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Special issue

Romania and the Paris Peace Conference (1919).

Actors, Scenarios, Circulation of Knowledge

Edited by Svetlana Suveica

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Introduction

Svetlana Suveica

At the beginning of 1919, all roads led to Paris. One hundred years ago, over 1,000 delegates and journalists hurried to the French capital to participate in the Peace Conference that ended World War I. The desideratum of the conference was to achieve a peaceful and stable post-war political order. To that end, the new state borders, established after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empires, had to be recognized, and mechanisms that would ensure the implementation of the political and social order had to be established. The principle of national self-determination, based on Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points," was proclaimed as the guiding principle of the conference: states maintained the right to shape their borders based on national, strategic and economic interests.

Re-shaping East European borders was a complex task.¹ The new nation-states accommodated multi-ethnic societies with various war-time experiences. Their separation from empire did not automatically mean that they embraced an optimistic perspective on the nation-state. The immediate post-war period was marked by the confrontation of various political forces that tried to fill the power vacuum of transition, which led to an "extensive arc of post-war violence."² The newly formed governments had high expectations for the conference, as they strove for the international recognition of their recently established national borders. At the same time, the Great Powers, in charge of decision-making, were little acquainted with the history and post-war domestic situation of Central and Eastern Europe.³ Plebiscite, although recommended as a democratic exercise by various political forces from the contested regions,⁴ was applied only in several cases; in Upper Silesia, the "nation did not qualify as natural or divine entities" in people's minds, and therefore

1 Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement. Peacemaking after the First World War, 1919–1923*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 139–68.

2 Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

3 Hans Fenske, *Der Anfang vom Ende des alten Europa. Die alliierte Verweigerung von Friedensgesprächen 1914–1919* (Munich: Olzog Verlag, 2013), 89.

4 On the region as a research category, see Oliver Jens Schmitt and Michael Metzeltin, eds., *Das Südosteuropa der Regionen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015).

the adversarial (German and Polish) propaganda, which made full use of stereotypes and the fear of Bolshevism, could not influence how people made their decisions.⁵

Another mechanism developed by the conference was the principle of minority protection, which sought to guarantee equal rights to minority groups and was created especially with regard to Jews. The League of Nations was given jurisdiction over disputes that involved minority rights.⁶ The post-war situation has shown that, although all the treaties signed in Paris included clauses on the equal treatment of minorities living in national states, the latter interpreted the issue as a limitation on national sovereignty. Nation-states constantly redefined their criteria of nationhood, thus questioning the loyalty of their citizens.⁷ As a result, Southeastern Europe became a region of constant migration,⁸ a laboratory for the implementation of forced population exchange and international refugee regime.

Romania before the Peace Conference: The Context

At Paris, Romania was considered by contemporary political figures especially favoured among the new states: the country succeeded in doubling her territory and population after the war as well as formulating and successfully negotiating territorial claims matching her interests. By entering the war on the side of the Entente in 1916, Romania secured the regions of Transylvania and the largest part of Bucovina. The revolution and civil war in Russia, which led to the disintegration of the Russian army on the Romanian front, left the Romanian army alone. This had enormous military consequences, as the local population had to

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- 5 Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 135; and Waldemar Groch, "Deutsche und Polnische Propaganda in der Zeit der Aufstände und des Plebiszits," in *Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Studien zu einem nationalen Konflikt und seine Erinnerung*, ed. Kai Struve (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2003), 63–95.
 - 6 Mark Mazover, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," *Daedalus* 126, no. 2 (1997), 47–64.
 - 7 On the Bulgarian-Greek case, see Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands. Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900–1949* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 77–117.
 - 8 Ulf Brunnbauer, *Politisch Bedingte Migrationen*, in *Online-Handbuch zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*, no date, available at: <https://www.hgsoe.ios-regensburg.de/themen/wirtschaft-und-gesellschaft.html> (accessed on 23 February 2019); and P. Panayi and P. Virdee, eds., *Refugees and the End of Empire. Imperial Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

confront the anarchy and disaster caused by the withdrawing army. The peace Treaty of Bucharest (7 May 1918) signed with the Triple Alliance, which was never ratified by King Ferdinand I, forced Romania to cede Dobrogea to Bulgaria but allowed it to retain Bessarabia. Romania's declaration of war on the Triple Alliance the day before signing the armistice of Compiègne pushed Romania on the side of the Entente. Throughout that year, the regional diets of Bessarabia (Chişinău on 9 April), Bucovina (Cernăuţi, 28 November), and Transylvania (Alba Iulia, 1 December) issued declarations of their union with Romania. In each case, the Romanian army entered the region before the declaration was issued. At the conference, the Romanian government expected to secure recognition for the country's new borders.

When the Romanian delegation left for Paris, the country was in a difficult situation. Local violent conflicts,⁹ along with the military confrontation between the Romanian and the retreating Austro-Hungarian and Russian armed forces, were often presented as a fight against the Bolsheviks. Various actors later instrumentalised these conflicts during the negotiations for the post-war order.¹⁰ The physical destruction of the region as well as the food crisis and scarcity of resources were complicated by the large flow of Russian and Ukrainian refugees seeking shelter and security in Romania; since they were suspected of Bolshevism, the state implemented a series of restrictive measures against these "undesirable elements."¹¹ Most important was the existence of minorities, especially Jews, Germans, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Russians, the so-called "non-Romanians," who had to be integrated into the new country. An integration strategy, which did not neglect or suppress past imperial experiences but rather made use of them, failed to materialize. Instead, the ruling National Liberal Party declared that integration

9 For a case study on Romania's western border, see Ionela Moscovici, "Violence Variables in the Banat at the End of World War I," *Banatica*, 22 (2012): 277–293; for Bessarabia, see Ion Țurcanu, *Sfatul Țării. Istoria zbuciumată a unei importante instituții politice basarabene din anii 1917–1918* (Chişinău: ARC, 2018), 73–9.

10 Jörn Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden. Versailles und die Welt, 1918–1923* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018), 214.

11 The border was closed to those lacking the necessary authorization from the Allied governments. Among the active organisers of shelter and charity events for Russian refugees and invalids was the Russian ambassador S. Poklevskii-Kozell. He and Queen Mary of Romania presided over the Romanian branch of the Relief fund for Russian invalids, founded in Paris. Vadim Guzun, ed., *Chestiunea refugiaților de peste Nistru: documente diplomatice și ale serviciilor române de informații, 1919–1936* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2012), 415; and Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

would occur under a centralized umbrella. The Romanian language was imposed within the administration, and the shares and assets of foreign nationals were seized even before the peace treaties had regulated the issue.¹²

At the conference, Romania “emerged as the special defender of East-Central Europe against Bolshevik expansionism.”¹³ The Allies emphasized the containment of the spread of Bolshevism. The local conditions following the withdrawal of the Allied troops from Russia (March 1919), escalation of the civil war in Ukraine, and instalment of the communist regime in Hungary turned Romania into an important “chain” of the European *cordon sanitaire*. The Romanian Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu cleverly used the Bolshevik threat to reinforce the country’s territorial demands.¹⁴

The territorial claims that extended beyond those of the 1916 Treaty, although viewed skeptically by the Great Powers, did have a chance at success. In fact, the probability that Romania’s territorial claims over Transylvania would be satisfied grew proportionately to the diminishing chances of Hungary’s territorial claims after the communist leader Béla Kun came to power in March 1919. To the east, revolutionary Russia did not accept Romania’s annexation of Bessarabia, while an unstable Ukraine sought to obtain Bucovina. Among the decisions regarding the territories claimed by Romania, only that regarding Banat was more complicated: on 21 June 1919, the Committee of Ten divided Banat between Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania, with the latter getting the largest part of the region. Romania’s borders were confirmed by several treaties: the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine with Bulgaria for the return of Dobrogea (27 November 1919); the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with Austria for acquiring Bucovina and the Minority Protection Treaty (10 December 1919); the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary for Transylvania, Crișana and Maramureș, and two thirds of Banat (4 June 1920); and the Treaty of Paris for Bessarabia (28 October 1920), which was never signed by Soviet Russia. Romania’s newly established frontiers remained an irritant to neighboring Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia and Soviet Russia.

12 The sequestration of the financial capital of the oil companies Steaua Română, Concordia, Vega, and Astra Română was cancelled in January 1919. Bogdan C. Murgescu, “Anything but Simple: The Case of the Romanian Oil Industry,” in *History and Culture of Economic Nationalism in East Central Europe*, eds. Helga Schultz and Eduard Kubû (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2006), 237.

13 Norman A. Graebner and Edward M. Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and its Legacy. The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 50.

14 Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden*, 879.

