

Mythology versus historical reality about the ideal of national unity during the Revolution of 1848–1849 in Transylvania¹

Mitologie versus realitate istorică privind idealul unității naționale în timpul Revoluției de la 1848–1849 în Transilvania

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Abstract. In 1848, a series of simultaneous revolutions swept across Europe, moving from France towards the east, inflaming Germany, Italy, the Habsburg Empire, and the Romanian countries. Although the 1848–1849 Revolution was a manifestation of the entire Romanian nation, because of the specific circumstances in each province, it did not break out simultaneously, nor did it know the same development or intensity in all of them. Alongside the 2nd half of the 19th century and during the 20th century, several clichés which need to be amended developed in the Romanian historiography.

Keywords: the Romanians, 1848–1849 revolution, historiography, stereotypes and clichés.

Introduction

The great Romanian historians who dealt with the modern period in the history of Transylvania and/or Romania (some of them trained and active before 1918 or 1945, others educated in the interwar period, but also active

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during the communist regime, and others formed between 1945–1989 and active not only then, but also after 1989) showed the importance of the Revolution of 1848 for the destiny of the Romanian nation in general and of what we call generically Transylvania (incorporating here Ardeal, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș) in particular. Nicolae Bălcescu, George Barițiu, Silviu Dragomir, Ioan Lupaș, Ion Clopoțel, David Prodan, Ștefan Pascu, Vasile Netea, Cornelia Bodea, Dan Berindei, Gheorghe Platon, Alexandru Zub, Liviu Maior, Nicolae Bocșan or Gelu Neamțu – to remember only the most profound exegetes – emphasized the major role that the Revolution of 1848 had for the transition of Transylvania from a world still deeply rooted in forms, socio-economic and legal remains of medieval origin to a modern one. Also, foreign historians who have focused on the history of Romania have noticed the importance of the years 1848–1849 for the affirmation of the Romanian nation in the next period (Seton Watson, Heith Hitchins, Paul Michelson, Francesco Guida, Jean Nouzille etc.). They all emphasized the positive socio-economic, political, ecclesiastical and cultural consequences for the Romanians of the years 1848–1849. Books and hundreds of studies published in the last hundred years by Romanian and foreign historians have demonstrated the magnitude of the transformations generated by the Revolution of 1848 for the Romanians in Transylvania. Some of the aforementioned historians have only stated, more as a general finding, without a solid and detailed argument, that the founding moment of the revolution of 1848 was the basis of the act of December 1, 1918 in Alba Iulia. Others went further and in pages or chapters demonstrated the continuity between the Revolution of 1848 and the fulfilment of the dream of national-state unity. Periodically, historians have the obligation to highlight new documentary sources, to re-read with another methodological grid the edited sources (documents, memoirs, correspondence, press, etc.). In this way, one can correct the predecessors' errors (or even one's own views), nuance aspects left in the shadow of historical research, in order to get as close as possible to historical truth. The Revolution of 1848–1849 was a turning point in national history, in all provinces inhabited by the Romanians. During the events, in the revolutionary programs that became public, in secret covenants, in the press, in speeches or in the correspondence between leaders, the main demands of the nation were unequivocally expressed: the abolition of feudal relations and the introduction of a functioning economic system, the introduction of democratic rights and freedoms, the modernization of the state, national unity and the independence of the country. In connection with *the unitary character* of the revolution but also with *the problem of national unity* during and after the Revolution of 1848, we want to express some thoughts, some older, others more recent, trying to combat some clichés or even “falsehoods” created over about 175 years, to

