

# NEW AND OLD ELITES ACROSS THE CARPATHIANS. GENERAL AVERESCU'S PREFECTS IN TRANSYLVANIA (1920–1921, 1926–1927)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

This paper examines the recruitment strategies and profiles of prefects appointed in Transylvania (including Banat, Partium, and Maramureş) during General Alexandru Averescu's second and third governments (1920–1921; 1926–1927). Combining appointment decrees published in the *Monitorul Oficial* with prosopographic and biographical sources, it traces how political change, party organization, and center–periphery dynamics shaped selections, resignations, and delegations. Quantitative evidence suggests that a large majority of prefects were locally born and legally trained, while the presence of appointees from the Old Kingdom in 1920–1921 diminished markedly by 1926–1927. The analysis underscores the prefect's pivotal electoral role and shows how Averescu's allies—especially in 1926—balanced local legitimacy with central control. It also situates recruitment patterns within broader political realignments and debates over administrative centralization and “Romanianisation.”

**Keywords:** Transylvania, local elites, local administration, prefects, Alexandru Averescu

After World War I, in both the Old Kingdom and the new Romanian territories, numerous politicians, civil servants, lawyers, journalists, etc., drew attention to the need for profound internal changes to (re)build a *New Romania*. This process should have prioritized the adoption of a constitution, legislative unification and uniformization, including agrarian reform, as well as other economic and social transformations, and, last but not least, improvements in the functioning of the administration and the status of civil servants.<sup>2</sup> Especially in public administration, there were substantial differences between Romania before 1916 and the new provinces, as well as differences in vision among the

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding civil servants: *Lungul drum spre primul statut al funcționarilor publici din România: deziderate, (ante)proiecte, legislație, opinii și dezbateri, 1918-1923*, eds. Florina Sas and Andrei Florin Sora (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2019).

political, administrative, and legal elites. Thus, most politicians in the new Romanian provinces openly advocated for greater local autonomy, decentralization of public services, and even the depoliticization of some public services. In fact, in terms of local autonomy, the legislation of the Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist Empires was more favorable than that of the Romanian state.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, both before and after 1918, many voices in the Old Kingdom were open to greater local autonomy and administrative decentralization. At the center of this centralized system in Romania was the institution of the prefect —the most important decision-maker at the local level, the primary agent of the government in the county, and the representative of the local community's interests before the central authorities.<sup>4</sup> The prefect was an effective agent through which the ruling political parties won parliamentary and local elections and through which the administration and law enforcement were subordinated to the political factor. In addition, at the declarative level, many called for the depoliticization and professionalization of this office, especially after 1919.

Without neglecting the legislative changes made primarily through the administrative unification law of June 14, 1925, under a National Liberal Party / *Partidul Național Liberal* (from now on PNL) government, about which there are now relatively numerous bibliographical references,<sup>5</sup> this study aims to observe and analyze the recruitment strategies of the permanent (titular) prefects in the territories that were subordinate to the Budapest government before December 1918 (Transylvania, Banat, Partium, and Maramureș) during two governments presided over by General Alexandru Averescu (March 13, 1920 - December 16, 1921, and March 30, 1926 - June 4, 1927<sup>6</sup> ). Given that the prefect was a political official and his main (unofficial) mission was to ensure that the ruling party

<sup>3</sup> Andrei Florin Sora, "Prefecții în România, 1918-1938," in *Servitorii Statului: Funcționari, funcții și funcționarism în România modernă (1830-1948)*, eds. Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici and Andrei Florin Sora (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2022), 301.

<sup>4</sup> Sora, "Prefecții în România, 1918-1938," 301-302.

<sup>5</sup> Manuel Gutan, *Istoria administrației publice locale în statul român modern* (Bucharest: All Beck, 2005), 248-263; Andrei Florin Sora, *Servir l'État roumain. Le corps préfectoral, 1866-1940* (Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, 2011), 238-241; Gheorghe Calcan, *Unificarea administrativă a României întregite (1918-1925). Integrarea Basarabiei, Bucovinei și Transilvaniei în structurile administrației românești* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2016); *Colecția legilor administrative, 1918-1949*, ed. Zoltán Györke (Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Ministers of the Interior: Alexandru Averescu, March 13 - June 13, 1920; Constantin Argetoianu, June 13, 1920 - December 16, 1921; Octavian Goga, March 30, 1926 - June 4, 1927.

won the elections, it is clear that his appointment, retention, and resignation/dismissal from this important position were influenced by political changes, previous connections with the prime minister, the minister of the interior, and other decision-makers at the national and regional levels, previous political and professional experience, and election results. Thus, the first part of this text examines the political motivations and strategies of both the leadership of the People's Party (*Partidul Poporului*) and those proposed for appointment as prefects. In the second part, I have outlined an incomplete prosopographic analysis to highlight the common features of the Transylvanian prefects during the two Averescu governments (1920-1921; 1926-1927). This approach identifies recurring assets and strengths that increase a candidate's likelihood of appointment as prefect. On the other hand, governments, especially the ruling party, seek candidates with specific qualities who can serve as strategic allies, executors, and potential strongmen at the regional level.

In addition to the permanently appointed prefects by the Averescu II government (1920-1921), this study also includes those prefects appointed by the Governing Council (*Consiliul Dirigent*) who retained their positions during the parliamentary elections of May and June 1920.<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of 1920, the legislation on county administration in Transylvania was essentially the same as before 1918,<sup>8</sup> to which the decrees of the Governing Council added new specifications and clarifications. If we refer only to the period of operation of the Governing Council, the differences in the counties of Transylvania regarding the prefectoral function compared to the Old Kingdom consist in greater autonomy in relation to the authorities in Bucharest and in the fact that the prefect was not also the "executive body of the county." On April 4, 1920, the Governing Council's mandate ended and its powers were taken over by the "corresponding departments of the Royal Government."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the proposal for the appointment of prefects in Transylvania and Bukovina was submitted to the King by the Minister of the Interior in the same way as in the rest of the country. The Administrative Unification Law of June 14, 1925, which took effect on January 1, 1926, generally

<sup>7</sup> This approach is based on an analysis of the entire prefectoral body. See: Sora, *Servir l'État roumain*.

<sup>8</sup> For the prefectoral administration in Transylvania before 1918: *Cadrul legislativ al administrației din Transilvania în epoca dualistă (1867-1918)*, vol. I, ed. Judit Pál and Szilárd Ferenczi (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Royal Decree No. 1462, signed on April 2, 1920, *Official Gazette* (hereinafter M.Of.) 4, April 4, 1920, 225.

enshrined the extension of the prefectorial institution from the Old Kingdom to Bukovina and Transylvania, a process that had begun earlier through the application of various administrative acts and laws in Romania before 1918.

The historian Judit Pál is the author of a vital study that follows the same line of research into recruitment strategies for the position of county administrator (*föispán* or prefect) during the Governing Council,<sup>10</sup> which also analyzes the administrative changes and continuities in Transylvania in 1918 and 1919. Our challenge in realizing a prosopographical analysis of the prefects of Transylvania (including Banat and Partium) during the governments of Averescu II and III is facilitated by works on the prefects of a particular county and biographical studies.<sup>11</sup> Indispensable for our endeavor are the exceptional volume by Cornel Sigmirean,<sup>12</sup> two recent biographical dictionaries—one on the contribution of lawyers to the 1918 Union<sup>13</sup> and one on the delegates from Alba Iulia<sup>14</sup>—as well as an online tool concerning the latter.<sup>15</sup> For the evolution of local civil servants in the counties of the former Principality of Transylvania between 1918 and 1925 (until the adoption and entry into force of the administrative unification law of June 14, 1925), the statistical research by Judit Pál and Vlad Popovici is indispensable.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Judit Pál, “Föispánok és prefektusok 1918-1919-Ben: a közigazgatási átmenet kérdése Erdélyben,” *Századok* 152 (2018), no. 6, 1179-1214.

<sup>11</sup> Răzvan Mihai Neagu, “Personalități ale Marii Uniri: avocatul Dionisie Roman, primul prefect român al județului Târnava Mare,” *Mediaș – 750: studii* V, 2019, 56-67; Idem, “Personalități ale Marii Uniri: avocatul Ioan Vescan, primul prefect român al județului Mureș-Turda,” *Crisia*, Oradea XLIX, 2019, 273-280, *Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis* LV, 2/2018, 75-86; Claudiu Porumbăcean, “Dr. Ilie Carol Barbul (1883-1946), liderul românilor sătmăreni,” *Satu Mare. Studii și Comunicări* XXXV/II, 2019, 125-134; Victor-Tudor Roșu, “Portret de gardist: Ovidiu Gritta,” *Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis* LV, 2/2018, 15-30.

