

## CHILDHOOD IN ROMANIAN CONTEXT: *LES PETITS DOROBANTS*\*

SILVIU HARITON

In the afternoon of 9 May 1905, King Carol and Queen Elisabeth of Romania went to the Cotroceni Palace of Bucharest. The Crown Prince Ferdinand and his well-known Princess Maria invited them to assist at a demonstration staged by a group of pupils, sons of peasants from the Department of Ilfov. The king reviewed the children carrying wooden rifles and dressed in military uniforms resembling those of the territorial infantry troops (Romanian: *dorobanți*). With Prince Carol, Ferdinand's son, as one of them, they executed movements similar to those designed for regular soldiers, they answered questions on 'soldier's theories' and, finally, they practiced target shooting. Mihail Vlădescu, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, and Petre Th. Sfetescu, Prefect of the Ilfov Department, were also present at the exercise. On the next day, the children participated in the military parade held every year on the occasion of the national day on 10 May.<sup>1</sup>

This was the beginning of a unique experiment that lasted several years and provoked many disputes in the Romanian society from the early twentieth century. These children were known by their contemporaries as *micii dorobanți* in Romanian or *les petits dorobants* in French. I prefer to keep the latter form for two reasons. Firstly, this form was used at that time for presenting it to non-Romanians and, secondly, there is a strong similarity between *les petits dorobants* and the French *bataillons scolaires*. The case of *les petits dorobants* is extremely relevant for understanding, on the one hand, the relationships between militarism, nationalism and (physical) education, and, on the other hand, the impact of education on children's condition as well as the attitudes towards children and youth in the Romanian context. While leaving the first aspect to the confines of a further paper, this article concentrates on the way children were treated in the 1870s, 1880s and early twentieth century in relation to the introduction of military instruction in schools. It argues that even if certain conceptualizations of childhood existed in Romania before the twentieth century, a certain sensibility and attitude towards children's supposed fragility and psychological distinctiveness had spread in the Romanian society only at the end of the nineteenth century.

---

\* This text is part of a larger paper on "Childhood, Education and Militarism in Romania (1870-1916)" presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> International Standing Conference for the History of Education held at Hamburg (25-28 July 2007). I thank Central European University and the ISCHE organizers for their financial support and Valentina Bratu for help with editing. The sources of the images are indicated and commented in the body of the text.

<sup>1</sup> "Monitorul Oficial," 12 May 1905, no. 32; *Lege pentru introducerea instrucțiunii militare obligatorii în școlile primare, secundare și profesionale publice și particulare române de băeți și modificările aduse în sesiunea extraordinară a corpurilor legiuitoare din maiu 1906 împreună cu regulamentul de aplicațiune și desbaterile urmate în corpurile legiuitoare cu ocaziunea votării acestei legi*, București, 1906, pp. 3-4.

### Childhood in the 'Old Kingdom' of Romania

*Centuries of childhood* hypothesis on the lack of a specific sentiment of childhood in the Middle Ages has influenced the development of a huge number of scholarly works on whether the sentiment of childhood existed or not before the Renaissance and on the plurality and diversity of childhood's conceptualizations in Western and non-Western areas throughout all periods of history.<sup>2</sup> However, as Hugh Cunningham has pointed out, few accounts seem to be concerned with the plurality of social groups in a certain society and with the co-existence of different sentiments towards children and of conceptualizations of childhood.<sup>3</sup> For the Romanian case, there are few historical surveys able to answer questions like how childhood was conceptualized before and after the Great War and when and how the mentalities concerning children changed in different regions according to social, religious and ethnic strata.<sup>4</sup>

Although there is not enough space to go into detail here, one can argue for Romanticism and its late impact on the Romanian context as a vehicle and paradigm for spreading a certain sensibility towards childhood (e.g. poems like Mihai Eminescu's *Fiind băiet păduri cutreieram* ...) in a time when popular literature was explored (e.g. Vasile Alecsandri, Petre Ispirescu, and others). In her essay on nineteenth century daily life, the literary historian Ioana Pârvulescu devoted a special chapter to the sentiments of fondness and tenderness shown towards their children by many representatives of the Romanian cultural and political elites.<sup>5</sup> However, the attitude of C. A. Rosetti and others who spent their youth in the French and German contexts is not representative for the entire Romanian society of the nineteenth century and not even for all the members of the elites. Consistent with Ariès' theory, Ioana Pârvulescu points to the grave attitudes that some children show in their poses while being photographed and how their clothes were copies of those of the adults. There are numerous accounts attesting the attitudes of the boyar families towards their children before westernization as a process started to be carried out in a systematic

<sup>2</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, New York, 1962. For a textual analytical approach to Ariès' 'present-mindedness,' divergences and inconsistency see Adrian Wilson, *The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès*, in "History and Theory," vol. 19, February 1980, no. 2, pp. 132-153, while for a more contextual approach see Richard T. Vann, *The Youth of Centuries of Childhood*, ibidem, vol. 21, May 1982, no. 2, pp. 279-297.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Histories of Childhood: Review Essay*, in "The American Historical Review," vol. 103, October 1998, no. 4, pp. 1195-1208.

<sup>4</sup> For a survey on the Romanian literature on the history of childhood see Luminița Dumănescu, *Transilvania copiilor. Dimensiunea demografică a copilăriei la românii ardeleni (1857-1910)*, Cluj, 2006, pp. 41-47. For the case of the Old Kingdom there are *Copilăria și adolescența altădată*, ed. by Mirela-Luminița Murgescu and Silvana Rachieru, București, 2003 and Adrian Majuru, *Copilăria la români. Schițe și tablouri cu prunci, școlari și adolescenți*, București, 2006. The first is an anthology of texts written by high school pupils that participated in a history contest, while the second is an attempt to offer a jigsaw image of childhood in interwar Bucharest. Both focus more on the interwar period and then after, rather taking for granted present conceptions of childhood.

<sup>5</sup> Ioana Pârvulescu, *În intimitatea secolului 19*, București, 2005, pp. 125-148.

way. For most of the cases, after the period of infancy, the children were treated rather as small adults free to do whatever they wanted if they did not upset their parents; they were tolerated around the household until they were able to establish their own families; they were brought up together with the servants, frequently beaten in order to make them listen and obey. For the case of the peasant families, most of the reports indicate the same treatment, children being prevented from going to school in order to help their parents in the household.