nuance some of the theses of older or more recent Romanian historiography. We do not intend at all to demolish the national mythology that has had its place in forging our identity, especially in modern times, as has happened to other nations in geographical proximity or in more remote areas. But it is necessary to amend some exaggerations made knowingly or unknowingly, to reveal mechanisms that allowed the perpetuation of historical/historiographical falsehoods. These intentions of critically reevaluating the problem of national unity in 1848 will not circumvent the historical reality, because during the revolution the question of national unity was raised extremely firmly and clearly, in the forms possible at the time. Therefore, we will reconstruct the concrete events and tendencies of unity, documented by many sources, we will emphasize the real trends existing then, but integrating them into another interpretative grid. A. D. Xenopol noted in volume XII of his synthesis of Romanian history that among the three important consequences of the Revolution of 1848, the idea of “uniting Romanians” was the first: “in many heads, especially of the youth of Wallachia, there were boiling ideas of uniting even all the Romanians, and these ideas penetrated more and more from the mysteries of the mind to the outside world”². Not coincidentally, the Transylvanian Ioan Maiorescu, the diplomatic agent of Wallachia to the German revolutionary government and parliament in Frankfurt, submitted a memorandum proposing the union of Moldavia, Wallachia, Bucovina and Transylvania into a kingdom called Romania, ruled by the Austrian prince and under the suzerainty of Germany. Not coincidentally, in a letter from the summer of 1849 of Dimitrie Golescu to Ioan Ghica, the former expresses his enthusiasm for a possible scenario of unity of all the Romanians: “I was casting my eyes, for a few days, on a map printed in Vienna for more than 20 years and which contains only the Romanian countries: Wallachia, Bessarabia, Moldova, Bucovina, Transylvania and Banat. You know that these countries would form a beautiful and round kingdom, with boundaries that nature itself seems to have signified. The Black Sea, the Danube and the Tisza would make her a beautiful bridal girdle, and a good defence against the unfriendliness of foreigners.”³. The national ideal electrified the most visionary Romanian consciences of the mid-nineteenth century. Nicolae Bălcescu said it unequivocally in the spring of 1849: “We, Romanians, will not exist until we all unite in one and the same political body”⁴.

² A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. XII, *Revoluția din 1848*, third edition, Editura Cartea Românească, f.a., București, 1930, p. 99.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 100 sq.

⁴ Silviu Dragomir, *Avram Iancu*, edited by Sorin Șipoș, Editura Academia Română-Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca – Deva, 2016, p. 282.

The “unitary” character of the Revolution

First of all, we must abandon the “axiom” launched and greatly exaggerated during the communist regime, that the Revolution of 1848 had a unitary character in all territories inhabited by the Romanians. We say it unequivocally, in 1848 there were notable differences in the functioning of political institutions, administrative-territorial structures and political mentalities between Wallachia and Moldavia, although the Organic Regulations introduced in 1831–1832 tried precisely to reduce these differences. However, too little time passed for a common evolution of the two principalities to really be imposed. Then, in Moldova we cannot really speak of a revolution in the classical sense, as in Wallachia, just as the insurrectionary model and political institutions in Bucharest differed greatly from those in Transylvania. Therefore, it is necessary to immediately and totally abandon the cliché of the unitary revolution throughout the Romanian space. Nicolae Iorga, in a consistent work dedicated to the idea of political unity among the Romanians, was as categorical as possible in the sense of stating that in 1848 there was not a single revolution, on the contrary, historical conditions practically generated three revolutions in Moldova (paler in the province but very explicit in the programs written in the Habsburg Empire by the exiled revolutionaries), Wallachia and Transylvania: “We are dealing, therefore, not with the same Romanian revolution, which would have taken place in three special places, but with three Romanian revolutions, each with its own particular character”⁵. In fact, none of the Romanian historians before the establishment of the communist regime advanced the thesis of a single Romanian revolution in 1848.

But how did the thesis of the unitary character of the revolution of 1848 come about? The genesis of this cliché is associated with the change in Romania’s policy towards the USSR following the April 1964 Declaration. Detachment from proletarian internationalism, begun historiographically even earlier⁶ and was associated with a return to indigenous traditions, personalities and events in national history that could be contrasted with ideological tendencies coming from Moscow. Either the revolution of 1848 and the Union of 1859 offered enough examples that could be valued politically and ideologically in this national sense. The festive session organized by the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania and the University of Bucharest on January 24, 1966, was one of the important moments of public launch of new theses on the problem of national unity. The papers presented here were included in the first 1966

⁵ Nicolae Iorga, *Desvoltarea ideii unității politice a Românilor*, Editura Casei Școalelor, București, 1915, p. 54.

