

The Surprising Interwar Period

Reinventing Regionalism in Interwar Iași*

(Abstract)

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In academic circles, there is much more substantial discussion about interwar Transylvanian regionalism, but very little about Moldavian (Iași) regionalism, even though the latter preceded the former, and there is a thematic and inspirational connection between the two. Between 1859 and 1914, Iași's regionalism can be highlighted through intense petitioning activities, attempts to form blocs of Moldavian parliamentarians with the declared goal of regaining Moldova's “rights” or enforcing decentralization. This movement culminated in the establishment of the Committee for the Defense of the Economic and Cultural Interests of Moldova (1891), which serves as a landmark of pre-World War I regionalism.

During the period of neutrality from 1914 to 1916, the regionalist movement was utilized by the Germanophile circles (such as P. P. Carp and Al. Marghiloman) through newspapers like “Moldova”, “Iașul”, and “Opinia”, or expressed directly in political action, political programs, and electoral efforts by the conservatives in Iași during the spring 1918 elections. The collapse of the state, the victory of the Entente, and the success of the Union on December 1, 1918, marked the defeat of the regionalist Germanophiles, and the entire movement was taken over by the “Frăția Moldovei Unite” (The Brotherhood of United Moldova) – a group unprecedented in terms of the diversity of personalities, cultural tastes, and wartime orientations (pro-Entente and pro-German). This group had different political visions, including conservatives, nationalists, and socialists. The most significant document of the Brotherhood of United Moldova is a radical decentralization project, inspired by the federative model of Switzerland and the United States.

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