An argument against asserting that westernization was an important factor in the dissemination of a certain childhood sentiment derives from the case of Ion Creangă's *Amintiri din copilărie* (Childhood Memories), one of the first accounts of childhood in Romanian literature. However, together with his well-known stories, the four parts of *Amintiri din copilărie* were written for Junimea rather for documenting the Moldavian peasants' life, wisdom and the 'authentic' Romanian language. Creangă deals with childhood as the only period when he was in direct contact with village life. Further research is necessary in this regard. For instance, if one takes a glance at the images of children in Romanian paintings and at the development of Romanian literature written especially for children, one would observe that the representations of childhood and children in the space of the Romanian Old Kingdom are rather infrequent before the turn of the twentieth century. Ștefan Luchian is one of the first painters to include children in his works in the first decade of the twentieth century, while Nicolae Tonitza's numerous representations of children are drawn and/or painted only in the interwar period. Similarly, except the early works of Elena Farago, literary works written especially for children appear in Romanian only after the Great War, e.g. Cezar Petrescu's *Fram, ursul polar* (Fram, the Polar Bear), Ionel Teodoreanu's *În casa bunicii* (In the Grandparents' House). While children appeared in literary works before, as in I. L. Caragiale's *Mr. Goe*, these works were addressed to adult people and the case was similar with the literature that was later consigned to children and youth, e.g. the novels of Alexandre Dumas-père, Jules Verne and many others. This possible chronology may be confirmed also by the moment of appearance of the first folklore collections concerning or belonging to children, edited by Tudor Pamfile in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

This paper argues that the main factor in the spreading from the social and cultural elites to the other levels of the society of a certain sensibility towards childhood and children around the turn of the twentieth century was the implementation of the educational system sponsored by the state with its consequences on the proliferation of pedagogical theories, the need to start the education process at an early age, and the increasing role of education in improving one's life.

---

<sup>6</sup> Tudor Pamfile, *Jocuri de copii*, București, 1906; *Jocuri de copii. Memoriul al doilea*, București, 1907; *Jocuri de copii. Urmare la memoriile publicate în Analele Academiei Române*, București, 1909.

### Nationalism and Militarism in the 1870s and 1880s

*Les petits dorobants* are a part of a larger nineteenth century phenomenon of associating gymnastics and sports movements with nationalism and later militarism. The *Turnverein* movement, considered to be an important factor in the preparation of the Prussian victories of the 1860s, had several replicas in nineteenth-century Europe. One of these replicas was the *Sokol* movement within the Czechs, Slovaks and the Croats of the Habsburg Empire, a movement established in the 1860s and developed especially after the 1880s with branches even in Serbia and Bulgaria. The other important replica was the organization of *les bataillons scolaires* in the 1880s France alongside other sports activities.<sup>7</sup> The Romanian case is distinct from the German and Austrian contexts, being similar to some extent to the French case. In Romania, gymnastics played a minor role compared to the dimensions given to the proper military instruction. Further, the model of organization was identical to the French one since the educational system was largely inspired by the French.<sup>8</sup> However, the Romanian case precedes the French one with several years and it developed only under the direct impact of the Prussian victory over France in 1870, and of Japan over Russia in 1905.

In the 1870s Romania, military instruction in schools was seen as a way to prepare and fasten the proper military training during conscription. Article 65 of the 1868 law for military organization stipulated that military regulations were to be taught in every primary school.<sup>9</sup> What is the explanation for this provision in a military law? Military conscription was introduced in Romania in 1860 as an equal duty for all inhabitants and it represented an instrument of civic, religious and medical education for the 80% peasant population, for the most part illiterate.<sup>10</sup> According to the laws of military organization of 1864 and 1868, the

<sup>7</sup> Berit Elisabeth Dencker, *Popular Gymnastics and the Military Spirit in Germany, 1848-1871*, in "Central European History," vol. 34, December 2004, no. 4, pp. 503-530; Claire Nolte, *All for one! One for all! The Federation of Slavic Sokols and the Failure of Neo-Slavism*, in vol. *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, ed. by Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rosenblitz, New York, 2005, pp. 126-140; Eugen Weber, *Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-siècle France: Opium of the Classes?*, in "American Historical Review," vol. 76, February 1971, no. 1, pp. 70-98.

<sup>8</sup> Dimitrie Ionescu, *Istoricul gimnasticeii și educației fizice la noi*, București, 1939, pp. 20-24, 29-33, 67-69, and 83-85; Constantin Kirițescu, *Palestrica. O istorie universală a culturii fizice. Origini, evoluție, concepte, metode, probleme, împliniri*, București, 1964, pp. 530-531, 539-542. There are only a few accounts of *les petits dorobants* in the Romanian military historiography: Jipa Rotaru, Costică Prodan, *Pregătirea tineretului pentru apărarea patriei în perioada 1859-1918*, in vol. *Pregătirea tineretului pentru apărarea patriei. Tradiții și actualitate*, coord. by Dumitru Băscăneanu and Victor Năstăsescu, București, 1984, pp. 28-97; Dumitru Preda, *Măsuri de pregătire militară a populației*, in vol. *Istoria militară a poporului român*, vol. 5, București, 1988, pp. 228-232. The historical accounts on the history of education are concerned only with the institutional developments and therefore there is no mentioning of any children and/or youth while Maria Totu, *Garda civică din România*, București, 1976 is also quiet about this topic.

<sup>9</sup> Vasile Boerescu, *Codicile române seu colecțiune de toate legile României ... cu unu suplimentu în care intră toate legile administrative, militare și judiciare, toate decretetele și regulamentele celle mai noi și mai usuali, de la 1858 și până acum*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., București, 1873, p. 311.

<sup>10</sup> Silviu Hariton, *Conscripție militară și educație primară în România (1860-1900)*, in "Revista de istorie militară," 2003, no. 6, pp. 36-43.

Romanian army was organized on the Prussian model: the permanent army with its reserves, the so called territorial troops, divided after 1872 in cavalry units (Romanian: *călărași*) and infantry units (Romanian: *dorobanți*) with its reserves and the militia. The cultural and political affinities with France as well as the scarcity of material resources determined the Romanian government to adopt the system of *tirage au sort* as a form of preparing a solid army. Around a quarter of the available youth in their twenties were selected for the permanent army while the rest were supposed to do their military service in the territorial troops where they were trained for a week every month. Image 1 shows three soldiers from the territorial infantry troops, *les dorobants*.<sup>11</sup> Their white clothes represent the summer uniforms and their model served as a source of inspiration for the later uniforms of *les petits dorobants*.