⁶ See: *Studii privind Unirea Principatelor*, Editorial Board Andrei Oțetea, Nichita Adăniloae, Dan Berindei, Cornelia Bodea, Alexandru Vianu, Editura Academiei RPR, București, 1960.

issue of the journal *Studii*. Andrei Oțetea, one of the great Romanian historians, respectable through his enduring work, also had to make some concessions. Vasile Maciu, among the most loyal propagandists of the communist leadership in Bucharest, published afterwards a study entitled the unitary character of the revolution of 1848⁷. Unfortunately, historians known for the solidity of their work, such as Ștefan Pascu, Gheorghe Platon, Dinu C. Giurescu, Dan Berindei etc. have taken over the cliché of the unitary character of the revolution of 1848 that they included in some of their works, but this does not diminish the value of their works on the revolution and the modern era. On the contrary, they asserted truths about the leaders of 1848 or advanced courageous interpretations that gradually led to the elimination of the theses issued by Roller that had dominated the Romanian historiography for more than a decade.

National unity in 1848

Despite few authors, Romanian or foreign, who try to induce the idea that the Union of Transylvania with Romania on December 1, 1918 would have somehow come against the natural course of history, that the Great Union would have been a gift of the Entente and that the Romanians in the liberated territories did not really want the union, most Romanian historians regard with honesty and critical spirit the process of forming national unity, compared to what was achieved by Germans and Italians, for example, in modern times. Together with them, we strongly believe that the crossing of the Carpathians by the “battalions” of the Romanian army in August 1916 came as a normal gesture, legitimized by previous historical developments that revealed, not infrequently in the decades preceding the Great War, the unity of thought and feeling on both sides of the Carpathians. The Revolution of 1848 was an important moment on the road to December 1, 1918 in Alba Iulia⁸. The efforts of generations of scholars who often worked as politicians in the Old Kingdom (first of all the 1848 generation, illustrated exemplarily by some writings of Nicolae Bălcescu and Mihail Kogălniceanu, then the generation of the Great Union) could not fail to raise public awareness in the territories over the Carpathians, could not fail to influence the options of national solidarity of all Romanians and not lead to pressure on political decision-makers to join Romania on the natural side of the allies, who were ready at the end of the war

⁷ Vasile Maciu, „Caracterul unitar al revoluției din 1848”, in *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, tom 21, 1968, nr. 5.

⁸ See also: Ioan Bolovan, „Transilvania pe drumul unității naționale (de la Revoluția din 1848 la Primul Război Mondial)”, in *Centenar Sfatul Țării, 1917–2017. Materialele conferinței științifice internaționale Chișinău, 21 noiembrie 2017*, edited by Gheorghe Cliveti, Ioan Bolovan, Gheorghe Cojocaru, Chișinău, Editura Lexon Prim, 2017, pp. 167–178.

to recognize the legitimacy of Romania's takeover of all territories in Austria-Hungary inhabited by Romanians. In the years preceding the Revolution of 1848, contacts between the leaders of the Romanians in all Romanian provinces intensified. The travels of George Barițiu and Timotei Cipariu in Wallachia or the wanderings of Moldovans and Wallachians through Transylvania and Banat ensured, among other forms of communication, the dissemination of national and democratic ideology throughout the Romanian space. Even in Paris, the most important European city for the formation of the Romanian intelligentsia in the Principalities in those years, social, democratic and national desiderata were expressed through the Romanian Students Society, which contributed fully to attracting political and diplomatic support from abroad for the national movement in the Principalities. The speech delivered within the Society by Nicolae Bălcescu on January 1, 1847 is extremely suggestive of the national orientation of the program of the Romanian students' association in the capital of France: "Our target, gentlemen, I reckon, can be none other than the national unity of the Romanians. Unity first in feeling, then bringing political unity with time... But Romanianism is our flag, under it we must call all the Romanians."⁹ Of course, Bălcescu's immediate goal was the Union of the two principalities, but he calls for unity, under the banner of Romanianism, for all Romanians. In a way, Bălcescu is a precursor of Ioan Slavici who, a few decades later, appealed to the cultural unity of all the Romanians, under the protective and guiding dome of Bucharest (the formula "the sun for all Romanians rises in Bucharest" that the writer from Arad imposed on the frontispiece of the newspaper *Tribuna* in Sibiu starting with 1884 was one of the most important expressions of this ideal)¹⁰.