<sup>12</sup> Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Lazăr Gruneanu, Mirel Ionescu, *Contribuția avocaților din Transilvania și Banat la Marea Unire* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2018)

<sup>14</sup> *Dicționarul personalităților Unirii. Delegații Adunării Naționale de la Alba Iulia*, ed. Dragoș Ursu and Tudor Roșu, (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lista\\_delega%C8%9Bilor\\_la\\_Marea\\_Adunare\\_Na%C8%9Bional%C4%83\\_de\\_la\\_Alba\\_Iulia](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lista_delega%C8%9Bilor_la_Marea_Adunare_Na%C8%9Bional%C4%83_de_la_Alba_Iulia).

<sup>16</sup> Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici, “Une analyse statistique du personnel de l’administration publique départementale de Transylvanie pendant son intégration administrative au royaume de Roumanie (1918-1925),” *Histoire & Mesure* 37 (2), 2022, 99-124, <https://journals.openedition.org/histoiremesure/16741#ftn1>.

Although we do not have complete information for all subjects, the quantitative and qualitative analysis provides answers regarding the prefects in office (level of education, training and professional experience, age, geographical and social origin, religion, political sympathies, subsequent career, etc.), as well as on the relationship between the center and the periphery, more precisely on how real or unreal the accusations of the Transylvanians regarding *the re-establishment* of the local administration and this public office were. Beyond the fact that General Alexandru Averescu headed both governments, there are several differences between the two chosen periods. The economic, social, and political context is different. Between 1922 and 1926, several important laws were adopted: the 1923 Constitution, the 1923 Statute of Public Servants, the 1925 Administrative Unification Law, and the 1926 Electoral Law, which introduced a majoritarian principle. Additionally, the balance of power within the government shifted between the political leaders of Transylvania and those of the Old Kingdom in 1926, compared to 1920. However, while the May-June 1920 elections were the first in Greater Romania to be won decisively by the ruling party, a victory made possible by the direct intervention of the local administration, the 1926 elections were at least as necessary for the prefects, who were no longer able to afford any missteps.

To identify the appointment decrees, which also contain information about prefects who resigned or were dismissed, we used *the Monitorul Oficial (Official Gazette)*. The appointments of prefects in Transylvania do not appear in the *Monitorul Oficial* before April 23, 1920. Indeed, at least for the period 1920-1921, not all changes in the leadership of the prefectures in Transylvania are found in this publication, as they should be. These limitations do not alter the observations in this study. In many cases, the exact date of the prefects' resignation is challenging to determine with precision, and not only for the period under investigation. The last day of legal exercise of this office is not always the day before or the day of the appointment of a new prefect or the announcement of the transfer of the Prefecture's affairs to a civil servant (sub-prefect – the deputy head of a county administration; chief magistrate; administrative inspector general, etc.). When we did not know exactly or other works and sources consulted did not specify, we chose to indicate the resignation/dismissal of a prefect on the date in *the Official Gazette* corresponding to the appointment of the new holder or, as the case may be, the announcement of the delegation of this office (see: *Appendix*). This methodological choice takes into account the fact that the act of resignation

or dismissal should have involved, in theory and in practice, not only its acceptance by the central administration of the Ministry of the Interior, but also the announcement of the new holder or the person who was to take over the leadership of the Prefecture. Not in all cases, after the prefect's resignation, his deputy, the sub-prefect, was delegated to lead the Prefecture, as an acting prefect. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to accurately identify (within a few days) the start and end dates of the terms of office for five cases, all between 1920 and 1921, with the provision that we hope we have identified all the prefect nominations. In the periods researched, there is also a situation rarely encountered in interwar Romania: Iuliu Tămășel, appointed by royal decree as prefect of Caraș-Severin County,<sup>17</sup> is listed as "not present at his post" and is consequently replaced.<sup>18</sup>

There are distinctions between the two governments analyzed in terms of their economic, social, and political contexts, the image of the party leader, General Alexandru Averescu, the regional representation of the People's Party, and the role of Transylvanians in the two governments. At the beginning of 1920, General Averescu was a well-known figure and enjoyed a positive image in Transylvania.<sup>19</sup> His prestige suffered due to information about behind-the-scenes maneuvering in Bucharest that led to the resignation of Transylvanian Alexandru Vaida-Voevod and his nomination as president of the Council of Ministers.<sup>20</sup> In fact, in 1920, 1921, 1922, and 1926, King Ferdinand's choices for prime minister, and implicitly for the government, consisted of selecting a politician from the Old Kingdom.<sup>21</sup> In the Averescu II government (1920-1921), the co-opting of Transylvanian ministers—Octavian Goga,<sup>22</sup> Petru Groza, Octavian

<sup>17</sup> M. Of., 15, April 23, 1920, 1002.

<sup>18</sup> M. Of., 23, May 2, 1920, 1137.

<sup>19</sup> Regarding the image of the politician Averescu: Sorin Radu, Sorin Radu, "Mitul eroului salvator – cazul generalului Alexandru Averescu," *Apulum – Acta Musei Apulensis* XXXV, 1998, 545-558.

<sup>20</sup> Bogdan Murgescu, Andrei Florin Sora, "Consecințele alegerilor (noiembrie 1919 – martie 1920)," *România Mare votează: alegerile parlamentare din 1919 la „firul ierbitii,”* eds. Bogdan Murgescu and Andrei Florin Sora (Polirom: Iași, 2019), 381-382.

<sup>21</sup> King Ferdinand I entrusted the formation of the government to a single person who was not born and had not been professionally trained in the Old Kingdom: Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, with the mention that he was known to Romanian politicians even before 1916.

<sup>22</sup> Marin Pop, "Organizația Partidului național Român din Județul Sătmar și primele două alegeri parlamentare după Marea Unire (noiembrie 1919 și iunie 1920)," *Satu Mare – Studii și Comunicări* XXXII/II, 2016, 139.

Tăslăuanu, etc.,<sup>23</sup> and the recruitment of local Romanian National Party / *Partidul Național Român* (from now on PNR) leaders, some of them prefects, into the People's Party did not lead to a decline in the popularity and strength of the PNR in Transylvania. Although there were disagreements and misunderstandings, from March to May 1920, most of the leaders, including the county leaders of the PNR, continued to support the leadership represented by Iuliu Maniu. In March 1926, the People's Party once again gained the trust of King Ferdinand I, to the detriment of the PNR and the Peasant Party, important voices in the opposition during the PNL government of 1922-1926.<sup>24</sup> The Transylvanians had had time to become accustomed to a centralized style of government. We also note a greater degree of political maturity in Transylvania in 1926 compared to 1920, which meant a better understanding of the political environment in Bucharest and how power was obtained and maintained. The presence of Transylvanians in the Averescu III government (1926-1927) increased not only through the appointment of Octavian Goga as head of the Ministry of the Interior (the second most powerful man in the government), but also in terms of numbers. Thus, if on March 13, 1920, Transylvanians had obtained only two portfolios (the Ministry of Industry and Trade - O. Tăslăuanu and the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction - O. Goga), on March 30, 1926, the proportion of Transylvanians was higher: O. Goga at the head of the Ministry of the Interior, Ion. I. Lapedatu at the Ministry of Finance, Petru Groza at the Ministry of Public Works, Vasile Goldiș at the Ministry of Cults and Arts, Ioan Lupaș at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. In terms of numbers and key positions, Transylvania had a strong position in the new government. We recall that at the beginning of 1926, Vasile Goldiș attempted to create a major split within the National Party against Iuliu Maniu and the merger with the Peasant Party,<sup>25</sup> then forming the Romanian National Party (Ardelenesc), which "entered into

<sup>23</sup> On the Averescu II government: Ion Mamina, Ioan Scurtu, *Guverne și guvernări, 1916-1918* (Bucharest: Silex, 1996), 36-41.

<sup>24</sup> In March 1926, the leaders of the National Party, as well as other political actors, were firmly convinced that Iuliu Maniu, possibly in alliance with the Peasant Party, had the best chance of forming the new government, Alexandru Nicolaescu, "Alegările parlamentare din 1926 reflectate în presa vremii," *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane* XXV, 2018, 145.

<sup>25</sup> Vasile Goldiș held the position of Minister of State (with responsibility for Transylvanian affairs) in the Averescu II government for two days (18 and 19 March 1920).

collaboration with the People's Party”<sup>26</sup> and whose first congress took place in Sibiu on May 2, 1926.<sup>27</sup> In addition to the close associates and supporters of Vasile Goldiș and his new party, it is worth noting that in 1925, the opposition People's Party had several branches in Transylvania, although not in all counties, with fewer members than the branches in the Old Kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

As for the similarities between the two periods studied, the most important one for our research is the aversion of local leaders and the population towards politicians or officials from the Old Kingdom.<sup>29</sup> Unlike in 1920, by 1926, the Averescu government knew and had the human resources to limit criticism and fear regarding *the re-establishment of the Old Kingdom in Transylvania*, which was evident not only in the number of ministers originating from Transylvania, but also in the geographical origin of the prefects appointed (permanent/in office and delegates) in this historical region.

