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THE UNION OF TRANSYLVANIA AND BANAT WITH THE KINGDOM OF ROMANIA. IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL ACTION

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The union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania was and is a chapter of national history intensively discussed in historiography, the subject having been treated in different ways from one era to another, each generation of historians bringing new perspectives/research directions and ways of interpreting documentary and memorial information. Although more than a century has passed since the historical event mentioned, it remains topical, both because it is the moment that completed the unity of the Romanian people (the birth of the Romanian national state, later recognized by the Paris Peace Treaties) and because the Romanian archives still hide documentary sources that can bring new perspectives on the subject or shed new light on fragments considered enigmatic. In the same way, the study of the memorial material, which has been intensively capitalized on, at least in the last two decades, allows us to try to create a cultural history of the events that took place in the autumn and winter of 1918 in Transylvania and Banat, territories that had just left the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Starting with these considerations of an observational nature, in the autumn of 2015, continuing an earlier research dedicated to the Romanian national councils of the former county of Alba Inferior, I started a PhD program whose practical end is the present thesis, a synthesis about the events leading to the achievement of the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania (with the remark that when we refer to Transylvania in this work, we refer to its territory in a broad sense, including Crisana and Maramures). Carrying through such an approach required a considerable intellectual effort, given both the extremely interesting subject and the vastness of the bibliography, which had to be doubled by archival research in Cluj-Napoca, Alba-Iulia, Sibiu, Sălaj, Bistrița-Năsăud, with the idea of presenting unpublished aspects behind the achievement of the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. By the summarizing nature of the work we had to remain confined to the principles and rules of elaboration of such a scientific approach, which is why certain aspects, certain particular cases, certain biographical references, have not been treated here, and will be the subject of future studies and materials dedicated to the union (after all, this should be the practical purpose of a doctoral thesis, namely the beginning of a scientific approach, continued later throughout the author's research activity). Our paper is set out to answer a number of questions raised both before and during the research: "What characterized the Central-Eastern European political landscape at the end of the First World War?"; "What were the ways of expression of the Transylvanian and Banat Romanians in the autumn and winter of 1918?"; "Can we talk about a revolution in Transylvania and Banat at the end of the First World War?"; "How was the rapprochement and collaboration between the Romanian National Party and the Romanian section of the Social Democratic Party in Hungary achieved?"; "How was the cooperation between the Romanian National Party and the Romanian section of the Social Democratic Party in Hungary?"; ",What were the steps of the establishment of the Central Romanian National Council?"; "What was the activity of the Central Romanian National Council?"; "What was the impact of the activity of the Central Romanian National Council?"; "How was the Romanian administration established?"; "What was the way to Alba-Iulia?"; "What were the main directions of the Romanian national movement in the autumn and winter of 1918?"; "Can we talk about an ideology of the Great Union?". All these research questions found the expected answers as we progressed with the study of literature, archival documents and the work of drafting the text itself, answers found in the five chapters of the work The Union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. Ideology and political action. Initially, the project of this research was a much more generous one, conceived in ten chapters, but in the course of its progression, it went through two massive restructurings, following its presentation and discussion in the circle of Cluj historians. The final version of the work comprises five chapters, as follows: "The Great Union: historiographical trails", "Finis Austriae!", "The Central Romanian National Council and the Romanian power structure in Transylvania and Banat", "The Romanian National Guards. Constitution, organization, attributions" and "The way to Alba-Iulia. Ideology and political action". Five chapters which could be, without a doubt, at any time, as research intensifies and deepens, both in the internal and especially in the external archives, which hide unsuspected "treasures", be the subject of a work in their own right