Making Use of “Centenaries”: World War I and the Paris Peace Conference in Historiography

During the 2018 “centenary year,” the foundation of Greater Romania was celebrated through public commemorations, monument inaugurations, academic events and various media channels and publications.¹⁵ Commentators only occasionally exercised a critical approach towards the 1918 union, which was heavily impacted by the war and the Russian Revolution. Instead, the older nationalist discourse, which frames nation as the central construct of collective identity, was and continues to be reinvented and reinforced. The commemorations transferred the war-time “sacrifice” of the Romanian army during the war towards the ruling politicians who led the country’s national unification and the Romanian politicians and diplomats who “fought” for their country’s interest at the Peace Conference in Paris. The conference was presented as the “consecration” of the “Greater Union” through international treaties. A small number of critical studies¹⁶ and occasional media debates reinforced the role of intellectuals in the construction—and deconstruction—of national identity.¹⁷

At the same time, international scholars used the centenary of the war and the Peace Conference to consider these crucial events from new angles. Jörn Leonhard compared the war to “Pandora’s box” because it posed a serious challenge to states, including those of Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁸ In different parts of the world, scholars emphasized the need to question the state-centred approach that presented the newly emerged post-war political entities as “natural units.” The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empires and the formation of

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- 15 Bogdan Bucur, ed., *Cartea de Aur a Centenarului Marii Uniri* (Bucharest: RAO, 2017); Vasile Arimia, Ion Ardeleanu and Constantin Botoran, *Cartea neamului. Marea unire din 1918. Documente istorice* (Iași: Tipo Moldova, 2017); Anton Moraru and Ion Negrei, *Anul 1918. Ora astrală a neamului românesc* (Iași: Tipo Moldova, 2017); Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan, *Marea istorie ilustrată a României și a Republicii Moldova* (Bucharest: Litera, 2018); and Nicolae Enciu, *1918 pe ruinele imperiului spulberat de istorie. Basarabia în pragul modernității* (Chișinău: ARC, 2018).
 - 16 Lucian Boia, *În jurul Marii Uniri de la 1918. Națiuni, frontiere, minorități* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018).
 - 17 The debate involved well-known historians Ioan-Aurel Pop and Lucian Boia. On the role of the intellectuals in critically reviewing the Greater Union, see Bogdan Murgescu, “Istoricii și Marea Unire din 1918. Complexitate, valori, sens,” *Studii și articole de istorie*, no. 85 (2018): 7–18.
 - 18 Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora: Geschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2014).

new political entities—the nation-states—were presented through individual and collective life experiences that highlighted continuities along the *Zäsur*.¹⁹ Historians challenged the old versus new and the imperial versus national dichotomies, emphasizing instead the interplay between old and new, imperial and national in the transition. The imperial imprint endured in the (Austro-Hungarian) successor states as the old and the new political elite of the post-imperial nation-states brought their professional and personal experiences into the new political realm.²⁰ Feelings of a lost motherland and an in-betweenness generated strategies in which alternative loyalties and the use of the experiences gathered during the imperial period were exercised at the individual, group or community levels.²¹ Scholars questioned the mass character of nationalism through the lens of “national indifference,” revealing the limits of this categorization when it comes to daily experiences.²²

According to Jörn Leonhard, the Paris Peace Conference was an “overwhelmed peace” since the competing expectations of both big and small actors were never fully met. These unmet expectations generated disappointments and conflicts both at home and on the international stage. The differences between the assumptions in Paris and the realities on the ground led to mutual frustration, blame, and revisionist actions and ultimately fueled a continuum of violence.²³ Other contributions show the war as a conflagration for imperial survival, the post-war Peace Conference being viewed as a conflict of empires in which the Allied Powers tried to secure the vestiges of imperial interests while the successor states sought to limit imperial authority.²⁴ The valuable outcome of this special

19 Katrin Steffen, ed., *Nach dem Zerfall der Imperien: Historische Zäsur und biographische Erfahrung im östlichen Europa / After the Fall of Empires: Historical Turning Points and Biographical Experience in Eastern Europe* (Lüneburg: Nord-Ost Institut, 2015).

20 Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

21 Florian Kühner-Wielach and Markus Winkler, eds., *Mutter: Land—Vater: Staat. Loyalitätskonflikte, politische Neuorientierung und der Erste Weltkrieg im österreichisch-russländischen Grenzraum* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2017).

22 Gábor Egry proposed the concept of “everyday ethnicity” for the case of Transylvania; see Gábor Egry, “National indifference as everyday ethnicity,” in *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe*, eds. Maarten van Ginderachter and Jon Fox (New York: Routledge, 2019), 145–60 and Andrei Cusco, “Russians, Romanians, or Neither? Mobilization of Ethnicity and ‘National Indifference’ in Early 20th-Century Bessarabia,” *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 20, no. 1 (2019): 7–39.

23 Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden*.

24 Leonard V. Smith, “Empires at the Paris Peace Conference,” in *Empires at War*, 254–77.

issue is that the peace negotiations were not bound to Paris: notions such as nation, sovereignty and citizenship were negotiated by state actors as well as regional and local actors both in Paris and at home.²⁵

The contributions gathered here make at least three critical interventions. First, they show the multitude of state and non-state actors who positioned themselves with regard to the Romanian interests at the Paris Peace Conference. We observe the actors' (un)fulfilled missions, exercised both in Paris and at home as well as how these intertwined with party, group and personal ambitions. Second, the studies reconstruct rare moments of interaction between these actors. Consistent or brief, purposeful or occasional, emotional or cold, these moments reveal the energetic dynamic of those times. Third, the contributions show that the main scenes of negotiation on the future of Romania were not necessarily to be found in Versailles. Negotiations also took place—depending on the actors and their status, interests and connections—in Paris clubs and private houses as well as far from the French capital, in Bucharest, upon the return of conference delegates or during visits of foreign nationals. The form and content of these negotiations challenge the perception of Paris as a “fabric” of nation-states accomplished on the basis of people’s desire to live in a unified state. Instead, there is evidence of the molding of alternative post-war scenarios in and for the contested regions. Last but not least, the contributions gathered in this journal add value to the understanding of the Conference not only as a venue but also as a space that affected the ways in which the actors imagined and experienced their roles, interacted with others while fulfilling their mission and challenging the mission of others as well as how they produced, selected and spread knowledge and news.²⁶ The articles complement each other in reconstructing the circulation of people, the production and spread of knowledge, as well as the fabrication of propaganda materials and news favorable to, or discrediting Romania.

25 Markus M. Payk and Roberta Pergher, eds., *Beyond Versailles: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Polities after the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).

26 Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann, eds., *Spatial Turn. Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008).

State and Non-state Actors: Missions and Ambitions

Similar to the histories that present the Paris Peace Conference through the “eyes” of the “Big Four,”²⁷ previous works on Romania’s participation at the conference have been dominated by the figures of Ion I.C. Brătianu and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod.²⁸ Lucian Leuștean makes a fresh appraisal of the role of the two Romanian state leaders with relation to Romania’s interests at Paris, showing not only the importance of a better contextualization of the actions undertaken during the conference by the two but also the need to look beyond Brătianu and Vaida-Voevod and examine their entourage and connections at country and regional levels. He further shows that the harsh critique of Brătianu’s character and positioning in Paris, presented in western publications, was often based on thin arguments or simply re-quoted from others. To this, we must add the Romanian historians’ (purposeful) ignorance of the complex context in which the Romanian delegation heads fulfilled their challenging mission. Leuștean observes the influence of (opposition) party and group interests and underlines moments in which, when mistreated by the “Big Four,”²⁹ vanity and personal feelings played a role. The contribution reconstructs little known moments, such as when Brătianu, to the satisfaction of the small state leaders, took the lead in voicing collective animosity toward the issue of minority protection. The “moral success” of the Romanians generated severe reactions by decision-makers, criticism and pressure being directed towards Brătianu personally and the claims of Romanian delegation more generally.

Although agreeing with Romania’s position on minority protection as limiting state sovereignty, the two state leaders had different visions of Greater Romania. For Brătianu, Greater Romania was to be a centralised state governed from Bucharest, but for Vaida it was a state in which regional autonomy should be respected (Kührer-Wielach). Conscious that the issue should not be publicly discussed during the conference,

27 Margaret McMillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003).

28 Little attention was given to the activity of other members of Romanian delegation: experts Alexandru Lapedatu, Ion Pelivan, Vasile Stoica, Neagoe Flondor, Gheorghe Crișan, C. Danielopol and Constantin Brătianu.

