

New Information Regarding Romania's Coat of Arms Project Drawn up by General P. V. Năsturel

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The problem concerning the drawing up and institutionalization of Greater Romania's coat of arms has been discussed by generations of specialists in heraldry, who have followed separately either the evolution of the state armory as a whole or for each historical province, from the beginning up to its settlement in its interwar form¹, or the contribution of those involved in the elaboration process². Recently other researchers have also discussed the issue due to the fact that the smaller variant of the state insignia from 1921 was considered in 1992 when the present coat of arms was institutionalized.

Nowadays from among the evolution stages up to the interwar national symbol's institutionalization the most known are the first impulses which came from Paul Gore immediately after the union of Basarabia with Romania,

¹ From the bibliography of the matter the following papers cannot be overlooked: Dan Cernovodeanu, *Evoluția armeriilor Țărilor Române de la apariția lor și până în zilele noastre (sec. XIII-XX)*, Brăila Museum, Istros Publishing House, Brăila 2005; Maria Dogaru, *Simbolurile naționale ale României*, Sylvi Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003; Tudor Radu Tiron, *Stema Banatului între 1921-1992*, in „Analele Banatului”, New series, Archeology – History, IX, 2001, pp. 510-519; Maria Dogaru, *Din heraldica României*, JIF Publishing House, Bucharest 1994; Jean N. Mănescu, *L'Héraldique d'Etat de la Roumanie contemporaine de 1918 à nos jours*, in „Revue Roumaine d'Histoire” (hereafter «RRH»), 1993, XXXII, 1-2, pp. 115-145; Idem, *Les armes de la Transylvanie (XVI-XX-e siècle)*, in „RRH”, 1992, XXXI, 1-2, pp. 29-49; Idem, *L'évolution historique des armoiries des Principautés Roumaines du XV-e au XIX-e siècle*, in „R.R.H.”, 1988, XXVII, 4, pp. 315-337; Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința și arta heraldică în România*, Bucharest, 1977; Const. Moisil, *Stema României. Originea și evoluția ei istorică și heraldică*, Bucharest, 1931; I. Marțian, *Contribuții la heraldica vechiului Ardeal*, in „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională”, 1928, IV (1926-1927), pp. 441-446; P. V. Năsturel, *Stema României*, Bucharest, 1892.

² We refer mainly to the following publications: Mihai Macuc, *Contribuția oștirii la definitivarea simbolurilor heraldice ale României Mari, după încheierea Tratatelor de Pace din 1919-1920*, in „România și Conferința de Pace de la Paris (1919-1920)”, coord. Gheorghe Buzatu, Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Horia Dumitrescu, Empro Publishing House, Focșani, 1999, pp. 279-293; Silviu Andrieș Tabac, *Heraldica teritorială a Basarabiei și Transnistriei*, Chișinău, 1998; Idem, *Paul Gore heraldist*, in „Arhiva Genealogică”, Iași, IV(IX), 1997, 1-2, pp. 231-255.

materialized in a memorandum whose fate remained unknown³, and afterwards the Army's contributions that started the whole procedure by adopting the armour of the reunited regions. This mission was assigned to the 3rd Office (historic) of the 3rd Section of The Great General Staff, specifically that was asked to "make researches regarding Transylvania's armour in order to include it in the new coat of arms of the Greater Romania"⁴. The preliminary researches conducted by the military specialists at the Romanian Academy have been followed by the making up of a mixed committee that coopted Lieutenant – Colonel C. Ștefănescu-Amza, head of the 3rd Section – Operations, the reservist General P. V. Năsturel and the historians Dimitre Onciul, Ion Bianu, Nicolae Iorga, Vasile Pârvan. The head of the committee was General Constantin Christescu.

