc., a great contribution was represented by the Romanian press of the period, because of its interest in Romanians’ dynastic loyalty, all newspapers of the era discussing this subject with every opportunity: from the Emperor’s birthday and his and other Habsburg members’ visits to territories inhabited by Romanian to the sad moments in the Dynasty’s lives, mainly due to the deaths of Habsburg members.

This thesis is structured in five chapters, presenting the way dynastic loyalty was formed for Romanians in Austro-Hungary and how it evolved in the researched period, also referred to the main political events concerning Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, revealing the influence these events had on dynastic loyalty

In the first chapter, entitled **The Image of the Habsburg Dynasty and the Romanians of Austro-Hungary**, we present the way in which the myth of the “Good Emperor” was created and propagated in the case of Romanians under the Habsburg rule, the way this myth evolved and the way dynastic loyalty manifested itself in the period under research. For this purpose, we present the most significant events marking this evolution in loyalty: the celebrations marking the Emperor’s birthday, the celebrations caused by his visits in territories inhabited by Romanians, the manifestations towards problems in the Habsburg Dynasty, mainly the deaths of Empress Elisabeth, Archduke Rudolf, heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne and Emperor Franz Joseph himself.

The Habsburg Dynasty was one of the most important European dynasties, managing to ascend from a simple nobiliary family to a great power. Due to their policy of territorial conquests and their policy of marriage alliances to families providing territorial advantages, the Habsburgs managed to come into possession of vast lands, thus becoming one of the greatest European powers.

In order to maintain their position in the conquered territories, the Habsburgs would lead a policy of constructing a dynastic loyalty amongst their subjects, by creating a pro-dynastic discourse that was to be transmitted in the most varied ways, including the main state institutions: the Church, the army and the school.

This policy was a real success, especially among those oppressed peoples, including the Romanians. The latter would become one of the most loyal people, believing the Emperor was the only one that could grant them the rights and privileges they were deprived of.

A series of factors contributed to the propagation of dynastic loyalty among Romanians in the Habsburg Monarchy: on the one hand, there were the policies adopted in Vienna trying to implement the feeling of dynastic loyalty, on the other hand, the oppressions Romanians had been subjected to by the Hungarian nobility over the centuries. This was the main reason why Romanians would turn their attention towards the court in Vienna, convinced the Emperor would solve their problems. When these problems failed to be solved in due time, the blame was placed with the Hungarian nobility that deterred the Emperor from knowing the real situation of Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Nurturing this conviction that all was to blame on the Hungarian nobility and the Emperor was clueless to the oppressions, the Romanians would focus their

attention on the court in Vienna, becoming one of the Habsburg's most loyal subjects, a loyalty they would prove any chance they got.

In the second chapter, entitled **The Dualist Austro-Hungarian Compromise and its Consequences for Romanians in Austro-Hungary**, we present the causes that led the Emperor to accept the Compromise with the Hungarian political class, and the consequences this act had for Romanians in Transylvania and their position towards Austro-Hungarian Dualism.

Presenting the events that took place in the period before the signing of the Compromise, the treaties anterior to the signing and the consequences they had for the Romanians in the Monarchy is necessary in order to ascertain the starting point for the erosion of dynastic loyalty. Events before the signing of the dualist pact, such as the rights acquired by Romanians in Transylvania through the decision of the Sibiu Dieta in 1863-1864, had a positive influence on dynastic loyalty, by increasing the trust in Emperor Franz Joseph, the one who had enabled such rights and liberties. Thus, when the dualist pact will be signed, a pact that meant the loss of Transylvania's autonomy and the rights obtained in 1863-1864, Romanians felt betrayed by the Emperor, and dynastic loyalty suffered a decline, that would further accentuate in the following period.

Generally, the dualism of 1867 was not only the result of historical events, on the contrary it can be traced back to the Hungarian legislation of the Revolution in 1848. The Austro-Hungarian dualism did in no way solve the impending national problems; contrariwise it aggravated the socio-political situation, leading to waves of protests from all oppressed nations, marking the total failure of the Habsburg Dynasty and Austrian nationalist elites in creating a centralized German state.

Once the Austro-Hungarian Compromise is signed – when Transylvania loses its territorial autonomy, by being joined to Hungary, a decision that completely displeases Romanians in Transylvania, thus transforming them in the most virulent protesters against a dualism they had contested even before actual negotiations between the Emperor and the Hungarian elites and would continue to contest all along the period of the Dualist Monarchy – one can notice a marked decline in dynastic loyalty for Romanians in Austro-Hungary.

