

THE MOMENT “ROME, THE CAPITAL OF MODERN ITALY” AS REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF *GAZETA TRANSILVANIEI*

Abstract: For the Transylvanian Romanians, the process of Italy's unification had a double meaning, and that explains why they were interested in the course of these events throughout this period. First, the formation of the modern Italian state could be a successful model for the Romanian nation, eager to accomplish its own unity, and second, there was a huge wave of sympathy for a people with profound Latin roots, just like those of the Romanians. That is why a national newspaper as *Gazeta Transilvaniei* was, was empathetic and enthusiastic when it wrote about the proclamation of Rome as the capital of new Italy, and why its comments always emphasised the greatness of national values and the “blood” ties existing between the Italians and the Romanians.

Keywords: Gazette, Transylvania, Italy, Rome, the capital

Between the Italian Peninsula and the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space there had existed a permanent bond, starting from the period of the Dacian-Roman wars, going through the Romanisation process north of the Danube, crossing the Middle Ages with frequent agreements between Venice, Genoa, the Holy See and the Romanian voivodes or princes, marking the union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome in 1700 and reaching the period of the Risorgimento, when the relations between the Romanians and the Italians were represented on multiple levels - ideological, cultural, economic, political and, to some extent, even military. As far as the Transylvanian Romanians were concerned, the Italian space had always been represented in an attempt to valorise their common affinities, one of these being their Latin extraction. The image of the fallen Roman civilisation, which was nonetheless present in the blood of any Italian or Romanian,¹ evolved towards the concept of retrieving the “original homeland,”² the descriptions of the Transylvanian August Treboniu Laurian being made on a lucid enlightened note, in which poignant romantic influences may be identified.³ Another Romanian intellectual from Transylvania, Timotei Cipariu, related to Italy without Romantic exultations but following a consecrated typology. We may find here the appeal to the Romanians' Latin descent, the modern-classic binomial, which was enlightening for an overview of Italian culture, the sentiment of the past⁴ drawing closer and legitimising the self-assertion of nations such as the Italian and the Romanian ones. Constantly present was also the need to know, to enter the Italian libraries and archives,⁵ to gather documents through which the Romanians' history

¹ D. Găzdaru, *Contribuție la relațiile lui Grigore Maior, Gheorghe Șincai și Petru Maior cu Roma*, Iași, 1933, p. 5.

² Viorica Lascu, “Din legăturile lui August Treboniu Laurian cu Italia,” in *Apulum*, XIX, 1981, p. 290.

³ *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, 1855, no. 38-39, p. 212.

⁴ Sorin Mitu, *Transilvania mea. Istorii, mentalități, identități*, Iași, Polirom, 2006, p. 352.

⁵ Timotei Cipariu, *Jurnal*, Dacia, edited by Maria Protase, Cluj-Napoca, 1972, p. 139.

could be retrieved and shared, a history designed to create a recognised identity through natural exposure. The Romanian patriots Simion Bărnuțiu, Iosif Hodoș and Alexandru Papiu Ilarian had close relations, during their Italian period,⁶ with Giovenale Vegezzi Ruscalla, Carlo Gambini and Carlo Cattaneo. Reading Cattaneo,⁷ Bărnuțiu realised the importance of cultivating the national language and literature for the forging of self-consciousness, and in a few articles that appeared in Transylvania, he urged his compatriots to “mark down” Italian words that resembled Romanian ones, in order to be form a comparative view on the evolution of the two Romance languages.⁸ Although he granted a subsidiary role to the Italian language, since he was in favour of the natural evolution of Romanian, Bărnuțiu confessed that “our separation from this country (Italy) has always been fatal for us; we may learn science from other nations that are more cultivated than we are, but only Italy may mediate the union with the Latin peoples.”⁹ Regarding the joint political actions of the Transylvanian Romanians and the Italians, they were found in Mazzini’s revolutionary plans relating to the Balkans in general and to the Romanians in particular,¹⁰ as well as to the projects of the Garibaldini agents with the Hungarian revolutionaries.¹¹ All these imagological representations, direct and indirect personal connections, common political projects or revolutionary ideologies induced among the Romanian nation in Transylvania a sense of brotherhood and patriotic attachment to the Risorgimento movement and the cause of the Italian unity. The direct expressions of the Transylvanian Romanians’ interest in the Risorgimento events were the enthusiastic articles and permanent notifications from the pages of *Gazeta Transilvaniei*.