The conspiratorial or semi-legal societies and associations that were established in those years throughout Romania have constantly promoted both democratic ideals and the desiderata of union and independence. The formula of *Dacoromânia* can always be found expressed in the acts and programs of the revolutionary movements, in the publicistics of the time. It was also received by foreigners who travelled before the Revolution of 1848 through the Romanian space and were able to make direct contact with the realities of the time. Thus, Hipolyte Félix Desprez, a good connoisseur and admirer of Romanian history, captured this ideal as faithfully as possible around the revolution of 1848: "**The Romanian movement represents this political action of the Romanian scholars, writers from the principalities, Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bucovina, for the union of the eight million Romanians** (emphasis added),

⁹ Cornelia Bodea, *1848 la români. O istorie în date și mărturii*, vol. I, București, 1982, pp. 319–320.

¹⁰ Ioan Bolovan, *Ioan Slavici: Între loialismul pro-habsburgic și devotamentul național*, Biblioteca Județeană George Coșbuc, Colecția Clasică, 6, Bistrița, 2017, p. 22.

who survived seventeen centuries of cruel trials. From the point of view of the principle of nationalities, this mutilated people currently forms only one body and the vast territorial unit on which it lives is called Romania, if not in the language of treaties, at least in that of patriotism"¹¹. Framed in a general European phenomenon, the Romanians' aspirations are not expressed only in salons and private circles, they go beyond the limited framework of discussions and letters, overflow in the press, anonymous or assumed brochures are published, etc. The national culture and ideology, militant par excellence, prepared the public spirit of the Principalities, gave expression to the fundamental ideals of the Romanian people of establishing an independent, modern and integrated national state among the civilized states of Europe. Symptomatic in this respect is the speech delivered on November 24, 1843 by Mihail Kogălniceanu at the opening of the history course at *Academia Mihăileană*: "If the Greeks fell once under the yoke of Philip and then under the yoke of the Romans, it is because they wanted to be Platans, Thebans, Athenians, Spartans, and not Hellenes; in the same way, our ancestors wanted to be Transylvanians, Wallachians, Banatians, Moldovans and not Romanians; Seldom did they wish to regard each other as one and the same nation; in their union, however, we must see the story of all past misfortunes, traces of which are still alive on our land to this day. I regard as my homeland all that expanse of land from where Romanian is spoken and as national history, the history of the whole of Moldova before its tearing, of Wallachia and of its brothers in Transylvania"¹². An important role in the propagation of national history was played by *Arhiva Românească* and *Dacia Literară* (published in 1840), edited in Iasi by Mihail Kogălniceanu, and *Magazin istoric pentru Dacia* (1845), edited in Bucharest by Nicolae Bălcescu and the Transylvanian August Treboniu Laurian. The plethora of almanacs, calendars and pamphlets, along with newspapers and magazines more or less enchanting, prepared from an ideological point of view the explosion of 1848, contributing decisively to the dissemination of culture but also of the national ideology.

The Romanian Revolution of 1848 in Transylvania had in its unfolding an astral moment, representative of the responsibility with which the Transylvanian Romanians took care of the fate of their brothers in the Principalities. In Blaj, between September 3/15 and September 16/28, 1848, a new national assembly (third) was convened, attended by about 60,000 people, this time many armed. The Assembly reaffirmed the revolutionary program adopted at the second May assembly in Blaj and emphasized certain social and political aspects: it rejected the incorporation of Transylvania into Hungary and demanded the restoration of the

¹¹ *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, vol. IV (1841–1846), edited by Daniela Bușă, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2007, p. 659.

