

THE BANAT POLITICAL ELITE DURING THE 1926 GENERAL ELECTIONS*

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(Abstract)

The present study aims to analyze the electoral phenomena in which the regional political elite from Banat were involved during the parliamentary elections in May 1926. Based on archival sources and information extracted from the contemporary early 20th century press, we will trace the coordinates of the national and regional political context, conduct a prosopographic analysis of the interwar Banat political elite, and discuss the electoral strategies employed as well as the outcomes of the elections. The conclusions will focus on the role of the 1926 elections from Banat in the process of the integration of the regional parliamentary elites in the political life of Greater Romania.

Starting with the mid-19th century, the elections for parliament represented turning points in the history of the Banat. By the middle of the first half of the 20th century, the electoral experience amassed by the Banat voters had led them to grow aware of the fact that, periodically, a right they were able to exercise could function as a means of solving their own issues. While individual and group interests had thus been essential factors in the differentiated voting choices, the 1926 elections placed the Banat voter group in an unexpected position. For the first time in the electoral history of Banat since 1848, the voters no longer had to choose between two or more persons who were directly opposed in the electoral process, but rather to select their preferred candidate lists provided by the parties.

Following the Great Union of 1918 and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, two thirds of the territory of the historical province of Banat was incorporated into the borders of the Kingdom of Romania¹. The integration of this space in the

political life of Greater Romania was a lengthy process, a fact also reflected at an electoral level. The specific socio-political realities of the Banat corroborated with the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional character of the region, its electoral tradition, and the transformations which had occurred at the level of the political elite after 1918 argue for a differentiated approach of this region from the perspective of the interwar electoral phenomena.

Despite the fact that numerous studies have focused on the parliamentary elections in interwar Romania², a regional-level analysis may be more appropriate for the understanding of the complex phenomena that they represented. The present approach meets precisely this need, while the choice of the precise time frame selected has a twofold justification, related to changes in legislation that directly affected the abovementioned

² Among the more recent contributions to the discussion should be mentioned: Sorin Radu, „Electoral Behavior of National Minorities in Transylvania during the First Interwar Decade. Considerations”, in V. Ciobanu, S. Radu (eds.), *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, Sibiu, Editura Universității Lucian Blaga from Sibiu, 2006; Mihai Panu, „Reprezentarea politică a minorității germane în Banatul interbelic”. V. Ciobanu, S. Radu (coord.) *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, Vol. V, Sibiu, Editura Techno Media, 2010; Vasile Dudaș, „Alegerile parlamentare din anul 1919 în județul Caraș-Severin” in *Analele Banatului, S.N., Arheologie-Istorie*, XIX, 2011.

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¹ Marin *et alii* 1968, 200–204.

electoral phenomena. Firstly, the electoral law of March 1926 introduced the voting on lists and the “majority bonus”³ and secondly, the Royal decree no. 284 of December 25th 1925 re-divided the Banat from an administrative perspective into three counties – Caraș, Severin and Timiș-Torontal.⁴ It should be noted that the present study exclusively focuses on the elections for the Chamber of Deputies.

The main sources of the research are documents found within five archival funds as well as articles from the regional and central press of the times. From a methodological perspective, we will, on the one hand, take the specific steps of the historical method – the identification of sources followed by their critique and interpretation –, but on the other hand we will also conduct a qualitative and quantitative analysis enabled by the diversity and amount of available information. Moreover, in order to more vividly depict the situation of the political elite from Banat, who were active during the 1926 elections, we will conduct a prosopographic analysis of the candidate group, which presupposes that their biographic information will be extracted and interpreted according to a pre-set questionnaire and in connection to the general historical context.⁵

I. The general political background

As the mandate of the government led by Ion I. C. Brătianu neared its conclusion, the issue of its succession came to the fore. While Iuliu Maniu was preferred by the King for the position of prime-minister, the national-peasant composition of the envisaged government caused the sovereign to manifest a reserved attitude, on account of his reticence towards the adherents of the Peasant Party. In order to resolve the matter, Maniu assured King Ferdinand that he would not tolerate any political wavering from his political partners, assuming moreover a firm attitude in the negotiations held with the members of the Peasant Party concerning the formation of the new government and the appointment of the new prefects⁶.