The total number of individuals in office as permanent or delegate prefects in Transylvania during the Averescu II and Averescu III governments is 83, comprising 69 permanent prefects (in one or both governments) and 14 acting as delegated prefects. Six subjects served in both governments. We have identified 103 appointments and confirmations (for the Averescu II government) of permanent or acting prefects. Twenty-six percent of these were delegated prefects,<sup>30</sup> with a slight percentage difference between the two governments (25% - Averescu II; 28% - Averescu III), which is therefore inconclusive. Thus, in 1920-1921 (21 months of government) there were 17 appointments of delegates in 12 counties, and in 1926-1927 (14 months of government), when Transylvania had 24 counties instead of 23, the number of

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<sup>26</sup> Ioan I. Lapedatu, *Memorii și amintiri*, ed. Ioan Opriș (Iași, European Institute: 1998, pdf version: Civic Academy Foundation, 2016), [https://www.memorialsighet.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ilapedatu\\_memorii\\_si\\_amintiri\\_opris.pdf](https://www.memorialsighet.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ilapedatu_memorii_si_amintiri_opris.pdf), 173.

<sup>27</sup> Nicolaescu, “The 1926 Parliamentary Elections,” 149.

<sup>28</sup> Without being able to estimate the actual power and total number of members accurately, the branches with the most members in the county leadership committee and municipal committees were those in the counties of: Bihor, Turda-Arieș, Târnava-Mică, Făgăraș, and Brașov, *Anuarul Partidului Poporului pe anul 1925* (Bucharest, 1925), 62-72.

<sup>29</sup> In this regard, see: Andrei Florin Sora, “Funcționarii publici «regăteni» în noile provincii ale României Mari, 1918-1925,” *Studii și Articole de Istorie* LXXXVI (2019), 78-92.

<sup>30</sup> It is likely that there were more appointments of deputy prefects and, implicitly, prefects, as these were not always published in the *Monitorul Oficial / The Official Gazette* (from now *M.Of.*).

appointments of delegate prefects fell to ten, in eight counties,<sup>31</sup> reflecting the decrease between the two governments in the number of appointments and confirmations of prefects (67 compared to 36). We counted 76 confirmations and appointments of prefects, namely 50 during the Averescu II government and 26 appointments by the Averescu III government. We cannot speak of actual confirmations, as these are implied by the fact that in the first days after its inauguration (March 13, 1921), the new government did not request the resignation of the prefects appointed for Transylvania in 1921 by the Governing Council. We can suspect that it was not only the fact that the Governing Council for Transylvania had not yet been dissolved that mattered, but also that the People's Party leadership was desperately seeking partisans and political allies in the new regions of the Romanian state. None of the 23 prefects appointed by the Governing Council lost their position or resigned until the dissolution of this institution (April 4, 1920).<sup>32</sup> However, with a few exceptions, these prefects did not remain in office for long, the approaching parliamentary elections being a determining factor: they resigned, were dismissed, or their delegation ended no more than a month after the announcement of General Averescu's appointment as President of the Council of Ministers.

In the days immediately following March 13, 1920 (the fall of the Vaida-Voevod government), the prefects in office in Transylvania and the population were uncertain about what would happen next, especially since the Parliament formed after the November 1919 elections had not been immediately dissolved. King Ferdinand I hoped that General Averescu would obtain the support of a parliamentary majority, but this did not happen due to Iuliu Maniu's refusal to subordinate the PNR to the new government.<sup>33</sup> This uncertainty is well highlighted by the Oradea newspaper *Tribuna*, on March 21, 1920, in the column *News of the Week*:

**“The prefect remains.** Some local newspapers, in connection with the departure of the government, have reported that the prefects will also

<sup>31</sup> I have also included here those who began working as deputy prefects and later became permanent prefects.

<sup>32</sup> There are multiple reasons for this: the resigned prime minister (except for Interior Minister Nicolae Lupu) did not ask the prefects to resign, resignation upon the fall of the government (seen in the Kingdom as a form of loyalty to the party that had proposed them) was not known to the Transylvanians, and the Governing Council had appointed them, not the Ministry of the Interior in Bucharest, the leadership of the RNP did not make this request to its party members who were prefects. Additionally, the Averescu's Party attempted to recruit local leaders to the People's Party.

<sup>33</sup> Murgescu, Sora, “Consecințele alegerilor,” 382-383.

leave their posts, which they obtained through the trust of the Governing Council and the National Party. The news is premature and inaccurate. The prefect of our county, Dr. N. Zigre, has not yet received any official notice and has not made any decision until the national party's position on the changed situation is clarified. Based on the signs so far, the Transylvanian prefects will not change. And that's a good thing! In any case, we, the people of Bihor, have no interest in replacing the current prefect, who is known throughout the city and county as a capable and sincere democrat. And we have no desire to see him replaced by a stranger who does not know the people and local customs of this city, which is largely non-Romanian.”<sup>34</sup>

In the Old Kingdom, for several decades, the collective resignation of prefects upon the announcement of the appointment of a government representing other political parties in power had become customary, for two reasons: on the one hand, even if not all of them were party members, former prefects showed their loyalty to those who appointed them or contributed to their appointment to this position, and on the other hand, to please their supporters and ensure success in future elections, it was normal for the new rulers to change the prefects.<sup>35</sup> Although most prefects and politicians in Transylvania were aware of this practice, in Bukovina and Transylvania, the collective resignation of prefects did not take place until December 1921–January 1922. This transition did not last long, as the publication in *the Official Gazette of Decree-Law 1476* of April 2, 1920, by the Governing Council, led to the resignation or replacement of prefects until the elections in early June 1920 in only 19 of the 23 counties studied, representing the territories that were under Budapest's control before December 1, 1918. Only the following retained their position as prefect during the elections: Gheorghe Baiulescu (Brașov), Octavian Vasu (Făgăraș), Nicolae Comșa (Sibiu), Octavian Felecan (Turda-Arieș), and Valer Neamțu, who was transferred from Odorhei (titular prefect) to Târnava Mică County (delegate prefect). However, we cannot say that the majority of the prefects in Transylvania in office at the beginning of March refused to collaborate with the People's Party; some of them participated in the parliamentary elections of June 1920, which is why they resigned from the county they had previously administered: Marcian Căluțiu (deputy, Târnava Mică); Dionisie Român (deputy, Târnava Mare). In fact, although elections should have been held as soon as possible after the dissolution of Parliament by King Ferdinand I on March 25, 1920, General

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<sup>34</sup> *Tribuna*, Oradea, 12, March 21, 1920, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Sora, *Servir l'État roumain*, 161.

Averescu postponed the elections for the two chambers until the beginning of June. The People's Party achieved significant success at the end of March when Octavian Goga and other members, including those from the PNR, left the party, thus gaining time by postponing the elections by a week.<sup>36</sup> The PNR regrouped by organizing a congress on April 24, 1920, and launching an election campaign, which enabled it to win against government candidates in several counties.

In March-April 1920, unlike those in the Old Kingdom, the prefects in Transylvania did not resign/were not dismissed with the fall of the Vaida Voevoed government, but gradually lost their posts after April 4, 1920,<sup>37</sup> when the Governing Council (which had appointed them) was dissolved. We recall that the royal decree of April 4, 1920, stated that:

“The appointments of officials made by the Governing Council, department heads, and prefects shall have the same power as other appointments of State officials. They shall retain the rights acquired through those appointments with regard to the regulation of pension rights.”<sup>38</sup>

In the Old Kingdom, it was rare for a change of government to a different political color not to cause substantial changes among the titular prefects. Most of the time, they resigned without waiting for the decision of the new power. Thus, through what Gheorghe Tătărescu called the “system of collective resignations,” the prefects confirmed their loyalty to the party that had appointed them to this office and to the politicians who had contributed to it.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Marin Pop, “Organizația Partidului Național Român din Județul Sătmar,” 141.

<sup>37</sup> Vasile Pahone, prefect of Bistrița-Năsăud County by Decree No. 3139/1920 of the Governing Council of March 8, 1920, effectively taking office on March 14, when General Averescu was already in power. In his memoirs, Victor Moldovan mentions that in March 1920, he recommended Vasile Pahone to the Vaida Voevod government for the position of prefect, which had been vacated by Gavril Tripon's departure from Bistrița. After having been the head of the Bistrița city organization of the R.N.P. in the meantime, in 1926, Vasile Pahone followed Vasile Goldiș and Victor Moldovan into the People's Party, becoming prefect again.

Victor Moldovan, *Memoriile unui politician din perioada interbelică*, vol. I, eds. Mircea Gelu Burta and Adrian Onofreiu (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2016), 95.

<sup>38</sup> M. Of., 4, April 4, 1920, 225.

<sup>39</sup> Gheorghe Tătărescu, *Le régime électoral et parlementaire en Roumanie* (Paris: M. Giard et E. Brière, 1912), 49.