France's defeat in the autumn of 1870 revealed the importance of the *Landwehr* in the Prussian army and reminded to some the provisions of the 1868 law for military organization. The Prefect of Roman, a department situated in the middle of Moldavia, was the first to try imposing the application of the article 65 in the schools from his area in the last months of 1870 but his measure was opposed by several directors of primary schools.<sup>12</sup> Initially, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction (MCIP) reacted reluctantly to the efforts of imposing military education in the state schools and it accepted the idea only after March 1871, when a Conservative government was formed.<sup>13</sup> For example, in 1872, the high school students from Bucharest were supposed to be trained in military techniques every Sunday at seven o'clock in the barracks of Dealu Spirei while the school directors were ordered to communicate the number of pupils.<sup>14</sup> In June 1873, MCIP convoked all trained pupils for a review in Cișmigiu Park for the first day of July, and used this occasion for insisting on the application of military training in schools.<sup>15</sup> In the same period, the school inspector (Romanian: *revizor școlar*) from the Gorj Department considered military instruction a way to bring more children to school, and therefore he proposed its extension to the primary schools from the rural area.<sup>16</sup> One year later, the commandant of the First Regiment of *Dorobants* was showing that the number of peasant people had doubled in the counties of Mehedinți, Dolj, Romanați and Olt as a consequence of this measure.<sup>17</sup>

Two types of problems were encountered. On the one hand, the military training on Sunday mornings was sometimes overlapping the religious service made compulsory for all pupils by the code of order and discipline applied in all schools. This type of problem is

<sup>11</sup> The source of the image is Cornel I. Scafeș, Horia VI. Șerbănescu, Corneliu M. Andonie, Ioan I. Scafeș, *Armata română în Războiul de Independență, 1877-1878*, București, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale – București (hereafter: DANIC), fund Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice (hereafter: MCIP), file 109/1871, f. 3.

<sup>13</sup> The government was led by Lascăr Catargiu (1871-1876). See Ion Bulei, Ion Mamina, *Guverne și guvernanți*, București, 1994, pp. 33-40.

<sup>14</sup> DANIC, fund MCIP, file 214/1872, ff. 4-6 and 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, file 210/1873, ff. 18-19, 21, 27, and 34.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, file 214/1872, f. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, file 210/1873, f. 4.

mentioned in many complaints addressed to MCIP and, as a consequence, MCIP decided that, during the winter, the pupils should first go to church, and then to the military training while, during the summer, things were to proceed the other way around.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, there was a strong need for military instructors to train the recruits and therefore there were not enough military instructors for pupils.<sup>19</sup> Parents signed no petition against the military instruction in schools, while the few protests signed by teachers argued against militarism in itself without referring to the children's and youth's situation.<sup>20</sup>

For this reason and maybe due to the lack of a systemic implementation, a special regulation was adopted in July 1874, signed both by Ioan Emanuel Florescu as Minister of War and Titu Maiorescu as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, and approved by all the members of the Council of Ministers. According to this regulation, pupils from the state schools were supposed to be trained in basic military techniques after the age of thirteen, and in target shooting after the age of fifteen, in two weekly meetings to be established according to the local conditions. The pupils were to receive uniforms similar to those of the *dorobants* and to be grouped in battalions with their own flag at official and school celebrations.<sup>21</sup>

Since the prefects of every county were supposed to report on their activity every month, one gets the impression that military instruction was systematically applied in the few years before the Russian-Turkish War (1877-1878).<sup>22</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa recalls both Constantin I. Istrati and himself participating in these military trainings.<sup>23</sup> A student in medicine at that time, Istrati later became a promoter of gymnastics and military instruction in schools, and an important member of the Conservative Party and minister in several governments.<sup>24</sup> During and especially after this war, the War of Independence for the Romanians, a military fashion had spread in the Romanian society being documented by the cultural historian Adrian-Silvan Ionescu. Image 2 is an example of the military fashion for children that was to last several decades.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, file 214/1872, ff. 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, file 122/1874, ff. 92-95, 101, 104, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, file 210/1873, ff. 30, 36, and 63; file 122/1874, ff. 70, 72, and 90. Broadly speaking, the majority of the teaching staff at that time tended to be Francophile and Liberal. In a report to the King on the state of the education, Titu Maiorescu showed that many of them were also state functionaries in a time when the Liberals used to extend the bureaucracy while the Conservatives always tried to limit the state expenses. Ibidem, file 105/1875, ff. 3-12.

<sup>21</sup> Vasile Boerescu, *Appendice la Codicile Romane coprinzendu tote legile, decretetele și regulamentele de la 1873 până la aprilie 1875*, București, 1875, p. 258.

<sup>22</sup> DANIC, fund MCIP, files 122/1874, 100/1875, 110/1876, and 210/1877. After 1878 the archives of MCIP are incomplete and no files on military problems appear up to the 1900s.

<sup>23</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, vol. I 1871-1884, București, 1927, pp. 119-121 and 180.

<sup>24</sup> C. I. Istrati, *Mens sana in corpore sano. Considerațiuni asupra importanței și necesității gimnastice din punctul de vedere igienic și social în școalele de ambe sexe, în armată, la diferite etăți ale vârstei și ca mijloc therapeutic în căutarea a diverse maladii*, București, 1880.

<sup>25</sup> Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Modă și societate urbană în România epocii moderne*, București, 2006. Image 2 is from p. 241. Special chapters deal with the uses of the uniforms in the Romanian society, sport fashion, children's fashion and, relevant for the topic of this article, children's military fashion where *les petits dorobants*

The military instruction continued after the war, uniforms and rifles for the pupils being distributed by Carol Davila, the president of the Romanian Society for Target Shooting.<sup>26</sup> *Les petits dorobants* were present at official ceremonies.<sup>27</sup> In 1885 there were fifteen schools in Bucharest where military instruction was taught by Constantin Dimitrescu, who was active for several decades in this posture.<sup>28</sup> A first textbook dates from 1880<sup>29</sup> while a more serious and technical textbook for gymnastics and military instruction dates from 1885.<sup>30</sup> The military instruction was kept as a part of the curriculum of the “normal school” designed to train teachers, being mentioned by Spiru Haret in his 1884 report on the state of public education,<sup>31</sup> while the military laws insisted that children should be familiarized with the military legislation. Later, until the beginning of the twentieth century, the sources are rather quiet, but the military instruction was mentioned by every law concerning the educational system: primary schools, high schools, and even universities.

### **‘The Japan of Europe’: The Militarization of the Romanian Schools in the 1900s**

The small battalion of *les petits dorobants*, presented to the royal family on 9 May 1905, was prepared in the previous years by Captain Ioan Chirițescu (1853-1913), who got his first medal and became a major as a reward. A volunteer at the age of sixteen, Chirițescu had worked his way up the ranks without graduating any formal education, and in his early fifties was a reserve officer in the territorial infantry troops from Ilfov County.<sup>32</sup> Here, he started training groups of peasant children in military techniques and dressing them in uniforms similar to those of the *dorobants*. His initiative was received with some enthusiasm among the children he gathered given that military fashion was so widely spread among the boys from the upper classes while the white uniforms of the *dorobants* offered them distinction (Image 3).<sup>33</sup>

---

were used. See also A.-S. Ionescu, *Costumele populare și militare în moda copiilor din secolul al XIX-lea*, in “Revista muzeelor,” 1990, no. 1, pp. 36-47.

<sup>26</sup> C. I. Istrati, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-97.

<sup>27</sup> *Calendarul resboiului. Cu multe ilustrații*, București, [1881], pp. 78-79.