After Ion I. C. Brătianu had officially ended his mandate in March, the King initiated consultations with the leading political figures in order to constitute the new government. Following his meetings with Nicolae Iorga (the National Party), Alexandru Averescu (the People’s Party) and Ion

Mihalache (the Peasant Party), the King suggested the solution of a so-called national concentration government. While Averescu agreed to the sovereign’s recommendation, the National and Peasant Party leaders were fervently opposed to the “unconditional” fusion of the three political formations under the former’s leadership. In the context of the failure of this idea, which would have led to the formation of a government containing members of all the three parties, each political organization submitted its own lists for ministry positions to the sovereign. Their proposals did not however satisfy the sovereign, who required Nicolae Iorga to submit a common list for the Peasant and National Parties. Despite the fact that the list was submitted during the same day, Iorga’s assertion that it was incomplete made the monarch suspicious, due to his fears that Constantin Stere, whom he regarded as “*dangerous, with a hidden agenda*”⁷ could be co-opted into the government.

King Ferdinand’s initial option – favorable to Iuliu Maniu and the National Party – was thus abandoned and, as a result of the pressures made in Ion I. C. Brătianu’s name, Alexandru Averescu was appointed as president of the Council of Ministers. However, as the People’s Party did not enjoy a great degree of popularity in ranks of the voters, and moreover lacked political influence, three members of the National Party were also appointed as ministers: Vasile Goldiș, Ioan I. Lapedatu and Ioan Lupaș. By integrating the National Party group led by Goldiș, the already extant adversity between the opposition parties and the new government was significantly amplified⁸.

The Averescu government dissolved the Parliament and set the date for the following parliamentary elections for the 25th of May for the Chamber of Deputies, and 28th of May for the Senate. These would be followed by the meeting of the country’s new legislative corps on the 25th of June 1926.

II. The organization of the general elections in Banat

Both during the prewar and the interwar periods, the Banat regions affirmed itself as a significant electoral pool, especially due to the high number of parliamentary representatives it elected. In the 1919 elections, the first after the Great Union, the two Banat counties elected the highest number of representatives among the counties from the provinces that had been newly integrated

³ Radu 2004, 39–45.

⁴ Vișan-Zaberca 2009, 299; Narai 2004–2005, 444.

⁵ Keats-Rohan 2007, 47–48.

⁶ Scurtu 1999, 163.

⁷ Pop 2014, 148.

⁸ Scurtu 1999, 167–168.

in the Romanian Kingdom in the course of 1918⁹. The administrative reorganization of Banat as a result of the Royal decree no. 284/1925 indirectly modified the number of representatives to which each county was entitled, but did not however affect the overall number of deputies on a regional level. Thus, the county of Timiș-Torontal would elect 10 deputies, the county of Severin 6 deputies, and the county of Caraș 5 deputies.

The elections were held in conformity with the dispositions of the Electoral Law of March 1926 by which the electoral system of Greater Romania was unified. Although this law maintained many of the principles which had stood at the basis of the Electoral Law-decree of November 1919, it also brought a series of significant revisions. The most ardent debate was caused by the so-called “majority bonus”, an innovation through which the proportional representation was eliminated. Consequently, the distribution of mandates would be made on a national level and not at the level of each electoral circumscription. After the votes were centralized, the percentage obtained by each political group was calculated. The group that had obtained the relative majority on a national level (a minimum of 40% of the votes) would then be awarded the “majority bonus”, thus enabling it to accumulate half of the total number of mandates. The remaining half was divided proportionally in accordance with the percentages obtained during the elections between all the political parties that had met the 2% electoral threshold. The law maintained that the deputies were “*elected by the Romanian citizens who had reached the age of majority, in a direct, obligatory and secret manner, on the basis of minority representation, by casting votes from a list, within electoral circumscriptions*”. For Transylvania and Banat list polling was an innovation, as before the Great Union voting was done in a uninominal manner in these provinces. In order to obtain a mandate in the Chamber of Deputies, the candidates had to be Romanian citizens resident in Romania, had to have reached the age of 25, and had to be able to exert their civil and political rights¹⁰.

