

LUDOVIC MRAZEC – 43 YEARS IN THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY (1901–1944)

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Abstract. In the Romanian Academy Hall, on 12 February 2018, Ludovic Mrazec's 150th anniversary of birth was commemorated. The event was opened by acad. Cristian Hera. Our article is reviewing the main moments and achievements of Ludovic Mrazec in the 43 years he worked in the Romanian Academy. The focus is on: the interwar period, the life in the Scientific Section, the mission and public positions of Ludovic Mrazec, the President agenda, new members of the Romanian Academy, reception speeches, anniversaries and commemorations, prizes and donations. Ludovic Mrazec was born on 17 July 1867 in Craiova and died on 9 June 1944, when was 77 years old. He was the founder of the Department of Mineralogy of the University of Bucharest (1894), of the the Geological Institute of Romania (1906), and president of the Romanian Academy (1932–1935).

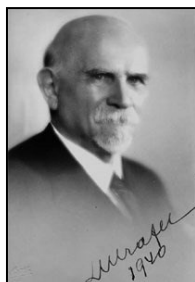
Keywords: Ludovic Mrazec, Romanian Academy, president, mineralogy, professor.

Résumé: Dans la salle de l'Académie Roumaine, le 12 février 2018, a été commémoré Ludovic Mrazec à passe 150 années de sa naissance. L'événement a été ouvert par acad. Cristian Hera. Notre article en revue les principaux moments et réalisations de Ludovic Mrazec dans les 43 ans travaillés à l'Académie Roumaine. On mentionne la période de l'entre-deux-guerres: la vie dans la section scientifique, la mission et les positions publiques de Ludovic Mrazec, l'ordre du jour du Président, les nouveaux membres de l'Académie Roumaine, les discours de réception, les anniversaires et les commémorations, les prix et les dons. Ludovic Mrazec est né le 17 juillet 1867 à Craiova et est décédé le 9 juin 1944, âgé de 77 ans. Il a été le fondateur du Département de Minéralogie de l'Université de Bucarest (1894), de l'Institut géologique de Roumanie (1906) et président de l'Académie Roumaine (1932–1935).

Mots-clés: Ludovic Mrazec, Académie Roumaine, président, minéralogie, professeur.

Ludovic Mrazec, an illustrious Romanian scientist, was unquestionably the best role model for the geologists who followed his footsteps, his disciples and fellow members of the Romanian Academy, an institution to which he dedicated 43 years of this life.

In order to reveal his true personality, I had to turn to archives, and to texts that others wrote about him. Thus, I discovered the wide range of areas that his scientific contributions covered, his organisational spirit, his didactic vocation, his excellent communication skills; and this is how his profile, the one of a true leader of the community in which he lived and created, came alive in my mind quite clearly. And maybe more than just that, I was able to understand the genuinely human side of his personality. This is how I managed to pick the parts of a puzzle that I am now trying to put together in the following pages.



Mr. Gh. Macovei, member of the Romanian Academy, wrote in 1967, upon the celebration of 100 years since the birth of L. Mrazec: *As one who enjoyed the privilege of working closely with him for almost 40 years and as a person who came to know all of his reactions, I am yet unable to tell which one of the wonderful gifts*

he had received from nature is more worth admiring than the others. All who have known Mrazec are aware that he had everything a great scientist, a great researcher and great animator needs, because he was a person who could insufflate fresh life into everything he was doing, with great warmth and enthusiasm [Macovei, 1941; Macovei, 1968].

The personality of Ludovic Mrazec, the one who founded the Department of Mineralogy of the University of Bucharest (1894) and who was the first director (1906) of Romania's Geological Institute, left his imprint for many years upon the geological research and activities in Romania and he was a conspicuous role model for what an intelligent person, a prolific researcher and an outstanding manager should be; he is also remembered for the many generations of mineralogists, petrographers, and tectonicians whom he mentored tirelessly [Anastasiu, 1996; Codarcea, 1968; Dimitrescu, 1997; Giușcă, 1971].