¹² Bodea, *1848 la români*, I, p. 220.

province's autonomy; it demanded an end to military executions and repression against those who opposed the authority of the Hungarian revolutionary government, etc. Proclaiming a break with the Hungarian government, the Romanian elite moved towards a possible alliance with liberal and constitutional Austria. In the memorandum drafted at this third national assembly and sent to the Austrian Parliament, the idea of establishing an autonomous Romanian state within Austria was put forward, by uniting Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia: "In no state have all nationalities obtained so many guarantees for their freedom and nationality as in Austria, through the just, liberal decisions of a high Parliament... We want the free union of free peoples under the leadership of Austria, free inside, strong outside... But it is not only for us that we pray, **but also for our brothers in the Danubian principalities** (emphasis added)"¹³. The memorandum of September 14/26, 1848 is the culmination of the collaboration between the Romanian revolutionaries in Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia and Bucovina. At the same time, it is proof of a concerted action, meant to save the political and legal status of the Romanian Countries under dual foreign occupation. The political regime established after the defeat of the revolution in Wallachia was an obvious violation of autonomy, and the solution envisaged by the Transylvanian memorandum, although it proposed the creation of a Romanian state under the aegis of Austria, was obviously a step forward compared to the situation existing in the two Romanian states across the Carpathians.

Although Nicolae Bălcescu's work *Românii supt Mihai-Voievod Viteazul*, written in exile in the last years of his life, was printed posthumously in volume in 1878 by Alexandru Odobescu (after being serially published between 1861–1863 in *Revista română*), it contributed to shaping the public spirit in Romania in the sense of national unity, admirably illustrated by the unifying ruler. In fact, Book IV of the work, suggestively entitled National Unity (April 1599–July 1600), begins with that fine geographical description of Transylvania that made a career in the last century and a half: "On the highest peak of the Carpathian mountains lies a proud and blessed land among all the countries sown by the Lord on earth. It resembles a great and extensive palace, a work of architecture, where all the natural beauties that adorn the other lands of Europe are gathered and masterfully placed... Wherever you look, you see colours sliced like a vast rainbow, and the most enchanting painting charms the view... Such is the country of Transylvania. But not only the artist and naturalist, but still the strategic, the political and the archaeologist have much to marvel at in this adorned land... The archaeologist historian will research with interest the souvenirs and remains of the Dacians, of this brave and wretched people... He

¹³ Bodea, *1848 la români*, II, p. 911.

will still encounter everywhere the giant traces of the master people here, the Romans, the lords of the world, because Transylvania is the most beautiful part of happy Dacia”¹⁴.

Equally important for the unionist message bequeathed by Balcescu is another article, a speech delivered in Paris by the Wallachian patriot in exile after the defeat of the revolution in Wallachia. It is a text (*Mișcarea românilor din Ardeal la 1848*) printed starting with 1851 in several editions, including the 1878 volume curated by Alexandru Odobescu, in which a pertinent analysis of the revolution of Romanians in Transylvania in 1848–1849 was made. Nicolae Bălcescu’s admiration for the Second National Assembly in Blaj on May 3/15–5/17, 1848 was undisguised, being impressed by the force of the event organized by the Romanian leaders of Transylvania: “May 15, 1848! Day of light, freedom and Romanian magnificence, we remember you and celebrate you with love! In the Romanian annals no other day shines brighter than you and the one like you, your beloved sister, the day of June 11, 1848 of the people of Bucharest. We remember you and celebrate you with love, a great day! For the first time we heard then a whole people responding to those who spoke to them about the union of Transylvania with Hungary, with this cry: «We want to unite with the Country». Wonderful confession of God, who on such great days of popular feast speaks outright in the hearts of his chosen ones, and only the people and poets, these sons of divine inspiration, had in 1848 the consciousness of future events, only they were aware and revealed what was written at the bottom of the heart of every Romanian: salvation from any foreign rule through national unity”¹⁵. The note put by Bălcescu after the sentence “We want to unite with the Country” is relevant to his creed: “Under this word Country, the Transylvanians understand Wallachia. I did not have the good fortune to be in Blaj on May 15, 1848, but several Romanians from Transylvania who were in Blaj assured me of this cry of the people”¹⁶. Even if today we have another interpretation on the correct meaning of what many participants in the second assembly in Blaj claimed (“We want to unite with the Country”), important for the post 1848 era and for the effort of an entire generation to constitute a national ideal by uniting all Romanians is the interpretation given by Bălcescu, that the Transylvanian Romanians chanted in Blaj that they wanted union with Wallachia. Thus, the appeal in the memorandum also drafted in Blaj, at the third national assembly of September 1848, which proposed the reunification under the sceptre of liberal

¹⁴ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Românii supt Mihai-Voievod Viteazul*, edited by Andrei Rusu, preface and chronological table by Emil Manu, București, 1985, pp. 234–235.

