

ROMANIAN MAGAZINES IN TRANSYLVANIA (1920-1940)

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Abstract

Romanian press in Transylvania between the two world wars had greatly suffered. Primarily because publications written in German and Hungarian were more consistent, and secondly because many of the journalists have been relocated to Bucharest. The crisis of the Romanian press was mentioned by the major European publications, however, should be noted that despite the crisis that passed, the press managed to be a cultural and literary school for citizens, not just a political one. The 19th century was the most successful period of the Romanian press and that was mentioned in every Romanian newspaper. The beginning of the crisis was considered the summer of 1914, when the Hungarian injustice, the deportations of the journalists who were outspoken in the columns of the Romanian newspapers, would blow the media, around the entry of Romania into the war or after the withdrawal of the Romanian army in Transylvania.

Nicolae Ghiulea and Onisifor Ghibu wrote two articles published in "Societatea de mâine" under the titles "Pentru presa Ardealului" ("For the press of Transylvania") and "O soluție pentru chestia presei din Ardeal" ("A solution for the press of Transylvania") that, before the war, the press was made by soul, without political ideals, but with the ideas of patriotism and nationalism. Both writers say that, after the war the press was assaulted by politics, forgetting that the press should properly inform population that it must be an objective critic of the political power and it should not be influenced by pressure, which can lead to abuse. Besides the control it exercised, the press was also an active and social factor of progress, helping to disseminate the facts of culture and civilization, to form and to lead the public opinion.

Key words: The Romanian magazines, the journalist, the crisis, the progress, the literary influences, the society

The Romanian newspapers from Transylvania have gone through a very difficult period both before the First World War and immediately after. If in the prewar period these were dominated by the national spirit, they tried to find their place among the many newspapers of other nationalities. The road was rough and full of obstacles, but each of these newspapers contributed to a cultural elite worthy of mention even today.

A situation in Cluj Romanian newspapers cannot be complete without an overview of key publications that influenced the formation of Cluj interwar Romanian press. All these have played a critical role in shaping journalists, promoting their work, but also ideas about reality that the society of Cluj lived in between the wars, so, magazines, in particular, occupied an important place in the cultural life frontispiece. The following presentation of three of the most important cultural magazines confirms the situation in the Cluj Romanian press, and they are: "Cosânzeana" (1911-1918, 1922-1928), "Gând românesc" and "Societatea de mâine".

In 1911 "Cosânzeana" was under the direction of Sebastian Bornemisa and its appearance was interrupted by World War I, as it appears in two series, namely: October

15, 1911 - 7th February 1915, at Orăștie, then in Cluj in the period of January 1st 1922 - the 12th of February 1928. This literary journal kept in touch with writers from Romania, publishing their writings, fitting it in "the front Transylvanian literature broader literary battle for cultural and political union"[1].

The magazine aims to be close to people and portray the beautiful sides of society. According to its editor "Cosânzeana" was "a diligent and obedient child who would spread smiles around her, forever willing to try to collect fragrant flowers from the field of literature, which she will gladly share with all the souls she comes across"[2].

Until 1915 Semănătorist influences were noticed in the magazine, but then realistic influences became more obvious, except for one period (1912-1915), when D. Tomescu tried to print an ideological direction of the magazine, the publication would neither have an official critic nor an ambition to entertain, to carry debates or to print directions in literary field, contenting itself with the role of only publishing literature[3].