An essential role in the organization of the elections was played by the prefects. Precisely for this reason, before the elections the Averescu government decided to replace numerous individuals who occupied these offices with persons loyal to the government’s interests¹¹. In Banat, persons close to the

National Romanian Party led by Vasile Goldiș were appointed in these high-level administrative positions: in Caraș the jurist Ioan Nedelcu¹², in Severin Romulus Boldea¹³, with a career in the military, and in Timiș-Torontal the jurist Anton Bogdan¹⁴. In the period preceding the elections they were intensely active, supervising the printing of voting sheets, setting the number of voting sections, collaborating with the military authorities in order to ensure the public order during the electoral campaigns, and maintaining a permanent connection to the central authorities in Bucharest¹⁵. During this entire period their close collaborators were the presidents of the county electoral offices, namely Octavian Tănăsescu in Caraș, Nicolae Ioanovits in Severin, and Nicolae Athanasiu in Timiș-Torontal.

III. Political options, candidates, and electoral behavior

In Banat the electoral struggle mainly involved the People’s Party and the National-Peasant Block, although a significant role was also played by the Liberal Party and the National Christian League of Defense.

The leaders of the People’s Party were aware of the great gap between their party and their national opponents in terms of the popularity within the ranks of the Banat voter body. Consequently, starting with the first months of 1926 they initiated an ample action of establishment and organization of party structures at county level within the entire region. Tasked with this were the presidents of the county committees: Aurel Ciobanu in Timiș-Torontal, Adam Groza in Severin and Gheorghe Jianu in Caraș¹⁶.

Meanwhile, the dissensions taking place within the National Party also contributed to the furthering of the objectives of the People’s Party pertaining to the counties in Transylvania and Banat. By accepting to be part of the Averescu government, the three national leaders created the conditions for the emergence of a dissident faction within the National Party, a faction to which a number of county-level-significant members adhered.

⁹ Iancu 1974, 116.

¹⁰ Radu 2005, 198–208.

¹¹ Mihai 2009, 106.

¹² *Gazeta Banatului* III (1926), no. 16, April 18th.

¹³ *Deșteptarea* I (1926), no. 5, June 20th.

¹⁴ *Gazeta Banatului* III (1926), no. 17, April 25th.

¹⁵ County Service of the National Archives Timiș (hereafter abbreviated CSNAT), archival fund *Prefectura Județului Severin*, folder 13/1926, f. 5–11; CSNAT, archival fund *Prefectura Județului Timiș-Torontal*, folder 5/1926, f. 5–39; County Service of the National Archives Caraș-Severin (hereafter abbreviated CSNACS), archival fund *Prefectura Județului Caraș*, folder 81/1926, f. 1–12.

¹⁶ *Gazeta Banatului* III (1926), no. 4, January 24th.

Following the “goldist” action the cornerstones of the National Romanian Party were placed. Among the local Banat leaders who joined the National Romanian Party should be mentioned Anton Bogdan, Ion Popescu and Mihail Groșianu (former members of the National Party)¹⁷ as well as Ion Țicu and Dimitrie Apăteanu (former members of the Peasant Party)¹⁸. At the beginning of April 1926 in Timișoara an important gathering of the Banat-based organizations of the new party was held. Mihail Groșianu, the former parliamentary representative, held a speech wherein he denounced the policy of the National Party and affirmed the new political organization's option to collaborate with the Averescu government: *The previous policy of passivity is the cause for the fact that, since the union, nothing useful has been done for the country. The blame for this inaction rests on the leaders of the national party, who did not understand the spirit of the times and could not rid themselves of some personal preoccupations. Instead of working to earn the entire country's trust and thus to lead the governments ourselves, we have initiated negotiations with all the political parties in the land, without reaching any agreement with either of them. [...] We believed that it is time to get to work. We are collaborating with the government*¹⁹.

