

THE RUMANIAN IDEA OF AUTONOMY IN TRANSYLVANIA, 1867—1906

By
KEITH HITCHINS

The main goal pursued by the Rumanians of Transylvania during the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism was the right to manage their own affairs, that is, to be administered, judged, and educated by Rumanians in their own language. In other words, they sought autonomy. But their notion of how best autonomy could be secured changed as events took their course. The aim of this paper is to show how Rumanian politicians and intellectuals turned away from a reliance on the autonomy of the historical principality of Transylvania and came to embrace fully the idea of modern national autonomy.

I

Austro-Hungarian dualism obliged Rumanian politicians and intellectuals to reassess their place within the Habsburg Empire. For over a century before the Compromise of 1867 they had striven to gain recognition as a nation equal in rights to the Magyars and Saxons¹, the other principal inhabitants of Transylvania. Their main goal, sometimes openly expressed, sometimes only implied, had been autonomy. But the historical principality of Transylvania had been their political frame of reference, at least until the revolution of 1848, when other solutions had for a time seemed possible.

Rumanian nationhood and autonomy, ideas which were tightly interconnected, received their most eloquent expression in 1848 in the national program — the so-called Sixteen Points — adopted on May 15 at Blaj, the most important Rumanian cultural center in Transylvania and the seat of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate. The first point declared the political „independence“ (i.e. autonomy) of the Rumanian nation and asserted its right to be represented in the Transylvanian diet, administration, and judiciary in proportion to its population and to use its language in all legislative and administrative matters in which Rumanians were involved. The sixteenth point dealt with the most burning issue

¹ The name by which the Germans of Transylvania were commonly known.

of the day — the union of Transylvania with Hungary. Rumanian leaders vigorously opposed such action, for they saw in this incorporation into Hungary nothing less than the destruction of their nation. They knew that union would transform them from a majority in Transylvania into one of many minorities of Greater Hungary. Consequently, they demanded that no action be taken until the Rumanians had assumed their „rightful place“ as one of the constituent nations of Transylvania and had been heard. The link they established between the preservation of Transylvania's autonomy and their own ambitions guided their political thinking until the end of the century.

The Rumanians in 1848 had no control over the fate of Transylvania. The diet, which had been convoked under pre-revolutionary rules, practically excluded them. On May 30 its Magyar majority approved the union of the principality with Hungary. Yet, subsequent events persuaded the Rumanians that a reorganization of the Habsburg Empire on the basis of nationality was at hand, and in their optimism they formulated a bold plan for the creation of a Rumanian „duchy“, which would, in fact, extend beyond the boundaries of Transylvania. They petitioned the Emperor Francis Joseph on February 25, 1849 to approve the union of all the Rumanians of the empire into an „independent“ (i.e., autonomous) nation with its own separate political administration and with Rumanian as its official language.² But the Court of Vienna, which had had to bear the disruptive force of nationalism for nearly a year, was disinclined to contribute further to the dissolution of the empire. It gave the Rumanian plan short shrift.

During the so-called decade of absolutism of the 1850s manifestations of nationalism in Transylvania were for obvious reasons discouraged. Yet, the Rumanians found some consolation in the fact that Vienna had restored a political administration for Transylvania separate from that of Hungary. They also discerned how the historical principality of Transylvania could offer the surest protection of their nationality.

The constitutional experiments directed from Vienna between 1860 and 1865, which preceded dualism, found Rumanian political groups supporting the maintenance of Transylvania as a separate crown land as the best way of protecting their national identity. They also wanted to bring the institutions of the principality into harmony with the tenets of the new nationalism and liberalism and to enact laws recognizing the equality of all its peoples.³

Yet there were differences of emphasis among the Rumanians. The more conservative current, led by Andrei Saguna, Bishop of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, favored close cooperation with the Court of Vienna. It based its plan for the maintenance of Transylvania's autonomy on legal precedents in the belief that these would move the Court to grant concessions more readily than arguments drawing upon such novelties as the rights of nationalities. This current also considered the

² Nicolae Popea, *Memorialul Archiepiscopului și Mitropolitului Andreiu baron de Șaguna sau luptele naționale-politice ale Românilor, 1846—1873*, Vol. 1 (Sibiu, 1889), pp. 248—249.

³ *Verhandlungen des verstärkten Reichsrats* (Vienna, 1860), pp. 42—43, 125, 432.

peoples of Transylvania as „sons of the same fatherland“ and stressed the need for cooperation among them if the problems common to all were to be solved. The idea prevailed that fate had brought the Rumanians and Magyars together and that, consequently, each had no choice but to work for the general good. The other current, which may be dubbed „liberal“, was led by George Barițiu, a journalist and historian. He and his supporters were not opposed to the goals of the conservatives, but they wanted the Rumanians to take a more independent political course and rely less upon Vienna. For them, the idea of nation was paramount, and they urged a formal recognition of Rumanian political autonomy and a redrawing of county boundaries based upon nationality.⁴ At a national congress on April 23, 1863 the two currents agreed on the general principles they would follow at the forthcoming diet: recognition of the Rumanians as autonomous and equal in rights to the other nations of Transylvania; representation of the Rumanian nation in the diet and administration in proportion to the public burdens it bore; the introduction of the Rumanian language in the administration and courts; and the maintenance of Transylvania's autonomy.⁵

Magyar leaders in Transylvania opposed the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy and insisted upon the validity of its union with Hungary in 1848. Rejecting all attempts at compromise and drawing support from Hungary, they boycotted the reorganization of Transylvania sponsored by Vienna. Once again, as in 1848, the aspirations of the Rumanians (and of the other non-Magyar nationalities of Hungary) coincided with the Court's own aims and, hence, received a sympathetic hearing.

The Rumanians achieved their immediate objectives at the diet, which met for the first time since 1848 in Sibiu on July 15, 1863. Rumanian deputies, who in the absence of the Magyars formed a majority, laid the foundations of national autonomy. They passed two main pieces of legislation, one recognizing the Rumanian nation and its Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches as equal in rights to the Magyar and Saxon nations and their churches, and the other marking Rumanian one of the principality's official languages.⁶ Both laws received imperial sanction, but required a second reading in the diet and then final approval by the emperor before they could take effect.