In the third chapter **The Political Movement of Romanians in Austro-Hungary from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise to the First World War**, we present the main political actions of Romanians in Austro-Hungary in the period from

the Dualist Compromise to the outbreak of the First World War, also following how these events influenced the dynastic loyalty of Romanians in Austro-Hungary.

All the actions of Romanians in this era were turned against Austro-Hungarian Dualism, Romanians expressing their wish that Emperor Franz Joseph would cancel the pact of 1867, giving Transylvania back its autonomy. The failure to meet with these compliances will have a long lasting effect on dynastic loyalty, constantly subjected to erosion, which will only be accentuated by the Memorandum movement.

The political movement of Romanians in Austro-Hungary in the period from the signing of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise to the First World War channeled around the desire to regain autonomy for Transylvania lost with the signing of the dualist pact, when Transylvania became part of Hungary. All the actions of the Romanian political leaders in this period had as a main target the opposition to the forced unification of Transylvania and Hungary, as well as demanding the autonomy of Transylvania and the return of privileges gained in 1863-1864, lost with the dualist Compromise.

In this period, as the Romanian emancipation movement gains ground, the dynastic loyalty meets with a decline, further accentuated by the refusal of the Emperor to meet with the leaders of the Memorandum Movement that had travelled to Vienna to hand the Memorandum personally. Disappointed by Franz Joseph, a part of Romanian political leaders will look to the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, known to labor reforming ideas concerning the federalization of the Empire, equal rights to all nationalities, a policy that would benefit the Romanians.

In the fourth chapter **The Sarajevo Assassination, as Reflected in the Romanian Press**, we attempt to show how the Romanian press presented the Sarajevo assassination by following the main themes and aspects discussed in the Romanian press concerning the assassination: from Romanians' attitude towards the assassination to the mourning processions at the death of Franz Ferdinand, the man they had placed all hope for a better life in. The Romanian press closely followed the events following the assassination, asking what would change because of this assassination.

Research done for this chapter emphasizes the fact that, despite Emperor Franz Joseph's refusal to meet with the Romanian delegation travelling to Vienna in order to hand him the Memorandum, the Romanian political leaders had not

completely lost their faith in the Habsburg dynasty. Even though they now mistrusted Franz Joseph, a part of the political leaders of the Austro-Hungarian Romanians will turn their attention to Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne, and very popular and beloved amongst Romanians because of his anti-Hungarian feelings. This fact is obvious if we analyze the reaction of Romanians in Austro-Hungary to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand: Romanians mostly feel regret at the loss of a man they hoped would change their future, mourning him more deeply than any other nationality and expressing feelings of hatred against the perpetrators of the crime that had taken away from them the person who could improve their situation.

Romanians were initially reticent in believing the news of the assassination and when the news proved true, they expressed the utmost indignation, misbelieving that someone had stolen away from them the man they had placed their hope for a better future in. This was mainly due to Franz Ferdinand's policies of diminishing Hungarian power in the Empire by creating a federal Austria, a policy that would benefit the Romanians.

During the entire period from the assassination to the outbreak of the World War, the Romanian press emphasizes the great loss suffered by the entire Monarchy, and especially the Romanian people with the death of Franz Ferdinand. Furthermore, the press shows interest in the political consequences following the Archduke's death, as well as the results of the investigation, closely following its progress and relating all details, declarations of the assassins and resulting actions by the Empire's leaders in order to punish the perpetrators, following the would-be consequences of the Sarajevo assassination.

In the last chapter, entitled **The Romanians in Austro-Hungary during the First World War. The End of Dynastic Loyalty**, we present the evolution of dynastic loyalty for Romanians in Austro-Hungary during the First World War, pointing the main events that reflect Romanians' attitude towards the Habsburg dynasty, from the outbreak of the war until the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, that would also lead to the centuries-old desire of all Romanians, specifically the unification of all Romanians in one independent and united state.

During the First World War, dynastic loyalty in the case of Romanians of Austro-Hungary will go through a significant decline in favor of loyalty to the nation, that would eventually triumph. Despite all these, at the outbreak of the war, Romanians will answer to the call to arms above all expectations. This was mainly



due their belief that the war was meant to avenge Franz Ferdinand's death, as well as the appeals of political and religious Romanian leaders addressed to Romanians and asking them to show loyalty once again.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the Romanians of Austro-Hungary were facing a loyalty crisis, mostly because of the increasing attachment to the nation to the injury of dynastic patriotism. Despite this, a majority of Romanian political leaders, as well as most of the peasant population were still loyal to the Habsburg dynasty, hoping the Emperor would solve their problems and instate the deeply desired liberties and rights.