The electoral strategy put forth by the People's Party was very successful – a fact that had effects in the counties of Transylvania and Banat – as a result of the electoral alliances made with the national minorities. At the end of April an electoral agreement with the Hungarian Party was signed. According to this, the leadership of the Hungarians promised to support the prime-minister's party in the elections in exchange for the introduction of Hungarian candidates on the electoral lists and the repeal of minority legislation that had been adopted during Ion I.C. Brătianu's government. The German Party however led tougher negotiations, only agreeing to support the new government after 15 German candidates were included on the lists of the People's Party (11 for the Chamber of Deputies and 4 for the Senate)²⁰.

The electoral victories registered by the People's Party, enabled by the agreements between the PP, the NRP, and the minorities, allowed the leaders of the National and the Peasant Parties to overcome their differences and the mutual chicanery they had perpetrated in the spring of 1926. As a result of the

meetings held at the end of April an agreement was reached regarding the establishment of an electoral cartel, which would set up common candidate lists comprising members of both parties, under the heading of the National-Peasant Block²¹.

Within this context, the candidate lists from Banat from the political parties that had reached the electoral threshold provide a clear image of the electoral agreements which had been made at a national level. In the Caraș county, the lists were headed by the following individuals: from the People's Party, the university professor Ioan Lupaș – the minister for public health and former member of the National Party –, seconded by the Ion Țicu, the former regional leader of the Peasant Party; from the National-Peasant Block, the arch-priest of Bocșa Mihail Gașpar, seconded by the Banat-stemming lawyer Augustin Bardossy, both from the side of the nationals; from the National Liberal Party, I. G. Duca, former minister for external affairs, seconded by Tancred Constantinescu, former minister for commerce and industry in the Ion I.C. Brătianu government; from the National Christian League of Defense, the university professor Cuza, the president of the party, seconded by the lawyer Maxim Radovan²². In the Severin county, the lists were headed by the following: from the People's Party, the Banat lawyer Petre Nemoianu, along with the lawyer Aurel Hădean; from the National-Peasant Block, the diplomat Caius Brediceanu, seconded by the lawyer Ioan Lugojanu; from the National Liberal Party, the university professor Traian Lalescu, seconded by the priest Cornel Corneanu, who held the office of consistorial assessor in Caransebeș; finally, from the National Christian League of Defence, the lawyer Constantin Murariu, seconded by the lawyer Isac Rădulescu²³. In the Timiș-Torontal county, the electoral lists included as main figures the following: from the People's Party none other than Vasile Goldiș, the minister for cults and arts and the leader of the NRP, seconded by the lawyer Nicolae Imbroane; the National-Peasant Block designated the experienced journalist and political figure Sever Bocu, who was seconded by Gheorghe Chirvasie; the National Liberal Party named the lawyer Aurel Cosma –, who had served as minister for public works under Ion I. C. Brătianu's government and had been the county's first prefect after the Union – seconded by Avram Imbroane – the former vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies;

¹⁷ Mihai 2009, 107–108.

¹⁸ *Deșteptarea* I (1926), no. 1, May 9th.

¹⁹ *Gazeta Banatului* III (1926), no. 15, April 11th.

²⁰ *Patria*, VIII (1926), no. 90, April 27th.

²¹ *Voința Banatului* VI (1926), no. 18, May 2nd 1926.

²² *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 122 of June 4th 1926, 8016–8017.