In September 1912 he assumes the critic role, opening a section entitled "Săptămâna Literară" in which "people's, beliefs, manners, habits and problems in our lives will parade"[4]. He was also outraged by the attitude of newspapers and magazines in Transylvania for being too tolerant with some manufacturers. Regarding these newspapers and magazines, he said that "these were distinguished by a clear lack of courage, and sometimes by a surprising gallantry for the people and events and, here, in Transylvania, they should be shown contempt and chastisement"[5]. At first, the favorite writers of the magazine will be the circle "Sămănătorului" then the traditionalists and realists. In its first issue, collaborators were: I.U. Soricu, M. Gaspar, V. Eftimiu, Viora din Bihor, V.C. Osvadă, V. Stoica, Al. Ciura, E. Pitiș, and Z. Bârsan. From the third issue on, the magazine received the collaboration of Liviu Rebreanu with "Proștii", followed by the novels "Cântec de dragoste", "Idilă de la țară", "Ofilirea", "Taclale", "Armeanul, armeanca și cuibul". In 1912 Ion Agârbiceanu appears in the columns of the magazine with the novel "Dinu Natului", a writer who will become, along Al. Ciura, the most steadfast contributor. In 1913 other writers appear: Al. Cazaban, Ion Dragoslav and poets: Z. Bârsan, V. Eftimiu, Elena Farago. In the beginning one of the writers was Mihail Sadoveanu. Among the already well-known poets of the journal, the names of: Aron Cotruș Teodor Murășanu Victor Eftimiu appear and even it's editor, Sebastian Bornemisa. Besides literature, the magazine played an important cultural role, informing readers about all artistic events, theater and music in Transylvania, featuring a chronicle of each event. For the literary new entries "Flori de o zi", "Spiciuri literare," "Ilustrațiile noastre" were created, with economic, historical, geographical or "diverse" columns. The First World War signified serious problems, the writings survived for a period due to the material efforts made by Sebastian Bornemisa, but when he was sent to the front and left the magazine in the care of Nicolae Damian, it could not maintain the level of yore and later was suspended. The second series was resumed January 1st, 1922 with a foreword by Sebastian Bornemisa, in which he evoked the difficult conditions of 1915 and why he had to seize the issuance of the magazine. After that, the cultural activity was resumed with the same name and same vigor with which it worked before The First World War. Bornemisa wrote in the foreword of the new series: "we appear again today, despite the enormous weight on our shoulders with the new printing conditions after the war. And we appear called by new life, by the desire to fulfill a goal in the Romanian cultural life"[6]. Even though the magazine is trying to maintain tradition by having a constant number of employees, in this second series, many of the old employees disappear, replaced by:

Onisifor Ghibu Vladimir Nicoară, Ioan Slavici, Aurel Buteanu etc. In 1926 Sebastian Bornemisa published the resume "După zece ani", saying: "Cosânzeana felt the need for more evaluation into pure literature. Only a few ancient literary personalities remained its steadfast collaborators, it gathered its younger elements, which gave it an increasingly pronounced literary look"[7]. Bornemisa proposes reorganization, but this does not happen. Even if, in 1927 he brings D.I. Cucu as editor and the magazine switches to a large format, the progress isn't remarkable.

In conclusion, being held back by its former collaborators and unfortunately taking very little steps with the innovations produced by the new literary trends in the interwar climate, the magazine stagnated. It does not even reach pre-war levels, not to mention the situation of the new arising journals[8]. At the end of 1928, because it fell behind the post-war literary phenomenon and had no prestigious employees, "Cosanzeana" was forced to close the business.

"Gând românesc" was a cultural magazine, edited by ASTRA, published monthly under the direction of committee: editor Ion Chinezu, editorial secretary Olimpiu Boitoș. This occurred during May 1933 to April 1940. During this period, because of financial problems, it was published every two, three, four, six, or even eight months. Its editor, Ion Chinezu, scholar, essayist, literary critic and historian, with real vocation, had a decisive role in defining the literary renewal process time and the management of his expression in this journal[9].

The programmatic article of the first number entitled "Cuvânt înainte" had an even-minded tone about the position the publishing took: "Some people imagine that after correcting borders, we can leave ourselves to providential autonomy and the repetition of words, empty of free ego, can replace real effort. Among the most valuable, anticipating the development stages that constrained us, others withdraw in a splendid isolation, justified in countries with a secular tradition of cultural life, allowing without loss this subtle form of selfishness, unallowable by us, where everything needs to be done. The purpose of this magazine is to mobilize all the positive energy of Transylvania, to always bring to the surface the complex problems in this part of the country, to continue to update the "Astra" tradition. The time used for this is not wasted, the work done for this purpose is not a sacrifice: it is a simple and self-evident duty, to make life as individuals and as a nation have meaning and dignity"[10].

