

### *Book presentation in Bucharest*

Gundula Gahlen, Deniza Petrova, Oliver Stein (Hg.), *Die unbekannte Front. Der Erste Weltkrieg in Rumänien*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 2018

Thursday, 23 May 2019, the University of Bucharest, the Center of Turkish Studies, together with the Center of International Relations from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" from Iași, organized, in the presence of an informed public, the presentation of the volume "Unbekannte Front...", followed by discussions and questions of the audience. The referents emphasized the utility of the volume for the Romanian historiography and the necessity to understand the "Romanian war" at the scale of the European history.

Gundula Gahlen analyzed the structure of the volume (Koalitionskriegführung; Militär und Bevölkerung; Erinnerungskultur) and the succinctly presented the content of the articles published. She emphasized the original thematic approaches, the research of less known sources, the reflection of the specificity of the Romanian front.

Oliver Stein commented the origins of the volume, which are based on the acts of the international conference *The Romanian Campaign 1916/1917. Experiences and Memory*, held at Veliko Tarnovo, Saints Kyril and Method University (26-28 September 2016). So, the volume has a preeminently international character. The context of the event was connected – as the speaker noted – to the debates of the recent years occasioned by the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War in the entire Europe.

At the discussion table there was no confrontation, as in the past, between the history of the defeated or of the winners, but rather a debate about the issues that remain to be clarified by the present researches. Thus, specialists from nine different countries brought their contribution in clarifying the "histories" of the Romanian front. Their texts evoke the history of a war with a unique deployment of force, reflected in ethnic diversity, in the cultural and religious amalgam. The war of the Central Powers in Romania revealed, for the first time, the military presence of Germany and all its allies in the same theater of operations. It was a trench war as well as one of movement, covering a difficult front, geographical and climatic.

Claudiu Lucian Topor identified three categories of historical arguments that plead for the necessity of the transition from the dominant reflection of the war serving the nation to the perception offered by the development of the coalition war: what the Romanian soldiers knew about the enemy; hiding the Romanian responsibilities in the interpretation of the memory of the war; stereotypes of the military occupation in eyes of the locals. Vicissitudes of history made this perception unknown for a long time. The generations that preceded us didn't have the chance of a complete reconstitution. They discovered few things about the common experiences from the years of war. The war of national unity remained the dominant formula of the interpretations in the Romanian space. The editorial projects occasioned by the centenary of the Great War show that the impasse was surpassed at least at the

European level. The interpretation of the past needs everywhere approaches that value diversity. Romania can't be the exception.

Daniel Cain ended the series of presentations by outlining a picture of the present Romanian historiography. His conclusions show that the dimension of the coalition war was ignored by the official Romanian histories; the Romanian historiography continued to adopt a national perspective, within which the great military strategies and the interpretation of the political acts prevail. The Romanian historiography consciously built the edifice of its "own" war in Europe (a war of the Romanians only), a tendency that dominated the approaches of the centenary and maintained a constant isolation from the cross border debates that characterize the European discourse in recent years. The history of the coalition war in the Romanian space became a theme of historiographical "rebelliousness", accessible to those (few in number) which assumed individual research projects outside the national frame. The volume also represents an invitation (an impulse) to broaden the local research horizon and to change the traditional paradigms.

*Claudiu-Lucian-Topor*