The leadership of the People's Party attempted to negotiate in March-April 1920 with some of the prefects in office (appointed by the Governing Council). Some of them resigned within a month, considering this decision a sign of loyalty to the PNR leaders, even though some may have been asked to remain in office, an action that, in reality, meant joining the People's Party. However, we can only speak of the resignation "provoked" by the Averescu government of the prefects previously appointed by the Governing Council. In many counties in Transylvania, the leaders of the People's Party could not yet rely on well esteemed local figures, supported by the population, who would take on the responsibility of leading the prefecture and contributing to the Party success in the elections, but who would also enjoy the trust of the leadership in Bucharest or of some of Alexandru Averescu's strategic allies, such as Octavian Goga. Along with other political allies, O. Goga and Avram Imbroane (from Banat) joined, along with their partisans, the People's Party in April 1920. The promise of maintaining administrative and/or political dignity was not always enough to leave the ranks of the PNR. One such example is Aurel Cosma, prefect of Timiș County, an emblematic figure of the Romanians in Banat both before and after 1918. Even though he was a member of the PNR, Cosma was reconfirmed as prefect on April 8, 1920, by the Averescu government, at the recommendation of his brother-in-law, Octavian Goga.<sup>40</sup> According to historians Vali Corduneanu and Vasile Dudaș, Cosma consulted with the PNR leadership on whether to continue in this position, receiving a recommendation to resign, which he followed.<sup>41</sup> The reconfirmation of prefects previously appointed by the Governing Council can also be seen in other counties in the first month of April 1920, which certainly means that the leaders of the People's Party, as well as its Transylvanian allies (especially Octavian Goga and Octav Tăslăuanu), preferred to "negotiate" with the old prefects in certain counties to get them to switch sides, the first step being to grant them the confidence of the government.<sup>42</sup> As in the Old Kingdom and Transylvania, prefects were to be recruited from among the members of the ruling political party.

The first appointments of prefects in Transylvania by the government in Bucharest were made more than five weeks after the

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<sup>40</sup> Corduneanu, Dudaș, *Prefecții Județului Timiș-Torontal*, 18-19.

<sup>41</sup> Shortly after this resignation, A. Cosma resigned from the PNR and joined the PNL, Corduneanu, Dudaș, *Prefects of Timiș-Torontal County*, 19.

<sup>42</sup> The names of the county and city prefects who remained in office in April 1920 are also mentioned in *Gazeta Poporului*, Sibiu, 15, April 18, 1920, 3.

installation of the government led by General Averescu: by a royal decree dated April 19, 1920, the lawyer Iuliu Tămășel,<sup>43</sup> a well-known fighter for the rights of Romanians, was appointed prefect of Caraș-Severin County, but he did not take up his post and was replaced by the lawyer Dimitrie Chiroiu.<sup>44</sup> Mihail R. Sturdza, a career diplomat,<sup>45</sup> was delegated to the position of prefect on April 24, 1920,<sup>46</sup> so that on May 1, 1920, King Ferdinand I could sign other delegations to the position of prefect for the counties of Arad (Vasile Avramescu, president of the Arad court) and Bihor (Colonel George Bacaloglu). The delegated prefects of Arad and Bihor counties no longer exercised the office of prefect of the county seat as they had done until then. V. Avramescu's delegation ended on July 15, 1920, when Aurel Crișan, who was at that time delegated to perform the duties of prefect of the city of Arad, was also appointed prefect of the county.<sup>47</sup>

In the spring of 1920, the establishment of local branches of the People's Party in Transylvania was in its infancy.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, in the spring of 1920, some of the prefects appointed or retained by the Averescu government were also involved in setting up local branches, as Victor Moldovan recalls in the case of Prefect Virgil Al.I. Popescu, who presided over the founding assembly of the People's Party in Bistrița-Năsăud County on May 13, 1920.<sup>49</sup> General Averescu visited Transylvania in May 1920, primarily for an election campaign rather than a working visit in his capacity as Prime Minister. This "tour" also provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of local political realities, to meet new

<sup>43</sup> M. Of., 15, April 23, 1920, 1002.

<sup>44</sup> M. Of., 23, May 2, 1920, 1137.

<sup>45</sup> In his memoirs, Mihai R. Sturdza only mentions that in 1920 he temporarily left his diplomatic career in favor of leading the prefecture of Cojocna County (in the text Cluj): "... where I believed that more subtle methods and more diplomatic attitudes could lay the foundations for a rapprochement between Romanians and the main national minority." After the Cojocna episode, M. Sturdza resumed his diplomatic activity, being appointed first secretary of the legation in Budapest, Mihail Sturdza, *România și sfârșitul Europei. Amintiri din țara pierdută* (Alba Iulia, Paris: Fronde, 1994), 61.

<sup>46</sup> M. Of., 21, April 30, 1920, 1097-1098.

<sup>47</sup> M. Of., 89, July 23, 1920, 3161.

<sup>48</sup> In some counties, such as Bihor, where the PNL had no established organizations, the liberals were allies of the People's Party, Gabriel Moisa, *Opțiuni ale electoratului bihorean în perioada interbelică*, in *Elite parlamentare și dinamică electorală în România 1919-1937*, ed. Florin Müller (Bucharest, Bucharest University Press, 2009), 86.

<sup>49</sup> Moldovan, "Memoirs of a politician from the interwar period," 103.

members of the People's Party,<sup>50</sup> and to encourage the establishment of new branches.

To facilitate the best possible result for the ruling party, the prefect, who should have ensured that the elections were conducted in accordance with the law, tried, on the contrary, to limit the actions of the opposition by any means possible. Consequently, it was necessary to co-opt some of the People's Party's well-known personalities in the county, as well as at the regional level, who could compete against the PNR candidates. Former prefects from the time of the Governing Council, as well as important members of the PNR, joined the People's Party in Târnava-Mică, which enabled them to secure parliamentary seats. Thus, from his position as the recently resigned prefect of Târnava-Mică County, in the elections of May 25-27, 1920 (for the Chamber of Deputies), Marcian Căluțiu obtained a seat as a deputy, as did Liviu Micșa, former prefect of Solnoc-Dobâca County, who became a deputy in the Dej constituency, and Ilie Carol Barbul, former prefect of Sătmar County. In October 1920, Marcian Căluțiu resigned from the Chamber of Deputies, preferring to return to his position as prefect. Another parliamentarian who chose the dignity of prefect was Ioan Victor Vancea, deputy for the Oaș-Ugocea electoral district (in Sătmar County), who in the summer of 1921 opted to become head of the Alba County administration.<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned above, maintaining the prefects in office before the parliamentary elections meant that the new government had confidence in the previously appointed prefects. Thus, Gheorghe Baiulescu (Brașov), Nicolae Comșa (Sibiu), and Octavian Vasu (Făgăraș), all of whom were appointed before March 13, 1920, by the Governing Council, retained their positions during the 1921 elections. We believe that it is no coincidence that these three counties were predominantly inhabited by Romanians and had the strongest ties to the Old Kingdom, including through substantial emigration to the south and east of the Carpathians before 1916. In fact, some of them had strong previous direct ties with political leaders in the Old Kingdom or indirect ties through well-known Transylvanians east and south of the Carpathians, such as Octavian Goga, Alexandru Lapedatu,

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<sup>50</sup> Not only General Averescu's partisans were trying to penetrate the counties of Transylvania, but also the PNL. According to Ioan Munteanu, the prefect of Timiș-Torontal County, Aurel Cosma, resigned in March 1920 (correctly April 1920), then laid the foundations for PNL organizations in the south-west of the country, Ioan Munteanu, "Dr. Aurel Cosma – primul prefect român al județului Timiș," *Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis* XXV, 1989, 532.

<sup>51</sup> Marin Pop, "Activitatea organizației Partidului Național Român din județul Satu Mare în perioada 1920-1926," *Satu Mare – Studii și Comunicări* XXXII/II, 2016, 171.

pharmacist Alexandru Iteanu,<sup>52</sup> or school inspector Solomon Haliță.<sup>53</sup> One of the prefects with strong visibility in Bucharest was Gheorghe Baiulescu, who was closer to PNL circles. He was the first prefect of Brașov County, appointed by the Governing Council of Transylvania. Baiulescu remained in this position until December 1920, when he was promoted to General Administrative Inspector in Bucharest at the Ministry of the Interior. Despite this promotion during the Averescu government, Baiulescu had long been known to Ion I.C. Brătianu through his two brothers, Ioan and Romulus, specialists in railway and bridge construction and senior officials in the Romanian Ministry of Public Works.

Another method of recruitment used by the government was to appoint delegates at the head of the county administration before the elections. Thus, around the time of the elections, five of the 23 prefects had previously held this position in the same county, including Octavian Felecan (Turda-Arieș) and Vasile Ianza (Hunedoara). For these five prefects, as well as for all the others, the parliamentary elections were the test that would determine whether they would remain in office.