At the end of 2017, we celebrated 150 years from this birth. It is now our duty of honour to review the wealth of knowledge and information he left us.

This review will be focusing on the contributions he made while he was an Academy member and on his achievements that preserved the spirit of this institution and helped it develop and evolve. Ludovic Mrazec became a member of the Romanian Academy in 1901, when he was 34, as a token of recognition of his contributions to science, and of the prestige he had acquired in the international geological community; over the next years, his sophisticated talents, his innovations, the wider responsibilities he took and his contribution to the public image of the Romanian Academy turned into as many averments of his entitlement to be a member of this institution. He put a lot of passion and devotion into strengthening the institutions in which he spent the best 43 years of his life [Andrei D., 2016].

THE EVOLUTION OF LUDOVIC MRAZEC IN THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY

The brief chronological review below will be walking you through the milestones that marked Ludovic Mrazec's life at the Romanian Academy, more specifically [Stanciu, V., 1944; Ilie, M., 1957; Ianovici, V., 1968; Rădulescu, D., 2006; Anastasiu, 2010; Berindei, 2006; Rusu, 2007]:

1901/25 March – he became a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy (proposed by Dr. C. Istrati);

1903 – he became a member of the Oil Commission;

1905/11 April – he was elected a standing member of the Romanian Academy (proposed by Gr. Ștefănescu);

1906 – he was assigned the mission to organise and head the Geological Institute of Romania;

1907/23 March – he delivered the acceptance speech at the Romanian Academy;

1907 – he organised the 3rd International Oil Congress in Bucharest;

1919 – geodesy/mapping advisor, member of the Romanian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference;

1920 – he was entrusted with the organisation and management of the Commission for the Electrification of Romania;

1922 – he became general secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce;

1924 – lead author of the 1924 Mining Law;

1927 – he organised the Congress of the Carpathian Geology Association in Bucharest;

1927 – 1929 – Minister of Industry and Trade;

1930 – he created the Romanian Geology Society (*Societatea română de geologie*);

1932 – 1935 – president of the Romanian Academy;

1944, 9 June – he passed away.

PRE-WWII PERIOD. THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The life, success and failures of every one of us involve challenges that occur in a certain national, social and political context. Our ancestors' activities and achievements, of whatever sort they were, appeared mostly during and around the interwar period, which our grandparents and grand-grandparents have always described as a period of great development and progress. And that is exactly what it was.

Yet, we should not forget that the rumours of those times were not always speaking highly of persons who were supposed to make decisions and act according to their public standing. It took courage, determination, and diplomacy to overcome such hurdles.

Monarchy grew stronger in Romania over 1901–1939, three kings reigned, governments changed, and those headed by the Brătianus (Ionel I. C. Brătianu and Vintilă Brătianu) implemented several reforms (agrarian reform, electoral reform, etc.). Several political parties appeared on the political arena, but their authority was undermined by the dictatorship of Carol II. Patriarch Miron Cristea became prime minister and the new Constitution (1938) bestowed executive prerogatives upon the king. The parliament became just a conventional institution. Romania started preparing for war and was forced into an economic agreement with Germany which started receiving large amounts of Romanian oil and cereals.



Calea Victoriei, Bucharest, 1935.

After the 1929 Stock Market Crash in New York, the economic crisis also hit Europe in 1931 and affected the banking systems in Germany and Austria. In 1932, the US Senate adopted a moratorium on intergovernmental debts and Germany became insolvent straight away.

In France, the socialists and radicals won the 1932 elections, which threw the nation into a political crisis; communists, socialists and radicals took to the streets together in July 1935.

In UK, the thirties became nostalgic and sad, yet Romanticism and Victorian humour were favoured; Britain was concerned about how international relations were developing and especially how Nazism and communism were gaining ground in Europe.