29 “Even Brătianu did not come to be received by Wilson. [Brătianu was received] at Lloyd George’s—only [the] last Friday, for the first time. That is how we, the small ones, are treated,” complained Alexandru Vaida-Voevod in a letter to Iuliu Maniu. Mircea Vaida-Voevod, ed., *Alexandru Vaida Voevod, Scrisori de la Conferința de Pace. Paris-Versailles, 1919–1920* (Cluj-Napoca: Multi Press International, 2003), 77.

the latter wrote to his political counterpart Iuliu Maniu from Paris: "Without a complete autonomy we [the Transylvanians] will be overwhelmed by the money, ostracism, flunkeyism and Byzantinism coming from the country [Old Kingdom—n.a.] to the detriment of national unity, and only then the fight for Transylvanian autonomy will become a stringent necessity in the face of the peril that will threaten us."³⁰

Gavin Bowd's study alerts the reader to the activity of the French expert-geographer Emmanuel de Martonne, the conference expert in the Territorial Commission for Romanian and Yugoslavian affairs. He was part of the "epistemic community" of experts whose works aimed at providing plausible arguments regarding the territorial matters under discussion.³¹ In contrast to another recent study that presents de Martonne as the "advocate" of Romanian national interests at the conference,³² Bowd offers a multifaceted picture of his activity.³³ De Martonne was a "friend of Romania": an active member of the Franco-Romanian lobbying network, he advised delegates on Romanian propaganda and personally made public written and oral interventions to counterbalance Hungarian and Russian propaganda. Bowd asserts that de Martonne's geographic and cartographic activity, which fully served Romania's "cause" in Paris and boosted France's presence in Southeastern Europe, oscillated "between science and propaganda."³⁴ Conscious of his vulnerabilities, during the interwar period de Martonne preferred to emphasize his "non-political" research.

The activities of the Paris Peace Conference coincided with the zenith of tensions between the Romanian government and the international oil companies. Whereas most historians favorably evaluated post-war nationalistic policies, others emphasized that the dividing line be-

30 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod to Iuliu Maniu, Paris, 7 April 1919 (Vaida-Voevod, *Scrisori*, 88).

31 Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organizations*, 46, no. 1 (1992): 1–35; Dimitri Kitsikis, *Le rôle des experts à la Conférence de la Paix de 1919; gestation d'une technocratie en politique internationale* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1972).

32 Nicolae Enciu and Vasile G. Ursu, *Emmanuel de Martonne—l'avocat de la Roumanie à la Conférence du Paix à Paris in 1919–1920 en matière de Bessarabie* (Beau Bassin: Éditions Universitaire Européenne, 2018).

33 On de Martonne's full biography, see Gavin Bowd, *Un géographe français et la Roumanie. Emmanuel de Martonne (1873–1955)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).

34 On de Martonne's involvement in the issue of Bessarabia, see Svetlana Suveica, "Between Science, Politics and Propaganda. Emmanuel de Martonne and the Debates on the Status of Bessarabia (1919–1920)," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 58, no. 4 (2017): 589–614.

tween the Romanian national interest, which was promoted by the Liberals and apparently had strong social support, and the self-interest of multinational oil companies to earn profits at the expense of the Romanian state, "was not so clear cut." Members of the opposition parties and representatives of various social strata opposed nationalization.³⁵ In her study on the little-known topic of post-war American relief in Romania, Doina Anca Cretu shows that the Romanian government tried to use oil as leverage to secure the financial and diplomatic support of the big allies, such as France and Britain, while coping simultaneously with American pressure. For Brătianu, the American Relief Association (ARA) "practices, their conditions around its reception, and the impositions on Romania were essentially threatening the sovereignty of this new state" (Cretu). Ultimately, the Romanian government accepted the ARA support due to the Bolshevik threat, both sides tacitly agreeing that this threat could be tackled through food and material support.

Cretu brings in new actors who participated on the political scene. Herbert Hoover negotiated with the Romanian government, while the ARA agents worked with governmental and local public institutions on the ground. Hoover had to deal with the stubborn Brătianu, who tried to resist his "open threats" and not hand his country over for economic exploitation (Leuștean). Comparatively speaking, the ARA agents, who found in Romania "the most starved looking people" of Europe, cooperated with local and national authorities. The "semi-oriental Slavs" apparently could not administer the aid without American guidance and advice. The article masterly reveals the "multiple colors" of the ARA-brand in the region. The organization acted under the umbrella of humanitarianism and felt itself morally obliged to help the East European nation. At the same time, American aid in Romania was an "elitist" project. Its aid flew into the country through governmental institutions, and regional and local public employees communicated with the donors, reported to the country officials and voiced people's needs.

Non-state actors also rushed to Paris. Among them were representatives of the former Bessarabian imperial elite and Sfatul Țării deputies disappointed by the loss of Bessarabian autonomy. They formed a "Bessarabian delegation," which used various means, such as appeals, memoranda and propaganda publications, to persuade the decision-makers and the public to reject Romania's claims to Bessarabia. They cooperated closely with Russian political emigres and diplomats, who in turn sought the support of the Great Powers for the anti-Bolshevik front

35 Bogdan C. Murgescu, "Anything but simple," 231–50.

and opted for the restoration of Russia to her pre-war western border. In countering Romania's claim to Bessarabia, the "delegation" asserted that the majority of the region's inhabitants, if given the chance to share their opinion through a plebiscite, would opt against the Romanian "yoke," installed in the region on 9 April 1918. Instead, they would favor the return of Russian protection. The issue of legitimate representation was crucial for both state and non-state actors. The conference delegates did not question the mandate of the Romanian delegation, which was nevertheless challenged by the "Bessarabian delegates" who claimed in the press to represent "a good part of the Bessarabian people." In my own article, I reveal how the Bessarabians, whose status in Paris was contested by the Romanians, made use of the diplomatic tensions between the latter and the Americans to persuade the US delegates to reject Romania's claims to the region. In particular, the "Bessarabian delegation" exploited conflicts over oil interests and tensions around the conditioned aid of the ARA (Cretu) to convince the American administration of Romanian abuse of duty in the distribution of food to Bessarabian inhabitants.

Another important actor in Paris, mentioned in several contributions to this journal, was Queen Mary of Romania. Conscious of her political mission as queen of the country and protector of the Romanians, to which she dedicated her entire energy during the time of the war and great distress, she made a trip to Paris in March-April 1919 to lobby for Romanian interests. Once there, she received guests, gave audiences and was photographed and featured in almost every newspaper. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod appreciated her presence as being "of the highest importance" for the Romanian cause: "This extraordinary woman succeeded in what hundreds of diplomats plus an army corps could not have done. She remains the most imposing historical figure of our time."³⁶

The figure of Queen Mary serves as an important example of the activities that took place outside the conference, helping to deepen our understanding of the relationships between Romania and other countries beyond the strictly diplomatic sphere. Her wartime cooperation with the Russians and the Americans on charity projects projected a positive attitude towards the ARA's mission, different from Brătianu's (Cretu).³⁷

36 Vaida-Voevod, *Scrisori*, 93–4.

37 On the Queen's role in the organization of charity and propaganda during the war, and the construction of her image, see Alin Ciupală, *Bătălia lor. Femeile din România în Primul Război Mondial* (Iași: Polirom, 2017), 194–328.

(Alternative) Scenarios: Through the “Region’s Lens”

In Paris, the Romanian delegation invested in diplomatic and propaganda efforts in order to show the willingness of the people inhabiting the newly acquired regions to merge with Romania. The delegation presented the union declarations issued in Chişinău, Cernăuţi and Alba Iulia as expressions of the people’s will. Back in the provinces, the hesitant elites were persuaded to abandon any idea of autonomy and “go there [to Paris—n.a.] united so as to leave no room for criticism.”³⁸ In contrast to the French capital, where the position of the official delegations mattered, the leading political figures in Bucharest were well aware that the centralized state-building project of Greater Romania was not very welcome in the new provinces; moreover, the capital’s plans clashed with regional and local perspectives.³⁹

Far from Bucharest or Paris, the local and regional elites molded scenarios that conformed with, or opposed, the nation-state perspective, thus trying to negotiate the place of their region in the future political order. It is telling that the Bucovinian resident Iancu Flondor, who pleaded for regional autonomy and greater political participation for non-Romanians, was marginalized by proponents of centralism such as Ion Nistor.⁴⁰ In Bessarabia, Sfatul Țării deputies underlined the region’s multi-ethnic character and the quest for equal rights for all citizens starting from its first session, held on 25 November 1917.⁴¹ Until the merging of the region with Romania on 9 April 1918, the dominant political project with regard to Bessarabia’s future was autonomy within a federative Russia.⁴² The frustration of the Bessarabian elite with Bucharest’s centralist policy is reflected in multiple private and official

38 Svetlana Suveica, “The Bessarabians ‘between’ the Russians and the Romanians: The Case of the Peasant Party Deputy Vladimir V. Țiganko (1917–1919),” in *Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania. Perceptions, Mentalities, Propaganda*, eds. Sorin Radu and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), 233–4.

39 Andrei Florin Sora, “Centralizare sau autonomie locală? Opinii, dezbateri, primii pași spre unificarea administrativă a României Mari, 1918–1920,” *Studii și articole de istorie*, no. 85 (2018): 125–36.