²³ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 122 of June 4th 1926, 8053–8054.

finally, the National Christian League of Defense designated the teacher Alexandru Tieran and as his second, the lawyer Tiberiu Moise²⁴.

One may notice that the People's Party designated extremely well known and liked political figures – from the perspective of the region's public opinion – as candidates for the Banat counties. Two of them were ministers in the Averescu government – V. Goldiș and I. Lupaș –, while other two – N. Imbroane and I. Țeicu – had stood out in the regional political life as former parliamentary representatives of the Banat electorate. Moreover, the National Romanian Party had managed to obtain from the People's Party two of the three leading positions on the lists, a concession made by the prime-minister's party that had its source in the superior level of popularity and organization of Vasile Goldiș's party at regional level. The National-Peasant Block's counter-strategy was to name as leading candidates a series of political figures from Banat, who were very well-known and popular amongst the ranks of the electorate and who had accumulated a vast political experience prior to 1918: Caius Brediceanu, Sever Bocu, Mihail Gașpar. The most imposing leading candidates from Banat had however been designated by the Liberal Party: all the six individuals in question had each held at least one previous parliamentary mandate, while three of them had served as ministers, and one as vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies. The presence of the president of the National Christian League of Defense in the Caraș county should also be noted.

During the elections, the regional leaders of the main political organizations involved in the struggle for primacy were intensely active, and participated in electoral gatherings in a great number of places in Banat.

The regional leaders of the People's Party sought to be present in as many Banat localities as possible, and to this purpose divided themselves into groups of three-four persons. Each of these groups was assigned a number of pre-set towns and villages to go through, so that the party's program and its incentive to vote for the star – the party's electoral sign – could reach as many Banat voters as possible. Cornel Grofșorean, Teodor Bucurescu and Nicolae Imbroane especially distinguished themselves through their activity. According to the Banat press, the leaders of the PP were enthusiastically welcomed by the peasantry: „Every place they reached, they were met with the greatest enthusiasm and trust by our peasantry. In some places, the

inhabitants of the villages welcomed them with bands of horse-riders and choruses”. Beyond the attachment of the crowd, one should note the fact that these gatherings also included a great number of representatives of the rural elite, be they priests, teachers, or low-rank clerks. This social class was singled out by the prefect Anton Bogdan in his speeches, as part of his involvement in the electoral campaign and during his participation in the various gatherings in the context of which he discussed the government's political program²⁵.

The most significant electoral gathering of the People's Party in Banat took place in Timișoara on the 19th of May, and was attended by over 15 thousand people of all ethnicities, representing the entirety of the region, according to the “Banat Gazette”. The presence of the prime-minister Averescu lent a great importance to this event. Speeches were held by the prefect Anton Bogdan, by Aurel Ciobanu, who was president of the PP organization in Timiș-Torontal, the lawyers Nicolae Imbroane and Pompil Ciobanu, the papal prelate Francisc Blaskovics and finally, by the lawyer Tornya, the representative of the Hungarians in Banat. The final and most expected speech was that held by the general Averescu. Within his exposition, the prime-minister condemned the regionalist orientation and those who promoted it – thus indirectly alluding to the leaders of the National Party –, and vowed to devote all the necessary attention to the national minorities. Moreover, he insisted on the necessity of resolving the issues that had arose from the erroneous implementation – in his opinion – of the agrarian reform²⁶.

The National-Peasant Block focused its electoral campaign on those who had elected to leave the two parties and join the prime-minister, against whom a starkly disapproving discourse was directed. The Banat press that was faithful to the Block abounds in articles wherein the attitude of the “steak-men”²⁷ from the group led by Vasile Goldiș was condemned. The Block crafted a strategy similar to that of the People's Party, designating certain local leaders who were tasked to cross the region and incentivize the voters to choose the circle – the formation's electoral sign²⁸.