Despite their success, a number of Rumanian leaders sensed that all was not well. They had been taken aback by the efforts of Austrian officials to force the deputies to enact the Court' legislative agenda exactly as it had come down from Vienna. Their misgivings proved well-founded. At the second session of the diet, which opened on May 23, 1864, the high expectations of the previous year had all but disappeared. The Magyars continued their boycott, and even many Rumanian deputies stayed away much of the time. Although the laws on the equality of the three nations and their languages received second readings, the emperor withheld his approval. Action on other bills which were essential

⁴ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, November 6, 1860.

⁵ *Protocolul congresului națiunii române din Ardeal, ce s-a ținut în Sibiu la 20/8 Aprilie 1863* (Sibiu, 1863), pp. 129—130.

⁶ Simion Retegan, *Dieta românească a Transilvaniei* (Cluj-Napoca, 1979), pp. 103—126, 142—158.

for the functioning of the principality was delayed. By the time the session ended on October 29 the deputies had little to show for the time spent. When the diet met again its sole business would be to approve the union of Transylvania with Hungary.

Between 1865 and 1867 the Court engaged in a new constitutional experiment which culminated in the famous partnership between Austria and Hungary. In order to assure stability at home and strengthen the empire's international position Francis Joseph and a new team of advisers had decided to seek an accommodation with the Magyar aristocracy of Hungary. In the process they sacrificed the principality of Transylvania and renounced promises of autonomy to the Rumanians. The diet of Transylvania, which reconvened in Cluj on November 19, 1865, this time with a large Magyar majority, declared the union of Transylvania with Hungary enacted in 1848 valid and designated the Hungarian diet in Pest as the only forum where the affairs of Transylvania could properly be considered. Francis Joseph concurred and „invited“ Transylvania to send representatives to the Hungarian diet. On January 6, 1866 he prorogued the diet of Transylvania *sine die*, an act which marked the end of its existence as a separate principality.

The Rumanians mounted a strenuous defense of Transylvania's autonomy. But they were divided. Some, called activists and led by Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna⁷, were prepared to work within the new constitutional system. They reasoned that the best way for the Rumanians to defend the autonomy of Transylvania and their own national identity was to be represented in those bodies, such as the Hungarian diet, where the decisions were being made. But the majority of Rumanian leaders took the opposite view. Known as passivists and led by George Bariţiu and his friend Ioan Raţiu, a lawyer, they organized a boycott of the elections to the Hungarian diet. To participate, they warned, would signify acceptance of the union and seal their fate as a nation.

Belying their name, the passivists were extraordinarily active in opposing the new political course. The most important of their undertakings was the so-called memorandum movement organized by Raţiu and Bariţiu in the fall of 1866. In the petition they drew up they urged the emperor to preserve the autonomy of Transylvania. To justify their stand and to prove the independence of Transylvania from Hungary they cited, among numerous documents, the Diploma of Emperor Leopold I (*Diploma Leopoldinum*) of 1691, which recognized the political autonomy of the principality and served as a kind of surrogate constitution until 1848; the Pragmatic Sanction, which the Transylvanian diet was forced to accept in 1722 and which specified that the first born of the House of Habsburg should be Grand Duke of Transylvania; and Article VI of the Transylvanian diet of 1791, which dealt with the relationship between Transylvania and Hungary and reaffirmed the separate political status of the principality and forbade subordination of its constitution to any other country. Raţiu and Bariţiu stated bluntly that the Rumanians had no confidence in the „political and national ideas“ then prevalent in Hungary and insisted that the Rumanians wanted to remain „for all time“

⁷ He became Metropolitan after the bishopric of Transylvania was raised to a metropolitanate in 1864.

in an autonomous Transylvania as part of the „Austrian Monarchy“ and had no intention of becoming Hungarians⁸. They urged Francis Joseph to reject the union of Transylvania with Hungary „imposed“ by the Transylvanian diet in 1848 and, instead, sanction the laws on national equality passed by the diet of Sibiu in 1863, which, in their view, would allow the principality to develop „naturally“ in accordance with its venerable constitutional traditions⁹.

It was all in vain. Rațiu brought the petition to Vienna and was received for a few minutes on December 31, 1866 by Francis Joseph, not as a representative of the Rumanian nation, as he had wished, but merely as a private citizen „whose views might be valuable to the state“¹⁰. The emperor promised to consider the matters Rațiu had laid before him, but, in fact, left the petition unanswered. The course had, after all, already been set, and the Rumanians did not count in the calculations of the Court. Six months later, on June 8, 1867, Francis Joseph would be crowned King of Hungary in Buda and on July 28 he would sanction Article XII, the fundamental law establishing the Dual Monarchy.

Before these events took place Rațiu and his supporters tried to persuade influential Magyars of the rightness of their cause. When Manó Péchy, the new royal commissioner charged with overseeing the administrative fusion of Transylvania with Hungary, sampled Rumanian opinion, he was taken aback by the uncompromising opposition on all sides to the union. In Turda Rațiu urged him to seek the immediate convocation of the Transylvanian diet and warned that the Rumanians would use „all the moral force at their command“ to thwart the union¹¹. In Cluj Alexandru Sterca Șuluțiu, the Rumanian Greek Catholic Metropolitan of Transylvania, explained how deeply attached the Rumanians were to the laws passed by the diet of Sibiu and urged that they be allowed to hold a national congress where the will of the nation could express itself¹². In Sibiu, the seat of the Rumanian Orthodox Metropolitanate and the center of activism, Péchy's reception was the same. His reply on all these occasions revealed a similar intransigence. Noting that the union was an accomplished fact, he admonished the Rumanians that their future depended upon how well they reconciled themselves to it.