40 Mariana Hausleitner, “Konfliktfelder zwischen Rumänen und Ukrainern in der Bukowina zwischen 1910 und 1920,” in *Mutter: Land—Vater: Staat. Loyalitätskonflikte, politische Neuorientierung und der Erste Weltkrieg im österreichisch-russländischen Grenzraum*, eds. Florian Kühner-Wielach and Markus Winkler (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2017), 97–118.

41 *Sfatul Țării. Documente*. Vol. I Procesele-verbale ale ședințelor în plen (Chişinău: Știința, 2016).

42 Andrei Cusco and Viktor Taki (with Olega Groma), *Bessarabia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii (1812–1917)* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2012), 361–8.

sources, including the minutes of parliamentary sessions. Whereas the so-called “*generația unirii*,” who contributed to the union with Romania, remained faithful to the old Romanian nationalists and made successful careers for themselves in the interwar period, the younger generation were regionalists.⁴³ The former imperial elite’s scenario for Bessarabia imagined the region’s future as part of a restored (Greater) Russia, in which Ukraine was somehow removed from this imaginary space (Suvaița).

The integration of the new regions into Romania, synonymous with a “levelling” based on political, administrative and cultural transfers from the Old Kingdom, generated discourses in Transylvania about the distinctiveness of regional multiethnicity, cultural superiority and identity.⁴⁴ The Bucharest elite’s immediate push for Romanianization generated various political and cultural counter-reactions in the new regions. Intellectuals supported cultural regionalism to show the distinctiveness of the Hungarians in Romania from those in Budapest.⁴⁵ The declarations of Transylvania’s union with Romania mentioned autonomy as a necessary political condition for creating Greater Romania. Conscious that the issue of autonomy should be postponed until after Paris, regional leaders privately exchanged views about why and how it should be achieved.

Local and regional actors designed political agendas and constructed mental maps⁴⁶ that hardly coincided with those designed in Bucharest, Budapest, Belgrade or Paris. Whereas the state elites saw the regions as (frontier) spaces lacking national loyalty and labelled those who failed to support the nationalist agenda as “enemies” and “disloyal elements,” the regional elites sought strategies that would allow them to gain from the ambivalent situation. Similar to the national delegations in Paris, the regional elites used historical and strategic arguments to claim that, in the case of a plebiscite, either the minorities or the majority of a

43 Irina Livezeanu and Petru Negură, “Borderlands, Provinces, Regionalisms and Culture in East-Central Europe,” in *Regionalism and Modern Europe. Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, eds. Xose M. Nunez Seixas and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 251–70.

44 Florian Kühner-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Zentralistische Integration und politischer Regionalismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014).

45 Livezeanu and Negura, “Borderlands.”

46 Andreas Langenohl, “Mental Maps, Raum und Erinnerung. Zur kultursoziologischen Erschließung eines transdisziplinären Konzeptes,” in *Mental Maps—Raum—Erinnerung. Kulturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zum Verhältnis von Raum und Erinnerung*, ed. Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf (Münster: Lit, 2005).

region would prefer the citizenship of one or another country. In addition, the regional elites argued for the need to make the region an independent political construction. Gábor Egry shows that the Banat elite, which opted for the region's integration into Romania, tried to convince the population to assert the continuity of Banat as part of a unitary Romania. In the case of Székelyland, they projected the region as a "buffer zone" against the spread of Bolshevism. The author convincingly argues that, for the period *in-between* the empire and the nation-state, when a political and administrative vacuum was formed, the regionalist more than the nationalist political mobilization drove people in the two regions. The competing power centres used propaganda means to further exploit the violation of the principle of self-determination of people inhabiting the two regions, which fueled animosities between the "rival" countries long after 1919. This sharpened political debates in the country.

Florian Kührer-Wielach further develops Egry's argument that regional parties capitalized on and manipulated the regions' unique positions and specific needs during the interwar period. He shows that the Transylvanian regional party Partidul Național Român, which was led by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod and won the first parliamentary elections in 1919, justified the mission of Transylvanian "regionalists" as "saving" the country from total collapse. They used the authority Vaida-Voevod gained in Paris and the idea of regional "uniqueness" undermined by the Bucharest "centralists" to achieve this. Rather unsurprisingly, contemporary commentators presented the post-war ideals of "peace," "unity" and "prosperity" as absences keenly felt by Romanian society ten years after Versailles. Specifically, they placed the (forgotten) symbols and (unfulfilled) values of the 1918 Alba Iulia Declaration of the union of Transylvania with Romania at the center of the political discourse. According to Vaida-Voevod, these ideals remained unachieved because of the persistence of the "ancient regime" of Bucharest politicians, namely, Brătianu's Liberals who imposed centralism, nationalization and Romanianization on the regions. This time, Romanian authenticity was to be found not in the Old Kingdom but rather in Transylvania, whose politicians were ready to guide the country towards a brighter future. Vaida did not refer to the failures of Romanian parliamentarianism, in which he played a part together with Brătianu and other political leaders after 1918.⁴⁷ The 1928 mobilization experiences were the most detrimental to

47 Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismus in Rumänien (1930–1940): Demokratie im autoritären Umfeld* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997).

parliamentarianism, since mass mobilization almost replaced elections. The Romanian political parties' strategy to find "enemies" and "scape-goats" among opposition groups and blame them for failures was not abandoned, since those who identified with the Liberals were treated as "enemies" and "traitors."⁴⁸ Though not well embedded socially, the parties gained capital from acting against the "other."

From Bucharest to Paris, and back: Circulation of People, Knowledge and News

The circulation of people, knowledge and news reached a transnational scale during the conference. Members of the Romanian delegation, Romanian and foreign diplomats, politicians, militaries, and journalists circulated between the two capitals. In spring 1919, Queen Mary of Romania travelled to Paris. Emmanuel de Martonne came to Bucharest in June; his travels around the country were carefully planned and supervised by Romanian officials.⁴⁹ Various militaries and representatives of US and European relief organizations became acquainted with the situation inside Romania during the conference. For example, in spring 1919, US Army officer Cpt. John Kaba visited Bessarabia on behalf of the ARA and completed a two-month survey of the region. The representatives of the Belgian Red Cross and the Jewish Distribution Committee also visited the country (Suveica and Cretu).

There were other less visible routes to Paris, upon which actors whose presence was neither facilitated nor welcomed by the Romanian government embarked. For example, the members of the "Bessarabian delegation" reached the French capital via Odessa, where they had emigrated during the period of Bessarabian autonomy (1918). Former members of the Russian provisional government facilitated their visa.

The circulation of knowledge, facilitated by these and other actors, occurred through official notes, telegrams and dispatches. These communications sought to offer access to knowledge in order to inform, discuss, debate and propose. For the Romanian officials, the intense intellectual exchange took place on a fairly regular basis, with the exception of private correspondence. The same was not true for their political

48 Gábor Egy, "Crowding Out: Experiences of Difference, Discourses of Identity and Political Mobilization in Interwar Transylvania," *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis*, Series Historica, no. 9 (2012): 161–82.

49 This prompted the "Bessarabian delegates" to question the objectivity of his account (Suveica, "Between Science, Politics and Propaganda").

opponents; in their private correspondence the members of the “Bessarabian delegation” and their supporters in Odessa, Chişinău and other cities complained of excessive censorship, which prevented their briefs and propaganda materials from ever reaching their intended recipients.

How was knowledge for the Peace Conference produced? Inside Romania and in the French and other capitals, actors drafted reports, notes, responses, appeals and memoranda addressed to the president of the Peace Conference, the official delegations and the representatives of the Great Powers. The actors sought to argue for or against the Romanian character of the regions claimed by Romania. Based on the case of de Martonne, Gavin Bowd shows how historical data were carefully selected, statistics were analyzed and maps were drafted in order to deepen the political, economic and strategic arguments favoring Romania. The map designed by de Martonne had a “quasi-hypnotic effect” on the delegates of the Allied countries but bothered the Hungarians, the Serbs and the Russians. The maps became “swords” in the hands of either the state actors who advocated for the nation-state perspective or those who contested it and looked for political alternatives.⁵⁰

Political actors constantly acknowledged the importance of propaganda. The Romanian delegates asked Bucharest to send “pictures (postcards) with beautiful Romanian women in [national] costume, postcards with types of Romanian stitches,” photos of the royal family and anything else that could present Romania in a good light before the delegates and general public. In fact, each victorious country that participated in the conference developed postcards and fine embroidery emphasizing the national character of the new state. At the same time, the official delegates and their supporters also gathered any material that negatively depicted their political rivals.⁵¹

The Romanian delegates constantly complained to their counterparts inside the country about the lack of resources to handle the counter-propaganda directed against Romanian interests (Leuştean). They simultaneously praised the propaganda activities of political rivals who invested human and financial capital into the matter. Vaida-Voevod wanted to create a Romanian press bureau in Bern to counteract Hungarian propaganda. Later, Ion I.C. Brătianu supported its creation. The