Mussolini and Pope Pius XII entered into the Lateran Treaty in 1929, which guaranteed Vatican's independence. Germany recognised Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and the Rome–Berlin Axis was created.

In Spain, the king was forced to step down because of the economic and social problems, and General Francisco Franco led the 1936 coup d'état against the Popular Front and started the Civil War.

In Germany, the Reichstag was dissolved several times between 1930 and 1932; governmental instability (19 governments were reshuffled in 13 years) was the catchphrase of the time. The Weimar

Republic had failed. In January 1933, Hindenburg, the then President of Germany, appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of the Reich. And we all know what came next. On August the 2nd, 1934, after the president passed away, Hitler became president of the state. He proclaimed himself Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich.

LIFE IN THE CITY AND THE SCIENTIFIC TEAM

A good number of years after the creation of the Romanian Academic Society (1866), Dimitrie A. Sturdza – the general secretary of the Romanian Academy – announced that members would be clustered in three sections dealing with literature, history and science.

The scientific section was a small-scale reflection of the international development and competitiveness of the Romanian science, and the most remarkable results were seen in the field of medical care, marine and ocean biology, but also geology and speology [Berindei, 2006]: a clear expression of the scientific profile of the members of the Section.

In 1901, the Science Section was formed of Petru Poni, Șt. Fălcoianu, Gr. Ștefănescu, dr. V. Babeș, dr. L. Felix, dr. C. Istrati, Spiru Haret, Anghel Saligny, N. Teclu, Fl. Porciuc.

Dr. C. Istrati, during the very first meeting of the science section, proposed that *young scientist* Ludovic Mrazec should be received in the Romanian academy. He was voted by 19 voters out of 20.

In 1905, Gregoriu Ștefănescu suggested that Ludovic Mrazec should become a standing member of the Academy, which he became by 19 votes out of 25.

Ludovic Mrazec delivered his acceptance speech on 5 April 1907: *On the formation of oil fields in Romania*. He concluded his speech by reassuring colleagues across Romania that *he would make his best to join them in their efforts to reach the high goals that this outstanding cultural establishment has set and, above all, the research of truth [AAR, 1907].*

Anghel Saligny responded: *...we may not have the richest lands in the world, but we definitely have one of the most skilled geologists, who will teach us how to find the largest amount of underground deposits and we are proud to have him as one of our colleagues.*

After several years, in 1930, the membership of the Science Section became even richer: Petru Bogdan, Ioan Cantacuzino, Grigore Crăiniceanu, Ion Inculeț, Gh. Marinescu, Simion Mehedinți, Emil Racoviță, Ion Simionescu, Gh. Șerban Țițeica, George Vâlsan, Nicolae Vasilescu-Karpen, Dimitrie Voinov came on board.

Under such circumstances, the Science Section proved to be concerned with a host of practical matters associated to Romania's economic development; it also encouraged investment and geological research [Berindei, 2006]. The geology came out over and over as an important matter, with oil at the focus of all concerns, in terms of not only exploration, but also exploitation.

The activities of the sections continued after 1937 in the new building of the Romanian Academy, which had been built while Ludovic Mrazec was president of the Academy. Alexandru Lepedatu, who succeeded Mrazec as president of the Romanian Academy, said once: *Academy members would meet in plenary sessions or in their sections or commissions in that building which lied around the towering lecture room, dwarfed by the statues of the forerunners who are looking at us every day and keep their bronze or marble eyes on what we are doing at the Academy [Haiduc-Otiman, 2012].*

MISSIONS - PUBLIC POSITIONS

Once he became a standing member of the Romanian Academy, Ludovic Mrazec was tasked with the organisation and management of the Geological Institute of Romania (1906).