Rumanian deputies who had been elected to the Hungarian diet, despite the passivist boycott, realized that they were too few to influence its work and decided to take the case for Transylvanian autonomy to Ferenc Deák, the principal Hungarian architect of dualism. Their meeting with him on June 3, 1867 was friendly, but its outcome was disappointing to the Rumanians. Deák pointed out that it was too late to do anything about the union, but he promised that the forthcoming law on na-

⁸ Eugen Brote, *Die rumänische Frage in Siebenbürgen und Ungarn* (Berlin, 1895), p. 226.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 229—231.

¹⁰ Keith Hitchins and Liviu Maior, *Correspondența lui Ioan Rațiu cu George Barițiu (1861—1892)* (Cluj, 1970), pp. 133—134: Rațiu to Barițiu, December 31, 1866.

¹¹ Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, Cluj. Arhiva Istorică: Ioan Rațiu correspondence: telegram from Rumanian intellectuals of Turda to George Barițiu, May 22, 1867.

¹² Hitchins and Maior, *Correspondența lui Ioan Rațiu*, p. 149: Rațiu to Barițiu, May 18, 1867.

nationalities would guarantee equal civil rights for every citizen regardless of his nationality or religion and would assure the use of minority languages in local government¹³. Deák was, in effect, repeating the promises made by Magyar liberals in 1848. Rejected by the Rumanians then, the offer was no more acceptable twenty years later. Both passivists and activists were intent upon gaining recognition of the Rumanians as a separate political nation with the power to determine its own future within the Habsburg Empire. Deák's formula meant the dissolution of the nation into individual citizens and eventually, so the Rumanians thought, bring the loss of ethnic identity itself.

After the dualist pact had been concluded in the summer of 1867 the Rumanians, lacking political organization and weakened by the conflict between passivists and activists, could do little else but offer up protests. The most important of these was the so-called *Pronunciament*, a succinct statement of principles drawn up at Blaj on May 15, 1868 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the national assembly of 1848. Rumanian intellectuals, probably at the urging of Ioan Rațiu, restated their commitment to the cause of Transylvanian autonomy as defined by the Diploma Leopoldinum of 1691 and the Pragmatic Sanction. They also demanded the revival of the laws passed by the diet of Sibiu recognizing the Rumanians as a constituent nation of Transylvania and guaranteeing the equality of their language and churches, and they denied to the Hungarian parliament the power to legislate for Transylvania¹⁴. Such ideas accurately reflected Rumanian public opinion, but they were not new. What was new the reaction of the Hungarian government, which accused the authors and the editor of *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, a leading Rumanian newspaper in Transylvania where the *Pronunciament* had been published, of disturbing public order. The matter went no further, as it was quashed by the emperor on the recommendation of the Hungarian Minister of Justice, but it was a harbinger of many *causes célèbres* to come which would envenom relations between the government and the Rumanians,

The so-called Law of Nationalities, which the Hungarian parliament passed on December 5, 1868, found little favor with the majority of Rumanian political leaders. Although it specified a number of rights which the non-Magyar minorities would enjoy, it made no provision for their separate political organization. Rather, it reflected the ideas of those Hungarian leaders who favored a centralized Magyar national state. On December 6 Francis Joseph gave them a double victory by sanctioning Article XLIV, the Law of Nationalities, and Article XLIII, which set forth the regulations governing the union of Transylvania with Hungary.

The Rumanians took their places in the dual system unwillingly and, so they thought, only temporarily. They were certain that the compromise between Germans and Magyars would fail and that Vienna would turn again to the other nationalities, as in 1848 and 1860, for help in governing the empire.

¹³ Ion cavalier de Pușcariu, *Notițe despre întâmplările contemporane* (Sibiu, 1913), pp. 111—113.

¹⁴ Teodor V. Păcățian, *Cartea de aur, sau luptele politice-naționale ale Românilor de sub coroana ungară*, Vol. 4 (Sibiu, 1906), p. 355.

II

In the twenty years or so following the union of Transylvania with Hungary Rumanian passivists made the restoration of the principality's autonomy their principal objective. They were convinced that it alone could provide their nation with the necessary constitutional protection for free development. Transylvania's autonomy was thus a central issue at all Rumanian political conferences between 1869 and 1890. Their linking of autonomy and national rights was an essentially historicist view of the question, which reinforced traditional Rumanian attitudes toward the Magyars.

The first national conference to be held after the union of Transylvania and Hungary met in March 1869 and laid down the principles which all later conferences until 1890 would adhere to in dealing with the problem of autonomy. The participants enthusiastically reaffirmed the demands of 1848: rejection of the union of Transylvania and Hungary, recognition of the Rumanian nation as autonomous, and representation of the Rumanians in the diet and all branches of local administration in proportion to their numbers¹⁵.

In 1872 Rumanian leaders met three times in order to clarify their stand on current political questions. The first conference was held by the activists on May 5—6 in Sibiu. After debating the merits of passivism and activism, they finally decided to take part in the forthcoming elections to the Hungarian parliament¹⁶. But, like the passivists, they strongly endorsed the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy and drew up a lengthy historical exposition of their stand on the matter. The official national conference, which was dominated by the passivists, was held on June 27 in Alba Iulia. Here the majority cited their obligation to take no action that would compromise the „autonomous rights“ of Transylvania and the „national liberty“ of the Rumanian people¹⁷. Two days later a small group of passivist leaders met with the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Ioan Vancea in Blaj to consider a proposal from the Hungarian Prime Minister Menyhért Lónyay to suggest ways of bringing about a compromise between the Rumanians and the government. But they came to essentially the same conclusions as the activists. They reported to Lónyay on July 3 that they were willing to join him in seeking a solution to the „Transylvanian question“, but they saw little hope of reaching an understanding with the government until it had agreed to restore some measure of autonomy to the principality¹⁸. They linked autonomy for Transylvania to the recognition of Rumanian autonomy and urged the inclusion of the following points in the new constitution for the principality: a new political division of the principality among the three nations to replace the „cumbersome and abnormal“ boundaries of the past; recognition of Rumanian as one of the official languages; a new electoral law which would abolish privileges of wealth and rank (and, of course, allow the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5 (Sibiu, 1909), p. 84.