50 Peter Haslinger and Vadim Oswald, eds., *Kampf der Karten. Propaganda und Geschichtskarten als politische Instrumente und Identitätstexte* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2012); Steven Seegel, *Map Men: Transnational Lives and Deaths of Geographers in the Making of East Central Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

51 Such was “the album of Hungarian atrocities” (Vaida-Voevod, *Scrisori*, 29).

bureau was led by diplomat Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, who joined the Romanian delegation to Paris in February 1919, taking with him six boxes of propaganda materials. During that same year, along with other publications on Dobrogea and Transylvania, he published eighteen articles on Bessarabia in the Swiss press.⁵² In addition, he entered into press polemics with marginal figures and regional actors.⁵³

“There is an immense literature that was produced about our cause. But who reads it? Propaganda through the press and the live word, invitations to lunches and private discussions can give results,” noted Vaida-Voevod.⁵⁴ Besides participating in hearings and commissions, the delegates made use of their presence “in the salons, where politics is discussed and weaved.”⁵⁵ Propaganda was the only tool for regional actors, who were therefore very active in this sphere. For example, the “Bessarabian delegation” in Paris and their supporters in other capitals drafted memoranda that sought to influence the decisions in Paris as well as brochures, pamphlets and newspaper articles that were distributed among Russian and Bessarabian emigres, and were sent to Bessarabia. This way, the pro-Russian supporters in the region were informed of the negotiations in Paris and given hope that Bessarabia would leave Romania and return to Russia.

The research on how the Romanian public acknowledged and interpreted the events in Paris remains to be done. From the available sources one can assert that the news about the state of affairs in Paris reached the Romanian peripheries with difficulty. The fastest were the governmental newspapers that informed the reader about Romania’s efforts at the Peace Conference and spread optimistic prognoses about the “soon-to-be” international recognition of Greater Romania’s borders.

52 Adrian Vițălaru, *Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen—diplomat* (Iași: Editura Universităţii Al. I. Cuza, 2014), 88.

53 One of them was Serge Persky, a Russian émigré poet who worked, together with the members of the “Bessarabian delegation,” for the restoration of Greater Russia and supported the return of Bessarabia to Russia. On Persky’s activity, see Daniel Artho, “Der Landesstreik als gescheiterter Revolutionsversuch? Zur Geschichte eines verhängnisvollen Narrativs,” in *Der Landesstreik. Die Schweiz im November 1918*, eds. Roman Rossfeld, Christian Koller and Brigitte Studer (Baden: Hier und Jetzt Verlag, 2018), 412–29.

54 Vaida-Voevod, *Scrisori*, 30.

55 *Ibid.*, 99.

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Romania, the Paris Peace Conference and the Protection System of “Race, Language and Religion” Minorities—A Reassessment

Lucian Leuștean

Abstract: *In 1919, Ion I. C. Brătianu, the Romanian Prime Minister and head of his country's delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, vehemently opposed the establishment of a system of minority protection and preferred to resign rather than agreeing to sign the treaty by which the Romanian state accepted such obligations. Romania was finally a founding member of the League of Nations and a participant from the very beginning in the protection system of the minorities “of race, language and religion” endorsed by the organization. In spite of the genuine enthusiasm that the leaders in Bucharest showed to the general targets of the League, the issue of minorities' protection remained a delicate subject. Romanian and foreign historians dealt extensively with this topic, but a fresh view based on new archival findings and a balanced approach is necessary.*

From the perspective of Romania, the Paris Peace Conference after the Great War was a unique moment when the country, through its representatives, managed to reach its major national objective without being overwhelmed by the nations that determined the new international order. Even then, the country's image and that of its leaders were far from favorable, but this did not prove to be an insurmountable obstacle towards reaching the national goal. The documents of the period and the memoirs of its contemporaries prove that in the Paris peace forum, Ion I.C. Brătianu, who was the Prime Minister and the chief of the Romanian delegation, was quite unpopular among many of the conference delegates. One of the members of the American delegation, Major Stephen Bonsal, wrote in his journal: “One of President Wilson's marked dislikes is his aversion for Brătianu, the beetle-browed prime minister of Rumania with the notorious Byzantine background.”¹ The Americans even gave a nickname to the Romanian leader, “the Bull.” The British diplomat Harold Nicolson

1 Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Supplicants. The Little Nations at Versailles* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1946), 169.

saw him as “a bearded woman, a forceful humbug, a Bucharest intellectual, a most unpleasant man.”² The French diplomat Jules Laroche believed that the performance of the Romanian leader in arguing the territorial claims of his country had been “disappointing.”³ The British minister to Bucharest, Rattigan, wrote to his superior, Lord Curzon, on 8 October 1919: “Mr. Bratiano is certainly a patriot, but his character lacks the pliancy necessary for such work, and he apparently succeeded in exasperating all those with whom he came in contact by the excessive nature of the claims and the somewhat arrogant and unbending manner in which they are presented.”⁴ Such character depictions—subjective and hyperbolic, no doubt—were actually unique sources of inspiration for certain contemporary historians (otherwise highly acclaimed), such as Margaret MacMillan, whose chapter on Romania to the peace forum only reprises such idiosyncrasies, thus reaching anti-Romanian conclusions.⁵

Other historical syntheses dedicated to the Paris Peace Conference, from the famous quasi-official history penned in 1921 by a team coordinated by H. W. V. Temperley to the works published in the past decades, written by renowned historians such as Alan Sharp and Erik Goldstein, among others, have cast an unfavorable shadow upon the Romanian delegation in Paris.⁶ They gave little to no credit to the Romanian leaders and failed to appreciate how effectively they attained their objectives or how skillfully they took advantage of the favorable conjecture; nevertheless, the simplistic anti-Romanian view, such as the one presented by Margaret MacMillan, was avoided. The only Western monograph about the Romanian representatives to the Paris Peace Conference with a more balanced approach that shows both the attraction and the rejection towards the Romanian leader Ion I. C. Brătianu was authored by Sherman D. Spector.

2 Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London: Methuen, 1965), 248.

3 Jules Laroche, *Au Quai d'Orsay avec Briand et Poincaré, 1913–1926* (Paris: Hachette, 1957), 74.

4 E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939* (hereafter DBFP), First Series, VI, 1919 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1956), 280.

5 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 125–35.

6 H. W. V. Temperley, ed., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, 6 vols. (London: Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton, 1921); Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement, Peacemaking after the First World War, 1919–1923*, 3rd edition (London: Palgrave, 2018); and Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919–1925* (London: Routledge, 2013).

His work, based on a PhD thesis, had only a minor influence on the Western historiographic mainstream.⁷ Furthermore, the historians who wrote about the avatar that marked the elaboration of the minority protection system of “race, language and religion” at the Paris Peace Conference were not very favorable to Romania’s official position, whether they published their works in the interwar period, after World War II or more recently.⁸

Among current Western authors who avoid presenting Romania’s position at the Peace Conference with hostility or indifference is the French historian with Romanian roots Carol Iancu, whose works—written in the last decades—became part of the international scientific circuit.⁹ However, Iancu tends to overestimate the role of France and of the French and Romanian Jews in the emergence of the national minorities protection system at the Conference.

Paradoxically, the Romanian historiography also failed to give the deserved importance to the participation of Romania at the Paris Peace Conference, and for this reason there is no consistent monographic study dedicated to the topic. The only work that may contest the aforementioned statement was published by a team of historians in 1983 for the 65th anniversary of the 1918 union.¹⁰ Nevertheless, far from meeting the

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- 7 Sherman D. Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*, (New York: Bookman, 1962), translated by Sorin Pârnu as Sherman D. Spector, *România și Conferința de pace de la Paris, Diplomația lui Ion I. C. Brătianu* (Iași: Institutul European, 1995).
 - 8 C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934); Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); Erwin Viehhaus, *Die Minderheitenfrage und die Entstehung der Minderheitenschutzverträge 1919* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1960); Mark Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe. The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf, 1914–1919* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1992); and Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others. The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
 - 9 Carol Iancu, *L’émancipation des juifs de Roumanie (1913–1919). De l’inégalité civique aux droits de minorité: l’originalité d’un combat à partir des guerres balkaniques et jusqu’à la Conférence de paix de Paris* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1992); Carol Iancu, *Le combat international pour l’émancipation des juifs de Roumanie. Documents et témoignages (1913–1919)* (Tel Aviv: Université de Tel Aviv, Centre Goldstein-Goren, Institut de Recherche de la Diaspora, 1994); Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie (1919–1938). De l’émancipation à la marginalisation* (Paris-Louvain: Editions Peeters, 1996); Carol Iancu, *The Jews in Romania (1866–1919). From Exclusion to Emancipation* (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1996); and Carol Iancu, *Les juifs de Roumanie et la solidarité internationale: Documents diplomatiques inédits (1919–1939)* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2006).
 - 10 Constantin Botoran, Ion Calafeteanu, Eliza Campus and Viorica Moisuc, *România și Conferința de pace de la Paris (1918–1920). Triumful principiului naționalităților* (Cluj Napoca: Dacia, 1983).

requirements of a reference work, the book is more a product of the national-communist historiography, being focused on the national and ideological confrontations of the time. There are some collections of documents, book chapters and papers written in Romanian, only few of which have become internationally relevant. Even a brief comparison of Romanian historiography with the historiographies of other Central and Eastern European countries shows that the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Yugoslavians and Greeks dedicated significantly more works on the topic of the participation of their country at the Paris Peace Conference. For Germans and Hungarians, the peace reunion after the Great War was the crucial topic, thus a tremendous number of works was dedicated to it. For Hungarians, Trianon was, and still is, a national obsession: it was treated as a pivotal historiographic topic and was allotted governmental funds for enhancing the research on Trianon Treaty.