One year later, he organised the 3rd International Oil Congress in Bucharest;

In 1919, he became a geodesy/mapping advisor to the Romanian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. Ion I. C. Brătianu, the then prime minister, presented a report titled “Romania in front of the Paris Conference. Her territorial claims”, which presented extensively Romania’s participation in the war and the separate circumstances in which a separate peace deal had been concluded with the Central Powers. Ludovic Mrazec was a member of that Commission and had a number of pertinent comments [AAR, 1919]. Other missions and initiatives followed:

1920 – he organised and managed the Commission for the Electrification of Romania;

1922 – he became general secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce;

1924 – he was lead author of the 1924 Mining Law;

1927 – he organised the Congress of the Carpathian Geology Association in Bucharest;

1927–1929 – Minister of Industry and Trade.



The Government of Ionel C. Brătianu (1928), Ludovic Mrazec (circled),
Minister of Industry and Trade.

L. Mrazec presented to prime minister Vintilă Brătianu the problem Romania’s failure to participate in international science conventions, which caused a lot of damage to the country, and he successfully obtained a decision to send out an extensive delegation, for which purpose a dedicated service was established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Berindei, 2006, p. 237].

1930 – he created the Romanian Geology Society.

When L. Mrazec stepped down from his position as head of the Romanian Geological Institute in 1930 and started working on his first reports on crystallography, mineralogy, and petrography that were to be printed out for his students and disciples, his experience and prestige that he had earned in his numerous years of research, teaching, international exchanges, and successes [Filipescu, M.G., 1945], recommended him as one of the exceptional candidates running for the position of president of Romanian Academy in 1932. Therefore, he was the president of the Romanian Academy between 30 May 1932 and 2 June 1935.

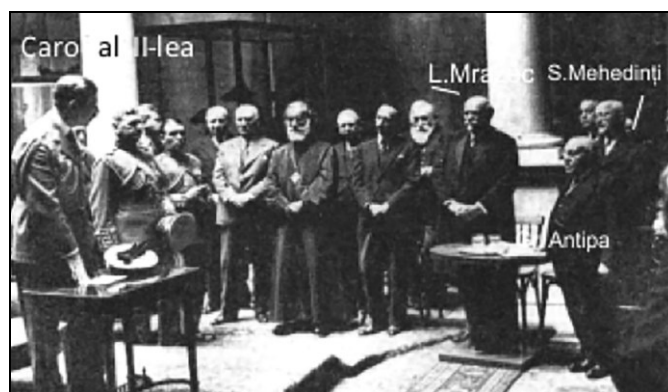
THE PRESIDENT’S AGENDA

I focused with great attention on the Annals of the Romanian Academy referring to 1932–1935 while trying to identify Mrazec’s spirit and efforts in his capacity as president of this high scientific forum. That was quite a difficult endeavour and implied a lot of responsibility [AAR, 1932–1935, Dorina Rusu, 2007].

Reading the Annals captivated me and immersed me immediately into the universe of the Romanian elites, revealed to me their aspirations and their unstoppable wish to push this country forwards and closer to the culture and civilisation of Western Europe.

Presenting in a nutshell the projects and messages that Mr. L. Mrazec devised as president of the Romanian Academy would be extremely difficult, but failing to mention at least some of them would do him much injustice. During those years, the science section had gathered a team of people sharing the same values, and Ludovic Mrazec's associates always followed and supported the president of the Academy.

Over 1933–1935, Ludovic Mrazec chaired the ordinary sessions of the Romanian Academy (38 weeks/year), the public sessions, solemn meetings and general meetings, delivered speeches, sent messages to the academic community, initiated projects to review the statute of the Romanian Academy, co-authored (with Gr. Antipa) the Memorandum on the reorganisation of the Romanian Academy and the Science Museum, and submitted the Annual Reports of the Presidium of the Romanian Academy to debate [AAR, 1932–1935].



Reception of King Charles II by members of the Romanian Academy.