<sup>28</sup> *Documente privind istoria militară a poporului român (iulie 1878 – noiembrie 1882)*, București, 1974, pp. 77-79; D. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 51, footnote 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Prisonierul sau resbelele în miniatură și gimnastica pentru școlarii tuturor claselor din țară (jocuri pentru copii)*, ed. by I. Alexe, București, 1880; A.-S. Ionescu, *Modă și societate urbană*, p. 231.

<sup>30</sup> Ioan Protopopescu, *Manualul de gimnastică și instrucție militară pentru usul școalelor primare, secundare, normale, de meserii și comerciale, regimentare și militare, cu figuri și tablou gimnasticii din text*, Ploești, 1885.

<sup>31</sup> Spiru Haret, *Raport asupra învățământului secundar*, in vol. *Operele lui Spiru Haret*, vol. I, București, a. o., p. 136.

<sup>32</sup> *Anuarul armatei române pe anul 1905, cuprinzând toate mutațiile făcute până la 16 decembrie 1904 inclusiv*, București, 1905, p. 750.

<sup>33</sup> G. Iannescu, *Armata română. Ce a fost, ce este, ce ar putea să fie. Studii de organizațiune militară. I. Generalități. Infanteria*, București, 1906, pp. 304-307. Image 3 is taken from Constantin Ștefănescu-Justin, *Manualul micului dorobanț. Zicători, proverbe și poeme patriotice în versuri pentru uzul claselor primare, urbane și rurale*, București, 1905, p. 17.

The Japanese imminent victory over the Russians in their war of 1904-1905 stirred a wave of enthusiasm in the Romanian public sphere. The anti-Russian feelings had been strong, especially since the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 when Russia had ignored her previous agreements with Romania and when, at the end of the war, the Russian troops hardly left for home. Next to the example of the Boers in 1899-1902, the Japanese victories over Russia were seen to prove the importance of 'moral training,' which is convincing soldiers of the justice of the cause they were fighting for, in containing and even reversing on the battlefields the superiority of a Great Power in material and human resources.<sup>34</sup> A conference held by Alexandru D. Xenopol best illustrates the type of Social Darwinism that dominated many of the Romanian elites and especially the military establishment. 'The survival of the fittest' and a violent competition for resources and/or survival were seen as a kind of 'smart thinking,' while war was considered the 'natural' state of humankind. Peace and international cooperation were dismissed as socialist utopia, and history since Antiquity was invoked as the source for this argumentation.<sup>35</sup>

A Conservative government had just been installed in December 1904, two out of its six members holding military ranks.<sup>36</sup> In this political context, after many people cheered *les petits dorobants* while King Carol stressed the necessity of military instruction in schools in his message to the Parliament, a law on introducing military instruction in all public and private schools for boys from the third grade on was adopted in early March 1906.<sup>37</sup> According to this law, a General Inspectorate for Military Instruction in Schools (IMGS), subordinated to MCIP, was in charge with the implementation of the law and the supervision of military instruction in schools. A special network of military school inspectors (Romanian: *revizori militari școlari*) recruited from the retired officers according to a supplementary law adopted in June 1906 was established next to the MCIP's network of school inspectors.<sup>38</sup> The IMGS supervisors were grouped in five regions with the center at Iași, Galați, Constanța, Bucharest, and Craiova, according to the military organization of then Romania. The military instructors were regular people from the territorial troops, and this was one of the main points of criticism. They were supposed to be trained every year in a summer

<sup>34</sup> On the context of the first decade of the twentieth century see Ion Bulei, *Lumea românească la 1900*, București, 1984 and Idem, *Atunci când veacul se năștea ... lumea românească 1900-1908*, București, 1990. For a corrosive ironical view on the model of Japan see Al. V. Urechia, *Meliția în școală: conferință ținută la Ateneu în seara de 30 decembrie 1906*, București, 1907.

<sup>35</sup> Alexandru D. Xenopol, *Congresul sociologic din Londra și organizarea militară a școalelor din România*, in "Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice," 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. XXIX, 1906-1907, pp. 273-295. An example of this type of discourse that dominated most of the military elites is Mihail Goruneanu, *Instrucția și educația militară în școalele de toate gradele*, București, 1907.

<sup>36</sup> General Iacob Lahovary was the Minister of Foreign Affairs while General George Manu was the Minister of War. I. Bulei, I. Mamina, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-123.

<sup>37</sup> See footnote 1. The law was published also in "Buletinul Oficial MCIP," year XI, vol. XIII, 1/15 July 1906, no. 257, pp. 5710-5733 and 5752-5777; *Instrucțiuni necesare la aplicarea legii și regulamentului pentru introducerea instrucției militare obligatoare în școalele publice și particulare române de băeți*, București, 1906, published also in "Buletinul Oficial MCIP," year XI, vol. XIII, 1/15 November 1906, no. 261, pp. 5901-5910.

<sup>38</sup> DANIC, fund Parlament, file 1401, ff. 324-345.



camp, but the army sent many people either violent and recalcitrant or illiterate and did not send others to replace them. They were supervised by around one hundred and twenty lower ranks or retired officers who were receiving monthly salaries which were double the teachers' salaries. MCIP later designed special instructions for them, asking that children should be treated more carefully in comparison with the young recruits from the barracks.<sup>39</sup>

What were the aims of this military education? According to the motivation presented by Mihail Vlădescu, the aims of the physical education through gymnastics and military instruction were to strengthen the bodies of the future soldiers; to accustom them with 'order' and 'punctuality'; and to fulfill one's duties, and obey and respect (State) authority. An envisioned outcome for the near future was the much debated reduction of the military service from three to two years.<sup>40</sup> Special textbooks were dedicated to the 'moral training.' Next to a book of poems and songs,<sup>41</sup> two other textbooks were issued. The first, authored by Chirițescu himself, concerned the proper military instruction,<sup>42</sup> while the second, authored by George Coșbuc, was designed for military and nationalistic education. This military education was considered one of the three pillars of nation-building next to the Orthodox religion preached by the priests and lay knowledge disseminated through the state schools. Image 4 symbolically grouped a priest, a teacher, and an officer with several *petits dorobants*.<sup>43</sup>

The military instruction in 1905-1906 enjoyed some popularity with children and donations in money and uniforms were relatively numerous while support for the initiative came also from some of the teachers and professors.<sup>44</sup> More significantly, during the autumn of 1906, military instruction in urban schools was sometimes interrupted by groups of people who assisted at it, as in the case of a school situated on Kiseleff Boulevard in Bucharest.<sup>45</sup>

### Childhood and Education in the Public Sphere and in the Reactions from Below

The implementation of the law on introducing military instruction in schools was carried out without any preliminary survey of an estimated budget, like most of the other measures taken at that time. Most of the people welcomed it in the beginning, but soon signs of opposition from the teaching staff, parents, and even the children started to appear. These reactions should be placed against the background of a patriarchal society, where a

<sup>39</sup> *Deslușiri pentru instructorii urbani și rurali*, in "Buletinul Oficial MCIP," year XI, vol. XIII, 1/15 November 1906, no. 261, pp. 5911-5914.