How can we possibly explain the significant peripheralization and minimization of Romania's activity at the Paris Peace Conference by Western historiography, on the one hand, and the Romanian historiographic inconsistency concerning the topic, on the other? For the first question, there are various explanations, the dominant one being the propagandistic battle that the Romanian state lost at the Conference and afterwards. We refer here to the issue of minority protection, especially of the Jews, a field in which the Bucharest leaders were involved permanently after 1878, mostly from the perspective of the "mass citizenship" obtained by "foreigners." The Romanian opposition to the matter, the efficient obstacles enforced by the authorities up to World War I to prevent the "naturalization" of "non-Christians," the opposition at the Peace Conference to a minority protection system, the vivid rejection by Ion I. C. Brătianu of the so-called Minority Treaty and his refusal to sign it (he preferred to resign as Prime Minister) started and fueled the propagandistic war with the individuals and groups affected by the above-mentioned actions and attitudes. The Romanian state was bound to lose the confrontation, as it was lacking the necessary capacity, resources and international affinity for the issue. The effects of the defeat were implacable: an unfavorable image abroad, the permanent labeling of the Romanian people, the state and the Romanian leaders as "Anti-Semitic," a word that acquired even a more negative connotation after 1945, and harmful political and economic repercussions. The negative portrayal of Romania in international historiography, pointed out above, consequently followed.

The relative disinterest of Romanian historians in the performance of the Romanian leaders to the Paris Peace Conference has various causes. During the communist period, the ideological approach in research on

twentieth century topics was very strong; as such, the Paris Peace Conference was presented as a reunion of imperialists who failed to acknowledge the first Soviet state or the claims of the Small Powers. After cladding Romanian communism in national attire, the final part of the aforementioned assertion became prevalent. After 1989, Romanian historiography has been in convalescence after the communist slough, the historians embracing other priority topics in their research. Not least, the scarce number of works written in Romania about the peace after the Great War and the Treaty of Minority Protection is due to a state of complacency. Romanian historiography expresses unanimous delight in what the Romanian state obtained at the Peace Conference, mostly because that success was not only magnificent, but also entirely unexpected. No complex explanations were required, as they were considered the duty of the defeated conference parties that had to rationalize their failure.

The purpose of this article is to outline a new and more balanced image—without definitive statements and simplifying labels—of what occurred in 1919–1920 in Paris, by cross-checking the perspective of the Romanian state and outlook of the supporters of the “race, language and religion” minority protection system. It is necessary to reread the already-published documents, to use unpublished ones, and to provide a non-biased historiographic analysis of what has been written in the field so far. This article is part of a more comprehensive project, meant to be completed in a few years as a monograph.

One aspect relevant for the unfolding of the above-mentioned propagandistic battle—within which Romania in 1919 had already an almost insurmountable gap to overcome—is the correspondence from April–May 1919 between William H. Taft, at that time former President of the United States and future Supreme Court chief justice, and Thomas Tileston Wells, the Honorary Consul general of Romania in New York. Taft wrote to Wells about the past “dishonorable” attitude of Romania concerning the Jews,¹¹ about how the Romanian government had broken the promises made at the Congress of Berlin and, consequently, about the fact that the country could not reject any conditions imposed to compensate for being granted

11 “I cannot but consider that the course of Romania with respect to the Jews are [was?] most dishonourable in the past. It may be, as you say, that they changed the law now so as to comply with the promises made so many years ago that were so outrageously violated.” Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe/The Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter AMAE), Fond Paris, vol. 53, 162.

major benefits, both at Berlin and at the Peace Conference in Paris.¹² The “Romanian” consul replied to his illustrious fellow citizen that the Jews had arrived relatively late in the Romanian Principalities, after 1830, so that they could not be “naturalized” in great numbers, that the Romanian representatives were not listened to in Berlin, and that Russia had taken Southern Bessarabia, which made the Romanians resentful. He further replied that the emancipation of the Jewish population and the introduction of the “universal (male) vote were only adopted at the end of the Great War.”¹³ Taft was not persuaded by the “good” intentions of the Bucharest authorities or by the new Romanian legislation, and he insisted upon enforcing new conditions through an international treaty, because “the bitterness against the Jews seems to override every consideration, and it ought not to be so.”¹⁴

The acid letter exchange between the two Americans should be understood not as an isolated case but as a manifestation of the multi-level tensions between Romania and the United States of America. Furthermore, even during the peace reunions of January–March 1919, the relations between Romania and the leading powers of the Peace Conference were far from happy and, therefore, the anxieties of the Romanian delegation grew in intensity. The Paris letter of Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, addressed to Iuliu Maniu on 20 March 1919, is revealing in this respect:

Old people for the French, old people for the English, old people for the Americans, for the Italians. Then, in commissions, people under 30 and 40. But old people have the vote. There is no bad intention, but each of them focuses on their own interest, jealous if another takes the lead [...] we must be ready to fight for our own justice by defending ourselves from Bolshevism, towards Ukraine, and banishing the Hungarians beyond the Tisa and the Serbs beyond the Danube at the right time—*si vis pacem para bellum*. The Serbs, despite their Balkan character, enforce an element of order and discipline through their lack of obedience in front of these old ladies in pants more than we do. With their boastfulness, corruption and warlike photos, the Hungarians will be treated as allies tomorrow unless we know how to punch them right. They will only be summoned to give their signature, but you know they are masters of twisting and distorting the meaning of words. I will thus prepare my paper arsenal; you prepare the one of steel, because the latter confers respect upon the first.¹⁵

12 Ibid., 165.

13 Ibid., 163–64.

14 Ibid., 162.

15 Here and thereafter, author’s translation from Romanian. Arhivele Naționale Istorie Centrale/Central Historical National Archives (hereafter ANIC), Fond Vaida-Voevod, d. 42, f. 3, 10; Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Scrisori de la Conferința de pace Paris-Versailles 1919–1920* (Cluj-Napoca: Multi Press International, 2003), 53, 60.

While using official and unofficial channels in relation to the Paris decision makers, the Romanian delegation made attempts of *captatio benevolentiae* that were only partially successful. A variety of methods was employed, from official memorandums to working luncheons and dinners, from press propaganda in Paris and other Allied capitals to the use of the “secret diplomatic weapon,” namely, the quasi-unanimously acknowledged personal charm of the Queen Mary.¹⁶ Moreover, at Ion I. C. Brătianu’s suggestion, Vaida-Voevod and seven other members of the Romanian delegation adhered to Freemasonry,¹⁷ which allowed the Romanian officials in Paris to get useful secret information and increased their access to the French press. Despite these efforts, the wishes of the Romanians, expressed at the Conference and elsewhere, did not always get the desired reception within the leading circles; the Romanian delegation often shared the feeling of not being heard. As stated by one of the few contemporaries who did not express unfavorable opinions of the Romanian state, Romania “was treated like Cinderella by her stepmother.”¹⁸ In this context, the anger of the Romanian Prime Minister is understandable: “I have been many times on the verge of protesting, returning to Romania and offering my resignation. The conscience of an excess of duty imposed on me the obligation of enduring everything, as long as there is hope of stopping this miserable situation.”¹⁹

Tensions had accumulated in early 1919 on the relations between Romania and the Great Powers reunited at the peace forum in Paris, but it was obvious that the American-Romanian relations were the tensest. There were three reasons for this tension: the Romanian-Hungarian military confrontation, the issue of Romanian oil, and the issue of minorities

16 Queen Mary spent March and April 1919 in Paris and London, hoping to use her “succès de jolie femme” in favor of the Romanian cause. Maria, Regina României, *Însemnări zilnice (decembrie 1918–decembrie 1919)*, vol. I (Bucharest: Albatros, 1996), 72–157. The Queen overestimated her success (“... it was a great achievement for My Country,” 156). Some of her contemporaries, like most historians, were more temperate in their account. David A. Andelman observed that the Queen failed to have a decisive influence on the attitude of Paris decision makers concerning Romania, but she was definitely the most likeable Romanian “representative” in Paris and London in spring 1919. David A. Andelman, *A Shattered Peace. Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008), 231–5.