One of Ludovic Mrazec's extremely important interventions took place in the country's Senate on December the 1st, 1934, when he said: *The Academy is happily partaking in today's celebration, which is close to the hearts of all Romanians living all across the country; the Academy is also proudly participating, because it was the first cultural institution created after the Union of 1859. Its task was not only to reinforce this holy Union, as it was called back then, but also to prepare the expansion of the union upon all Romanian territories that had been placed under foreign-language dominations* [Rusu, 2007]. What a vision that was! And what tactics!

I would also highlight here two elements, in order to showcase the President's vision and his will to finish any commitment made to the public.

The memoire on the reorganisation Romanian Academy reads that: *of all cultural institutions that Romanians have created – wherever they live – the most important and the highest one is the Romanian Academy. And now it is bound to engage in this self-examination of conscience and to prepare the path that can be taken to reach solutions to the new problems that today's history is all of a sudden posing in her way* [AAR-t.LV, p. 53–641]. And here are some major requirements:

- scientific activities should not be permitted to develop randomly;
- goals: we should make the most of the richness and natural beauty of our country;
- fundamental matters: the organisation and guidance of research focusing on life, environment, and resources;
- the organisation of a scientific activity in all of his pure and applied areas.

A law was passed on May the 25th, 1935 to create the Natural Monuments' Commission, which – according to Emil Racoviță [AAR, t. LV–1935] – *is the head of the gendarme who should be protecting*

whatever has not yet been plundered, wasted and depleted, because the Homo sapiens has conquered the entire earth, with all its peaks, and all its depths, and waters, and atmospheric layers, but such great richness and wealth that's second to no other are so savagely and unwisely being used, that a gendarme has to take action, even now, with great delay.

* * *

During his last year in office, in March 1935, the Romanian Academy of Sciences was created, but president L. Mrazec challenged that decision: *both the name (Academy of Sciences) and the purpose of such association* were received with great bewilderment by the Romanian Academy. Such name violates our legal right, usurps our moral asset, and causes great damage to our institution (and Alex. Lepedatu 29 March 1935) (In the July 8th, 1938 issue of Romania's Official Gazette, a law-decree was published whereby the word "academy", either individually or accompanied by other words may not be used in the name of a legal entity or corporate person, apart from the Romanian Academy. Higher education institutions, scientific associations or professional associations had the right to use the word "academy" in their institutional names, but only if they obtained the clearance of the Romanian Academy).

Concerned about the plight of research in Romania and about the risk that specialists might leave the country, seven members of the academy, *i.e.* Emil Racoviță, L. Mrazec, Gr. Antipa, Traian Săvulescu, Gh. Marinescu, Ion Simionescu and Dimitrie Voinov, on May the 29th, 1937, called on their colleagues at the Romanian Academy to join in the fight against the plight of laboratories and to act so as to create a National Research Council (*Consiliul Național de Cercetări*) [Berindei, 2006, p. 216].

NEW PROPOSALS, SPEECHES AND ANSWERS

Attending all of the meetings of the science sections, Ludovic Mrazec was much concerned about attracting contemporary personalities, prestigious people of his time, who were active and well devoted to community.

Further to his proposal, **Grigore Antipa** was also assigned corresponding member of the Academy on April the 16th, 1907 (he became a standing member on May the 11th, 1910). After Antipa's acceptance speech (May 25th, 1912), Mrazec said: *There are very few pages of the history of natural creation that exercise upon us the charming effect of the matters of latent life, the dormant life, whose seeds resist up until the magic wand of nature awakens them by changing the environment and by casting the solar power upon them* [Ciupagea, 1991, p. 44]. *The Romanian Academy, this powerful pillar of the Romanian culture, opens its gates widely and welcomes you warmly.*

18 May 1911, he proposed **Ion Simionescu** as corresponding member and, two years after Simionescu became a standing member, Ludovic Mrazec commented upon his acceptance speech: *in the process of science being developed and disseminated all over the world, peer universities and superior schools, providing safe harbour and a prolific environment for sustainable and continuous scientific research, have been the breeding ground of cultures for all peoples* [Ciupagea, 1991, p. 30]. (The University of Iași, the oldest in Romania). *Your first day of membership is a celebration for the Romanian Academy, which is warmly welcoming you with open arms* [Ciupagea, 1991, p. 47].