¹⁵ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere II. Scrieri istorice, politice și economice 1848–1852*, critical edition and notes by G. Zane and Elena G. Zane, Editura Academiei, București, 1982, p. 115.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Austria of all the Romanians from the Principalities, Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina, fits even better into the mythology of national unity.

As we said in the beginning, the instrumentalization in a national spirit of history after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops and the visible affirmation of Romanian values also meant the recurrence of the idea of national unity expressed during the revolution of 1848 in all Romanian provinces. The *Tratat de Istoria României* of 1964 unequivocally formulates the thesis that in Blaj, at the second assembly, the desire to unite the Transylvanian Romanians with their brothers from Moldavia and Wallachia was expressed: "The thought of uniting Romanians from the three Romanian countries has gained momentum. Balcescu's information, based on the testimonies of some participants that the cry «We want to unite with the Country» was heard in Blaj is confirmed by several official Hungarian reports which state that the Romanian peasants did not want a union with Hungary, but with Wallachia"¹⁷. Andrei Oțetea is one of the first great Romanian historians who, after the increasing detachment from Moscow of the party leadership in Romania, advanced the same interpretation as in the treaty, taking over Bălcescu's thesis: "The revolutionaries of 1848 aimed primarily at the emancipation of the peasants and at endowing the country with bourgeois-democratic institutions, but they never lost sight of the Union: the people gathered on May 3/15 on the Freedom Field in Blaj demanded Union with the Country, that is, with Wallachia and Moldavia"¹⁸. Following Oțetea's footsteps, many historians of the modern era in the second half of the twentieth century resumed and perpetuated Bălcescu's interpretation, but extended to the union with Moldavia, not only with Wallachia, as the Wallachian scholar and revolutionary had claimed immediately after the revolution. Ștefan Pascu claimed that the idea of uniting Transylvania with Wallachia was propagated by Alexandru Papiu Ilarian before the second assembly in Blaj on May 3/15–15/17: "And, like Papiu, others certainly did, which explains the fact that this wish will be openly expressed by the crowds gathered two weeks later on the Freedom Field in Blaj on May 3/15, who demanded: «We want to unite with the Country,» according to Nicolae Balcescu"¹⁹. Likewise, Gheorghe Platon invokes the Wallachian revolutionary to justify the ideal of union of the Transylvanian Romanians gathered in Blaj: "The tens of thousands of Romanians, according to N. Bălcescu's testimony, have strongly affirmed, here, in Blaj, their desire to unite

¹⁷ *Istoria României*, vol. IV, edited by Acad. P. Constantinescu-Iași, Editura Academiei RPR, București, 1964, p. 138.

¹⁸ Andrei Oțetea, „Unirea Principatelor Române”, in *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, tom 19, 1966, nr. 1, p. 9.

¹⁹ Ștefan Pascu, *Făurirea statului național unitar român*, vol. I, Editura Academiei RSR, București, 1983, p. 97.

with the Country”²⁰. Dinu C. Giurescu wrote in the same tone: “From among the peasantry gathered on the Freedom Field, they shouted – as the Hungarian official reports admit – «We want to unite with the Country (= Wallachia or Wallachia)»”²¹. Dan Berindei did not deny Nicolae Bălcescu’s interpretation either, continuing to promote the same historiographical cliché: “On the Blaj plain, thousands of peasants shouted: «We want to unite with the Country», referring of course to Wallachia and probably even to the Principalities”²². Other Romanian historians from the post-1960 period supported the same thesis, thus perpetuating a false history.