17 Liviu Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod între Belvedere și Versailles (însemnări, memorii, scrisori)* (Cluj-Napoca: Sincron, 1993), 82–3.

18 Dr. E. J. Dillon, *The Inside Story of the Peace Conference* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1920), 85.

19 Gheorghe Brătianu, *Acțiunea politică și militară a României în 1919 în lumina corespondenței diplomatice a lui Ion I. C. Brătianu*, 2nd edition (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1940), 58.

of “race, language and religion.”²⁰ Some Romanian historians depicted an extremely close relationship between the disputes over Romanian oil and the unfavorable treatment that Romania “enjoyed” at the Peace Conference.²¹ It is undisputable that the rich Powers exercised constant pressure, sometimes with a trace of blackmail, on the states in acute need of money. This was actually the situation of Romania.²² Basic needs, especially the need for food, required the use of foreign credits. The only ones who could lend money were the Americans, British and French. Any credit request was inevitably accompanied by very brutal conditions which, in the Romanian case, included advantages and privileges in the field of Romanian oil exploitation.²³ In addition, Romania was the target of open threats from the omnipotent Herbert Hoover, the head of the American Relief Administration (ARA), which ensured supplies for the war-stricken Europe.²⁴

Furthermore, the Small Powers had no say in the draft treaty with Germany. It was highly likely that the Great Powers would do the same with the treaties with Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Turkey. Consequently, the small states reacted by attempting to find a common approach, founded on solidarity of interests and purposes.²⁵ The coagulant factor of this *ad-hoc* co-operation²⁶ was represented by common discontent with the potential minority protection system; the imposition of disarmament that would relegate them to the level of defeated states; the

20 Ibid., 65–104; I. Ciupercă, “București-Washington: diplomatie și petrol,” *Relații româno-americane în timpurile moderne*, ed. Gheorghe I. Florescu (Iași: Editura Universității “Al.I. Cuza”, 1993), 171–7; and I. Ciupercă, “Dincolo de “fațada impunătoare” a Conferinței de pace de la Paris,” *Românii în istoria universală*, II.1 (Iași: Editura Universității “Al.I. Cuza”, 1987), 615–9.

21 Gh. Buzatu, *România și trusturile petroliere internaționale până la 1929* (Iași: Junimea, 1981), 111–26; and Gh. Buzatu, *O istorie a petrolului românesc* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1998), 120–32.

22 E. J. Dillon, *The Inside Story*, 220–6.

23 Ion Ardeleanu, Vasile Arimia and Mircea Mușat, eds., *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale a poporului român. Recunoașterea ei internațională*. 1918, *Documente interne și externe*, vol. IV (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986), 471–7.

24 Brătianu, *Acțiunea politică*, 68.

25 Constantin Botoran, “România și statele succesorale din centrul și sud-estul Europei la Conferința de pace de la Paris (1919–1920),” *Revista de istorie*, 36, no. 11 (1983): 1133–4.

26 See the letter sent by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod to Iuliu Maniu on 11 June 1919 from Paris, *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale*, III, 421–32.

issue of commercial transit and the so-called “liberation quota,” which required taking over a part of the Austrian-Hungarian public duty and of the reparations due by the defunct Habsburg Monarchy.²⁷

Romanian historiography justly granted special attention to the treatment applied by the victorious Great Powers to the small states at the Paris Peace Conference and to the small powers’ failed attempt to set up a common front. We will refer to one aspect with a special meaning for the tensions between Romania and the Great Powers—the issue of minority protection.

The formal proposal of establishing a legal system of international minority protection was presented by President Woodrow Wilson at the meeting of the Council of Four on 1 May 1919.²⁸ He referred to examples of harmful behavior towards the Jewish communities of Poland and Romania and proposed protection clauses. The document was drafted by David Hunter Miller, a lawyer with the American delegation who previously consulted the representatives of interested states and the Jews. After a discussion attended by David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau, it was concluded that equal rights for all citizens could remedy the “disease” manifested by the Jews’ lack of loyalty towards the states where they lived. A decision was made to create the Committee of the New States, which was meant to identify solutions to the issue of minority protection and to other issues pertaining to small states in Central and Eastern Europe.

A decision of the committee was expected after the failed attempt of 1 May 1919 to introduce the protection of ethnic minorities in the draft version of the Pact of the League of Nations—a failure due to the Japanese counterattack regarding the equality of races, which was not accepted at that point by the European countries and especially the United States. The Japanese were the ones who destroyed Wilson’s plan for minority protection among the League States,²⁹ but many others did not agree with this decision: the British, French and Italians, to mention just the most important powers.³⁰ As one of the participants with a major role in the elaboration of the minority protection system, James Headlam-Morley, stated:

27 Paul Mantoux, *Les Délibérations du Conseil des Quatre (24 mars–28 juin 1919)* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la recherche scientifique, 1955) I, 183–6, II, 214, 231–2; and *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference 1919* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946) (hereafter FRUS, PPC), V, 877–8, VI, 43–4, 65–6.

28 FRUS, PPC, 1919, V, 393–5, 678–81.

29 Dillon, *The Inside Story*, 490–6, 500–2.

30 Fink, *Defending the Rights*, 154–60; Levene, *War, Jews*, 235.

"It would have involved the right to interfere in the internal constitution of every country in the world. [...] it would give the League of Nations the right to protect the Chinese in Liverpool, the Roman Catholics in France, the French in Canada, quite apart from more serious problems, such as the Irish."³¹ Various Jewish delegations to the Peace Conference had influenced greatly the institutionalization of minority protection, both before and after 1 May 1919. Some of the Jewish claims were inserted in the underlying texts for the system of minority protection, including the formula "language, race and religion minorities" instead of "national minorities," with Jewish organizations rejected for obvious reasons.³² The well-organized activities of the Jews had a considerable impact on the form and nature of minority rights.³³

In Romanian historiography and beyond, the activities of various small Jewish groups at the Paris Peace Conference were presented as a unique, compact and unitary international body of Jews that acted as an international pressure factor in favor of the Jews' rights. Today we know that there was no such thing, but that illusion was presumably caused by two facts. First, the delegations representing the Great Powers included representatives with Jewish descent: the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sidney Sonnino; the French Minister of Finance Louis Klotz; Paul Mantoux, the interpreter of Clemenceau; the British Secretaries of State for India Edwin Montagu and Lewis Namier; and the Americans Louis Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, Louis Epstein, Henry Morgenthau and Oscar Straus, to mention a few. Second, there was a large number of Jewish representatives in various Western as well as Central and Eastern European organizations who were always around the official delegations. They all seemed to be part of a monolith although these Jews pursued diverse goals.³⁴ Some of their opinions were not merely different but downright contradictory: some of them were Zionist, others were assimilationist;

31 Sir James Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference 1919*, ed. by Agnes Headlam-Morley, Russell Bryant and Anna Cienfiala (London: Methuen, 1972), 113.

32 Mark Levene, "Nationalism and Its Alternatives in the International Arena: the Jewish Question at Paris, 1919," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28, no. 3 (1993): 524.

33 Fink, *Defending the Rights*, 133–264; Stanislaw Sierpowski, "Minorities in the System of the League of Nations," in *Ethnic Groups in International Relations, Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940*, eds. Paul Smith, Kalliopi Koufa and Arnold Suppan (New York: New York University Press, 1991), V, 13–4.

34 Levene, *War, Jews*, 238.

some were moderate, others were radical, some were expressed by citizens of the Great Powers, and others were supported by Jewish representatives from Eastern Europe. There were also competing prides and inclinations.

This lack of unity of the Jewish actions at the Paris Peace Conference is today thoroughly reflected in international historiography, but it benefits from different conclusions from the three historians who have treated the topic thoroughly. While Mark Levene believed that “contrary to the prevalent idea that it was primarily American Jews who helped shape the Minorities Treaties in Paris in 1919, it was primarily Wolf who did so.”³⁵ Wolf was one of the leaders of the British Jewish organization Joint Foreign Committee. Carol Iancu gives credit to those of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*,³⁶ also highlighting the contribution of Wilhelm Filderman, one of the leaders of the Romanian Jews, who was in Paris during spring 1919.³⁷ In turn, Carole Fink stresses the role played by Louis Marshall and Julian Mack, the influential leaders of the American Jewish Congress, who took over the leadership of the predominantly Zionist organization *Comité des Délégations Juives/Conference of Jewish Delegations*.³⁸ At the same time, these historians stress the contribution of the delegations of the Great Powers to the regulation of the ethnic minority protection system. Mark Levene believes that the British delegation identified the necessary compromise, Carol Iancu thinks that the French found the *modus vivendi* that restarted the negotiations, while Carole Fink underlines the decisive character of the American contribution to solving the problem.

