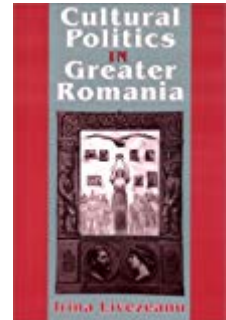


**Irina Livezeanu.** *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930.* Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. xx + 340 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8014-2445-8.



**Reviewed by** Jim Niessen

**Published on** HABSBUrg (February, 1996)

Studies of Romanian nationalism have focused mostly on their leading ideologists and political figures, such as the historian Nicolae Iorga and the founder of the Iron Guard, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. It is well known that their movements arose in the university milieu: Professor Iorga's before the First World War, and that of the student Codreanu in its aftermath. In contrast, the work under review places the nationalism of the interwar period solidly into the context of the state's educational policy. Of even greater interest for our readers, the author demonstrates that the challenge of integrating Romania's new regions (Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transylvania) decisively influenced educational policy and how students responded.

More than half of interwar Romania's population lived in the newly acquired territories, and more than one third in those annexed from the Dual Monarchy. Romanians predominated in the new territories, but not in their cities or educated elites. Livezeanu makes excellent use of the records of the Ministry of Education and the papers of its most influential interwar head, Con-

stantin Angelescu, in documenting the "cultural offensive" that sought to centralize, Romanianize, and expand the school system.

Also prominent in Livezeanu's account is the voice of Transylvanian educator Onisifor Ghibu, whose papers the author consulted in the home of his son in Bucharest. As a member of Transylvania's Directing Council and then Professor of Education at Cluj University, which he had helped Romanianize, Ghibu fulminated in his voluminous published and unpublished oeuvre on the need to advance Romanian culture through education, but also to respect local particularities in doing so. I would add that Ghibu's selective opposition to centralized, forced Romanianization reflected not only his regional bias, but the thesis of his 1910 Jena dissertation on the German school system in Alsace-Lorraine. He argued therein that it was pointless to force an alien language of instruction upon a homogeneous minority environment.

Local experiences bore Ghibu out. For instance, the author writes that

From the Romanian viewpoint...the linguistic balance in northern Bukovina did not swing

quickly and decisively enough from Ukrainian to Romanian. Although schools were massively Romanized on paper, many teachers could not actually speak the new language of instruction. (pp. 65-66)

Similar difficulties were encountered in Bessarabia, where Ghibu participated in the first efforts to train Romanian school teachers even before the end of World War I. Ghibu's testimony is most telling of all in the case of Transylvania. As an official he disapproved of the nationalization of the Romanians' own church-run primary schools. Fully aware of the vital role Romanian church schools had played before 1918, he campaigned vehemently against Hungarian confessional schools and religious orders, and indeed broke with his former mentor, Iorga, over the latter's acquiescence in the Concordat. Livezeanu uses the term *Kulturkampf* (pp. 172, 299) to refer to the government's Romanianization campaign. In one sense the analogy is helpful: as in Bismarck's Germany, the "culture war" served to galvanize the state apparatus in its work to consolidate the expanded country. For the state, however, this was not a struggle against Catholics. Ghibu would have liked it to become one. In this instance at least, centralist Bucharest proved more tolerant than the Hungarian- and German-educated Transylvanian.

Tables and graphs demonstrate the large numbers of non-Romanians in the leading cities of the newly acquired regions: most citizens of Cernauti/Czernowitz were Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles; most in Chisinau/Kishinev were Jews and Russians; most in the urban centers of Transylvania were Hungarians, Germans, and Jews. Educational and economic levels tell a similar story: the rural and uneducated masses were primarily Romanian; the pinnacles of society in the new territories were not. The architects of Habsburg electoral geometry, of course, were well aware of this and planned accordingly. Political incentives for educated Romanians to assimilate

late to the other nationalities disappeared after 1918, but the potential for cultural alienation seemed destined to remain because secondary and higher education were based in these urban centers. Romania cultural policy therefore directed special attention to the Romanianization of existing secondary schools and universities in the towns.