On May the 22nd, 1939, he proposed that **Gh. Macovei** should become a standing member: *the efforts and strife that Gh. Macovei put into his work for over 30 years have brought one of the most important contributions to understanding clearly the stratigraphic elements in the Oriental Carpathians and Dobrudja* [Anastasiu, 2010b].

On May the 23rd, 1940, he proposed to accept **Ion Atanasiu** as corresponding member: *the acceptance of Ion Atanasiu, a distinguished stratigrapher and tectonician, with sound knowledge of*

petrography and cartography, into the Romanian Academy should be accounted as an acknowledgement of the merits we owe to a distinguished and devoted Romanian researcher.

In 1934, Louis Barthou, France's minister of foreign affairs and member of the *Académie française*, who had visited Romania at the invitation of L. Mrazec, said: *a sincere and centuries-old friendship connects us to France, the cradle of so many grand and noble ideas, and of so many generous movements that have served well the interests of all humanity* [Berindei, 2006].

DELEGATE AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY

Once he became acting president of the Romanian Academy, Ludovic Mrazec was also appointed representative of Romania in a number of scientific and cultural events. Having read his speeches, I understood the principles on which he relied while working to serve his community.



Ioan Dalles Foundation Building of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, 1939.

On May the 2nd, 1909, he represented the Romanian Academy in the celebration of 350 years of existence of the University of Geneva, and in 1913 he participated in two geology congresses in Canada and France.

In a speech delivered on May the 12th, 1935, during the Book Week (*Săptămâna Cărții*), organised by the Dalles Foundation, L. Mrazec said that: *a book may harbour within its pages all of the spiritual energy of the humankind, with all of its manifestations and opportunities. The book is the guide of the first steps that children take on their path to education. The book is their educator and becomes and remains, nowadays, more than ever, an inseparable companion all along their lives, but also a refuge to man's emotions, at the dusk of life* [AAR-p.129–131].

ANNIVERSARIES AND COMMEMORATIONS

The speeches he delivered to celebrate or commemorate geologists and fellow Academy members are quite relevant for his comprehension capacities and for his ability to acknowledge the contributions which his friends, associates or colleagues made in the field of earth sciences and culture, in general.

Upon the demise of Eduard Suess (April 13th, 1914, Vienna), one of world's most important geologists, L. Mrazec said: *Suess has now departed. His concepts begot and will be begetting those fruits that will be braided in the handsomest laurel wreath that this scientist could have ever hoped for, because he rejected all official awards and honours during his lifetime* [AAR, XXXVI, p. 65–66].

When Ion Bianu (former president of the Romanian Academy, also a vice-president, secretary general and director of the library) (17 February 1935) passed away, L. Mrazec, said in his eulogy:

Losing Bianu leaves an empty place in the very being of the Romanian Academy and in the hearts of his fellow Academy members, which will never be filled again [AAR, LV, p. 129–131].

DONATIONS

Readers of Romanian Academy's Annals dating to the time when L. Mrazec was a member will be impressed by the effervescent activities that were taking place in this cultural institution that was an arena in which I. Brătianu, Alex. Lepedatu, N. Iorga, P. Istrati, S. Mehedinți, V. Pârvan, E. Racoviță, I. Simionescu, Gr. Țițeica and so many others like them were competing against each other with their books, and documents, and numismatics, and works of art, and cultural wealth [Ciupagea, 1991].