¹⁶ *Telegraful Român*, April 30/May 12, 1872; May 4/16, 1872.

¹⁷ Păcățian, *Cartea de aur*, Vol. 6 (Sibiu, 1910), pp. 58—59.

¹⁸ *Transilvania*, Vol. 8, No. 14, February 15, 1875, pp. 44—45.

Rumanians to use their peasant majority to advantage); and recognition of the autonomy of the Rumanian churches and their schools. As the first step toward any understanding with the government they requested the convocation of a Rumanian national congress, where a genuine expression of the national will could be formulated¹⁹. The matter went no further, as neither side was disposed to compromise.

The national conferences of 1875 and 1878 reaffirmed the conclusions of earlier meetings. The delegates to the latter, for example, reiterated the importance of Transylvania's autonomy for the development of the Rumanian nation and approved the continuation of passivism to show that they had not acquiesced in the destruction of „their country's“ autonomy and their own nationality²⁰.

The conference of May 1881 was especially important because it established the Rumanian National Party as the political representative of the Rumanians of not only Transylvania but also the Banat and Hungary. The delegates voted overwhelmingly to continue their passivist tactic, except in the Banat and Hungary, where „local circumstances“ made participation in the Hungarian parliament „beneficial“ to the national cause. They also expressed their complete adherence to the Sixteen Points of 1848 and declared that only when the Rumanian nation had been recognized as „autonomous“ and thus possessed the right to organize its affairs as it saw fit „in harmony with the interests of the Austro-Hungarian Empire“, could they contemplate participation in the political life of Hungary²¹. The new party adopted a program which placed the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy first on its list of priorities. It also declared its intention to promote Rumanian autonomy by obtaining the appointment of Rumanian functionaries and the use of Rumanian as an official language in places inhabited by Rumanians, by assuring Rumanian churches and their schools of the right to administer their own affairs, and by bringing about a revision of the Law of Nationalities in favor of the nationalities²².

At this and earlier conferences Rumanian leaders justified their demand for the restoration of the principality of Transylvania and the recognition of their own national autonomy mainly on historical and constitutional grounds. This line of argument is evident in the statement of principles which the activists drew up at their conference in 1872 and which they entitled, The „Rumanian Cause in 1872“²³. They were at pains to show that the Rumanians had formed a nation equal to the Magyars from the very beginning of Transylvania's political existence and, hence, ought to enjoy the same rights in the nineteenth century. To prove their point they cited passages from the works of medieval Hungarian chroniclers such as the Anonymous Notary of King Béla III and Simon Kézai and the diplomas of King Andrew II of 1211 and 1222 to the Teutonic

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, No. 15, March 1, 1875, pp. 53–55.

²⁰ Păcățian, *Cartea de aur*, Vol. 6, p. 633.

²¹ Biblioteca Academiei R. S. România, Cluj. Fondul Blaj, Diverse, III: „Proces verbal al conferinței reprezentanților alegătorilor români din Transilvania ținută în Sibiu la 12 maiu s.n. 1881“.

²² Păcățian, *Cartea de aur*, Vol. 7 (Sibiu, 1913), pp. 33–34.

²³ *Causa română la 1872* (Sibiu, 1872). A German translation, entitled *Die rumänische Frage im Jahre 1872*, is to be found in Brode, *Die rumänische Frage*, pp. 251–275.

Knights²⁴. Then they explained, as had Rumanian historians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, how the development of new political and social relations and the religious struggles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had excluded the Rumanians from political life. They showed how the new state of things had been sanctioned by the Diploma Leopoldinum of 1691, in which the new Habsburg rulers recognized the constitution of the principality and the privileges of the Magyar, Szekler, and Saxon nations, and then they described the union of Transylvania with Hungary in 1848, denying its validity on the grounds that the Rumanians had not been represented in the decision-making process²⁵. Finally, they denounced the Law of Nationalities and Article XLIII of 1868 regulating the union of Transylvania with Hungary because neither, in their view, offered adequate protection to the nationalities²⁶.

Similar ideas are contained in the *Memorial*, a public declaration on the nationality question which was drawn up by the passivist leader George Barițiu in 1882 at the behest of the National Party. Barițiu covered essentially the same ground as the activists in 1872, but he built his case with more attention to detail and more citations from the sources. He was anxious to demonstrate what seemed to him two fundamental truths: first, that during its long history down to 1868 Transylvania had never ceased to be politically separate from Hungary and that, hence, the union „perpetrated“ in 1868 violated its constitutional status in the Austrian Empire and should be reversed²⁷. His second point was that the Rumanians were entitled to equal political rights with the other nations of Transylvania and to national autonomy as a safeguard of those rights. For proof he turned to history, recounting the so-called theory of Daco-Roman continuity as it had evolved since the eighteenth century. With abundant citations from the sources and sharp criticism of the opponents of the theory he described how the ancestors of the Rumanians had lived in Transylvania and had their own political institutions centuries before the coming of the Magyars²⁸. As for the Rumanians of his own day, he left no doubt that political autonomy within a restored Transylvanian principality was their primary goal²⁹.

In spirit and substance these two elaborate position papers, one in 1872, the other in 1882, belong to an earlier period of the national movement. Their emphasis on history and legal precedents to justify national rights accorded with traditional ideas of national autonomy, which required the existence of a separate Transylvanian principality as protection against Greater Hungary seen as a Magyar national state.

The traditional idea of Transylvanian autonomy conditioned Rumanian thinking on other key questions. If the principality were restored in the form in which it had existed before 1868, then Rumanian leaders had to redefine their relationship with the Magyars. The majority saw

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 252–253.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 256–257, 260–262.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 262–268.

²⁷ *Memorial compus și publicat din însărcinarea conferinței generale a reprezentanților alegătorilor români...*, 2nd ed. (Sibiu, 1882), pp. 19–33.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–68.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–103.

no other possibility except cooperation, and, consequently, had no doubt that eventually they must come to some sort of understanding.