The core of the book is the portrayal of the encounter between Romanians of rural origin and the urban educational environment. An especially vivid evocation is from the pen of Ghibu, in which he recalls the anguish he experienced when his prewar Hungarian schoolmaster required him to exchange his peasant garb for bourgeois "German" or "European" clothes. Happily, a photo in the book of a village family presents precisely this contrast. Costume was far less an issue after 1918. Rural youth were hailed as the epitome and future of the nation, but were surprised to find well-prepared, relatively urbane Jewish or other minority fellow students over-represented in Romania's secondary schools and universities. Bukovina officials' attempt to correct this imbalance in the baccalaureate examinations of 1926 led to riots and the murder of one of the Jewish protesters by a Romanian student. After a heavily publicized trial in 1927, the jury acquitted the defendant after ten minutes' deliberation. The director of an Orthodox seminary in Edinita, Bessarabia led an anti-Semitic demonstration by his pupils (who are shown in a group photo taken the same year) in support of the shooting-- for which he was applauded in the national parliament.

The concluding chapters of the book home in on the immediate incubator of Romanian fascism, the universities and especially Iasi, site of both Iorga's and Codreanu's debut. Although the University of Bucharest was by far the largest in the country and the cities of Cluj and Cernauti more varied ethnically, Iasi had its own special features. Romania's political left was ascendant in the immediate postwar years, especially in Iasi with its

large Jewish population and student body and its still tenuous hold on Bessarabia threatened by Soviet Russia. Some Romanian authorities regarded the numerous Jewish immigrants from the north as communist infiltrators instead of refugees from Russian pogroms. They considered it a national duty to open the university to Bessarabians, yet only one third of these were ethnic Romanians and nearly half were Jews.

Codreanu's recourse to violence against Jewish organizations in 1921-22 initially drew his expulsion from the university, but then his reinstatement by the law school and his emergence as an increasingly popular student leader by the time he left Iasi for studies in Germany in June, 1922. Student anti-Semitism made its real breakthrough in the following years, through a nationwide wave of student strikes aimed at limiting Jewish enrollments (*numerus clausus*). The murder trial of one of Codreanu's associates in 1924 (he was undoubtedly guilty) revealed the breadth of the movement's popular appeal by this time. The government adjourned the trial once due to local sympathy for the accused, but the heavily publicized move to a town on the other side of the country still led to acquittal by the jury. As in the Russia of *narodnaia volia* or (some would say) the Los Angeles of 1995, the inconvenient jurors chose to make a political statement.

The author argues that the new generation of nationalists grew out of the determination of the authorities to create a new Romanian elite that would bind the disparate parts of the country together; the radicals approved of the effort, but resented its slowness and the reluctance of the authorities to challenge international guarantees for the minorities more directly. In his classic *Eastern Europe between the Wars 1918-1941* (1945; 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1967, p. 143), Hugh Seton-Watson wrote of the radical nationalists that "In Roumania the students were a simple instrument of the police." Livezeanu was evidently unable to consult police files. But "simple instru-

ment" is too strong because, as she demonstrates, the perceptions of many Romanians created their own social reality. Still, the suspicion of some official complicity with extremists throughout the interwar period is difficult to refute. The ultranationalists and their many influential intellectual supporters indeed contributed to the interwar integration of the nation; but their brief spell in the government in 1937 was a fiasco. It would appear therefore that their "integration" took place largely outside the exercise of power: it was a "negative integration" such as Dieter Groh hypothesized for the Social Democrats of Wilhelmine Germany (*Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus* (Frankfurt: Propylaen, 1973).

This work provides a needed investigation of the regional and educational environment in which the new generation of Romanian nationalists was formed, on the basis of archives in Romania, France, and Israel as well as a strong selection of periodical and secondary literature. It debunks Romanian assertions that the student movements were mostly leftist and devotes attention to the country's regional diversity that is too often lacking in such works. Students of nationalism, nationbuilding, and education throughout East Central Europe will profit from this important study.

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**Citation:** Jim Niessen. Review of Livezeanu, Irina. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*. HABSBURG, H-Net Reviews. February, 1996.

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