Appearing on 12 March 1838, in Brașov, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* was the Transylvanian Romanians’ first political-informative newspaper. Taking a national stand and adopting militant positions, with a well-nuanced patriotic agenda, the newspaper founded by George Barițiu had an important role in the political struggle of the Romanians north and west of the Carpathians, maintaining close links with the parties and the statesmen in the Romanian Principalities.

Throughout time, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* included in its pages the contributions of outstanding personalities, such as Timotei Cipariu, Andrei Mureșanu, Vasile Alecsandri, August Treboniu Laurian, Pavel Vasici, Andrei Șaguna, Costache Negruzzi or Mihail Kogălniceanu. Focused on promoting the spiritual force and the fervent actions undertaken by the nations that had regained their identity and fought to be recognised as such, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* resorted to the examples of the Italians, whose national movement was advocating freedom, independence and state unity.

⁶ They were students at the Universities of Padua and Pavia in the period 1852-1853.

⁷ Carlo Cattaneo, “Del nesso fra la lingua valacca e l’italiana ‘Annali di Statistica’” 1837, in Carlo Cattaneo, *Scritti letterari, artistici, linguistici e vari*, raccolti e ordinati da Agostino Bertani, 2a ed., Le Monnier, Firenze 1948, vol. I, 403 p.

⁸ Enea Hodoș, *Scrisori*, Veșteman, Sibiu, 1944, p. 24.

⁹ *Amicul Familiei*, no. 4, 1890, p. 54.

¹⁰ Alexandru Marcu, *Conspiratori și conspirații în epoca renașterii politice a României: 1848-1877*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 2000, 440 p.

¹¹ Pasquale Fornaro, *Risorgimento italiano e questione ungherese (1849-1867)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 1996, 290 p.

The Risorgimento movement was especially present in the chronicles of *Gazeta Transilvaniei* since the Transylvanian Romanians identified themselves spiritually with the Italian space to which they felt closely linked through their common Latin roots. Representative in this sense was an article published on 6 October 1847. Under the heading ITALIA, with an emotional discourse designed to raise the readers' awareness, the article pointed out that although the Italian nation clearly did not want struggle to become an example for the other European peoples, it nonetheless was - given the scope and intensity of the national sentiment it promoted - a landmark and a model for all those who believed in national identity, in a language and a state that would include those who shared the same ideals.

In the next three issues of the newspaper from Braşov, a descriptive analysis was made of the complex ideas promoted by Masimo d'Azeglio in his *Proposta di un programma per l'opinione nazionale italiana*, these ideas revealing a rational and comprehensive outlook on the Italian political situation in 1847, ousting all republican-popular reasoning and revolutionary radicalisms.¹² The external chronicle of *Gazeta Transilvaniei* followed with vivid excitement all the Risorgimento events from the Italian space, and almost every daily issue published information from the Peninsula. Often exalted, the lines devoted to Italy, especially in the years before the 1848 revolution, wanted to present an overview of the political ideas that were feverishly fomented, as well as the patriotic tumult and liberalism, with all its progressive social manifestations.

Mazzini's Roman Republic was glorified in the last issue that was not subjected to Austrian censorship, since it was considered to be a beacon for all the nations that wanted both national freedom and social equity. Moderate and lapidary texts - given that all the articles had to be shown in German first to the police - also presented the struggles of 1859, from Magenta and Solferino, as well as the southern Garibaldian campaign of 1860, in which numerous Romanian volunteers, mostly from Transylvania, participated.

The signing of the Convention between Italy and France on 15 September 1864 was also captured in the pages of *Gazeta Transilvaniei* and the fact that this agreement stipulated that the capital should move from Turin to Florence was considered a transitional step towards the integration of the Papal State into the Italian kingdom and the natural proclamation of Rome as the capital of a nation that had won its unity, independence and freedom.¹³

The events that happened in Italy in 1870 were presented gradually, going from laconic, expeditious information and leading to a discourse with pronounced patriotic symbolism. The issue of 20 July announced, in a note, that the Catholic prelates convening in the Council in Rome had proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope, with 223 abstentions. According to *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, this could only have negative consequences, encouraging the absolutist positions of the Catholic monarchies from Europe, with direct reference to the House of Austria. The latter felt thus entitled to