The first chapter, naturally, is a radiography of the historical writing dedicated to the Great Union, but not in the classical way, listing the titles published over the years, preferred by some historians, but in an analytical, critical form, in the sense of reviewing the literature. However, to a large extent, I have followed the analytical scheme proposed by historians such as Nicolae Bocsan, Alexandru Porteanu, Iacob Mârza or Valer Moga, starting with the

writings published between 1919 and 1948, written and published, in particular, by the main political actors since 1918, a justifying literature, continuing with the period 1948-1989, the time of the instrumentalizing of historical writing, and the period 1989-2022, the time of the liberalization of historical writing, during which, however, for reasons that escape us, a unified historiographical programme dedicated to the Great Union did not crystallize. Since the contribution of the Romanian section of the Social Democratic Party in Hungary, not much highlighted in Romanian historiography, has been projected over time with an eminently pejorative image, we considered it necessary to devote a sub-chapter to this issue, proposing even a scheme of analysis (the period 1918-1948-in which the former Social Democratic members of the Central Romanian National Council expressed themselves in writing, the period 1948-1968-when the Transylvanian Social Democrats were indexed, the period 1969-1989-when the activity of the Transylvanian Social Democrats was re-evaluated in the attempt to historically legitimize the Romanian Communist Party and the period 1990-2022-when, sporadically, the contribution of the Transylvanian Social Democrats to the achievement of the Great Union was brought into question).

The second chapter, entitled "Finis Austriae!", taking the title of a sub-chapter of Jean Bérenger's History of the Habsburg Empire (1273-1918), brings to the foreground an issue less debated in Romanian historiography: the collapse of the army and the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, as well as the establishment of the first Romanian national bodies outside the territory of Transylvania and Banat. In a very brief manner, we have tried to present the context of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian army, definitively defeated in the autumn of 1918 on the Italian front, the belated attempt to save the monarchy undertaken by Emperor Charles I who, at the last moment, in his manifesto "To my faithful peoples!", announced the federalization of the empire, as well as the establishment of nation states in central and north-eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, Austria, Hungary). In the chaos created by the collapse of the fronts and the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian army, in order not to repeat the experience of the former Romanian soldiers and officers imprisoned in Russia, some of them contaminated by the ideas of the Bolshevik revolution, by the initiative of Romanian political leaders or officers, in Vienna, Prague and Pola at the end of October 1918, three national bodies, the Central Romanian Military Senate of Officers and Soldiers in Vienna, the Romanian Legion in Prague and the Romanian National Guard of Sailors in Pola, came into being and succeeded, in a short period of time, in organizing and sending home in an ordely manner the Romanian soldiers and officers of the former Austro-Hungarian army. We have also written about the work of these bodies on other occasions, in volumes and studies published in recent years, but here, for the first time, we have analyzed them together, following a single thread and linking them directly to the launch of the imperial manifest "To my faithful peoples", an act which, among other things, allowed the nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy to organize into national councils and councils, each of which interpreted it in its own way.

The third chapter, entitled "The Central Romanian National Council and the Romanian power structure in Transylvania and Banat", presents the stages of the establishment of the Central Romanian National Council, starting with the resumption of the activity of the Romanian National Party and continuing with the drafting of the Oradea Declaration and the presentation of this document in the Budapest Parliament by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, with the reapprochement between the two Romanian political forces in Transylvania and Banat (the Romanian National Party and the Romanian section of the Social Democratic Party in Hungary), from which, on the night of 30 October 1918, the Central Romanian National Council was born in Budapest, a body whose activity was moved to Arad from 2 November 1918. Constituted on a parity basis, the Central Romanian National Council was made up of six representatives of the Romanian National Party (Vasile Goldis, Aurel Lazăr, Teodor Mihali, Ștefan Cicio-Pop, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod and Aurel Vlad) and six representatives of the Romanian section of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Tiron Albani, Ion Flueras, Enea Grapini, Iosif Jumanca, Iosif Renoiu and Bazil Surdu). In order to understand the relevance of these personalities for the Romanian movement at the beginning of the 20th century, but especially for the movement in the autumn and winter of 1918, we have included in this chapter a series of information and excerpts from their biographies (with references, of course, to their work in Greater Romania). Equally important is the information related to the violent dimension of the events that preceded the seizure of power in Transylvania and Banat by the Central Romanian National Council and the bodies created by it in the territory (county and local councils and national guards), as well as that related to the evolution of the Romanian social-democratic movement during the First World War (from the support of internationalist principles to the assumption of the principle of the free layout of the Romanian nation), also presented in the third chapter of the work. Then, we tried to capture the actual activity of the Central Romanian National Council by following the documents it drafted and the reports/information received from the territory (relevant to the way the directives of the Arad Council were implemented); based on the documents elaborated by the Romanian national county and local councils, we made a brief analysis of the way they functioned and succeeded in exercising their power towards the establishment of the Romanian administration in Transylvania and Banat.