In a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, Nicolae Iorga, analyzing the administration's involvement in the 1920 elections, said that he had never met in his life "a more zealous electoral agent than" the prefect in office of Sibiu County, Nicolae Comșa.<sup>54</sup> As a result of the way the prefects understood their duties, in Transylvania, the People's Party secured 69

<sup>52</sup> Alexandru Iteanu (1869-1928), originally from Hăghig (Trei Scaune County), studied pharmacy in Bucharest and settled in the Old Kingdom, in the town of Râmnicu Sărat, less than 200 km from his native village. Here, Iteanu became the owner of a pharmacy and a pharmaceutical laboratory, *Flora*, which became known throughout the country. He also became one of the local PNL leaders of Râmnic County. After the war, Iteanu moved to Bucharest, becoming president of the General Association of Pharmacists in 1921, and in 1923 he was appointed university lecturer at the Faculty of Pharmacy. Iteanu was very active in the PNL (prefect of Râmnic County in the autumn of 1918), and was tasked with building a solid local liberal organization in Trei Scaune County, where Romanians were a minority and the PNR was a formidable force.

<sup>53</sup> Solomon Haliță (1859-1926), son of a local official in Transylvania, settled in Romania after completing his university studies in Vienna, renouncing his Romanian citizenship. He became a secondary school teacher and held several positions in various committees and councils within the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction. Furthermore, between 1914 and 1919, he was general inspector within the Ministry, thanks to his proximity to the PNL. Between 1920 and 1922, he held the position of inspector general for Transylvania, and between 1922 and 1926, he was prefect of Năsăud County (during the PNL government). For further information, see: <https://elitesresearch.com/en/elites/from-the-lives-of-elites/h/>; Solomon Haliță, *om al epocii sale*, ed. Alexandru Dărăban (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Apud Radu, "Administrația și procesul electoral," 394.

seats, while the PNR secured 23 seats.<sup>55</sup> According to Constantin Argetoianu, the electoral successes of the People's Party in Transylvania were achieved as a reaction against the Governing Council: "... which, with Maniu at its head, had managed to make itself odious in a single year. There, across the mountains, the battle was not fought in the name of Averescu, as it was on this side of the mountains, *but against the Governing Council*, and most voters did not vote for Averescu, Goga, or the People's League, but against Maniu and the 'gentlemen' from Cluj."<sup>56</sup>

During the 1920-1921 government, the People's Party leadership attempted to refute accusations that it sought to bring *Romanians* into local government in Transylvania, especially into the leadership of the prefectures. This option was understandable from a political point of view (especially around election time), given the absence or weakness of the party's branches. In the Old Kingdom, both before and after 1918, in counties where the branches were poorly organized or there were disagreements among members, the central organization of the Party (liberals, conservatives, etc.) had a greater willingness/power to impose prefects who were not part of the local community and who did not have very close ties to the county. We cannot exclude the fact that the dignity of prefect meant prestige, control, and power, which led to increased interest from people close to the leaders of the ruling party, and/or ministers, but with no connection to the county. We believe that all these factors led the Averescu government to prefer to appoint people who would contribute to victory as prefects around the time of the elections. In the 1920-921 Averescu government, we have identified the following permanent prefects from the Old Kingdom: Mihail M. Condruș (Maramureș), Aurel Varlam (Făgăraș),<sup>57</sup> and Radu Panku/Pancu (Arad). One way for the government to avoid further criticism regarding the *re-establishment of the Old Kingdom* was to appoint deputy prefects, career

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<sup>55</sup> Marcel Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice în cifre și grafice, 1919-1932. Studiu comparativ al rezultatelor oficiale ale alegerilor pentru Camera Deputaților din anii 1919-1932* ((Sibiu: Krafft & Drotleff Publishing House and Printing House, n.d.), Table IV.

<sup>56</sup> Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri*, vol. VI: *Partea a VI-a (1919-1922)*, ed. Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Machiavelli, 1996), 29, 241.

<sup>57</sup> Aurel Varlam (1874-1935) had a law degree from Paris, was a deputy for Fălcu (1928-1931) and former prefect of Fălcu County (March 15, 1920 – October 15, 1920), a position from which he was transferred to prefect of Făgăraș County. Aurel Varlam is known for the impressions he published in the press of the time regarding his experience as a judge in the Belgian Congo (1900-1902).

civil servants, or military officers from the Old Kingdom who were considered trustworthy by the leadership of the People's Party. Among them were Colonel George Bacaloglu and N. Banciu Constantinescu in Bihor County, Colonel Ion Bălănescu in Sătmăr County, Lieutenant Colonel Grigore Cartian in Târnava Mare, and diplomat Mihail R. Sturza in Cojocna. Some of the permanent and delegated prefects from the Old Kingdom managed to integrate into the county's political life: Colonel Bacaloglu settled in Oradea, where he founded and edited the magazine *Cele Trei Crișuri*. Meanwhile, in Făgăraș County, Aurel Varlam appears to have had excellent relations with the powerful Vasu family.<sup>58</sup>

Although born in Caransebeș, Colonel Corneliu Dragalina, the deputy prefect of Timiș-Torontal County, grew up in Romania, attended military schools, including military high school, distinguished himself in World War I, and was also the son of the heroic General Ioan Dragalina. In 1920, we can be certain that General Alexandru Averescu also took into account the fact that some of the candidates had previous connections with the Old Kingdom. They had made friends here; they had helped the Romanian army in the summer of 1916; they had taken refuge in the Old Kingdom (Gheorghe Baiulescu, Nicolae Vecerdea) or had fought as members of the Transylvanian Volunteer Corps in the Romanian army. Several prefects in the Averescu II and III governments (and others) had served as fighters in the Romanian volunteer corps: Petru Meteș<sup>59</sup> (Alba and Cojocna); Simion Câmpean (u) (Hunedoara); Toma Vasincă (Hunedoara),<sup>60</sup> Aurel Popa, future prefect of Târnava Mare County (1926-1927) and Bihor County (December 28, 1937 - February 10, 1938),<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> "Separatism ardelean," *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Brașov & Bucharest, 185, 27 august 1921, 1.

<sup>59</sup> As early as 1914, Petru Meteș (1884-1946), a lawyer in Aiud and a close associate of Hungarian politician Pál Szász, the son of József Szász, the prefect of Alsó-Fehér County, was sent as an officer of the Habsburg Army to the front line and taken captive by the Russians. In the summer of 1917, he had already joined the Transylvanian and Bukovinian Volunteer Corps. Promoted to captain, Petru Meteș fought in Moldavia in the summer of 1917 and was later dispatched to Odessa, probably to ensure the security of Romanian refugees and dignitaries. The Bolsheviks under Christian Rakovsky (1873-1941) imprisoned him there for a short period.

<sup>60</sup> Cosmin Budeancă, *Iustin Pop (1875-1943) o viață în slujba românismului* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2018), 101.

<sup>61</sup> A native of Arpașul de Sus (Făgăraș County), a graduate of the Academy of Theology in Sibiu and the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Cluj, Aurel Popa is best known for having held the position of secretary general at the Ministry of Cults and Arts between 1942 and 1944.

Vasile Chiroiu<sup>62</sup> (Maramureş, originally from Banat), Petre Nemoianu (Caraş Severin), and Bogdan Florea (Mureş-Turda). We also remember Romul(us) Boldea, future prefect of Severin (1926-1927), who participated as an officer in the Romanian army's campaign in Hungary.<sup>63</sup> Although Virgil Al. I. Popescu (Râmniceanu), a native of Transylvania and future prefect of Bistriţa-Năsăud, did not actually fight on the front; he contributed to the war as a journalist attached to the Romanian General Headquarters, where he most likely met General Averescu. Ioan Vescan, a Transylvanian volunteer and officer in the Romanian army, ended his term as prefect of Mureş on April 19, 1920. At this stage of our research, we cannot provide exact figures. Still, it is certain that the number of prefects (including delegates) originating from the Old Kingdom or Transylvania who had lived in Romania before 1916 was lower than the number of prefects from Transylvania during the PNL government between 1922 and 1926.

While in March 1920 the Averescu government was forced to respect the appointments of prefects made by the Governing Council for several weeks, in April 1926 the appointments of prefects in Transylvania took place simultaneously with those in the rest of the country, i.e., shortly after the formation of the new government and the presentation/announcement of the resignations of the PNL prefects. Starting in December 1921 and especially in January 1922, the system of "collective resignations" of prefects was also applied in Transylvania. In March 1926, the practice of resigning from the office of prefect was already well known and was used by the PNL prefects,<sup>64</sup> and the Averescu government hastened to appoint new prefects in office (March 31, April 1-2, 1926). The most delayed appointments were in the counties of Braşov (Ioan Laţicu, April 10, 1926), Hunedoara (Simion Câmpean, April 12,

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<sup>62</sup> Ioan Olărescu, "Avocat Dr. Dimitrie Chiroiu (1875-1938)," *Syflet nou*, Comloşu Mare, 4 (245), April 2013, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Adrian Onofreiu, Ana Maria Băndean, *Prefecții județului Bistrița Năsăud (1919-1915; 1990-2014). Ipostaze, imagini, mărturii* (Bistriţa: Charmides, 2014), 57.