<sup>40</sup> DANIC, fund Parlament, file 1387, ff. 331-341.

<sup>41</sup> Constantin Ștefănescu-Justin, *Manualul micului dorobanț*.

<sup>42</sup> I. Chirițescu, *Manualul regulamentar practic și teoretic al exercițiilor de infanterie*, București, 1907.

<sup>43</sup> George Coșbuc, *Ostașul. Calitățile și virtuțile militare trebuincioase școlarului român*, București, 1906. The book had another edition in 1907. The image is from p. 72 of the 1907 edition.

<sup>44</sup> For donations see DANIC, fund Inspectoratul Militar General Școlar (hereafter: IMGS), file 23/1906. For the support of the teaching staff see George A. Cosmovici, *Instrucția militară în școlile noastre*, Tg. Neamțu, 1906.

<sup>45</sup> DANIC, fund IMGS, file 3/1906, f. 21.

strong attitude of respect for the authorities and people with any form of power usually inhibited the formal protests of the people. The peasant population was usually not aware of the ways to use the judicial system, while the others preferred to use their social networks for easing their situation.

In the public sphere, the most active opponent who also set the tone against the military instruction in schools was Spiru C. Haret. He was a Liberal who started to reform the educational system during his first term as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction (1897-1899) and continued his work during the other two terms in office (1901-1904 and 1907-1910). His reforms aimed to make possible a real access to primary education for the rural population, which represented almost eighty percent of then Romania. Next to several measures taken to help the peasants to buy land, he aimed to imprint a pragmatic vision on the role of education, insisting on a curriculum that emphasized skills (e.g. handicrafts that were largely unknown to most of the peasants) and on keeping the school materials affordable to the poor people. The teachers who were trained since the 1870s in specialized schools modeled on the French *écoles normales* were invested with the job to enlighten the poor people mainly through extra curricular activities. Haret created journals like "Revista generală a învățământului" and "Semănătorul," organized annual conferences and congresses for teachers, and encouraged touring lectures (Romanian: *atheneuri populare*) that helped him to explain his program, to foster the exchange of ideas and the debates on different relevant topics. He used to answer in detail to the letters sent by teachers looking for advice and, together with the positive role he offered to their mission, this made him extremely popular with the teaching staff, his program of reform being named "Haretism." A strong nationalism was his main reason for implementing social reforms, and this is why and how his program was seen and accepted by the political and cultural elites.<sup>46</sup>

Most of the criticism I found is taken from the "Revista generală a învățământului." The anti-militarism of Haret and his followers meant not an opposition to nationalism but to the subordination of civil life to military authorities. To some extent, this anti-militarism is very much influenced by the French one peaked by Émile Zola's *J'accuse*, and at the same time based on the experiences from the Romanian context, where the lower ranks were considered extremely violent and uneducated. On the one hand, literary works like Anton Bacalbașa's *Moș Teacă* (1893) and *Din viața militară* (1895) and Mihail Sadoveanu's *Amintirile căprarului Gheorghică* (1905) already gave voice and at the same time fostered the opinions on the military experiences of many Romanian intellectuals of the time. On the other hand, this anti-militarism was not shared by all the members of the teaching staff. For example, the pupils were not allowed at that time at the circuses. After showing that a pupil under discussion was not from his institution, the director of a high school was stating in

---

<sup>46</sup> For the context see I. Bulei, *Atunci când veacul se năștea*, pp. 82-96, while for a biography of Haret see Gh. Adamescu, *Biografia lui Spiru Haret*, in vol. *Operele lui Spiru Haret*, vol. I, pp. iii-lxvi; several examples of his nationalism are compiled in M.-L. Murgescu, *Spiru Haret și educația națională în școala românească*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj-Napoca," XXXIV, 1995, pp. 237-246.

early 1907 that “the best procedure to follow by officers and/or authorities was to arrest immediately all the delinquent pupils in order to serve as an example to the others.”<sup>47</sup>

Early in October 1906, George Bogdan-Duică published an article in which he was mocking the nationalism and lack of pedagogical knowledge showed by A. D. Xenopol in his conference delivered at the congress of the teaching staff of that year.<sup>48</sup> Starting from the same month, the military instruction was effectively introduced in schools and based on the direct experience of the first lesson given at the primary school where he was teaching, Ștefan Kirițescu emphasized and criticized the lack of education, especially pedagogical, of the instructors and their inspectors who often had only two or three classes of primary school.<sup>49</sup> The same criticism was employed by Ermil Pangrați in his evaluation of the activity of Mihail Vlădescu at MCIP, Vlădescu being replaced by Constantin Dissescu in November 1906.<sup>50</sup>

The most incisive criticism came from Spiru Haret. In a first article of November, he accused the militarization of the schools visible in the children’s obligation to wear military grades; he showed that school curriculum was disorganized due to its subordination to the military training, and as a consequence the hours were shortened to make space for the new subject of study. From Haret’s point of view, sources of risk for the children were the behavior of the military trainers and their lack of pedagogy, or rather the use of a ‘non-rational’ pedagogy, as Haret called it. The pupils had to learn by heart military regulations which they would forget by the time of conscription. They were not explained the physical movements in a simple, logical and easy to follow manner. Furthermore, as Haret tells it, when the children were not able to reproduce exactly what they had been taught, they were put in jail or forced to kneel down and stay with the eyes against the sun or slapped in their faces, or punched by the military instructors from several schools. When a pupil complained about this treatment, the military instructor answered that he cursed the entire class and not that particular pupil!<sup>51</sup>

In a second article of January 1907, which is a statement of his vision of school as an agency of nation-building, Haret bewailed the teachers who were supposed to teach the Romanian identity. He insisted on the lack of practical utility of the military instructors, who were far overpaid in comparison with the teachers and with their pedagogical and intellectual competences.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the military inspectors were paid sometimes double in comparison with a regular teacher who had to pass through at least eight years of formal education, while most of the military instructors had only two or three grades. In 1899-1901 Romania went through a severe financial crisis, and as a consequence all state salaries

<sup>47</sup> DANIC, fund IMGS, file 3/1906, f. 73.

<sup>48</sup> G. Bogdan-Duică, *Pedagogie militărească*, in “Revista generală a învățământului” (hereafter: RGI), 2<sup>nd</sup> year, October 1906, no. 3, pp. 190-197. See footnote 35 for Xenopol’s published conference.

<sup>49</sup> Ștefan Kirițescu, *Instructorii militari la școalele primare*, ibidem, November 1906, no. 4, pp. 250-252.