The idea of a Rumanian-Magyar rapprochement remained an important aspect of Rumanian political thought until the 1880s. It was rooted in history. Influential Rumanians who looked back over the development of Transylvania since medieval times were convinced that destiny had linked the two peoples and that they must share responsibility for the future of the principality. This sense of community was reinforced for these same Rumanians by the certainty that the two peoples were „natural allies“ in a struggle for survival against the Slavs. Pointing to the ethnographic map of Eastern Europe, they compared the Rumanians and Magyars to „two islands in a Slavic sea“, which threatened „to engulf them“³⁰. If this were so, the Rumanians concluded, then their very existence was at stake, and since neither they nor the Magyars had a strong empire abroad to which they could turn, they did not doubt that they would have to rely upon one another for protection. A number of Rumanians were even moved to observe that they had never been the enemies of Hungary and the Magyars because they had recognized in Hungary an indispensable barrier to „Slavism“ and, hence, regarded her welfare as of paramount importance for their own future development³¹.

A typical and persistent advocate of a Rumanian-Magyar rapprochement in the 1870s and 1880s was Vincențiu Babeș, a deputy in the Hungarian parliament from the Banat for many years and a leader of the Rumanian National Party. He urged upon his fellow delegates to the national conference of 1881 a kind of Rumanian-Magyar dualism in Transylvania. Even as he recommended a continuation of passivism, he called for solidarity with the Magyars, „with whose fortunes ours are so closely bound“. To enthusiastic applause he exclaimed. „As brothers... what progress, what happiness we could achieve for all the nationalities“³². But on other occasions he took Magyar political leaders to task for their failure to comprehend the „mortal danger“ which Russian-sponsored Pan-Slavism posed for both Magyars and Rumanians and for their folly in pursuing policies which merely widened the breach between two natural allies³³. At the national conference of 1884 Babeș repeated a favorite dictum that the Rumanians and Magyars had been fated to stand between the „two great rivals“ in Southeastern Europe — Germany and Russia — and added that had it not been for these two peoples, Russia would surely have gained control of the Balkans. The historical mission of the Rumanians and Magyars, then, was to preserve the independence of Central Europe, and if they could not grasp that fact, he had no doubt that they would perish³⁴.

Many Rumanian political leaders showed little interest in cooperating with the Slavs of Hungary in the 1870s and 1880s. They shared Babeș's ideas about „Pan-Slavism“ and doubted whether the Slovaks and Serbs were capable of acting independently of Russia. But even more important

³⁰ *Telegraful Român*, June 17/29, 1871.

³¹ *Ibid.*, May 13/25, 1876.

³² *Memorial*... (Sibiu, 1882), p. 213.

³³ Biblioteca Universității din Cluj-Napoca: Correspondence of George Pop de Băsești, Vol. 1: Vincențiu Babeș to G. Pop de Băsești, July 5, 1878.

³⁴ Păcățian, *Cartea de aur*, Vol. 7, pp. 170—171.

in shaping their relations with the Slavs was their concentration on the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy. Conscious of their own unique historical and constitutional position and intent upon achieving their own specific goals, they had little concern for the problems of others and wished to avoid prejudicing their own cause by becoming entangled in Slavic questions. Some Rumanians perceived themselves as different in every way from the Slavs, as an element that impeded the achievement of the „grand design of Pan-Slavism“ in Eastern Europe³⁵. Others simply saw no community of interests between themselves and the Slavs³⁷, ignoring the fact that they had a common interest in preventing the transformation of Hungary into a Magyar national state.

III

In the 1880s a change in Rumanian political attitudes gradually took place. The *Memorial* of 1882 was the last major statement of traditional ideas on Transylvania's autonomy, and although the national conferences of 1884 and 1887 dutifully mentioned its restoration in their list of goals, Rumanian leaders had come to the realization that it would no longer serve the national interest. The evidence of this change is everywhere. A striking example is the work of the delegates to the National Party conference in 1890. It is true that they unanimously reaffirmed their adherence to the national program adopted in 1881, which, as we have seen, gave priority to the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy, but now neither the report of the executive committee on its activities since the previous conference nor the report of the committee charged with setting a new agenda for the party mentioned the principality's lost autonomy³⁸.

By the 1890s many Rumanian politicians and intellectuals had come to see the relationship between Rumanians and Magyars in a new light and had developed an idea of national autonomy that was no longer dependent upon the existence of a Transylvanian principality. Two groups of Rumanians published comprehensive statements on the matter, which, significantly, had come to be known as the „Rumanian question“. They minced no words in condemning the nationality policy of the Hungarian government and set forth a vision of the future Hungary sharply at variance with the Magyar national state promoted by the leading Magyar political parties.

The first of these statements was the *Replică* (Rejoinder). It was drawn up in 1891 by a group of Rumanian university students to refute a defense of Hungarian nationality policy published in that year by Magyar university students in Budapest, who claimed that the rights of the political nation — the Magyars — superseded the rights claimed by the ethnic minorities — the Rumanians and the Slavs. The principal author of the *Replică* was Aurel C. Popovici, a medical student in Graz who later

³⁵ See, for example, *Telegraful Român*, January 22/February 3, 1870.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, February 5/17, 1870.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, February 27. March 11, 1877.

³⁸ *Actele conferinței Partidului Național Român ținută la 27 și 28 Octomvrie 1890 în Sibiu* (Sibiu, 1891), pp. 9—10, 19—41.

achieved fame as the author of a widely read book on the federalization of the Habsburg Empire. In the *Replică* he was concerned with two questions — national autonomy and federalism — which, in his view, could not be separated. He gave much space to an indictment of the Hungarian government's treatment of the Rumanians, which had made them „outcasts“ in their own country, and he concluded that the Rumanians could become a free nation equal to the Magyars only if the two peoples were separated politically and the Rumanians gained their own national territory within the Habsburg Empire³⁹. He said nothing about Transylvanian autonomy. Nor did historical and constitutional arguments figure prominently in his defense of national rights.