Ion Chinezu understood that a nation's literature should be the amount of local literature that evolves naturally refusing stagnation in a vain and harmful provincialism. Unlike the extremist era programs, that support growing regional themes or total denial of tradition, "Gând românesc" proposes the revealing of the truth that emerges from the present[11]: "We must have the courage, the respect, love and sense of contemporaneousness ...History is also the present for those who know how to approach the profound meaning around which the present is polarized"[12]. The magazine stands for changing attitudes towards the values of the past, for unleashing energies of young literary forces that will lead to the affirmation of the Transylvanian writing at an equal level with Romanian writing from everywhere and the universal literary phenomenon[13]. The magazine saw a need for continuity between old and new writing, a progress of Romanian Literature: "The new location is situating us, day by day, closer to Europe, bringing a lifetime of proportions beyond our habits of yore, it could not stay without repercussions in the heart of the youth, who are looking for new support, according to the new rhythm of life"[14]. "Gând românesc" published poetry and prose, theory, literary and historical

critique, studies of: ethnography, folklore, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, library science, pedagogy, sociology, economics, law, politics, history, geography and arts. Authors from all around the country are published here, but in the area of literature only the Transylvanian authors have priority. A large number of writers were published in these pages, many of them well established: Ion Agârbiceanu, Victor Papilian, Victor Ion Popa etc. It also encountered a number of translations of foreign literature, reviews found in the column “Revista revistelor”, comments of the nationalities’ creations and a series of articles on philosophy and aesthetics.

With the loss of some Transylvanian parts, in 1940, “Gând românesc” stopped working, but ideas will be further promoted in the “Transilvania” review from Sibiu, between March 1941 and April 1946 which had important collaborations from a number of well-known authors in “Gând românesc”.

The publishing fully understood its given moment to exist and directed it with a real vocation. The passing of the years did not minimize its role in the life of Romanian literary or the beneficial influences on Romanian writing[15].

“Societatea de mâine” was founded in Cluj by several representatives of the national culture, including Vasile Goldis, Ioan Lupas, Dimitrie Gusti, Gheorghe Bogdan-Duică and Onisifor Ghibu. It gathered all Transylvanian writers around it before the war, while collaborating with the “most important theorists of social and economic sciences from Bucharest”[16]. The magazine was published continuously for 22 years, first in Cluj (April 1924-February 1934) and then in Bucharest (March 1934-April 1945), as a weekly (1924-1927), bimonthly (1928-March 1932), monthly (April 1932-March 1936, 1942-1943), quarterly (in 1936-1941) or a biannual (1944) publication and it was ceased with the first issue in 1945, announcing the intention to move the editorial to Brasov[17]. “Societatea de mâine” attempted to address different topics of interest for Romanian society. The stated purpose was to be an organ of democracy, to fight for the freedoms and rights of the masses, the founders considering that the “The Romanian people can be better defended and helped to unravel the priceless treasures with which it was gifted, unless it is given a regime that would enable unrestrained outpouring of its energy ... Our unshaken faith is that the fundamental problem of our time is the issue of culture. It can only be unraveled by the sciences’ light”[18]. Although it partook in a tumultuous age, the magazine maintained its direction, that of democracy and progress, choosing collaborators exclusively by expertise in one area or another. A series of known and appreciated names were part of the editorial: Vasile Goldiș, Dimitrie Gusti, M. Popovici, Gh. Duică-Bogdan, Ioan Lupaș, Onisifor Ghibu, Vasile C. Osvadă, Radu Dragnea, Ion Clopoțel - editor (members of the editorial board) I. Agârbiceanu, D. Antal, A. Buteanu - editorial secretary, A. Cotruș, Ilie Cristea, V. Gherasim, N. Ghiulea, Ax. Iancu (collaborators). The magazine also had representatives in a number of cultural centers of the country: Oradea, Cernăuți, Arad, Blaj, Turda, Brașov, Ludaș, Lugoj, Timișoara, Carei, Făgăraș County, Sibiu, Tg. Mureș, Maramureș, Mehadia, Hațeg, Sf. Gheorghe, Cohalm, Beiuș and Secuime[19]. Even if at the first it focused on the locals’ problems then sought to spiritually unite Romanians in all provinces. The content of “Societatea de mâine” was determined and closely related to the work of its editor in chief, Ion Clopoțel. By reflecting the collaborators concernment for social reality research, the magazine inserted onto its pages a number of materials that vary in terms of content and the rigor of the analysis that had purely socio-graphical descriptions, and sociological studies, which intended to reveal social problems facing the Romanian society of the time, and develop solutions to