The document we are about to discuss on belongs to this stage and reflects General P. V. Năsturel's point of view regarding Greater Romania coat of arms composal. The armours proposed have been briefly mentioned by historian Mihai Macuc in the above mentioned study, but the memoire itself⁵ has not been published in extenso and contains the author's explanations namely the manner in which the coat of arms has been elaborated and which was the base for the symbols selection. At the same time he clears up the cause of Năsturel's subsequent absence⁶ – up to his death on 2nd of August 1920, at the age of 66⁷ – from the elaboration process of the new national coat of arms.

Ample enough, the document is structured on several sections starting by presenting the context in which the activity started. Here is how this is depicted:

"On 4th / 17th of October 1919 we received the address from The Great General Staff through which we were informed that the Ministry of War had named a Committee at that service, consisting of myself and the academicians and History professors at University, Mr. Iorga, Onciul and Pârvan, which committee, under the presidency of Mr. Christescu Constantin – Army Corps General – was to establish "The New Insignia of Reunited Romania". The first meeting took place 7th / 20th October at 10 a.m.

³ Gheorghe Bezviconi, *Pavel Gore*, Chișinău, 1938, p. 36.

⁴ Mihai Macuc, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

⁵ Romanian Military Archives, *Ministry of National Defence. Ministry 's cabinet fund*, p. 351, pp. 365-386.

⁶ See Ioan Silviu Nistor, *Stema României...*, pp. 170-171.

⁷ A good presentation of life and activity of P. V. Năsturel is made by Paul Cernovodeanu in the medallion *Generalul Petre V. Năsturel (1854-1920)*, in „Genealogical Archive”, III (VIII), 3-4, Iași 1996, pp. 5-13.

I must add up that about this study we were already been consulted by Mr. Intendant Zaharia – General of Division – who asked for everybody's opinion regarding the symbolic insignia of Romanian People's Union⁸. “Your opinion – he said – please be kind and communicate it by indicating the elements which are to be included in this emblem from a historical point of view in order to truly symbolize the unification of the sister countries to the Old Kingdom and to *Românism*.”

Whichever shall be the address of the above military authorities it is requested:

“The Insignia of the Reunited Romania”

In other words, to establish the coat of arms of the Reunited Romania from an historical point of view. Therefore, historical, diplomatic and heraldic knowledge is requested.

At the first meeting of the Great General Staff, Professor Onciul spoke 2 times and drawn up a couple of heraldic-historical sketches.

One of them portrayed their Majesties the King and the Queen as if heraldics stipulated those fine bows to be made by a person with restless soul who feeled the need to show his pure heart because he would have made a mistake or he would have repented his faith towards the throne and the king and between us, there was nobody with such grief and burdens on soul. This is the reason I vehemently protested not against the sentiment which was used by the producer in order to bring forward that issue but for the lack of heraldic knowledge and for the amount of fealty belived arguments.

The proposed sketch of the King and the Queen has been abandoned but it was maintained the so called Mihai-Viteazu's seal⁹, insignia which Mr.

⁸ The underlines belong to the author.

⁹ The armorial seal of Mihai Viteazul, dating from 1600, has arisen in the Romanian heraldry long controverses which started both from the diferentiated identification of the component elements and their symbolic interpretation. The first matter has been solved for good by Dan Cernovodeanu, who proved that the prints that generated different opinions came from separate matrixes, one for wax and the other for ink, of course with several differencies both iconografic and from the perspective of the legend's text. With refference to the symbolic interpretation, over the time, several theories arose pleading on one hand that the front lions would represent Mihai Viteazu's personal label (cf. P. V. Năsturel, C. Moisil, I. C. Filitti, Emanuel Hagi-Moscu), or the symbol of Transylvania derived from the so called Dacian insignia (cf. D. Onciul, Pavel Gore, G. D. Florescu, A. Sacerdoțeanu), and on the other hand, that the seven peaks of the mountains would represent the seven fortresses of Transylvania-Siebenbürgen (cf. Gr. Tocilescu, D. Onciul, Stoica Nicolaescu) or the four of them have no particular significance (cf. A. Sacerdoțeanu, George D. Florescu). Our opinion is in accordance with Dan Cernovodeanu, who alleges that „the presence of the two heraldic quadruped

Onciul offered to His Majesty the King in the Plan of the Romanian Academy the 1st as being discovered by him and the 2nd as representing the emblems of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, totally inexact, and fabricated facts sustained at the beginning by everyone who was influenced to, on seven hillocks two incited lions holding a sword in pale (which was the trunk of Constantinople's tree) which stood on the 7 hills in order to read Siebenbergen, and not Siebenbürgen the old German name of Transylvania!