The other major Rumanian declaration of the period was the Memorandum, a protest by the National Party against the Hungarian government's treatment of the Rumanians under dualism. It represented the views of the traditional Rumanian political leadership and, unlike the *Replică*, it sought a solution to the Rumanian question through the intervention of the emperor. But the Memorandum was no less forceful in defending national rights, which, its authors claimed, had been violated so systematically that the Rumanians had become „foreigners“ in their own land⁴⁰. The consequence of such a policy, they argued, was greater disharmony than ever before among the peoples of Hungary, clear proof, in their view, that the attempt to govern Hungary by a single people — the Magyars — had failed. In place of the existing centralized structure they urged the emperor to undertake the federalization of the empire by creating an „internal association of peoples gathered around the throne“⁴¹. They obviously had in mind national autonomy. In brief references to the earlier history of Transylvania they pointed out that ever since the eighteenth century the Rumanians had continuously asserted their „national individuality“. They cited as the culmination of these efforts the autonomy fashioned at the diet of Sibiu in 1863, and they declared such autonomy to be the only certain guarantee of their existence as a nation⁴². Like Popovici in the *Replică*, they said nothing about the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy. Their idea of nation, though nourished by history, had outgrown the narrow limits imposed by historical tradition.

A new attitude of the Rumanians toward the Slavs was a striking manifestation of their emphasis upon national, as opposed to Transylvanian, autonomy. They now perceived the Slovaks, Serbs, and Croats as political allies against the Hungarian government, whose own nationality policy had blurred historical distinctions between them and had drawn them together in self-defense⁴³. Aurel Popovici, among others, thought that the Slavs were destined to play a major role in bringing about a so-

³⁹ *Cestiunea română în Transilvania și Ungaria: Replica junimii academice române din Transilvania și Ungaria la „Răspunsul“ dat de junimea academică maghiară „Memoriului“ studenților universitari din România* (Sibiu, 1892), pp. 144, 151.

⁴⁰ *Memorandul Românilor din Transilvania și Ungaria către Majestatea Sa Imperială și Regală Apostolică Francisc Iosif I* (Sibiu, 1892), p. 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22—23.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴³ Ioan Slavici, *Românii din Regatul ungar și politica maghiară* (București, 1892), pp. 36—37.

lution to the nationality problem in Hungary. He rejected the old idea of a Rumanian-Magyar compromise, which had ignored the Slavs. Although he was concerned about the danger to the peoples of Central Europe of Russian Pan-Slavism, he thought that a federalized Hungary, based on the Swiss model, would enhance the sense of „national individuality“ of each Slavic people and, by thus separating them from the Russians, would create a sense of community with the Rumanians and even the Magyars⁴⁴.

Popovici and younger members of the Rumanian National Party grouped around *Tribuna*, the party newspaper, favored some sort of formal understanding with the Slavs. Pressure from the „Tribunists“ finally caused party leaders to take the initiative in forming an alliance with the Slovaks and Serbs (the Croats showed no interest), which culminated in the holding of a so-called Congress of Nationalities in Budapest on August 10, 1895. Here their representatives made clear that their primary goal was national autonomy, which they justified by appeals not to history or imperial diplomas, but to „natural law“ and the material contributions they made to the general welfare of Hungary. Rumanian delegates to a preparatory meeting in Novi Sad on July 21 had put the matter succinctly: „We don't ask how long we've been here or if the Magyars were here ahead of us. We act as we do because we are citizens of Hungary, because we support it with our blood and our goods, and because we form a majority of her citizens. And so we have the right to give this country the form of government we desire“⁴⁵.

At the Congress itself the three nationalities proposed a political restructuring of Hungary on a „natural basis“. They meant national autonomy and they proposed to achieve it by making local political boundaries conform to language boundaries. Consequently, in counties, municipalities, and rural areas where, for example, the majority of the population was Rumanian officials would be Rumanian as would the language of administration and the courts⁴⁶. Since the Rumanians formed compact masses of population in many parts of Transylvania, a large separate Rumanian territory, with perhaps small Magyar enclaves here and there, was an obvious, if unexpressed, goal of the „natural“ redistricting of Hungary.

The „alliance“ which the three nationalities formed was short-lived and ineffective. Yet, it symbolized a fundamental change of attitude on the part of the Rumanians toward historical Transylvania.

The causes of this change were complex. Of paramount importance was a new idea of nation which rendered Transylvanian autonomy obsolete as a means of satisfying national aspirations. Aurel Popovici gave the most eloquent exposition of this idea in a series of brochures which he published in the early 1890s. He drew from a variety of Western European sources and was the first Rumanian to apply the evolutionary theories of the Social Darwinists to an analysis of the national movement. His approach was deterministic; he saw the triumph of the „principle of nationality“ as the inevitable result of the operation of „natural law“.

⁴⁴ Aurel C. Popovici, *Cestiunea naționalităților și modurile soluțiunii sale în Ungaria* (Sibiu, 1894), pp. 44–45.

⁴⁵ *Tribuna*, July 18/30, 1895.

⁴⁶ Păcățian, *Cartea de aur*, Vol. 7, p. 763.

For him, the dominant creative force in modern Europe was the idea of nationality, which he interpreted as the striving of every people to develop in accordance with its own distinctive character. He treated it as a „more advanced phase“ of the „natural evolution of the ideas of liberty and equality“ which had emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century⁴⁷.

Popovici believed that the one compelling force which bound the members of a social group together and distinguished it from all others was national consciousness. In reaching this conclusion, he eliminated one by one those attributes which were frequently cited as the distinctive marks of a nationality. Language, he admitted, was important but not decisive: after all, the Irish had not ceased to be a separate nationality, even though they had adopted English, the language of another people. Political unity, in his view, was not critical either, and he cited the Jews as an example of a viable nationality that had no state of its own. He raised similar objections to racial uniformity, religion, and customs. When all was said and done it seemed to him that the specific character of a people was determined primarily by the awareness it had that some or all of these attributes together formed the basis of the existence as a distinct community. This awareness is what he meant by national consciousness. It was this intangible element that raised a people to the height of its aspirations; without it, he warned, neither nationality nor national rights could exist.