<sup>64</sup> The same thing happened a year later. The news of the resignation of the Averescu III government on June 4, 1927, triggered the resignation of the prefects, who, for a short time, were not replaced by members of the PNL, but were delegated sub-prefects of those counties or praetors (appointed by ministerial decisions), *M.Of.*, 124, June 8, 1927, 7792-7793.

1926), Timiș-Torontal (Antoniu Bogdan, April 12, 1926), and Mureș (Florea Bogdan, April 16, 1926).<sup>65</sup>

Between March 1926 and June 1927, compared to the previous People's Party government, there was not only greater stability in the prefectoral offices, which was normal and logical to a certain extent, but also the appointment of sub-prefects (...) and, to a lesser extent, administrative inspectors, garrison commanders, etc., as delegates. Consequently, unlike the Averescu II government, during the Averescu III government, not only were the titular prefects almost all from Transylvania, but so were the delegate prefects. The position of prefect was held for an extended period of time by delegates: Ioan Tulbure in Făgăraș County (April 1-November 20, 1926) and Vasile Boneu, chief notary, who oversaw the Arad prefecture throughout the entire government (over 14 months).

Although General Averescu's prestige in Transylvania seemed to be less intense than in 1920, numerous public figures rallied to his government alongside his recognized supporters. In addition to Vasile Goldiș, Octavian Goga, Ioan Lupaș, and Ioan Lapedatu, we also see other highly visible political figures who were well integrated into local power networks: Al. Racoți-Filip, the first Romanian prefect of Satu Mare County, the united archpriest Aurel C. Domșa, Victor Popescu, Vasile Osvadă, Victor Moldovan, Vasile Pahone, former prefect, dismissed in April 1920 during the Averescu II government, etc.<sup>66</sup> Onisifor Ghibu counted no fewer than 18 prefects out of 24, members at that time of the National Party (Maniu), who left this party in 1926 because of V. Goldiș's dissent and to be on the side of power.<sup>67</sup> Among those who resigned from the party led by Iuliu Maniu, we mention Vasile Pahone and Antoniu (Toni) Bogdan, who were immediately appointed prefects of the counties of Bistrița-Năsăud and Timiș, respectively. In exchange for joining the People's Party, Ion Țeicu, leader of the Banat regional branch of the Peasant Party,<sup>68</sup> was appointed prefect of Caraș County in November 1926. Additionally, to increase its influence in Transylvania, the People's Party

<sup>65</sup> Before the appointment of Antoniu Bogdan and Florea Bogdan as heads of the two prefectures, there were two delegated prefects nominated in *the Monitorul Oficial* at the beginning of April 1926.

<sup>66</sup> Florin-Răzvan Mihai, "Alegările generale din mai 1926," in *Elite parlamentare și dinamică electorală*, 107-108.

<sup>67</sup> Mihai, "Alegările generale din mai 1926," 108.

<sup>68</sup> Mihai, "Alegările generale din mai 1926," 108.

negotiated electoral agreements with parties representing the interests of national minorities.<sup>69</sup>

The pressure exerted by Averescu's prefects in the parliamentary elections in favor of government candidates is also visible in Transylvania in 1920 and 1926.<sup>70</sup> However, the electoral share obtained for the Chamber of Deputies by People's Party in Transylvania (47.22%, 65 seats), and in Banat (41.33%, 25 seats), were below the national average (52.09%),<sup>71</sup> with scores above 90% in counties inhabited mainly by Hungarians (Ciuc, Odorhei, Trei Scaune) and very low in counties such as Alba (25.39%), Hunedoara (27.06%) or Făgăraș (29.71%).<sup>72</sup> However, contrary to what would have happened in the Old Kingdom, only the prefect of Alba, Aurel Stoica, was replaced on July 15, 1926, by Ion Cușută. The prefect of Hunedoara County did not lose his position after these elections. A delegate headed the prefecture of Făgăraș County, Ion Tulbure, who was replaced by Ion Pica, initially as delegate too, and then titular in this position, as of November 1926. Thus, except for Alba and Someș counties (before January 1, 1926, Solnoc-Dobâca) - Simion Rus replaced by Ion Boca on June 30, 1926 - after the parliamentary elections in May 1926, no other changes of prefects were made, a sign that P. Pop. did not try to rush the alliance with the National (Transylvanian) Party, as well as the fact that finding people who enjoyed prestige and authority at the local level was not easy. General Averescu preferred not to cause discontent among his Transylvanian allies and thus did not resort to appointing "royalists" as prefects in 1926-1927. Moreover, in March 1926, General Averescu could rely on some local personalities who had served as prefects in Transylvania during his previous government.

Although the period in which the two governments functioned is not identical, the greater stability of the prefects in Transylvania during the Averescu III government is noticeable not only in the smaller number of delegated or titular prefects, but also in the fact that in 13 of the 24 counties the prefectural office was held by a single person, which was not the case between March 1920 and December 1921. During the Averescu II government, only one prefect (Nicolae Comșa, Sibiu) remained in office throughout the entire period. Let's consider the moment when Bucharest began to replace or confirm the prefects appointed by the Governing

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<sup>69</sup> Mihai, "Aleggerile generale din mai 1926," 107.

<sup>70</sup> Nicolaescu, "Aleggerile parlamentare din 1926 reflectate în presa vremii," 158-165.

<sup>71</sup> Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice*, Table XII.

<sup>72</sup> Mihai, "Opțiuni ale electoratului bihorean," 140.

Council (April-May 1920). Their number is three (in the counties of Hunedoara, Odorhei, and, of course, Sibiu).

The number of prefects found in both governments (including all those previously appointed by the Governing Council) is not very large: Marcian Căluțiu (Târnava Mică in 1920-1921; Cluj, 1926-1927), Iosif Iacob (Bihor), Alexandru Vasu (Ciuc), Ilie Carol Barbu (Sătmar), Nicolae Comșa (Sibiu), and Vasile Pahone (Bistrița-Năsăud/Năsăud from January 1, 1926).<sup>73</sup> In the latter case, it should be noted that he retained the position of prefect only until April 14, 1920, being the last prefect appointed by the Governing Council. Pahone will become, six years later, the first prefect appointed in Transylvania (March 31, 1932) by the Averescu III government.

The practice of appointing men from the Old Kingdom to the position of prefect (titular or delegate) was no longer used during the Averescu III government. Still, we find it again in other periods, especially in border counties and those with a Hungarian majority population, with active officers as delegated prefects and those in reserve and retired as titular prefects, constituting a substantial percentage, even at the end of the 1930s, when most of the senior officers of the Romanian Army were from the Old Kingdom. In 1926-1927, we estimate that the only prefect originating from the Old Kingdom was Dimitrie Criste, a deputy prefect in Odorhei County and a senior official (Administrative Inspector General) within the Ministry of the Interior.

Although we have data for approximately 80% of permanent prefects, in terms of geographical origin, if we analyze the prefects appointed in Transylvania during the Averescu II and III governments, we can make the following observations: 93% of the prefects whose place of birth or at least historical province we know were born in territories that were part of Austria-Hungary before 1918 (Transylvania, Banat, Partium, Maramureș). Furthermore, it can be said without a doubt that over 75% of the prefects (both permanent and delegated) during the Averescu II and III governments were originally from Transylvania. This observation confirms the conclusions of Judit Pál and Vlad Popovici in a study on local officials in Transylvania:

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<sup>73</sup> Ilie Carol Barbu and Vasile Pahone were not included in our subjects from the first sample (because, having been appointed before General Averescu came to power, they were not retained in the position of prefect during May-June 1920 – the period corresponding to the preparation and conduct of the parliamentary elections).