- Very well, let this be. But, in this case, what are the two lions with the sword and the 7 hillocks representing?

Mr. Onciul said that those were the armours of Mozes Székely¹⁰.

- But who was this Ghinăraș of Mihai-Viteazu to give his insignia to Ardeal county?

- During Mihai Viteazu's reign, on 1601, or after his death?

- Who was he, Székely, to insert his arms onto his master's seal? We know that Hospodar Radu Șerban Basarab's Pană Cămărașul that came to help Basta kills Székely in 1603, in the battle near Brasov.

Mr. Onciul was very persevering in sustaining the inexactitudes he revealed without "rime ni raison" and today, seeing that he was uncovered, he remembered that "qui ne risque ne gagne rien" and that is why he even contests the Romanian origin of the word "aquilă" by saying that the Romanian called it "Vultur".

With this occasion, wanting to demonstrate the exact opposite, I realized the solidarity between the professors and I remembered the so-called scientific society of mutual admiration seeing that both Professor Pârvan who declared that he read some heraldry in some manuals he didn't quote, and the University Professor of Romanian Literature and Language Mr. Bianu, rejected what I had said regarding the black color of the aquila: because the people in Oltenia even today call it "corb", not bird or grape, Mr. Bianu referring to the invocations from the old books to the country's insignia, because he said like this:

«This country, is wearing the Crow on its seal,

on the royal seal of Mihai Viteazu is not at all accidental, the ruler wanting to show both his reign over Transylvania (placed in the center of the old Dacian realm and his authority over the whole realm mentioned above". Apud Dan Cernovodeanu, *Heraldica în slujba științei istorice românești*, in „Buletinul Bibliotecii Române”, Vol. XIII (XVII), New series, Freiburg, 1986, p. 50.

¹⁰ The coat of arms contains two rampant lions, holding a sword in pale, up guarded, transfixing an opened crown in the upper quarter, on both sides of the sword being a six rays star and a half-moon. See *Istoria românilor*, vol. V, coordinated by acad. Virgil Cădea, Romanian Academy, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 84.

«Happy now the seal is armored etc., etc.,

In order to be understood that the crow (“corb”) was a black aquila (corb aquila) or to simplify a “corb”¹¹, because the drawing represented an aquila, but not knowing the way the aquila and the crow was represented in heraldry he was contradicting with conviction the science.

Therefore seeing that Society of Professors «de om ire scibili» was not looking for science and to my question which were the historical and political arguments in favor of the present Romanian status – Because I knew what Professor Iorga had said (whom would have convinced if he had come) I stood up and declared that because Mr. Professor Onciul had crossed the limit of serious discussions I would retreat from the meeting – being threaten with the finger and told that I only spoke from my imagination and ravings.

Mr. Onciul’s projects being made by an historian and not an heraldry specialist I knew that he could not realize what he was proposing, because of the mantels of the laic armours (the Pope does not have a mantel but only two keys en sautoir at the back of his shield) and he did not consider the rules of the heraldic art although he speaks about it all the time.

For all those reasons and for everything that happened at the first meeting for destroying the old seal of the state drawn in 1867 and 1872 withdrew myself from that assembly and dealt with this problem at home by answering as much as I could to the Minister’s request.”