The most significant moment in the electoral campaign led by the National Liberal Party in Banat

²⁴ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 122 of June 4th 1926, 8060–8061.

²⁵ *Gazeta Banatului*, III (1926), no. 20, May 16th.

²⁶ *Gazeta Banatului*, III (1926), no. 22, May 23rd.

²⁷ In the original Romanian, the term „fripturist” – literally „steak-man” – alludes to opportunism, especially political opportunism.

²⁸ *Voința Banatului*, VI (1926), no. 20, May 17th.

took place on the 16th of May, when the party held its electoral gathering in Timișoara. While the gathering of Averescu's supporters involved a large audience, the Liberals, under the presidency of Aurel Cosma, were only attended by a "select" assembly, comprised of the members of the local organizations. A series of speeches were held by Lucian Georgevici, Pavel Obădeanu and Aurel Cosma, wherein various electoral matters were discussed, among them the regionalist orientation, the completion of the process of legislative unification, and the lending of support to education and religious institutions. Moreover, they emphasized the need to award the proper attention to both the administrative corps and the national minorities. Their discourse highlights the strategy employed by the liberals, namely that of using the local elite – teachers, priests, clerks – as intermediaries who could act between the NLP and the rural-based voters²⁹.

The most active campaign led by the National Christian League of Defense in Banat was that which took place in the county of Caraș. This was to be expected, as heading the list from this county was the party's president, the professor A.C. Cuza. In mid-April a series of electoral assemblies were organized by the regional leaders of the NCLD in Bozovici, Anina, Cacova, Răcășdia, Oravița, Bozovici, Moldova Nouă etc. The League had also asked to be allowed to host a gathering in Reșița. However, due to the fact that Reșița was inhabited to a high degree by members of the proletariat, this request was denied in order to preclude potential violent outbreaks involving the socialists and the supporters of the NCLD³⁰.

IV. *The results of the elections*

The elections for the Chamber of Deputies were held on the 25th of May. The 250535³¹ voters from the three Banat counties were distributed between 84 polling stations: 21 in Caraș³², 27 in Severin³³, 36 in Timiș-Torontal³⁴. The Banat electorate paid proper attention to the event, a fact signaled by their high attendance – 74,79% at regional level. The attendance levels per each county were the following: 69,67% in Caraș (40387 validly

expressed votes and 908 annulled)³⁵, 74,44% in Severin (44970 validly expressed votes and 1216 annulled)³⁶, 77,30% in Timiș-Torontal (93625 validly expressed votes and 6271 annulled)³⁷.

In each of the three Banat counties six electoral lists from the following parties were given to the voters: the People's Party, the National Liberal Party, the National-Peasant Block, National Christian League of Defense, the Socialist Party and the Labor and Peasant Block. In Caraș the majority of votes were awarded to the People's Party (35,01% of the validly expressed votes), followed by the National-Peasant Block (27,81% of the validly expressed votes) and the NCLD (15,19% of the validly expressed votes). The Socialist Party also obtained good results, managing to convince 12,39% of the electorate to vote in favor of the left, while the lowest scores were those of the NLP – only 8,29% of the votes – and the Labor and Peasant Block – 1,28%³⁸. In Severin, the People's Party again managed to obtain the highest percentage of votes (41,85%), while the National-Peasant Block drew 36,84% of the voters to its cause. With the exception of the NCLD, which won 10.10% of the votes, none of the other parties succeeded in reaching the 10% threshold: NLP (5,37%), SP (2,94%) and LPB (2,87%)³⁹. In Timiș-Torontal the results obtained by the People's Party were even more overwhelming: no less than 49,04% of the county's voters awarded their vote to the prime-minister's political formation. The same as in the case of the previous two counties, the National-Peasant Block took second place in the voters' choices, amassing 27,11% of the validly expressed votes. The other parties did not manage to reach the 10% level: LPB (8,81%), NCLD (7,03%), SP (5,20%), NLP (2,78%)⁴⁰.