“On the one hand, we can identify a negative influence (in the sense of an alteration of the logic and principles of professionalization) of the important role played by ethnicity in hierarchical advancement. Nevertheless, this does not outweigh, but rather diminishes, the effect of the criterion of professional training. The ‘Romanianisation’ of the administrative staff was a reality that was initially imposed, in part, by the resignation or emigration of a large number of Hungarian civil servants, but it continued and intensified after 1920. This process targeted senior and decision-making positions in particular, and to a lesser extent, the large mass of civil servants, especially in departments where Hungarians or Germans were the majority ethnic groups (who, incidentally, dominated demographically in the cities where the administrative offices were located). Until 1925, ‘Romanianisation’ existed, but it was not excessive; it did not override professional qualifications, but allowed for exceptions to the latter...”<sup>74</sup>

It is evident that, since the early 1920s, we have witnessed, on the one hand, pressure from individuals originating from the Old Kingdom to obtain public office in the new Romanian territories and, on the other hand, an acute need for governments dominated by figures from the Old Kingdom to have trustworthy individuals in the position of prefect. However, for the counties that were part of Cisleithania before 1918, at least during the Averescu II and III governments (and to a large extent also under the PNL governments of 1922-1926 and 1927-1928), the local elites managed to obtain and, above all, retain a substantial number of public offices at the regional level. The pressure from the people of the Old Kingdom was evident in the Bucharest press's accusations of treason against the local elites for collaborating with ethnic and religious minorities:

“For a year now, the Romanian press has reported a whole series of actions hostile to the interests of our nation and state, actions carried out by the phalanx of regionalists and renegades placed in charge of public affairs in the annexed provinces, especially in Transylvania. The complete lack of personnel in General Averescu's party in the Transcarpathian province, as well as the need to appear to be dealing with the circumstances, contributed to the rapid recruitment of 'partisans', who rose to the top of the authorities, confusing the institution with a leased estate. After securing their material situations, these individuals, sheltered by their official status, began to sabotage any manifestation of Romanian life and,

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<sup>74</sup> Pál, Popovici, “Une analyse statistique,” 118–119.

at the same time, to encourage chauvinistic minority elements by any means possible.”<sup>75</sup>

The article in the official newspaper of the PNL named three prefects as regionalists: Vasile Boneu (Arad), Aurel Popa (Târnava Mare), and Ilie Carol Barbu, also referred to in the article as Karol I Barb (Satu Mare).

Of the prefects for whom we had this biographical information, the youngest prefect at the time of appointment was Petru Nemoianu (31 years old<sup>76</sup> in November 1920, born on September 22, 1889. We can also list other prefects who were under 35 years of age at the time of their appointment: Alexandru Vasu (Ciuc – in 1920), Petru Meteș (Cojocna), Ioan M. Popu (Făgăraș). With the caveat that we do not have this information for all subjects, the oldest prefect would be Gheorghe Baiulescu (born on July 27, 1855)<sup>77</sup>, who was 64 years old in January 1919 when he was appointed by the Governing Council and 65 years old during the Averescu II government.

As for friendships, family ties, and even patronage, it's easy to see that several of the prefects in Transylvania during the Averescu II and Averescu III governments had close ties to Octavian Goga (Minister of Cults and Arts between 1920 and 1921; Minister of the Interior between 1926 and 1927). Aurel Cosma was his brother-in-law (married to the daughters of Partenie Cosma – Hortensia, O. Goga's first wife), and Antoniu Bogdan, with whom he had studied in Budapest,<sup>78</sup> had been a schoolmate of Mihai Moldovan.<sup>79</sup> Vasile Goldiș, another Transylvanian leader and collaborator of General Averescu, is said to have promoted relatives to the position of prefect: in the press of the time, the deputy prefect of Arad County, chief notary Vasile Boneu, is referred to as Goldiș's nephew.<sup>80</sup> Ilie Carol Barbu, a prominent politician from Satu Mare County, was a longtime friend of O. Goga and Petru Groza.<sup>81</sup> No fewer than nine prefects from the Averescu II government held the same position

<sup>75</sup> Constantin I. Ștef, “Efectele regionalismului oficial în Ardeal,” *Viitorul*, Bucharest, 5775, May 28, 1927, 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Enciclopedia Banatului. Istoriografia*, ed. Dumitru Tomoni (Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House & Timișoara: David Press Print, 2021), 204.

<sup>77</sup> Enescu, Necula, “Prefecți ai județului Brașov,” 93.

<sup>78</sup> Corduneanu, Dudaș, “Prefecți ai județului Brașov,” 53.

<sup>79</sup> [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihail\\_Moldovan\\_\(1879–1943\)](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihail_Moldovan_(1879–1943)), accessed October 20, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> “După ancheta împărțirii parcului prefecturii din Arad,” in *Cuvântul*, Bucharest, 3, January 6, 1927, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Porumbăcean, “Dr. Ilie Carol Barbul (1883–1946),” 125.

in the short-lived Goga government (December 1937-February 1938), six of whom are the subjects of this study (Antoniu Bogdan, Romul Boldea, Ilie Carol Barbu, Aurel Popa, Io(a)n Cușută, Ioan Lațicu). Unlike in 1920, by 1926, the Transylvanian political elite no longer had any illusions about the centralizing policies pursued by politicians in the Old Kingdom, with some members of the PNR joining the PNL or PP in the meantime. For this reason, in March 1926, we would have expected the local branches of the People's Party to be stronger, but the search for local leaders continued. Prefects functioned as the government's principal electoral agents; selection hinged on partisan loyalty, effectiveness as "regional brokers," and networks around key leaders (notably Octavian Goga).

In conclusion, we did not set out to conduct a prosopographic analysis; however, a few observations can still be made. During the two governments of Averescu, both for titular prefects and delegates, people born in Transylvania predominate, while the number of foreigners (from the Old Kingdom) is low and more characteristic of the period 1920-1921. There are also frequent cases where they were born in the county where they exercised their prefectoral dignity. The number of law graduates, especially from Budapest, Cluj-Napoca, Debrecen, or Vienna, constitutes the majority of the subjects for whom we have data, including a significant percentage of doctors of law. There are also graduates of technical academies (Virgil Al.I. Râmniceanu-Popescu, Bogdan Florea, Aurel Stoica), medicine (Gh. Baiulescu, Victor Fodor, Nicolae Comșa), commercial schools (Mihai Condruș), and military schools (Valer Neamțu, Gen. Ioan Popovici, George Bacaloglu, Romul Boldea, Vlad Spătariu). We have conclusive data on the social origin (parents' profession) and religion of over 50% of the prefects analyzed, thanks in particular to the enormous effort made by Cornel Sigmirean in identifying Romanian students in higher education institutions in Hungary.

## Appendix:

### List of Prefects during Averescu's Governments (1920–1921, 1926–1927)

Acting prefects are shown in italics. Permanent prefects are in regular type. Prefects appointed directly by Averescu's cabinets are in bold.

Elections: June 1920 (Chamber of Deputies, June 3–4; Senate, June 6–7; University, June 8); May 1926 (Chamber of Deputies, May 25; Senate, May 28–30 and June 4).

No.	County	Averescu II Government, March 13, 1920 - December 16, 1921, Ministers of the Interior: Al. Averescu, March 13 - June 13, 1920; C. Argetoianu, June 13, 1920 - December 16, 1921	Averescu III Government, March 30, 1926 <sup>82</sup> – June 4, 1927, Minister of the Interior: Octavian Goga.
1.	<b>Alba</b> (until 1926 Alba-de-Jos/Lower Alba)	Io(a)n Pop (January 1, 1919 - April 15, 1920) <b>Petru Meteș, President of the Brașov Court (April 15 - October 5, 1920)</b> <b>Victor Fodor (October 25, 1920 - March 31, 1921)</b> <i>Vasile (Basiliu) Ciura/Tzura/Ciurea, sub-prefect (January 1, 1921 - June 10, 1921)</i> <b>Ion Victor Vancea (June 10, 1921 – December 31, 1921)</b>	<b>Aurel Stoica (April 2 - July 1926)</b> <b>Io(a)n Cușută (July 15, 1926 – June 5, 1927)</b>
2.	Arad	Iustin Marșieu, Dr. (April 1, 1919 - Apr. 1920) <sup>83</sup> <i>Vasile Avramescu, Dr., President of the Arad Tribunal (May 1, 1920 – July 15, 1920)</i> <b>Aurel Crișan (July 15, 1920 - October 5, 1920)</b>	<b>Vasile Boneu, chief notary (April 1, 1926<sup>84</sup> – June 7, 1927)</b>

<sup>82</sup> Most of the appointments of new prefects were published in: *M.Of.*, 77, April 2, 1926, 4965-4967 and no. 78, April 3, 1926, 5041-5045.

<sup>83</sup> If we are to believe the newspaper *Românul*, on May 5, 1920, Iustin Marșieu was still prefect of Arad County, a sign that the news of his dismissal had not spread throughout the county, *Românul*, Arad, 111, May 28, 1920, 3. Iustin Marșieu preferred to remain a member of the P.N.R.

<sup>84</sup> At the beginning of April, Valer Moldovan was mentioned in the press as the probable prefect of Arad County, *Clujul Românesc*, Cluj, April 4, 1926, p. 1.