The memorandum continues with a series of other multiple appreciations generally called by Năsturel under the title «*Heraldical elements and definitions*», which contains the fundamental notions referring to the art

¹¹ The philological assumption referring to the heraldic bird of Wallachia was first brought into discussion by General P. V. Năsturel in his paper *Stema României*, Bucharest, 1892, pp 138-139. In accordance with his theory the black aquila from the Wallachia coat of arms was described in the ancient times (with reference to its color) as „black aquila crow (corb)” – black bird, crow like. From this description in time the black word was eliminated because it was a redundant description thus the terms „aquila crow” being kept meaning black aquila. Further on to ease the speech only the word „crow” remained therefore the formula „Wallachia has a crow as insignia” has to be interpreted only from the color perspective and not as bird species because it is a fact of common knowledge that aquila is the symbol of Wallachia. Speaking about P. V. Năsturel’s hypothesis, the heraldist Dan Cernovodeanu calls it as being „very plausible” but he underlines that the author has find this explanation for the personalities such as bishop Teodosie, Antim Ivireanul, Udriște Năsturel, Radu and Șerban Greceanu brothers a.s.o. to which contributed at the perpetuation of the confusion between the crow and the aquila in the flag of the Wallachia. See Dan Cernovodeanu, *Reprezentări heraldice din vechi tipărituri și manuscrise românești (sec. al XVI-lea)*, in „Târgoviște, cetate a culturii românești”, part I, „Studii și cercetări de bibliofilie”, extract, Bucharest 1974, pp. 145-146.

and science of heraldics, without significance in respect of the information novelty. The 3rd section entitled «*Historical and diplomatic circumstances*» is much more interesting both from the perspective of evidencing the coat of arms project proposed by the General for *Daco-România*, as well as for the considerations regarding the content of the traditional symbols of the historical Romanian provinces, this is why we will present it in its integrality, including here the following heraldic description:

«*III. Historical and diplomatic circumstances.* When drawing up the armory or the coat of arms of a Country one has to consider the historical and diplomatic circumstances in order to avoid wrangles and frictions between States and nations.

May I remind you that back in 1872 when the 20 lei coin was minted in exergue there was imprinted the title: Carol the 1st, Ruler of the Romanians which almost immediately gave Austro-Hungary the opportunity to ask for the title change: The Ruler of the Romanians in Romania, because they said: we also have Romanians in Transylvania and Bucovina. By all means, because the solidity of the argumentation was recognized the plaintiff was satisfied. Today «The King of the Romanians» could no longer be contested, because although the Romanians are all over, they are not too many where they are so as to be under Romania's eyes as a goal to be reached in a fortuitous and not very remote future.

In the composition of the State's Armery there will enter together with their coat of arms all the provinces that have joined now when the time has come and it is absolutely necessary and decently not to exist anyone infuriated and also no one to act against history and heraldic art. Namely, Basarabia and Bucovina up to 145 and 107 years ago were Moldavian flash and body. Until their release from the oppressing, grasping claw of the powerful robbers, that is until last year the name of the province was not even known because they didn't called themselves Basarabians and Bucovinens but Moldavians and under foreign rule that changed their name into Bucovina and in Basarabia both at North and at East, the Moldavian insignia was kept – the Aurochs. Therefore, when Moldavia is represented on its coat of arms by its aurochs all Moldavians will be proud that they have entered their traditional old domain.

What about Banat and Transylvania? The historians may now speak about the relations they had with Hungary. We, in order to avoid discussions, are going to climb up in the history, higher over «Voivodina», up to the Daciens and consider that the facts from that period did not changed for Transylvania and Banat, in relation with the 3 border regiments: Serbian, Hungarian and Romanian; these regiments are only limits of country's defense against the barbarians and by no means political borders. Then, under the

oppressing domination of Attila's successors our nation recognized their reign only forced, but our nation was continuously called by them Daco-Romanian irredentism. That Hungarian epithet has crossed our mind and we have started the work of establishing the Daco-Romanians armeries as described further on.