overcome them[20]. Programmatically, particular attention was paid to economical phenomena and the manifested processes in Romanian society at that time. "We would like the economical publications of this magazine, to reflect at least, glimpses of a lively and effective life of economic turmoil. We will avoid any possible economic construction forged from the writing desk or in the fantasy of a such and such dreamer or theorist. We want our writing to rise from the economic life itself of our people and not others"[21]. The political life was shown in the column "Actualități", being examined by a group of collaborators, amongst them: Onisifor Ghibu, Gh.Duică-Bogdan, Ioan Lupaș, Ion Clopoșel, Al. Ciura, N. Ghiulea. The publishing consistently reflected the international political activity of the time. Another item of the general staff interest was titled "Probleme sociale", where it presented and analyzed a number of problems of the Romanian society. These materials contained viable solutions for the public authorities, that were given by trained and competent people. These materials targeted issues such as: alcoholism, the alarming spread of venereal diseases, malnutrition, the unfavorable financial situation of intellectuals, the problem of abandoned children and orphans, women's situation in society, and Romanians' health. The contributors were interested in the people's cultural state, articles and studies devoted to scholarly and educational problems being found in "Învățământ-Educație". Although a firm publication anchored in the present, it referenced the past, the reason being that the past is used for understanding the present and for foreshadowing the future. Along with history, other scientific disciplines related to the study of social life contributed to the completion of the content of the magazine and sociology occupied an important place. The concern for science determined the management to initiate a debate on contemporary Romanian sociology. Although it was a socio-economic profile magazine, "Societatea de mâine" provided space for the sciences. Also the magazine imposed its status in interwar cultural journalism under "Pagini literare" and the poetry was most represented by: Aron Cotruș, Ecaterina Pitiș, Octavian Goga, and the creation in prose was signed by Al. Ciura, E. Isac, I. Munteanu, I. Agârbiceanu. Regarding the literary chronic, the columns were not limited to national literature, but were internationally extended. The artistic life was presented in "Societatea de mâine" by "Cronica muzicală", "Cronica dramatică", and "Cronica plastică". Another section was "Revista revistelor" which depicted the domestic and international intellectual movement.

"Societatea de mâine" was a highly acclaimed magazine in the interwar period, as demonstrated by the favorable "echoes" of the publishing at that time which were reproduced in its pages. "For the first time Transylvania had in its grasp a large extensive social research magazine"[22].

These magazines are just a small part of what the publishing phenomenon of interwar Cluj meant. It should be noted that the writings of several personalities of Cluj journalism can be found in the pages of various culture magazines. They had special training, many of them had other professions, journalism being just a manifestation of a passion for literature.

In the context of the Transylvanian press crisis, the newspapers were able to handle, as much as possible, contributing to an important cultural level of Cluj life and to identity formation in the interwar Romanian press. The press crisis was driven mainly by political and economic factors, because the cultural training of those who wrote many of these journals contributed to raising the Romanian press in Transylvania, and it must not be forgotten that many of these journals were read throughout Transylvania.

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