		<b>Silviu Moldovan</b> (October 5, 1920 – January 24, 1921) <b>Radu Pancu</b> (January 24 - December 29, 1921)	
3.	Bihor	Nicolae Zigre (September 23, 1919 – May 1, 1920) <i>George Bacaloglu, Colonel</i> (May 1, 1920-?) <i>N. Banciu Constantinescu, Colonel</i> (? – August 14, 1920) <b>Iosif Iacob</b> (August 14, 1920 – January 23, 1922)	<b>Iosif Iacob</b> (April 1, 1926 – June 5, 1927)
4.	Bistrița- Năsăud (Năsăud, from Jan. 1, 1926)	Vasile Pahone (March 8 - April 14, 1920) <b>Ion Șerban</b> (April 14, 1920 - January 24, 1921) <b>Al.I. Virgil Popescu</b> (Râmniceanu) (January 24, 1921 - February 15, 1922)	<b>Vasile Pahone</b> (March 31, 1926 - June 5, 1927)
5.	Brașov	<b>Gheorghe Baiulescu</b> (January 22, 1919 - December 8, 1920) <b>Victor Mateescu</b> (December 8, 1920 - December 29, 1921)	<b>Ioan Lațicu</b> (April 10, 1926 - June 5, 1927)
6.	Caraș- Severin (from January 1, 1926, the counties of Caraș and Severin)	George Dobrin (May 14, 1919 - officially in office as of July 28, 1919 - April 19, 1920), “resigned” <b>Iuliu Tămăș(i)el</b> (April 19 - May 1, 1920) - did not assume office	Caraș <b>Ion Nedelcu</b> (April 1 - November 11, 1926) <b>Ion Țeicu</b> (November 11, 1926 – June 5, 1927)
7.	Ciuc	<b>Dimitrie Chiroiu</b> (May 1, 1920 - Nov. 11, 1920) <b>Petru Nemoianu</b> (November 11, 1920 - December 17, 1921)	Severin <b>Romul Boldea, Major</b> (April 1, 1926 – June 5, 1927)
8.	Cojocna (after January 1, 1926 - Cluj)	Dubleș(iu), Gheorghe (George), Dr., April 5, 1919 (effective as of June 1919) - April 18, 1920 <b>Alexandru Vas(s)u</b> (April 18, 1920 – December 29, 1921)	<b>Alexandru Vasu</b> (April 1, 1926 – June 5, 1927)
9.	Făgăraș	Simion Tămăș, January 7, 1919 – April 1920 <i>Mihail R. Sturdza, diplomat</i> (April 24 - September 1920) <b>Petru Meteș</b> (October 5, 1920 - January 1, 1921) <b>Petru Meteș</b> (January 1, 1921 - March 17, 1923)	<b>Marcian Căluțiu</b> (April 2, 1926 - June 5, 1927)
10.		Octavian Vasu (January 1, 1919 – October 4, 1920)	<i>Ion Tulbure, ‘prim- pretor’ of the Făgăraș</i>

		Aurel Varlam (October 5, 1920 <sup>85</sup> – December 29, 1921) <sup>86</sup>	<b><i>district, (April 1 - November 20, 1926)</i></b> Ion Pica (November 20, 1926 – June 5, 1927)
11.	Hunedoara	Toma Vasinca, (January 1, 1919 – May 11, 1920) <i>Vasile Ianza, sub-prefect (May 11-Aug. 18, 1920)</i> Vasile Ianza (August 18, 1920 – January 24, 1922)	<b>Simion Câmporean(u) (April 12, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>
12.	Maramureş	Vasile Chiroiu, (April 28, 1919 - April 4, 1920) Vasile Meşter (April 8, 1920 - May 1, 1921), “resigned” shortly after appointment Mihail M. Condruş (May 1, 1921 - Jan. 23, 1922)	<b>Titu Oroş (April 1, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>
13.	Mureş (before January 1, 1926: Mureş-Turda)	Io(a)n Vescan (January 1, 1919 - April 19, 1920) Adrian Popescu (April 19, 1920 - January 28, 1922)	<b><i>Petru Roşca, sub-prefect (April 1 - April 16, 1926)</i></b> <b>Florea Bogdan (April 16 - December 3, 1926)</b> <b><i>Petre Roşca, sub-prefect (December 3, 1926-January 27, 1927)</i></b> <b>Virgil Ciaclan (January 27 - June 5, 1927)</b>
14.	Odorhei	Valer Neamtu (June 1919 – April 18, 1920) Toma Cornea, Dr. (April 18, 1920 –December 29, 1921)	<b>Vlad (Vladimir) Spătariu (Spătaru), Major (April 2 – October 25, 1926)</b> <b><i>Dimitrie Cristea, general administrative inspector (October 25, 1926 - March 31, 1927)</i></b> <b><i>Andrei(u) Gus(s)u (Apr.-07.06.1927)</i></b>
15.	Sălaj	Gheorghe Pop (April 1, 1919 - April 8, 1920) <i>Nicolae Șerban de Voila (April 8, 1920 - February 21, 1921)</i>	<b>Nicodim Cristea (April 1, 1926 - May 26, 1927)</b> <b><i>Victor Gheție (May 26 - June 7, 1927)</i></b>

<sup>85</sup> Aurel Varlam was “transferred” to Făgăraş from his position as prefect of Fălciu County, *M.Of.*, 147, October 6, 1920, 5221.

<sup>86</sup> It is likely that between February and March, the Făgăraş prefecture was successively headed for several days by Teodor Popescu and Ioan M. Popu, respectively, who were local officials with whom Aurel Popa and Octavian Vasu were in conflict.

		<b>Nicolae Șerban de Voila (February 21, 1921 - February 1922)</b>	
16.	Satu Mare	Ilie Carol Barbul (Dec. 1919–May 29, 1920) <sup>87</sup> <i>Ion Bălănescu, Col. (May 29 - August 1920)</i> Ion Bălătescu (September 1920 - January 31, 1922)	<b>Ilie Carol Barbul (April 2, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>
17.	Sibiu	Nicolae Comșa, (December 29, 1918/January 1, 1919 - January 26, 1922)	<b>Nicolae Comșa (April 2, 1926 - June 8, 1927)</b>
18.	Solnoc-Dobâca (after January 1, 1926, Someș)	Liviu Micșa (August 11, 1919 – April 15, 1920) Clement (Chelemen) Barbu (April 15, 1920 - December 29, 1921)	<b>Simion Rus(u) (April 1 - June 30, 1926)</b> <b>Ion Boca (June 30, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>
19.	Târnava Mare	Dionisie Roman (January 1, 1919 - April 19, 1920) <b>Andrei Micu, (Apr. 19, 1920 - Jun. 28, 1920)</b> <i>Grigore Cartian, Lt. Col. (June 28, 1920 – August 5, 1920)</i> <b>Ioan Popovici,<sup>88</sup> retired General (05.08.1920 – 24.01.1921)</b> <b>Gheorghe Sofronie, Dr. (January 24, 1921 - December 29, 1921)</b>	<b>Aurel Popa (April 1, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>
20.	Târnava Mică	Marcian Căluțiu (January 1, 1919 - April 1920) <i>Valer Neamțu, Lt. Col. (April/May - October 5, 1920)</i> <b>Marcian Căluțiu (October 5, 1920 –December 29, 1921)</b>	<b>Ion Arieșan (April 1, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>
21.	Timiș-Torontal	Aurel Cosma (July 23, 1919 - April 19, 1920) <i>Corneliu Dragalina, Major (April 21, 1920 - February 1921)</i>	<b>Corneliu Bejan (April 2 - April 12, 1926)</b> <b>Antoniu Bogdan (April 12, 1926 - June 5, 1927)</b>

<sup>87</sup> The sub-prefect of Ciuc County, George Urdea, was delegated on May 11, 1920, to oversee the affairs of the Satu Mare Prefecture, but, in the absence of other information, we believe that he did not exercise this function (*M.Of.*, 37, May 22, 1920, 1265). A few weeks later, another prefect was appointed to Sătmăra County in the person of Colonel Ioan Bălănescu, who temporarily filled this position in place of Ilie C. Barbul, who had been “suspended” (*M.Of.*, 50, June 6, 1920, 1526).

<sup>88</sup> We believe that the person appointed prefect was General Ioan Popovici “Provincialul” (1857-1956), considered one of those responsible for the defeat of the Romanian army at Sibiu, and not General Ion Popovici “Epure” (1865-1951), Minister of Agriculture and Domains between September and November 1919.

		Nicolae Imbroane (February 21, 1921 - December 31, 1921)	
22.	Trei Scaune	<p>Nicolae Vecerdean (January 1919, effective as of April 1919 - April 1920)</p> <p><b>Vasile Pop (April 18, 1920 - October 5, 1920)</b></p> <p><i>Valer Neamțu, Lt. Col. (October 5, 1920 - January 1922)</i></p>	Zaharia Crișan (April 2, 1926 - June 5, 1927)
23.	Turda-Arieș (after January 1, 1926, Turda)	<p><i>Octavian Felecan (February 1, 1920 – May 10, 1920)</i></p> <p><b>Octavian Felecan (May 11, 1920 – Jan. 24, 1921)</b></p> <p><i>Paul Moys/Moys, district judge of Turda (January 24, 1921 – December 29, 1921)</i></p>	Mihail Moldovan (April 2 – April 1926) <i>Ovidiu Gritta (May 1 – June 18, 1926)</i> Ovidiu Gritta (June 18, 1926 - June 5, 1927)