<sup>50</sup> Ermil A. Pangrați, *Fostul ministru [Mihail Vlădescu]*, ibidem, December 1906, no. 5, pp. 297-304.

<sup>51</sup> Spiru C. Haret, *Militarizarea școlilor*, ibidem, December 1906, no. 5, pp. 304-309.

<sup>52</sup> Idem, *Școala naționalistă*, ibidem, January 1907, no. 6, pp. 369-379. This text was re-edited as a separate brochure as well.

were reduced by ten to twenty percent, including those of the teachers, which were already the smallest in the framework of state bureaucracy. During the summer and autumn of 1906, many teachers asked that military training should be delegated to them since they had already received the necessary training at the Romanian *écoles normales*.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, in a third article of February, Haret continued his criticism of the negative impact of military instruction on the school attendance of the peasants' children, underlining the high costs of uniforms and textbooks, the brutality and lack of 'rationality' of the military instructors, as well as the negative impact on the children's behavior, who started mocking school discipline and authority and even the military training in itself.<sup>54</sup> Most of this criticism was real since graduation was initially conditioned by the participation in this military training, and this participation was also conditioned by the acquisition of uniforms and textbooks, which resulted in low school attendance of the poor peasants' children. For example, following the introduction of uniforms in November 1906, a widow of Măcin showed in February 1907 that she was too poor to afford the uniforms, and therefore her two sons were not allowed to continue their classes, the following step being expulsion from school.<sup>55</sup> Also, children's promotion was changed from competence in school curriculum to competence in military training, which made the rest of the school curriculum look rather useless, while many times the classes were disrupted by the military inspectors who used to come unannounced and order a front formation in the schoolyards. In April 1907, the school inspector of Prahova was showing that the military supervisor alongside his subordinates had the custom to suspend the lessons and the normal activities during his inspection. Only in October that year the military school inspectors were ordered to stop such practices.<sup>56</sup> Especially in the countryside, many instructors found no other way to control the children but physical violence, and the Prefect of Vlașca was showing in December 1906 that in the village of Blejești a child had died most probably because of the beatings suffered from the military instructor, while many others had fallen ill with cold because of the frosty weather.<sup>57</sup>

Other arguments or presentation of cases came from Dr. Alecsandru V. Urechia, the son of a former Minister of Cults and Public Instruction.<sup>58</sup> The numerous reactions of the teachers and professors, negative towards the military instruction in schools, should be placed in the context of debate. For example, in January 1907, the director of the primary school of Bușteni was asking the reduction of the number of hours dedicated to the military instruction from about one hundred and twenty lessons in three years to only several tens. This number of hours was the period of time that was necessary in 1906 to train the children

<sup>53</sup> DANIC, fund IMGS, file 2/1906, f. 76; fund MCIP, file 837/1907, ff. 3-6 and 48-50, etc.

<sup>54</sup> Spiru C. Haret, *Militarismul școlilor*, in RGI, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, February 1907, no. 7, pp. 449-457.

<sup>55</sup> DANIC, fund MCIP, file 837/1907, f. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, f. 55.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, f. 61.

<sup>58</sup> Al. V. Urechia, *Instrucția militară*, in RGI, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, February 1907, no. 7, pp. 508-510; Idem, *Meliția în școală*, loc. cit.; V. Mândru, *Militarizarea școalelor*, in RGI, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, May 1907, no. 10, pp. 711-712; Leon C. Cosmovici, *Patria. Educațiunea fizică, morală, intelectuală și militarismul școlar, sau națiunea armată*, Iași, 1906; *Militarizarea școalelor*, s.l., [1908].

from his school in order to participate in the festivities dedicated to the 1906 Jubilee and even welcome Karl Lueger, the mayor of Vienna, during his visit at Sinaia in June 1906. The same director was arguing that “when they enter school, the peasants’ children aged seven are not physically developed enough to face the school schedule that asks for body and intellectual discipline,” and therefore military instruction was even more ineffective and it represented a heavy burden for the children.<sup>59</sup> A teacher from the primary school of Păușești from the Department of Vâlcea said that children were too small, and military instruction tired them considerably, so they could not prepare for the rest of the classes.<sup>60</sup> Similar views were expressed also by a group of professors from Gh. Șincai High School of Bucharest in February 1907. The military instruction represented a burden for the pupils since it physically exhausted them and predisposed them to get sick much easier; being exhausted, they were unable to prepare properly for the classes, and the agglomeration of the classes in the morning and the reduction of the class period to make room for the military instruction affected children’s capacity to learn even during the classes.<sup>61</sup>

How did the parents and even the children react? Some of them chose to use medical reasons to exempt their children, as the Socialist leader Ioan Nădejde did for his son Horea in November 1906.<sup>62</sup> Such means were probably used by many other parents, but their files may not have been kept because they were not so well known as Nădejde. Only a few protested in a formal way, as it was the case with the director of the post office of Tulcea, who was showing in a petition to IMGS of early March 1907 that his son had been slapped in the face and had had his ears pulled by the military instructor Dumitrescu Mărășanu, who had also cursed him and his family.<sup>63</sup> The differences in mentalities, social background, and education resulted also in protests from the pupils. For example, in December 1907, three pupils in the last year of the high school of Piatra-Neamț were accused by their military instructor of ‘debauchery,’ lack of respect, and defiance of authority. The pupils had gone to the theater, and in the first pause they were reading a newspaper crossed-legged and coats unfastened. The instructor reported that after he had approached them and asked what they were doing, they not only failed to revise their behavior but answered that ‘they were reading to see and know what was happening around the world,’ a reference to the instructor’s ignorance. The instructor was asking for measures to be taken since this was the second such case at his high school.<sup>64</sup>

After the great peasant revolt of March 1907, a Liberal government was established with the support of the Conservatives. Spiru Haret became once again Minister of Cults and Public Instruction. As a sign of his attitude towards the military instruction under the

---

<sup>59</sup> DANIC, fund MCIP, file 837/1907, ff. 7 and 47.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, f. 9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, file 1944/1907, ff. 20 and 25.

<sup>62</sup> DANIC, fund IMGS, file 3/1906, f. 42.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem, file 93/1907, ff. 29-30.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, file 103/1907, ff. 38-39, 43, and 47-48. The investigation took four months and resulted in the expulsion for three months of the involved pupils.

supervision of IMGS, the Inspectorate disappeared as a distinct division from “Buletinul Oficial al MCIP,” while Haret did everything he could to polish the attitude of the military instructors. The uniforms and the grading of pupils for participating in military instruction were abandoned, the acquisition of the special books was not compulsory anymore, the number of the sub-officers subordinated to IMGS was reduced by approximately ten percent, while further camps for training the military instructors were not anymore accepted. At the same time no further criticism was published in “Revista generală a învățământului.”