At a regional level, the elections were won by the People's Party with 44,07% of the votes in Banat, followed by the National-Peasant Block with 29,71%. The political programs put forth by the other political formations that had run in the elections were less convincing for the voter body, thus resulting in low overall regional scores: 9,64% for the NCLD, 6,25% for the SP, 5,62% for the LPB, and only 4,68% for the NLP.

²⁹ *Nădejdea* VIII (1926), no. 598, May 20th.

³⁰ CSNACS, archival fund *Prefectura Județului Caraș*, folder 82/1926, f. 1–15.

³¹ In Caraș 59266 voters, in Severin 62044, and in Timiș-Torontal 129225.

³² The National Archives of Romania (hereafter NAR), archival fund *Ministerul de Interne*, folder 500/1926, f. 4.

³³ NAR, archival fund *Ministerul de Interne*, folder 537/1926, f. 18–19.

³⁴ *Voința Banatului*, VI (1926), no. 20, May 17th.

³⁵ NAR, archival fund *Ministerul de Interne*, folder 500/1926, f. 14–15.

³⁶ NAR, archival fund *Ministerul de Interne*, folder 537/1926, f. 27–28.

³⁷ NAR, archival fund *Parlament*, folder 2096, f. 418.

³⁸ NAR, archival fund *Ministerul de Interne*, folder 500/1926, f. 14–15.

³⁹ NAR, archival fund *Ministerul de Interne*, folder 537/1926, f. 27–28.

⁴⁰ NAR, archival fund *Parlament*, folder 2096, f. 418.

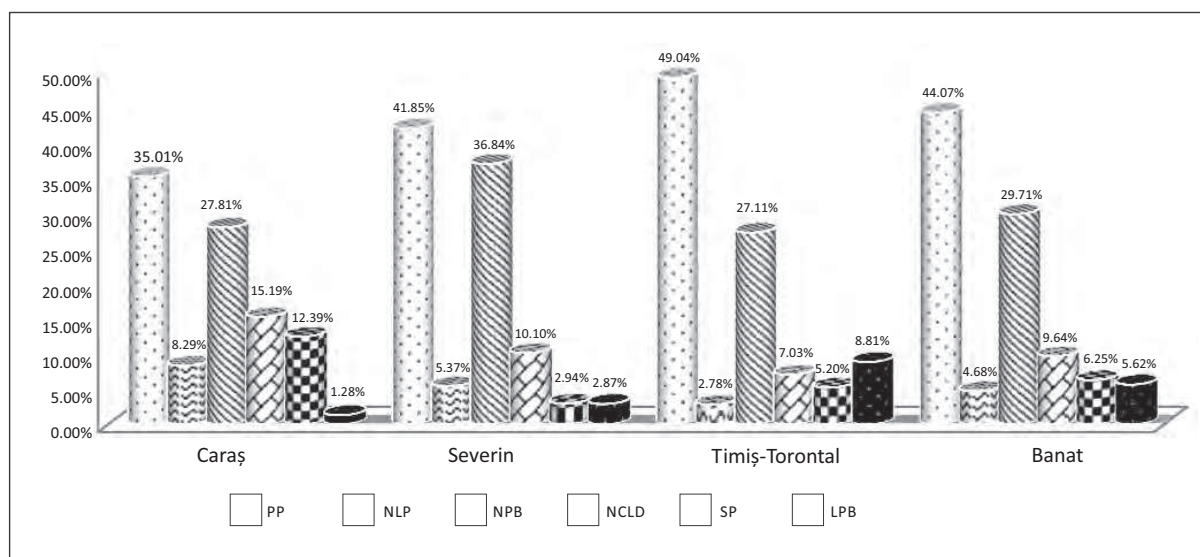


Table 1. The distribution of votes won by the political parties in Banat in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies in 1926.