¹² Ştefan Delureanu, *Italia şi România spre unitatea naţională. Un secol de istorie paralelă*, Bucharest, 2010, p. 60.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

further support its rights of divine origin, against the affirmation of the national identities of the peoples of Austria-Hungary.¹⁴ The note continued with the observation that in the imminent Franco-Prussian war (which actually began on 19 July) and as a result of the old treaties between Italy and France, the troops of the second empire were to withdraw from the Papal State, the Italian army was to tacitly occupy Rome and assume the role of defender of the Holy Father. In this case, the infallibility of the Pope, proclaimed in Vatican I, his position as leader of the Roman state, and the Italian government's intention to proclaim Rome as the capital were in a situation of open conflict, with no possibility of reconciliation.¹⁵

On 3 August, the readers of *Gazeta Transilvaniei* were informed that the Garibaldini or the revolutionary patriots were preparing to enter Rome and that although Italy had deployed 150,000 troops to support the French ally, the people showed their support for the Prussians and their outright antipathy to Napoleon III.¹⁶

The external chronicle of 6 August informed that the Italian Foreign Minister Emilio Visconti Venosta had announced in Parliament France's decision to enforce the provisions of the September Convention, so the French troops in Rome would return to their homeland. In an official letter, King Vittorio Emanuele assured Pius IX that from the moment of the French withdrawal, Italy would ensure the protection of the pope and of Rome.¹⁷ In *Gazeta Transilvaniei* from 10 August there appeared the information that the Franco-Prussian War had caused a political rift between the Italian people and the government. This rupture was caused by opposition to the alliance with imperial France and the desire to enter Rome regardless of the consequences. While the army was on the border of the papal state, awaiting the order to enforce the September Convention, the groups of Garibaldini volunteers were preparing to occupy Rome not to comply with a political treaty, but to proclaim it the capital of Italy, without taking into account the Pope's position. The editor wondered how it was possible - under these conditions, with the Italians being at the gates of Rome - for the Pope to still stand on his infallibility, proclaimed in the council, as long as his temporal power ceased to exist. For that very reason, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* considered that Pius IX had become the prisoner of that decision, being forced to adopt an irreconcilable attitude towards the Italian secular state.¹⁸

With a hint of sympathy, the issue of 10 September wrote that the irresolution of the Italian government to take over Rome had created a wave of complaints, which risked threatening the monarchy too, the republic being proclaimed in several Italian cities. Under these circumstances, the government resigned and the idea that was accredited was that the king was on the point of abdicating. The correspondent of the Brașov daily argued that the popular movements from all the major cities were pushing Italy towards Rome and the republic.¹⁹ On 14 September, it was revealed in a few lines that King Vittorio Emanuele had ordered the army to enter the territory of the papal

¹⁴ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXXIII, no. 52, Brașov, 20 July 1870, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Gazeta.....*, year XXXIII, no. 56, Brașov, 3 August 1870, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Idem*, year XXXIII, no. 57, Brașov, 6 August 1870, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Idem*, year XXXIII, no. 58, Brașov, 10 August 1870, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Gazeta.....*, year XXXIII, no. 67, Brașov, 10 September 1870, p. 3.

state, the boundary being crossed on 12 September. Although the Pope protested against this action, he ordered the Roman troops not to withstand this. The "Restoration rears its head again" through Francis II, who wanted to take command of the papal soldiers, according to *Gazeta Transilvaniei*. In this issue, there was also an analysis of the political situation in Italy following the defeat of France and the proclamation of the republic.²⁰ It was evoked that the transformation of France into a republic had been received with joy in Italy, on at least two accounts. The first was that because of the dismantling of the empire and the deposing of Napoleon III, the September Convention had become obsolete and the Italians could now enter Rome. This did happen, General Cardona leading his army across the border. The government sent an ultimatum, which contained assurances that the "complete freedom and splendour of the papal see would be maintained." Drafts were prepared for the king's proclamation and the government in Florence issued a memorandum to the European powers, meant to clarify "the matter of Rome." As an irreversible fact, the Pope's dominance was under threat, and the unity of Italy would shortly become a *fait accompli*.

The second reason of joy for the Italians was that given the emergence of a republican regime in France, this had also become possible in Italy, the movement manifesting with increasing intensity, and this led *Gazeta Transilvaniei* to opine: "Perhaps Vittorio Emanuele will have to make room for a republican regime in Italy and the Pope in Rome will have to bless this republic, with Rome as its capital."²¹

In a note of 21 September, there was news that on 16 of the same month, Civitavecchia had surrendered without resistance. The commander of the Italian troops sent a message to General Kanzler, the head of the papal army, informing the latter that he was preparing to enter Rome and did not want a military confrontation. Kanzler refused to abandon the defence of Rome, but as *Gazeta Transilvaniei* stated, the Roman population was unwilling to pose any resistance, the clergy being also advised not to engage in the conflict.²²

On 24 September, the readers learned from a telegraphic note, that on 20 September, after 3-4 hours of bombings, the Italians had entered Rome, through the Pia Gate. The garrison had surrendered to General Cardona and was moved to Civitavecchia, and the foreign volunteer forces were demobilised and sent home. It was believed that the Italian Parliament would meet in Rome and submit a plebiscite to the population regarding the decision to move the capital to the Eternal City.²³ Those who protested against these actions were the Pope and Bavaria.