The situation could not change much, since many local authorities still supported the idea of children in uniforms parading during the official festivities. For the military parade of 10 May 1907, the Romanian national day up to the 1940s, there were discussions on whether *les petits dorobants* should participate or not. MCIP decided that only the urban schools should participate, while the military authorities decided after many hesitations that children should not participate at all. Still, the prefects of Botoșani, Neamț, Tulcea, and Vlașca did not apply any of these decisions.<sup>65</sup>

In these conditions, MCIP tried to get feedback from the teaching staff. In May 1907, MCIP asked the vocational schools about the way in which the military instruction was implemented. The reports from the schools of Buzău and Bucharest pointed at the lack of education of the military instructors, while the report from Suceava insisted on the instructor’s “barrack-room language full of obscenity and curses” and his bad behavior.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, several petitions were signed by peasants. Several came from the Department of Neamț. In May 1907, a first petition came from fifty-two peasants from Bărgăoani, thirty of them being able to sign themselves and the rests being unable. This petition seems to have been written by the local teacher, the argument being that children will forget what they have learned in the period between primary school and the moment of serving in the army. Another petition was from Mărgineni. Signed by nine peasants, five signing with their names and the rest with crosses, their petition was asking MCIP to rescue them from the ‘calamity’ of military instruction in schools. Their children were kept standing for several hours after the end of the regular classes, and therefore they got sick, because ‘they are little,’ and they did not recover in less than three days when they were taken back to the instruction. Being sick they could not go to school, and consequently they could not receive a good education. ‘For a little while they do not want to go to instruction anymore, so we are fined.’ Finally, a third petition belonged to twenty-three peasants from Borlești, who were illiterate since they all signed with crosses. They were showing that instruction was carried out on frosty weather, between 1 and 3 o’clock in the afternoon. Because they were poor, their children were forced to do the instruction barefoot and bare head, and therefore they were falling ill with cold. Military instruction was considered useless and even harmful, also for the reason that “some functionaries are paid from our work,” an argument that most probably belonged to the teacher who wrote the petition.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, file 77/1907, ff. 103-106, 108-109, 114, 116-118, 120, and 122-123.

<sup>66</sup> Idem, fund MCIP, file 1156/1907, ff. 49, 65, and 68.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, file 837/1907, ff. 24-26.

Even if these petitions were thought out and written by the teachers, this does not mean that the problems facing the children were not real. Regardless of the extent to which these problems were real, what is relevant for this paper is not only that children's condition was used as an argument but also that this argument was fostered under the influence of the teachers. The writing of petitions continued, but none of them signaled any such serious problems, most probably as a consequence of Haret's efforts to control the situation and limit the influence of IMGS.

A new law on the military organization was designed by Alexandru Averescu in 1908 to be applied from the autumn of the respective year, most probably as a consequence of the peasants' revolt of 1907, but also with the aim to make useless the military instruction in schools.<sup>68</sup> The major change consisted in the disappearance of the *dorobants*, which meant the transformation of the territorial regiments into permanent units, so that every male should go through the military service and be trained in military techniques. High school pupils were to continue the exercises of target shooting as it happened in France where *les sociétés de tir* became widespread.<sup>69</sup> Since territorial troops did not exist anymore, there was a lack of instructors in every locality.

In November 1908, Spiru Haret asked the opinion of the teaching body on the effectiveness and usefulness of military instruction in schools.<sup>70</sup> The military school inspector of Neamț informed IMGS about this survey adding that he had already instructed his subordinates 'to take measures even' (!) against those known as opposing military instruction in schools, and to determine them to declare that military instruction infuses children with energy.<sup>71</sup> As a consequence, IMGS asked the military school inspector of Ilfov to report on the difficulties faced by the military instructors. This report shows the initial support from the school directors who used to attend the lessons and see that the children did not miss the classes. The remaining support was estimated at only one third of the body of the teaching staff.<sup>72</sup> This estimation is largely confirmed by a survey of the several thousand letters sent to MCIP by the primary school teachers and secondary school professors. Many of them, in their large majority from primary schools from the rural areas, praised the military instruction for disseminating and/or fostering order and discipline among the pupils. The pupils were supposed to become more punctual and respectful not only at school but also at home. Furthermore, they insisted on the spread of the children's games influenced by the military instruction. Still, most of the answers coming in their large majority from the urban schools, but also from the rural areas, reiterated the criticism of the lack of education of the military instructors visible in their language and behavior; the children's

---

<sup>68</sup> *Lege pentru organizarea armatei cu desbaterile din Cameră și Senat*, București, 1908.

<sup>69</sup> *Préparation au service militaire des élèves des écoles. Guide manuel destiné aux sociétés d'instruction et de tir; aux élèves de toutes les écoles françaises; aux professeurs et instituteurs; aux instructeurs militaires des lycées et collèges*, Paris, 1908.

<sup>70</sup> DANIC, fund MCIP, file 1019/1908, f. 68.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, fund IMGS, file 103/1908, f. 237.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, file 203/1909, ff. 8-12.

condition affected by the heavy burden of physical activity; the mocking of any authority by pupils who tended to behave violently in both verbal and physical ways, terrorizing their colleagues and sometimes people in the streets. The former category of accounts is usually short, maybe influenced by the military inspectors, while the latter accounts are quite developed and their argument is complex.<sup>73</sup>

### Later Developments: Scouting and ‘Straja Țării’

There is no doubt that the results of the November 1908 survey on the effectiveness of the military instruction were used by Spiru Haret to convince the King and the political leaders to dismantle IMGS. A law dissolving the IMGS was adopted in February 1909 after long discussions, including on Chirițescu’s tax dodging.<sup>74</sup> However, target shooting and teaching the military regulations in high schools, commercial schools and teachers’ training schools continued especially in the urban areas where officers were available from the local units. For example, one hour was devoted every week at the Superior Commercial School of Galați and at the Evangelical schools of Bucharest, while a Captain Velciu Anghel was teaching at the “National” High School of Iași since April 1909.<sup>75</sup> The officers were appointed by the Ministry of War with the agreement of MCIP.<sup>76</sup> In 1910 a special curriculum was prepared for these schools, and Haret asked for inclusion of the theoretical information and for expansion of the practical training in target shooting, about 4,000 pupils aged fourteen to eighteen being trained in the school year of 1909-1910.<sup>77</sup> After 1912, the military instruction remained compulsory only for those who were going to become teachers.<sup>78</sup>

The principles of military organization and the emphasis on physical training were present after 1913 in the activities of the Romanian Boy Scouts. Set up after Gheorghe Munteanu-Murgoci had traveled to England in 1911, it emphasized sports, camping, and other forms of outdoor activities during the summer. It was based on a voluntary adhesion which assured a large popularity to its activities. Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* was translated into Romanian in 1915, and a special journal “Cercetașul” served as the medium of communication. The Boy Scouts movement continued to be active in the interwar period and reached its heyday in the 1930s, when it was placed under the authority of the National Office for Physical Education (ONEF). A Girl Scout organization was set up in 1929, while

<sup>73</sup> Idem, fund MCIP, files 1020, 1022, 1023, 1024, and 1025, all from 1908.