The fourth chapter entitled "Romanian National Guards. Constitution, organisation, duties", presents the work of the Romanian National Guards, the "armed hand of the revolution" as we call them, to maintain public order and safety in the localities of Transylvania and Banat, with a view to the establishment of the Romanian administration by the national councils. In this chapter, information can be found on the incipient organization of the Romanian National Guards, in the context of the move of the Central Romanian National Council from Budapest to Arad, as well as data on the establishment of the Supreme Command of the Romanian National Guards (headed by Major Alexandru Vlad) and its activity through the Romanian National Guards (activity followed by the Supreme Command's agendas). In order to complete the picture of the activity of the Romanian National Guards, we have inserted a sub-chapter dedicated to the contribution they made to the organization and defense of the Great National Assembly of Alba-Iulia, under the leadership of Captain Florian Medrea.

Finally, the fifth chapter entitled "The Road to Alba-Iulia. Ideology and political action", is dedicated to the events that led to the convening of the Great National Assembly in Alba-Iulia on 1 December 1918, which confirmed the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. The issues related to the Romanian-Hungarian negotiations held in Arad between 13-14 November 1918, followed by the convening of the Great National Assembly, the appointment of delegates for it, the actual preparation of the assembly, which involved a whole debate on the location and the draft resolution to be voted by the delegates, were discussed. In conclusion, we made a brief analysis of the main programmatic documents drawn up in October, November and December 1918 ("Declaration on the right of self-determination of the Romanians in Transylvania", the manifest "The Revolution has won!", the Appeal of the Central Romanian National Council, the manifest "To the Romanian

Nation!", the manifest "To the Peoples of the World", as well as the text of the resolution adopted at the Great National Assembly in Alba-Iulia), an analysis from which the crystallization of the national ideology in this chronological interval of only three months emerges.

From the summary of the work on the Union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. Ideology and political action, it can be deduced that our research aimed at synthesizing the events that led to the achievement of the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. It is possible to deduce, undoubtedly, the fragments that refer to episodes already known in the course of events, but also the fragments that constitute the actual contributions of this work.

Looking through the summary of the five chapters of the work, it can be seen that we have used a series of terms and concepts, such as "Transylvania" (understood, as already mentioned, in a broad sense, including Crisana and Maramures), "revolution" (to define those events triggered in the autumn of 1918, in the context of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which led to the removal of the Hungarian administrative apparatus and its replacement by new Romanian power structures), "revolutionary violence" (a phrase used to define the way Romanians demonstrated in the context of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which constituted the first plan of action in the autumn of 1918, the popular one, followed later by the political, elite one), "military/national senates" (to define those Romanian bodies born under the impact of the launch of the manifest "To my faithful peoples!" by Emperor Charles I on 16 October 1918), "national council" (referring to those central, county and local structures that established the Romanian administration in Transylvania and Banat), "national guard" (referring to those military structures that accompanied the work of the Romanian national councils), "programmatic act" (to designate those documents that highlighted the ideology of the national movement in the autumn and winter of 1918), "national assembly" (in reference to the meeting of Romanian delegates at which the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania was voted on, the origin of which can be traced back to the organization of the old 19th century church assemblies found both among the Romanians and other nationalities in the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy). All these terms were used at the time, and were later taken up by all works, general and special, dedicated to the events of the autumn and winter of 1918.