Popovici argued that once a people had become conscious of itself, as the Rumanians had, it took on all the attributes of a living organism and was endowed by nature with the inherent right of survival and freedom to develop. But if a nation were to grow and prosper, he suggested, it must, like any organism, have a suitable environment. It required living space, and, eventually, all its parts would have to function as a unit. A people conscious of itself must, he concluded, inevitably establish an independent or autonomous state of its own and, if it chose, unite with other states on the basis of nationality⁴⁹. He characterized these two tendencies — the establishment of national states and the political union of „dismembered“ nations — as natural laws and, hence, he viewed their fulfillment as inevitable.

Popovici did not believe that the principle of nationality was necessarily centrifugal, and he pointed to the example of Switzerland where Germans, French, and Italians lived together in harmony, even though they were surrounded by three powerful national states that could have exercised a strong attractive power over them. In Switzerland, he argued, these three nationalities were equal before the law and enjoyed perfect freedom to develop as they chose. But in Hungary he complained, the condition of the non-Magyar peoples, and especially the Rumanians, was strikingly different. There, because of the policies of the Hungarian government, the principle of nationality did indeed act as a strong centrifugal force. Voicing the alienation felt by large numbers of Rumanian politicians and intellectuals, he accused the Magyars of having declared war on the non-Magyar peoples of Hungary and of having mobilized the

⁴⁷ Aurel C. Popovici, *Principiul de naționalitate* (București, 1894), p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

parliament, the ministries, the courts, and the county administrations to destroy their national consciousness and stifle their political, cultural, and spiritual development. Although he could see little hope of reconciliation between the Rumanians and Magyars, he stopped short of advocating the outright destruction of Hungary and its division into small independent national states. He proposed, instead, a reorganization of the Habsburg empire as a whole into a federation based upon ethnic rather than historico-political principles. Such a restructuring, he was certain, would allow all the peoples of the empire to develop freely and at the same time would protect them from what he viewed as the greatest danger of all — Russian expansion into Central Europe.

Popovici's theory found practical expression in the demand for national autonomy. Already formulated in the *Replică* and Memorandum, it became the centerpiece of all subsequent Rumanian plans for political development until the First World War.

The legislation and administrative acts of successive Hungarian governments had also convinced Rumanian politicians and intellectuals that cooperation between Magyars and Rumanians within the historical framework of Transylvania was no longer possible or even desirable. 1879 marked a watershed in their relations. In that year parliament passed a law which made the teaching of Magyar obligatory in Rumanian church elementary schools. It was the first of a series of laws designed to bring the education of Rumanians (and other nationalities) into harmony with the idea of Hungary as a Magyar national state. It was followed in 1883 by a similar law affecting non-Magyar-language middle schools and in 1891 by a law on kindergartens which contained provisions for the use of Magyar among non-Magyar children three to six years old. There was legislation also which was intended to undermine the autonomy of the Rumanian Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, particularly the law of 1893, which provided for the payment by the state of the salaries of teachers in Rumanian church schools, and the law of 1899, which offered state supplements to the salaries of Rumanian priests. The object of both was to extend control by the government over Rumanian teachers and priests, whom it regarded as fomenters of resistance to its assimilation policies. The government also used its considerable administrative powers to curtail Rumanian political activity. For example, in 1894 it brought the executive committee of the National Party to trial on charges of agitating against the security of the state for having published and distributed the Memorandum, a trial which resulted in the conviction and imprisonment for up to a year of the majority of the committee. In 1894 also the Minister of the Interior dissolved the National Party, although it continued to function as an electoral committee. Such acts all but destroyed the remaining hopes of a Rumanian-Magyar rapprochement of the sort advocated in the 1870s and 1880s. As a result, Rumanian politicians sought solutions to national problems elsewhere.

A significant element which broadened the political horizons of the Rumanians and offered another means of achieving their goal of autonomy was the Kingdom of Rumania. The ethnic and cultural affinities which Rumanians on both sides of the Carpathians felt for one another were, of course, not new, but in the 1890s the Rumanian state began to figure prominently in the political calculations of the Transylvanian

Rumanians. They sought to use the good relations between Rumania and the Triple Alliance as a way of putting pressure on the Hungarian government to modify its nationality policy and make concessions to the Rumanians. But the Transylvanians were also wary of allowing their national movement to become entangled in the partisan political struggles of Liberals and Conservatives in Bucharest.

By the end of the century, then, new ideas about nation, the nationality policy of the Hungarian government, and perceived changes in the international situation which enhanced the role of the Rumanian kingdom had caused a reorientation of Rumanian political thought in Transylvania. Calls for an activist policy came from many quarters. The Tribunists, who had been the driving force behind the Memorandum of 1892 and the Congress of Nationalities in 1895, led the campaign to abandon passivity and resume full participation in the political life of Hungary. Eugen Brode, who had had a prominent role in all their activities, gave clear expression to their ideas. Passivity, he argued, had achieved nothing. Rather, after the Memorandum it had led to „stagnation“ and „disorientation“. The only way out of the impasse and the only way the Rumanians could to achieve their objectives, he insisted, was „constitutional struggle“, which meant the creation of a strong party capable of sending as many deputies to parliament as possible⁵⁰.

The proponents of activism in effect abandoned the goal of a restoration of Transylvania's autonomy, which passivism had been designed to bring about. Characteristic supporters of the new course were the lawyers and other young professionals from the small city of Orăştie who founded a newspaper, *Libertatea* (Liberty), to promote their ideas. They created a sensation in 1902 by publishing an open letter from Ioan Mihu, a Rumanian large landowner, who bluntly demanded an overhaul of the national program of 1881. He urged the National Party to renounce passivism as a political tactic and to disavow its first article, which had committed the party to do nothing that would compromise the autonomy of Transylvania⁵¹. These changes were needed, he argued, because political circumstances and men's minds had changed drastically since the early years of dualism. He, along with the Tribunists, advocated „realism“. The activists achieved a stunning success shortly afterwards when in 1903 Aurel Vlad, a lawyer from Orăştie, was elected to parliament running on a platform which renounced passivism and the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy⁵².