Then given be the word Transylvania, the country's name is translated Sieben-Bürgen (seven fortresses) and because the German name of the Country always served the German army's so called parlantes; because then, different nations are represented by figures such as: The Szekler's through the golden sun and the Saxons through a bordered new moon. The Romanians are represented by an Aquila giving birth, because the Hungarians cannot be both represented in Hungaria and in the Large Principality of Transylvania (Gross fürstenthum etc., Erdély Nagy fejedemség), in order to eliminate the exigency of all the nations we have thought of a coat of arms for all the Daco-Romanians for all the Romanian historical regions and instead of reproducing the coat of arms of the Large Principality of Transylvania with all rightful changes both political and heraldically, we have preferred a more elegant solution.

Today Transylvania wears: separated by a red girdle dividing it up: on blue background, a black aquila giving birth (naissant¹², wachsender) in flight (au vol essorant) with golden beak and red tongue, accompanied at dexter by a golden sun (the Szeklers) and at senestre by a silvery new moon (the Saxons) contournée and down: on gold 7 towers (armorie parlante) with red opened fortresses enlightened and immured (maçonnée) in black, positioned 4, 3 which represents the Great Reign of Transylvania.

Instead of making a new coat of arms of the reunited Romania from the shields of Transylvania, Muntenia, Moldavia and Dobrogea, this new shield is divided in 3 reversed Y shape which in heraldic terms is called reverse tierced pallwise: at dexter (honour place) on red (Romanian aquila) natural reversed holding in its claws a silver ribbon with the following initials S.P.Q.P. (Senatus Populus Que Romanus); at senestre on gold (yellow) in pale a green flying dragon, langued and armed with two claws, the emblem of the Daciens; finally, at the base (pointe) on blue two silver dolphins fully faced in curve palewise (affrontés et courbés en pal) representing Dobrogea.

This is the elegant solution we've talked about previously and the necessity of a diplomatic presence in the committee was proved when a gentleman member is proposed the removal from Oltenia's coat of arms of the Lion and from Dobrogea's of the Dolphin as if there is a greater power in a country that could have destroyed what the nation had created (The Legislator

¹² It is emphasized that „l'aigle – bird is masculine in French and l'aigle – flag feminine”.

Bodies) in 1872 and as if we were called there to deal with the old Romanian coat of arms by rejecting what was already recognized and established.

With this occasion a gentleman officer, Colonel Ștefănescu Amza if I remember correctly, hearing that the exclusion of the dolphins was requested raised his voice in favor of their maintaining by all means in the new armory of Reunited Romania so as not to leave space for the interpretation that we could give up even a meter of the land Mircea-the-Great had left us on the territory of Aurelianus' Dacia where we still had left other lands to assert and other goals to follow and reach.

IV. The Heraldic description of Daco-Romanian Coat of Arms

Daco – Romania bears:

Tierced pallwise renversed, in dexter, on red a natural aquila renversed flying down, holding in its claws a silver ribbon lined with azure and having the following inscription with black letters S.P.Q.P. (Senatus Populus Que Romanus), which stands for the Roman Empire; in senestra on gold a green flying dragon with 2 blue legs langued and armed red, which is the symbolic insignia of the Dacs; at the base (pointe) on blue, two silver dolphins fully faced, curved in pale representing Dobrogea.

Fess point in the center of the shield is the écusson quartered (écartelé) in the first and the forth by the Moon (silver) and in the second and the third by Saturn black) placed in the fess point, which belongs to the royal house Hohenzollern.

On the shield there is a golden royal helmet, which protects it, and which is bordered frontally faced and fully opened without grilles with tricoloured azure, gold and red.

The helm covered with a golden crown with fleuron and pearls, the circle enriched with gems and closed in 8 semicircles united in a golden globe placed under a golden cross. The shield is held by two lions of natural color with langued and armed red each one holding the shield with one claw, and with the other claw holding a flag: the one in dexter Muntenia's flag, and the one in senester Moldavia's.

Everything is placed under royal purple pavilion seeded by Romania and lined with ermine, with golden edges and covered on top with a royal steel crown as the previous one but whose globe is placed under the Cross of Danube Passage also of steel.