In terms of methodology, our scientific approach began with the study of historical bibliographies, from the pages of which we selected the secondary sources that constitute the documentary basis of this work. Given the vastness of the documentary material, we selected the most important works, collections of documents, studies and articles dedicated to the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania, materials that were carefully studied. We have tried to critically assess the content of the secondary documentary sources, taking into account the fact that they were produced in different historical contexts and were more or less influenced by the political ideologies of the time. This stage of the research was often hampered by the lack of documentary material in the collections of libraries in Cluj, which is why we also called on the support of university, municipal or museum libraries in Alba-Iulia, Sebeş, Sibiu, Arad and Bucharest, which provided us with the requested materials.

Then, before researching the primary sources, we looked at the materials published in the press of the time, especially those published in the newspaper "Românul" (which in the autumn and winter of 1918 became the official newspaper of the Central Romanian National Council), the newspaper "Adevărul" from Budapest (the newspaper of the Romanian section of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party), the newspaper "Unirea" from Blaj (the newspaper of the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Church) or the newspaper "Timpul Nou" (the newspaper of the Central Romanian Military Senate of Officers and Soldiers in Vienna). The pages of these publications revealed both the atmosphere of the time and the evolution of the Romanian power structures in Transylvania and Banat, the stage of elaboration of the main programmatic documents, as well as some of the actions carried out by the other nationalities of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (which followed, approximately, the path followed by the Romanians). The databases of the Central University Library "Lucian Blaga" Cluj-Napoca, of the County Library "Alexandru D. Xenopol" Arad and of the County Library ASTRA Sibiu, in whose collections we identified the newspapers "Românul" and "Unirea", were of real use in studying the period press. As for the newspaper "Adevărul", its study was possible because the complete collection of issues published during the First World War was photocopied and made available to researchers who resort to the study rooms of the Romanian Academy Library, Cluj-Napoca branch. The photocopied version of the newspaper "Timpul Nou", available in the collections of the Austrian National Library, was made available to us by the researcher Ionela Zaharia-Schintler.

The primary sources of the work were collected from the archives of Cluj-Napoca (National Archives), Alba-Iulia (National Archives and National Museum of Unification), Sibiu (Library of the Faculty of Theology "Sfântul Andrei Şaguna"), Sălaj (National Archives), Bistrița-Năsăud (National Archives), keepers of documentary collections and personal collections extremely rich in information on the events in the autumn and winter of 1918 or the contribution made by some personalities of the time to the achievement of the Act of Union. The same as in the case of the secondary sources, we have attempted a critical interpretation of these sources and, where appropriate, we have used their text to reinforce the statements, hypotheses and conclusions that we have conveyed in the paper.

Finally yet importantly, living in the century of speed and rapid information, the documentation of our work has not bypassed electronic documentary sources, databases and virtual encyclopedias or dictionaries, which have provided us with some information not found in classical sources.

A browse through the work on the *Union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom* of Romania. Ideology and Political Action reveals the steps taken by the Romanian political elite towards the proclamation of the right to self-determination, in the context of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy at the end of the First World War, and the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. Although our aim was to produce a synthesis of these events, whole chapters and sub-chapters of this work are real contributions to the knowledge of some passages and events that took place in the autumn and winter of 1918, such as those related to the establishment of the first national bodies (whose purpose was the repatriation of Romanian soldiers from the former Austro-Hungarian army), what the violent manifestation of the first phase of the revolution in the autumn of 1918 meant, as well as the development of political actions and political discourse promoted by the Romanian section of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. At the same time, we believe that the historiographical analysis proposed at the beginning of the present work also offers a new perspective on what the historical writing dedicated to the union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania meant and means (the most interesting analysis proposed, in our opinion, being the one dedicated to the historical writings on the contribution of the Social Democrats to the achievement of the act of union).

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