George Barițiu, the most important Transylvanian Romanian historian of modern times, an active participant in the revolution, and one of the most informed intellectuals of the time, did not remember in his massive synthesis of Transylvanian history the fact that in Blaj, during the second assembly, they chanted “We want to unite with the Country”²³. Personally, however, we do not exclude the possibility that from the crowds gathered in Blaj someone shouted the words interpreted by Bălcescu in a general Romanian unionist sense. The fact that the gathering was attended by hundreds of Romanians from Banat, Crișana, Sătmăr and Maramureș, territories administratively located in Hungary, could generate enthusiasm among these participants, seduced by the impressive number of Transylvanian participants and by the determination of the leaders of the Romanian revolution in Transylvania. It is quite possible that some of these “Hungarian” Romanians present in Blaj expressed their desire for (administrative) union with the “Country”, in the sense of a “Transylvanian Land”. In fact, this project of uniting all Romanians in the Austrian monarchy took shape at the beginning of 1849, in several memoirs. The approach of the Banat, Transylvanian and Bucovinian leaders to the new emperor Franz Joseph I in the spring of 1849 failed due to the young emperor’s lack of experience and the clichés with which the Austrian ministers regarded the Romanians. Significant, however, for that moment is the argument brought by the Austrian government to the memorandum regarding the formation of a single Romanian province by uniting Banat, Transylvania and Bucovina: “The granting of this point of the Petition would dissolve the said countries of the Crown, creating in their

²⁰ Gheorghe Platon, *Istoria modernă a României*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1984, p. 123.

²¹ Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria ilustrată a Românilor*, Editura Sport Turism, București, 1981, p. 3.

²² Dan Berindei, *Epoca Unirii*, Editura Academiei RSR, București, 1979, p. 26.

²³ George Barițiu recorded in his monumental work only the fact that Bishop Ioan Lemeni, on the morning of May 4/16, passing among the crowd gathered on the Field of Freedom, heard shouts from several sides that Romanians “do not want union with Hungary”. George Barițiu, *Părți alese din istorie Transilvaniei. Pe două sute de ani din urmă*, vol. II, Second edition, curated, notes, comments and index by Ștefan Pascu and Florin Salvan, Brașov, 1994, p. 187.

place a new and independent country of the Crown – Romania”²⁴. Therefore, we firmly believe that Bălcescu honestly interpreted, in the sense he wanted and in the spirit of the national ideology, what could be acclaimed in Blaj by the representatives of Banat, Crișana and Maramureș, launching in history and historiography a falsehood that made a career for about a century and a half. It is true that before and after the second assembly in Blaj, several representatives of the Hungarian authorities in Transylvania launched in the correspondence with Vienna the thesis that the Transylvanian Romanians want their union with Moldova and/or Wallachia. They resorted to this not on the basis of evidence, but to dynamite any political approaches of the Romanians directed towards the imperial court, after their traditional address to the ruling family (see the petitions of Inochentie Micu Klein, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* etc.).

Conclusions

Fully affirmed during the revolution of 1848, the connections of Romanians in Transylvania with their brothers across the Carpathians were amplified, the War of Independence of 1877–1878 seeing ample Romanian solidarity. After several decades of such positions and contacts between the Romanians in Transylvania and those over the mountains, around the outbreak of World War I, the public opinion in the Old Kingdom was massively won by the idea of supporting with all forces the ideal of national unity. The general exhibition organized in Bucharest in 1906 on the occasion of King Carol I's anniversary of four decades of reign occasioned countless moments for effusion, for expressing feelings of national solidarity. The memoirs of a Banat resident participating in these events reveal the atmosphere that was in Bucharest in those years: “The column formed by ten in a row, from all the Banat choirs, arrived on Calea Victoriei passing in front of the Royal Palace. Along the streets, rain fell on the column, a flood of flowers accompanied by endless cheers from the windows and balconies of palaces adorned with rugs and Romanian flags... The following day, at the Roman Arenas in Bucharest, under the direction of master choir leader Kiriac, the grandiose jubilee concert took place, which awakened the volcano of vibrations of the Romanian soul in the chests of Romanian brothers gathered from all over Europe. All united choirs sang: «Imnul Regal», «Deșteaptă-te române» and «Pui de lei». It was a real glory expressed gratefully in the decision for uniting into an admirable people of Romanianism throughout the world”²⁵.

²⁴ Liviu Maior, *Revoluția de la 1848–1849 în Transilvania*, în *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol. III, edited by Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Năgler, Magyari András, Editura Academia Română – Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 361.

²⁵ Valeriu Leu, *Modernizare și imobilism. Sate și oameni din Banat la începutul veacului XX în documente memorialistice*, Muzeul Banatului Montan, Reșița, 1998, p. 20.