In its issue of 1 October, the date (October 2) was specified when the vote would take place in the Roman state concerning its integration into the Italian state, and a note of apprehension was sounded about the diplomatic games played by Prussia, which attempted to bring the "matter of Rome" before a European conference.²⁴ Citing *Gazzetta ufficiale* from Florence, Italy's casualties were made known, which amounted to

²⁰ *Idem*, year XXXIII, no. 68, Braşov, 14 September 1870, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Gazeta*....., year XXXIII, no. 70, Braşov, 21 September 1870, p. 4.

²³ *Gazeta*....., year XXXIII, no. 71, Braşov, 24 September 1870, p. 3.

²⁴ *Idem*, year XXXIII, no. 73, Braşov, 1 October 1870, p. 5.

21 dead and 3 captured officers, while the Roman troops that had surrendered totalled 4,800 citizens of the papal state and 4,500 foreign volunteers. Also as a result of the Roman population's violent manifestations against the papal gendarmes, Pius IX requested that General Cardona should send troops to maintain order around the Vatican, which is what happened.

The plebiscite of 2 October was reflected in the massive participation, the peace that prevailed and the fact that the Pope refused the participation of the church in the vote, even through a negative option. The Italian authorities took possession of the Quirinal Palace, which was to become the new royal residence.

The newspaper issue from 12 October described the ceremony in which a Roman delegation had handed the king the result of the plebiscite. Following this, in the shortest time, the Royal House, the Parliament and the Government moved to Rome. Although the Pope did not recognise this act, he received the monthly benefit of 50,000 Thalers from the Italian state. The first session of the Italian Parliament was to take place in Rome on 15 November. The Pope's protest from 19 September was published: this protest condemned the actions of the Catholic state, which had attacked without being provoked, and demanded that the papal troops should not continue the fight but capitulate as soon as the defence was pierced.²⁵

The measure of the attachment to the cause of Italian unity was offered in an extensive article from 22 October. Under the title Rome, the columns printed launched an enthusiastic discourse with the exclamation: Rome taken back! On a strong patriotic touch, specific to the period, a profound recourse to history was made and the Italian troops were compared with the legendary Roman legions and the papal army with the barbarian mercenaries. Using the biblical symbolism of resurrection, the author gave the king the Christ-like position of the father of a living and renewing nation, which knocked three times at the gate of old injustice in a Europe that was less and less willing to accept the old agreements and customs. Now was the moment of a Europe of nations, of marching with flags ahead and of the unity of consciousness. The people had imposed these new values and no arms could stop the world from rejoicing and shouting: Long live Rome, the capital of Italy! The author observed: "What the largest Italian poet, Dante Alighieri, had barely dared to dream, what for the diplomat of diplomats, Niccolo Machiavelli, had been a very distant target, what Cavour's genius could not openly aim for, what Mazzini and Garibaldi had fought for all their lives, the Italian people gained on 20 September 1870." If the popular joy of celebrating the Italian unity was full of luminousness, the pontifical silence was viewed as a tacit assumption of the drawbacks accumulated on account of the temporal power exercised by the popes throughout the centuries.²⁶

The contrasting silence from the "leonine" part of the city was sad and strained, the Curia grieving the King-Pope's fall from the throne and the passing of his "worldly" reign. The long line of popes was recalled, many of them wearing "a gentle and beneficent sceptre, in the true sense of the teachings of Christ, but quite a few were driven by passion and worldly, sinful ambition." For centuries on end, kings and entire

²⁵ *Idem*, year XXXIII, no. 76, Brașov, 12 October 1870, p. 5.