A formal end to passivism in Rumanian political life came at the National Party conference in 1905. The majority of the delegates voted to participate in the upcoming elections to the Hungarian parliament and to use every constitutional means available to achieve their goals. These they formulated in demands for the recognition of the Rumanians as a „political individuality“ and for legal guarantees of their „ethnic and constitutional development“. Thus, they had replaced the historical principality of Transylvania with national autonomy for all the areas inhabited by Rumanians where henceforth they should be administered, judged, and educated by Rumanians in the Rumanian language.

⁵⁰ *Tribuna Poporului*, October 20/November 2, 1901; January 8/21, 1902.

⁵¹ *Libertatea*, February 23/March 8, 1902.

⁵² Păcăţian, *Cartea de aur*, Vol. 8 (Sibiu, 1915), p. 107.

It was left to one of the younger leaders of the party, Iuliu Maniu, to explain the motives behind these changes. In a speech in the Hungarian parliament in 1906 he insisted that every nationality had a right to develop in accordance with its own unique qualities. He urged a political restructuring of Austria-Hungary to provide the necessary environment of justice and liberty, but he also hinted at where the idea of national autonomy might eventually lead. He proposed that the Rumanians of Hungary bring their political struggles into harmony with those of Rumanians everywhere, since, in his view, they all served a single idea, which he called „Rumanianism“. Buttressed by national consciousness, that idea, he asserted, transcended all political and geographical boundaries. His allusion to a Rumanian national state is clear. Significantly, he made no mention of Transylvanian autonomy⁵³.

IDEEA ROMÂNEASCĂ A AUTONOMIEI ÎN TRANSILVANIA.

1867—1918*

(Rezumat)

Ideea fundamentală a românilor din Transilvania în timpul perioadei dualiste a fost aceea a autonomiei lor; ceea ce însemna dreptul lor de a se administra, judeca și educa în limba națională.

Studiul, în termenii proprii ai autorului, demonstrează cum oamenii politici și intelectualii s-au orientat spre ideea modernă a autonomiei naționale.

Autorul a evidențiat antecedentele ideii în cele 16 puncte hotărâte în Marea Adunare Națională de la Blaj care, afirmând „independența“ națiunii române din Transilvania, a respins uniunea cu Ungaria. Adiacent, în studiu se relevă politica românilor, orientată spre menținerea Transilvaniei ca entitate de sine stătătoare în cadrul imperiului habsburgic. În funcție de aceste coordonate, autorul a reconstituit orientările din mișcarea națională și principalele faze ale mișcării politice în timpul perioadei liberale, când s-a produs puternica afirmare a românilor în dieta de la Sibiu (1863).

⁵³ Iuliu Maniu, *Discursuri parlamentare*. 29 maiu—31 iulie 1906 (Blaj, 1906), pp. 76—77; *Revista politică și literară* (Blaj), September 1906, pp. 3—4.

* Istoricul american Keith Hitchins, profesor la University of Illinois, este autorul unei întinse bibliografii de titluri referitoare la istoria românilor, care constă din 15 cărți, 62 articole și peste 110 recenzii. Studiind, de peste un sfert de secol (prima sa recenzie — având ca obiect *Istoria României*, vol. I — a apărut în *Balkan Studies*, 1963, nr. 1, p. 181—183), istoria românilor, cu deosebire a celor din Transilvania, K. Hitchins a devenit o autoritate indiscutabilă în materie, remarcându-se prin rigoare și obiectivitate, în tot ceea ce a scris, ca și printr-o analiză pătrunzătoare a faptelor și evenimentelor reconstituite. De aceea, publicarea prezentului studiu, ca rezultat al unor mai recente investigații ale omului de știință american, constituie pentru anuarul nostru un adevărat privilegiu.

Pentru ca un număr cât mai însemnat de cititori români să aibă acces la ideile conținute de acest valoros studiu, îi adăugăm un rezumat în limba română. Cei interesați de bibliografia și activitatea prestigiosului istoric K. Hitchins pot afla informații utile la: V. F., *Interviu cu K. Hitchins*, în *Vatra*, 1971, nr. 6, p. 9; Viorel Faur, *Keith Hitchins despre istoria românilor*, în *Familia*, 1973, nr. 8, p. 15; Interviu acordat de K. H. revistei *Tribuna României*, 1973, nr. 11, p. 10; Pompiliu Teodor, *Introducere* la cartea lui Keith Hitchins despre *Conștiință națională și acțiune politică la românii din Transilvania (1700—1868)*, apărută la Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1987 (Nota redacției).

Autorul a reliefat, de asemenea, ca esențială în politica românească respingerea soluțiilor oferite de conducătorii unguri, aceea a drepturilor individuale, căroro le-a opus principiul drepturilor unei națiuni distincte, individualizate.

În dreaptă consecință, studiul s-a oprit la principalele faze din evoluția politicii românești, rămasă fidelă principiului autonomiei Transilvaniei și autonomiei națiunii române. Reconstituirea mișcării politice a relevat sistematic și organizat, prin exemplul conferințelor, al altor luări de poziție, consecvența programului politic național. Studiul vizează, concomitent, raporturile româno-maghiare și cele cu slavii din imperiu.

De remarcă faptul că studiul a stabilit o linie de demarcație în evoluția politicii naționale românești în anii 1880, dovadă *Memorialul* (1882), precum și viitoarele evoluții care dinamizează „chestiunea română”, cu toate semnificațiile ei. Cu deosebire a fost subliniată afirmarea mișcării naționale sub semnul principiului naționalităților.

În final, examinarea pozițiilor lui A. C. Popovici și a relațiilor mișcării naționale cu regatul român a fixat, de fapt, concluzia studiului, potrivit căreia ideea autonomiei naționale trebuie văzută în legătură cu românii de pretutindeni, ceea ce însemna ideea statului național român unitar.