As we approach the beginning of the Great War, the manifestations of support in Romania for their brothers in Transylvania and Bucovina in particular have multiplied. Not infrequently, Austro-Hungarian diplomats accredited in Bucharest sent alarming messages to Vienna and Budapest about the growth of national feelings among the population of the Old Kingdom, highlighting the efforts of the cultural elites to maintain a state of national solidarity. The speech of Virgil Arion, vice-president of the Cultural League at the protest assembly in Bucharest on June 6, 1911 against the electoral practices of the Hungarian government to stop the election of Romanian deputies to the Parliament in Budapest, is suggestive in this respect: "We are of the same lineage as the Romanians in Hungary: we cannot separate the Romanian here from the Romanian beyond. We cannot tear the nation into pieces that do not hold on to each other... A nation is a living thing, something perfect and harmonic, that lives, that lasts, that pervades the ages"²⁶.

In fact, after the outbreak of the war and the declaration of Romania's neutrality, almost not a week passed without organizing in Bucharest or other important cities south and east of the Carpathians popular assemblies or meetings of the cultural elites where the desire for Romania to enter the war on the side of the Entente for the liberation of the brothers over the mountains was expressed. Perhaps the most relevant in this respect, in our opinion, is the speech entitled *Inima României*, delivered by Nicolae Titulescu in Ploiești on May 3, 1915, at the rally organized by the Cultural League. In this speech, as a fine political observer that he already was, Titulescu analyzed Romania's situation after the outbreak of World War I and the geopolitical context in which our country found itself. Titulescu manages to make an unparalleled plea for the renunciation of neutrality and our country's entry into the war alongside the Entente for the recovery of Transylvania. His position was that of most Romanian politicians who saw Romania's joining naturally the camp of democratic countries for uniting the territories inhabited by the Romanians in Austria-Hungary: "The problem facing Romania today is frightening but simple: either Romania understands the debt created by the ongoing events, and then its history is just beginning, and its future will be a prolonged and great revenge of its secular humiliations; or Romania, myopic to everything that is «tomorrow», with eyes wide open to everything that is «today» does not understand and stands still, and then its history will forever show the unique and miserable example of a suicide lived! From today's circumstances, Romania must emerge whole and great! Romania cannot be whole without Transylvania; Romania cannot be great without sacrifice! **Transylvania is the cradle that protected its childhood, it is the school that made its nation, it is the charm that**

²⁶ *Calendarul Ligei Culturale pe anul 1911*, Vălenii de Munte, 1911, p. 19.

sustained its life (emphasis added). Transylvania is the spark that ignites energy, it is mutilation that cries revenge, it is hypocrisy that calls punishment, it is strangling that demands freedom! Transylvania is Romanianism in distress, it is the strength that drives away the enemy, it is the life that calls life! We need Transylvania! We can't do without it! We will know how to take it and, above all, to deserve it! For Transylvania there is no life that does not die with pleasure; for Transylvania there is no effort that does not offer itself; for Transylvania everything changes, everything is beautified, even death changes: it ceases to be hideous, it becomes attractive! Transylvania is not only the heart of political Romania; look at the map: Transylvania is the heart of geographical Romania"²⁷.

As Titulescu estimated, Greater Romania was possible a few years later only through the sacrifice of several hundred thousand Romanians, anonymous or known soldiers and officers, priests, teachers, workers and scholars, Wallachians, Moldovans or Transylvanians, all martyrs of the ideal of national unity, of the modernization and affirmation of the nation to which they belonged in the concert of the civilized nations of Europe. Any speculations on the backstage arrangements at the Paris Peace Conference, on the games of interests of the Great Powers pale in front of reality, the one that is revealed to us if we want in all its fullness through thousands and thousands of documents that undoubtedly attest to the mentality of Romanians in the decades preceding the astral year 1918. And it all began to roll in the minds of intellectuals first, and then of the many, with the Revolution of 1848!

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²⁷ <https://cutiacuvechituri.wordpress.com/2012/01/24/inima-romaniei-discurs-din-1915-al-lui-nicolae-titulescu>, accessed 21 February 2017, 22:53.

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