The electoral provisions that provided the legal framework the 1926 elections determined a different type of mandate distribution on a county level (Table 1). Thus, on a national level, the People's Party won the majority of votes – 52,09% – and was followed by the National-Peasant Block with 27,73%. With the exception of these two formations, only the National Liberal Party – with 7,34% of the votes – and the National Christian League of Defense – with 4,76% of the votes – managed to reach the 2% electoral threshold and thus send their representatives to the Bucharest Parliament. As a result of the implementation of the new electoral provisions, the distribution of mandates for the Chamber of Deputies was overwhelmingly in favor of the prime-minister's party: 296 PP mandates, 69 NPB mandates, 16 NLP mandates and finally 10 NCLD mandates⁴¹.

Consequently, as a result of the May 1926 elections, the interests of the voters from Banat were represented by 17 deputies from the People's Party (3 from Caraș – Ioan Lupaș, Ioan Țeicu, Corneliu Bojincă; 5 from Severin – Petre Nemoianu, Aurel Hadan, Pavel Jumanca, Fabius Gelejan, Petru Fotoc; 9 from Timiș-Torontal – Vasile Goldiș, Nicolae Imbroane, Kräuter Francisc, Cornel Groșorean, Pompil Ciobanu, Teodor Bucurescu, Spiridon Iorgulescu, Emeric Reiter, Andraș Gheorghe), 3 deputies from the National-Peasant Block (one for each county: Mihail Gașpar from Caraș, Caius Brediceanu from Severin and Sever Bocu from Timiș-Torontal) and one deputy of the NCLD, namely the organization's president, the

professor A. C. Cuza, who was elected in the Caraș county⁴². The majority of the deputies who represented the Banat in the electoral cycle of 1926 – 1927 had been born in this historical province, and were ethnically Romanian – with the exception of the two Banat Swabians who were elected on the lists of the People's Party. From the perspective of their socio-professional background prior to their election, the majority were lawyers (9) and professors (5), 3 were high-level ministry clerks, while the rest had held various positions – as physician, forestry engineer, school inspector or publicist.

V. Conclusions

The 1926 elections marked a new stage in the process through which the regional political elite from the provinces that had been united to the Kingdom of Romania in 1918 was integrated into the central political life. Additionally, the issue of the regionalist orientation and more specifically, the means by which this orientation could be overcome were ever-present subjects in the electoral campaigns from Banat. One such tendency was visible in the electoral strategy of the People's Party, which would also manage to win the elections. By attracting a large number of remarkable regional leaders from the county offices of the National or Peasant Parties Averescu's party succeeding in winning a considerable percentage of the votes from Banat.

The candidates' message was echoed in the actions of the voters, who participated in the

⁴¹ Mihai 2009, 140.

⁴² NAR, archival fund Parlament, folder 2096, f. 460, 467–468.

electoral phenomenon to a high degree, very close to the national average of 76%⁴³. However, this aspect should not be surprising, if one takes into account the electoral tradition of the Banat region and the apparent ability of voters in this region to correctly evaluate the importance of exercising this particular right.

What is however surprising is the high percentage of annulled votes, compared to the national average. Whereas at a national level only 2% of votes were annulled, in Banat 4,83% of the votes cast were declared null and void. A county-differentiated analysis reveals that both in Caraș (2,19%) and in Severin (2,63%) the percentage is close to that at national level, while in Timiș-Torontal the overall regional percentage is raised by the annulment of 6,27% of the votes cast.

From the perspective of their socio-professional composition, the corps of the Banat representatives elected in May 1926 fits the national-level trends, where lawyers and professors (from secondary schools or universities) were the best-represented categories⁴⁴.

We may thus conclude that the Banat political elite was certainly on the path towards integration into the political life of Greater Romania, as evidenced by their behavior during the 1926 parliamentary elections.

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⁴³ Ivan, n.y., annexes, tabel XI.

⁴⁴ Dogan 1946, annexes, table no. 5b.