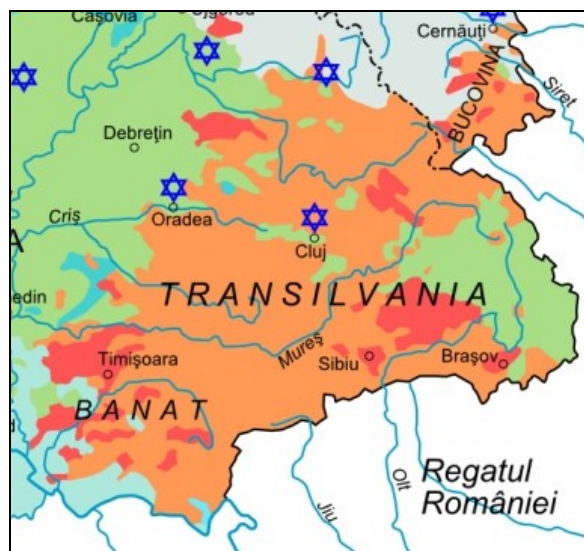
Let us take a look at some of Ludovic Mrazec's comments upon these matters, which we found in the archives of the Academy.

Mihail C. Sutzu left all of his antiques to the Romanian Academy, and the sheer size of this donation is an expression of the patriotism and generous feelings of this scientist, said L. Mrazec in 1933 [Haiduc & Otiman, 2012a, p. 83].

On March the 1st, 1935, Anastase Simu – honorary member of the Romanian Academy – passed away, and Mrazec brought him the supreme homage evoking – *and not without emotion, the day when Simu communicated to us in a most touching presentation, also as simply but deeply moving and with a clear satisfaction inside his heart, the decision of his noble wife, Elena, to use almost entirely her wealth in order to support the publication of meritorious works of art, history, and science, under the auspices and based on the decisions of the Romanian Academy [Ciupagea, 1991].*

In his will dated November 1st, 1939, Matei Drăghiceanu wrote: *...I would like to assign a commission formed of my good friends and colleagues L. Mrazec, I. Simionescu, Gh. Macovei, that will enact an annuity of 25,000 lei/annum which will be paid as a scholarship to the top winners of topical contests (geology, hydrogeology, agriculture, etc.) for a certain period or as aid for special studies of surface and subterranean waters...). I will close my speech by wishing peace for my country and peace for all, and to the current administration I am wishing success in the efforts they make to strengthen the army, which is our only hope for protection. [Ciupagea, 1991].*

(WWII started on September 1st, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland).



Source of the map: *Distribution of Races in Austria-Hungary* from the *Historical Atlas* by William R. Shepherd, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1911.

AWARDS

Although I am not reviewing all of the awards that were given to L. Mrazec, one of them would definitely reward the contributions of this scientist to establishing the place of Romanians in central Europe. On May 26th, 1909 he published in Iași *Transylvania's Ethnographic Map* (Romanians/Hungarians/Germans) and is awarded the *Adamachi Prize, with a recommendation to prepare a similar map for Timișoara, Crișana and Maramureș* [AAR-XXXIII-p. 227–235].

THE END

Ludovic Mrazec passed away on June the 9th, 1944, during the war. He was 77. Before demising, he asked that the money that would be spent to buy him flowers should be given away to the poor and he requested that no eulogy should be delivered by authorities, considering that both himself and the officials had said already all that was to be said during his lifetime. Quite a lesson of modesty and realism! His name was given to an amphitheatre of the Faculty of Geology and Geophysics in Bucharest and to a street in Craiova, in *Sărari* neighbourhood.

Ludovic Mrazec was a founder and a forerunner who took the fame of the Romanian science farther away, and provided new points of view in diverse areas of mineralogy, petrography, geology, geophysics, oil deposits, salt mines, minerals and ores. He was the mentor of the Romanian Academy and a front-ranking member of its Science Section.



And we complete our puzzle with the words of Dan Rădulescu (1968), a member of the Academy: *L. Mrazec managed to achieve something that you will rarely see: overcome the distance separating generations that never meet, influence the thoughts of the researchers who followed in his footsteps dozens of years after him, inspire disciples whom he would never meet.*

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