²⁶ *Gazeta.....*, year XXXIII, no. 79, Brașov, 22 October 1870, p. 4.

nations had prostrated themselves at the feet of the popes, who had permanently made use of the terrible weapon of excommunication, striking "mercilessly at countries, cities, villages, beggars and kings." The servants of the servants of God, as the popes were called from a certain moment on, became the kings of the kings, in the most despotic manner possible. The continuation was that: "As of today, this reign is no longer. Those who were able to counsel the liberal and constitutional pontiff from 1848, to issue the syllabus and the dogma of infallibility were not able to prevent the Italian people from taking their capital back. Italy cannot be without Rome, just like a body cannot live without a heart. The pontiff will nonetheless remain the pontiff even without the papal state. His independence is guaranteed forever within the limits of his Curia. His reign must henceforth be the reign of the Christian spirit, love thy neighbour as thyself." To confirm this, King Vittorio Emanuele II submitted the plebiscite to the Roman citizens, on 2 October, referring to a single-article law: "Rome and the Roman provinces shall form an integral part of the Italian State." The Romans were overwhelmingly favourable to integration within the Italian State, which offered the Romanian journalist the possibility of a new historical excursus on ancient Rome: "When the result of the plebiscite was heard, a cry of joy resounded throughout the beautiful Italian peninsula. The proud tricolour flag, fluttering in the sun, was hoisted on the Capitoline. Rome, the capital of the world, passed into the lawful possession of the Italian State at that moment.

The cheerful and touching hum from the Roman forum, where Cicero's fiery orations and Seneca's teachings had resounded, where the Gracchus had addressed the people, Pompey, Caesar, Brutus and Cassius, Octavian Augustus, where Trajan, Hadrian, Antony, Marcus Aurelius trod, the hustle and bustle from the Field of Mars, the Palatine, Quirinal, Esquiline could not be described. It looked like on 2 October, Rome and the Romans had come back to life. Only the sound of the bell of the Capitol reminded the citizens that they were in the Rome of the nineteenth century. Trajan's Column watched - like the only living witness of those glorious times - over this national celebration."²⁷ The disquisition ended with a mobilising message that was intended as an exhortation to also be heeded by other nations seeking the achievement of national unity: "Rome, glorious city! Your sons are gazing at you today. They lost you through their blind disunion and centuries of suffering ensued. Today they have regained you through the force of their unity. May you be their loving and protective mother from now on!" All this broad overview of the 1870 events from Rome clearly evinced the empathetic manner in which the Romanians felt in tune with this process of Italy's unification. Although the editorial board of *Gazeta Transilvaniei* comprised mostly Greek Catholics, who shared the values of the universal church, they brought to the fore the principles of national unity, of statehood and the right of the peoples to become modern nations, to the detriment of authoritarian forms of government, albeit of "divine right," as the pontifical state was.

The issue of 14 December published King Vittorio Emanuele II's message to the Italian Parliament convening in session in Florence on 5 December. It was mentioned that although the royal residence, the government and the parliament would move to Rome within eight months, the Italian state would not be involved as regards

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

the religious service of the Holy See and would not limit the freedom of the Catholic Church.²⁸ At the same time, the gazette from Brașov announced that on 9 December, in the Italian parliament, Minister Lanza had proposed that the results of the 2 October referendum from Rome should be ratified and passed a bill on the relocation of the capital from Florence to Rome within 8 months. Norms were enacted, ensuring both territorial cessions to the pope, and the recognition of his spiritual authority.²⁹

Gazeta Transilvaniei ended the year 1870, as regards the unification of Italy, presenting the Romans' festive reception of the King on 31 December. The king's entry into the future capital signified the "enlightenment of the town," and the enthusiastic people called him into the "balcony of the Quirinal, chanting welcoming cheers to him."³⁰

Even after 1870, the publication continued, through *Cronica Esternă*, to report on the political events - among other topics - from Italy, and the Transylvanian Romanians' travel impressions from the Italian Peninsula occupied large spaces in the columns of the newspaper from Brașov. Its militant position and attitude, which was not devoid of risks, given the censorship and the criminal liabilities of the written word in the Habsburg Empire, permanently brought to the fore the primordial example of the Risorgimento ideology and action, for the unity of the cause of the entire Romanian nation. The Risorgimento was regarded as a path to be followed by the Romanians, the Italians' military and political victories being synonymous with the divine justice that had given the people the right to have a free will, expressed both through petitions and projects with a national character, but also through military force, when their desire was not heeded by the absolutist regimes, deaf as they were to the call of the young modern nations.

²⁸ *Gazeta.....*, Brașov, year XXXIII, no. 94, 14 December 1870, p. 4.

²⁹ *Idem*, no.95, 17 December 1870, p. 4.

³⁰ *Idem*, no. 101, 7 January 1871, p. 3.