<sup>74</sup> Idem, fund Parlament, file 1476/1909, ff. 34-72.

<sup>75</sup> Idem, fund MCIP, file 1122/1909, ff. 3-4 and 29; *Anuarul Liceului “Național” din Iași pe anul 1908-1909*, Iași, 1909, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> DANIC, fund MCIP, file 1934/1910. The 236 pages of file consist of an extended correspondence on such appointments.

<sup>77</sup> Ibidem, ff. 14-18. The statistic is compiled after the data from ff. 8 and 159: 1,066 pupils were in the fifth grade, 777 in the sixth, 753 in the seventh, and 550 in the eighth.

<sup>78</sup> Aurel Mircea, *Instrucția militară în școalele normale*, in vol. *Lui Spiru C. Haret: “Ale tale dintru ale tale” la împlinirea celor șasezeci de ani*, București, 1911, pp. 338-344; DANIC, fund MCIP, files 621/1911, 591/1912, 1353/1912, 52/1913, etc.



other organizations like 'Archers' Societies' or the 'Carpathian Hawks' were also active. Very popular seems to have been the Legionary Movement's 'Brotherhood of the Cross.' In October 1937, the scouts and the other children and youth organizations dedicated to physical training were included in 'Straja Țării.' Headed by *Marele Străjer* Carol II, this organization resembled 'Hitlerjugend' through its cult of the Leader and mass staged gymnastics demonstrations.<sup>79</sup>

### Conclusions

Ariès's hypothesis on the *sentiment* of childhood has risen to the level of a middle-range theory which brought together English speaking educationalists, art historians, historians of everyday life, psychologists, and many other specialists. Either refuted completely or supported but amended, the hypothesis still fertilizes a great amount of literature on non-Western areas, where different social and economic frameworks under study generate differences mostly in chronology but also in interpretation. I envisioned this text as a contribution to this particular debate where Eastern Europe is an area largely under-researched.

*Les petits dorobants* represent a unique case of introducing proper military instruction at the level of high-school and university in the 1870s-1880s. Such military instruction continued in the teachers' training schools and was extended to the level of primary schools in the first decade of the twentieth century. By detailing the developments of *les petits dorobants* I aimed to present the attitudes towards the children and youth of the groups that clashed in the most obvious way, the military instructors on the one hand and the teachers and professors on the other, and of those who were the most affected by this dispute, the parents and the children. While in the first period, the 1870s and 1880s, the arguments based on the children's situation are rather lacking, the professors using political and ideological arguments when opposing military instruction in schools, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the arguments consisted mainly in 'the impact on the children.' The military and the political supporters of military instruction in primary schools insisted on the usefulness of the military education in fostering children's will and physical strength, and in teaching the importance of self-discipline and the values of 'honor' and 'order' in one's conduct. Most of their opponents insisted on the mechanical pedagogy of the military instructors, their lack of education and improper conduct (spitting, cursing, violence), their lack of knowledge that led many children to mock authority and military training and the disturbance of the normal calendar of school activities that was to affect children's moral and intellectual education.

---

<sup>79</sup> I. Manolescu, C. Nedelcu and T. Sidorovici, *Straja Țării*, in vol. *Enciclopedia României*, vol. I, București, 1938, pp. 482-489.

The point of this paper is that this difference of attitude may be explained not only by a different political and social climate but also by a shift of conceptualizing childhood. I tried to take into consideration the complexity of social strata, their interferences and the multiplicity of overlapping *longue durée* transformations while keeping in mind a mild version of the difference between the Old Regime's social and economic framework that characterized the Danubian Principalities up to the nineteenth century, and even later for the rural world, and the modernizing and liberal transformations occasioned by the inclusion in the world market and the institutional reforms carried out by the pro-Western cultural and political elites. The most important social groups of then Romania, the political and cultural elites, the growing bureaucracy and the practitioners of the liberal professions, the traders and shopkeepers, as well as the peasants, were heterogeneous groups whose attitudes and sensibilities were also very diverse, a premise that does not exclude the existence of notions of childhood as a distinct emotional stage in one's life and different from adulthood at several members of these social groups, most probably more widely spread among the cultural elites, as Ioana Pârvulescu has shown.

The military group was never homogenous, but it generally reproduced the structure of social groups from 'civil life,' most of the higher ranks coming from the 'upper' and middle groups that were able to subsidize their formal education, and the lower ranks being mostly recruited from the 'lower' groups, who passed through the permanent troops and got re-hired at every five years like *Moș Teacă*. Their attitude towards children remained largely unchanged during the period before the Great War, while the spread of the pedagogical methods introduced new definitions for keywords like 'order,' 'respect,' 'obedience,' etc. that were previously confined only to the military vocabulary. These transformations happened mostly among the groups that came into contact with the Western frameworks of mind, notably the elites and the merchants. In this context of social dynamics, faster in the urban areas and slower in the countryside, the teachers became the most active disseminators of a certain sentiment of childhood since the late nineteenth century, a sentiment not as liberal as today, but still far more liberal in comparison with the existing social and economic realities. These conclusions are rather intuitive, and therefore further research is necessary.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

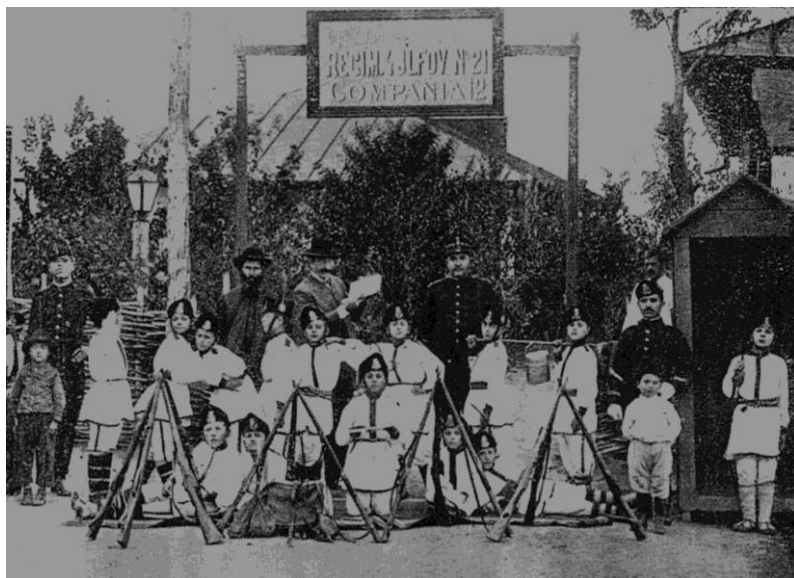


Image 4