Under the shield there hangs the national order Romanian Star and the motto Nihil Sine Deo belonging to Hohenzollern family.

In order to show that the fortunate event that had been waited for centuries by the whole nation, was set in motion by Romania, who didn't spare the blood and the fortune of its sons in order to set free their brothers from the

oppressing yoke of the foreigners, it was considered a moral satisfaction of the whole Romanian spirit in front of Romania so as to perpetuate the union under its wings. This was the reason I inserted between the lion's paws the flags of the regions reunited at 1859 and on the folds of the mantle aquilas and aurochs; thus as this is the practice of the heraldic art to make royal and imperial mantels» united.

The armors, as the author states, come from the idea of ethno genesis of the Romanian nation, and it is reflected first of all through the classic symbols, the Romanian aquila and the dacian dragon and secondly through the division method of field separation, the tierced pallwise shield, delimiting through its division the main heraldic figures of the coat of arms from the secondary ones, in this case the dolphins. This conception may offer an excuse for the dropping out of the traditional heraldic symbols belonging to Romanian historical provinces – well known by the general.

Finally Nasturel's project was one of the accompanying annexes of the document called «Motifs exposure», drawn up at the beginning of 1920 by the Great State Major referring to the future Reunited Romania coat of arms.

Although marked by numerous controversies – related with the origin of Oltenia's symbol¹³ and of the symbols in Transylvania's flag¹⁴, the debates ended with the resolution of maintaining the shield of the Romanian coat of arms, model 1872 with the existing divisions and with the four previous emblems with some changes in the way of representation and details. One of those was placing the Transylvania's insignia¹⁵ in the lower central region

¹³ Dimitre Onciul claims that the lion, the symbol of Oltenia has Romanian origin and Nicolae Iorga states that the lion's brush up indicates a Flemish origin.

¹⁴ In accordance with the paer prepared by the drawer Szabo, based on the evidences from the book *Der Ungarosche Adel*, of A. Siebmacher and other foreign heraldic dictionaries, this does not have Romanian origin. The author finished his paper by asking if the members of the committee agreed that that coat of arms should have been maintained or it should have been replaced with another heraldic symbol. Mihai Macuc, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

¹⁵ Because the Transylvanian coat of arms continued to arise controversies even after the institutionalization of state's armories in 1992 we present bellow the explanation offered in *Expunerea de motive*: „Transylvania together with all the others regions annexed: Maramures and the parts of Crisana that have been reunited with Father Land will be represented by the old insignia of Ardeal which show the 3 living: the Romanians, the Saxons and the Szeklers (the Hungarians have been excluded) In the corners of the sectors will be shown the gold sun and silver moon representing the Szekler nation. Hungarian aquila will be replaced with Romanian Vladislav Basarab's aquila in the insignia symbolizing the oldest Romanian reign in Ardeal. Both the sun with the moon and the aquila will be placed on a blue background. The Saxons are represented through

between the lions and the dolphins” and the choice of the dragons as holders – “mark of the old Daciens’ Empire”.

In this context in 1920 a new committee was formed in order to study and elaborate the national coat of arms. Its members were: Constantin Argetoianu, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Dimitre Onciul, Manager of the State Archives, Mihai Seulescu, University Professor, and the heraldist Paul Gore. The three projects were conceived then by Dimitre Onciul, Nicolae Iorga and Nicolae Docan¹⁶, having as starting point the coat of arms from 1872 and which are well known today. The Odyssey of Greater Romania coat of arms drawing got continued up to 1921 and the resulted composition was very much disputed.

the 7th red fortresses on a gold background. Between the two sectors of Ardeal’s coat of arms appears the red line as in the old coat of arms. Transylvania will be placed in the central low sector between the lion and the dolphins”. *Ibidem*, p. 290.

¹⁶ Published by Silviu Andrieș-Tabac, *Heraldica teritorială a Basarabiei și Transnistriei*, Chișinău 1998, 98 p.