Since a great part of the population had lost faith in Emperor Franz Joseph, they turned their attention to the heir Franz Ferdinand, to whom they felt connected because of the common hatred to Hungarians, hoping that once he ascended the throne, he would grant all nations in the Empire rights and liberties. Such policies, in the detriment of the Hungarians, would have solved the issues of the Romanian nation.

Due to their feelings for Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Romanians of the Dualist Monarchy will adopt a positive attitude towards the outbreak of the war, promptly responding to Emperor Franz Joseph's appeal to raise arms and avenge the offence against the House of Habsburg and the entire Monarchy. Therefore, the enthusiasm in the first weeks of war was caused by the conviction of Romanian soldiers that they had been called to arms to avenge the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the man that could have improved their situation.

But this situation did not last too long because, as time passed, the authorities adopted restrictive measures whose application would limit civil liberties. Publications were subjected to severe censorship; inhabitants were forced to accept requisitions and loans for front needs. In order to destroy all opposition, harsh punishments were introduced, including the death penalty.

Faced with this situation, Romanian leaders had different positions. A part of them would publish loyalty declarations that urged the Romanian people to do their duty once again, staying loyal to the throne and country, while another part believed the time had come to fulfill the national ideal, cross the Carpathian Mountains, into Romania so they could intensively support Romania's entering the war alongside the Entente, with a view of freeing their brothers across the mountains and thus accomplishing the ideal of national unity for all Romanians.

Thus, one can notice intensification in national loyalty in the detriment of dynastic loyalty. Only a part of the leaders willingly declared their loyalty to the throne and country, while others only did so under pressure and threats from authorities.

Therefore, under pressure from events that took place in the neutral period of Romania, one can notice a gradual deterioration in dynastic loyalty in the case of Romanians in Austro-Hungary, a deterioration that would grow even deeper when Romania entered the war and even further with the death of Franz Ferdinand. With the Emperor's death, the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian army believe themselves freed from their plea to the Emperor and start to desert en masse and enroll as volunteers of the Romanian army.

When Romania entered the war, the fate of all Romanians in Austro-Hungary deteriorated, authorities' reprisals reaching the climax. From the first days of Romania's joining the war, the Hungarian authorities began a wave of arrests, camp internments, job dismissals, police custody and house arrests, deportations and forced labor. Such measures affected thousands of Romanians, from all social classes. The authorities would also recur to forced population movements, forbidding cultural activities, and adopting new decrees and measures meant to contribute to Romanians' loss of national identity and even their physical extermination.

Faced with such a situation and without any help from the court in Vienna, the Romanians in Austro-Hungary channeled all their efforts towards accomplishing their national ideal, turning from Vienna to Bucharest.

Before Romania entered the war, a part of the Romanians in Austro-Hungary still felt loyalty towards the Habsburg dynasty. But since this turn of events, and especially following the death of Emperor Franz Joseph, these feelings will be replaced with loyalty towards the nations and the fight for Romanian national unity. This fight was led mostly by emigrant Romanians, but from the middle of 1918, the Romanians left in Austro-Hungary would join this fight, making known the desires of the Romanians in Austro-Hungary. Different measures were used: The Romanian National Party would resume its activity in September 1918, and some Romanian nationalist deputies, such as Ștefan Cicio-Pop, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Teodor Mihali, would even speak in the Parliament in Budapest.

Thus, although loyal to the Habsburg dynasty, the Romanians in Austro-Hungary, because of the persecutions subjected to by Hungarian authorities that

attempted to disintegrate the national spirit of all minorities in Hungary, would become more and more attached to the desire for national freedom and unification in a single state. As such, the evolution from dynastic loyalty to national loyalty takes place gradually. These feelings became more and more evident during the First World War when, because of the persecutions imposed by authorities in Hungary on Romanian nationals and realizing that they could no longer place their hope in the dynasty to solve their problems, the political leaders of Austro-Hungarian Romanians will turn their attention to Romania, waiting its entering the war against the Central Powers and free them from foreign domination.

If, at the outbreak of the war, still loyal to the Habsburg dynasty, Romanians would run to enroll, guided by the desire to revenge Archduke Franz Ferdinand's death, by the end of the war, the same Romanians would run to Alba Iulia to decide for the break from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the union with Romania, thus accomplishing the long term dream of all Romanians.