Honor and Death in the Militarist Discourse in Romania (1859-1918)

Abstract:

The expression "Better dead than dishonoured" was not just the formula often heard at the military festivities in Romania years 1859-1918. It actually represented the pedagogical opinion regarding the role played by honour in education and the officers' civil life. For half a century, as a consequence of the universal conscription, the Romanian militarism was reshaping the whole modern society. There was an astonishing increase in the enrolment numbers, Romania thus becoming around 1910, the second state after France regarding the number of citizens under arms. This communication is trying to illustrate all the argumentative hypostases used, especially after 1871, by important names in the Romanian army to present themselves in favour of a soldierly type of society, inspired by the model imposed in 1874 by Wilhelm I, the German emperor, in the full swing of creating the theoretical base for the German militarism. Influenced by the officers of the Romanian High Command, the iconic profile of the Romanian officer became that of an educator for the wide population as the army started to become a school for patriotism. In these institutional circumstances, both honour and death became the central pillars of the military discourse. The rhetoric of dying for the country as a supreme honour given to the 'soldier-citizen' or the 'citizen-soldier' surmised a specific idea, inspired from the ideology of an emerging nationalism, the concepts of Social Darwinism and Christian militarism.

Keywords: *militarism, European patterns, death, sacrifice.*