We do not propose here to settle once and for all this historiographic debate, but we will only state what these three historians acknowledged before taking their favorites to the forefront: the protection of “race, language and religion” minorities established at the Paris Peace Conference was the outcome of political negotiations. It did not have a humanitarian character but rather was a compromise between the Great Powers, between them and the states involved in the protection system, and between all of these international actors and the Jewish Western and Eastern European organizations. As with any compromise, each party had to give something up; nobody won everything; nobody was completely satisfied. Each got less than what they thought was fair, but the alternative

35 Ibid., IX, 285–98.

36 Carol Iancu, *Emanciparea evreilor din România (1913–1919)* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1998), 250–5, 257–66.

37 Wilhelm Filderman, *Memorii & Jurnale, volumul 1: 1900–1940*, ed. Jean Ancel, trans. by Nicolae Drăgușin (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2016), 211.

38 Fink, *Defending the Rights*, 202, 217–26, 259.

was refusing to make a deal and not obtain anything. Paradoxically, not even the states that opposed this agreement would have medium- and long-term advantages, but they would have become sooner or later—if they had not been already—targets of international opprobrium for their real or exaggerated oppression of ethnic and confessional minorities. At the same time, note here the raw statement made by one of the members of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, Eugene Sée: “the business of the Conference is to create a sovereign state for Poland, not for the Jews.”³⁹

The process of drafting the principles of minority protection was strongly affected by the reactions of the directly involved states. The main debate occurred on 31 May 1919 within the 8th plenary session of the Peace Conference.⁴⁰ The draft treaty with Austria contained provisions on minority protection in the successor states: Romania; Czechoslovakia; Poland; the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs as well as Greece. Informed from behind the curtain about what was to happen, the Romanian delegates Brătianu, Mișu, Diamandy and Vaida-Voevod, the Greeks Venizelos and Politis, the Czechs Kramář and Beneš, the Croat Trumbić, and the Polish delegates Dmowski and Grabski met and prepared their response right before they received the draft treaty. Brătianu asked for firmness, but some delegates were cautious. Venizelos even stated: “I do not have the illusion of representing a free and independent country. We are all at the discretion of the Great Powers. I do not believe I can oppose their will.”⁴¹ The subsequent discussion showed that the small states had to take common action, but almost all of them declined to be the spokespersons of the ad-hoc group. This allowed Brătianu to take the initiative: “after formally letting the others take the lead, they [declined and] did not have to ask him once more because he accepted, [... to] everyone’s satisfaction.”⁴²

The general assembly of the Conference of 31 May 1919 represented the most important public moment of the international dispute regarding minority rights, where Ion I. C. Brătianu voiced the opinions on minority protection shared by other Central and Eastern European leaders. The latter supported him rather silently: minority groups could receive special rights only if all of the other groups of other League of Nations member-states benefitted from them too. Brătianu stressed that the

39 Mark Levene, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives*, 519.

40 AMAE, Fond 71/1914, second part, vol. 57, p. 2–14; Fond 71/România, vol. 372, 128–40; League of Nations, Archives, United Nations Library, Geneva (hereafter, LNA), 1/S336.

41 Vaida-Voevod, *Scrisori*, 171–7.

42 Ibid.

founders of the League of Nations violated the principle of equality between the states from the very moment the organization was constituted. Additionally, he warned against introducing discrimination between citizens in domestic relations: some (minority ones) could use international legislation, while others (members of the majority) were not entitled to act the same. From an internal and international perspective, the institutionalization of inequality looked like a threat to their well-balanced development in the eyes of the states in question.

We present below what Brătianu's political adversary—the Transylvanian Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, who would become Prime Minister of Romania in late 1919 and who agreed to sign the "Minority Treaty"—thought of his performance:

The moral success obtained by Brătianu was absolute. Though each of the small states presented another broad standpoint, the fact that they all showed their view was a manifestation of solidarity. You have no idea how vehemently Clemenceau gesticulated and spoke in order to intimidate Brătianu. To no avail: Brătianu does not lose his temper. Even when he is turning red from inner emotion—he is either upset or mad—he does not lose his head. [...] He replied to Clemenceau and Wilson. The delegates—who on other occasions nap shamelessly or converse—[...] this time around acted with dignity, under the overwhelming impression of Brătianu's presentation.⁴³

The labels assigned to Ion I. C. Brătianu—"as rabid a nationalist as his father"⁴⁴ or "xenophobic"⁴⁵—are inaccurate. As shown above, his position was very similar to those of other political leaders of both Eastern European states and the Great Powers. He was a patriot; he was a representative of his country; he had national support; and his political opponents did not have much influence in the country. The comparison of Brătianu with Take Ionescu is meaningless today: whereas Ionescu was highly appreciated in important capitals and many would have wanted him as Prime Minister, he could not have represented Romania at the peace forum due to his lack of political support within the former Romania and the provinces united with the country in 1918.

Many of the delegates at the Conference resented Brătianu for his vehemence, radicalism, lack of diplomatic flexibility, and the fact that he deeply irritated the "Big Three."⁴⁶ He was compared to Take Ionescu,

43 Ibid., 177–8.

44 Fink, *Defending the Rights*, 232.

45 Levene, *War, Jews*, 256.

46 "Brătianu answered again; while he was speaking, Lloyd George turned round, and in a very loud aside said: 'This damned fellow; he cannot even get coats for his soldiers without us!', an observation which, though it presents a substantial truth,

Venizelos, Kramař or Beneš in order to highlight the opposite solution of an adjustment to the demands of the Great Powers. It is hard to say what a “right” position at the Conference would look like: “taming” the Czechs brought success, but the same did not happen with the Greeks; the Poles, Serbs and Croats alternated their attitudes, and the outcomes were various. Nobody can contest that Brătianu attained most of his country’s objectives effectively. Furthermore, he was consistent and persuasive: he could not be firm on the issue of Romanian oil or the war with the communist Hungary of Béla Kun, but his firmness was manifested with ease on the issues of minority protection.

The confrontation within the plenary session of 31 May 1919 revealed that the small states refused to “surrender” without a fight; the Supreme Council had to reply in writing to the delegations of Romania and “Yugoslavia” and reject the negotiation propositions of the Greeks and Czechoslovaks. The representatives of the Jews were not welcomed to the discussions and, therefore, their efforts were intensified, mostly in order to influence the Western statesmen. All the participating actors acknowledged that concessions had to be made because there were no easy solutions. In addition, note that the “riot” of the East European leaders, led by Brătianu, came only two days after the worrisome reply of the German delegation to the treaty; the answer contained precise references to the Germans’ right to self-determination.⁴⁷

One of the consequences of the combined actions of the so-called minority states was Georges Clemenceau’s letter to Paderewski of 24 June 1919.⁴⁸ The president of the Peace Conference detailed the goals of treaties concerning minorities. Only the existence of protective principles would make minorities accept the new situation according to Clemenceau.⁴⁹ The fact that the League of Nations would supervise the guaranteeing of minority protection excluded any potential interference in the internal affairs of the interested states. Hence, the provisions concerning warranties had been formulated with “maximum scrupulosity” in order to rule out any political character to a dispute that might arise by applying these provisions.⁵⁰

might perhaps have been presented more discreetly.” See Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir*, 136.

47 LNA, 1/S336.

48 Pablo de Azcarate, *League of Nations and National Minorities, An Experiment* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), 166–7.

49 Macartney, *National States*, 238–9.

50 George Sofronie, *Principiul naționalităților în tratatele de pace din 1919–1920*, ed. Constantin Schifirneț (Bucharest: Albatros, 1999), 168–9.

Between 31 May and 24 June several concessions had already been made concerning the treaty to be signed with Poland. For instance, the supreme arbiter of disputes on minority issues became the Council of the League of Nations, where decisions were taken unanimously and therefore any member had a veto right. This allowed a relatively easy blocking of potentially severe condemnations for treaty violation. New concessions were made in the fall when the Eastern European rebels—Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—had to be called to order and made to sign the Treaty with Austria and the Treaty of Minorities, which they had refused to sign in September 1919. Such concessions, in the Romanian case, involved the elimination of the so-called “Jewish clause” (Articles 10–11 of the “Polish treaty” on the Jewish committees and the Sabbath) and any reference to the Treaty of Berlin.⁵¹ In the quasi-official history of the Peace Conference, it was noted: “The attitude of the Rumanians on this point is not easy to understand. They seem to have regarded the whole system with such dislike that they repudiated any reference to it and they carried this attitude to such a degree that they would not accept even a formal discharge of their obligations; they preferred to act as they [these obligations] did not exist.”⁵² Nonetheless, a vaguely designed local autonomy for Germans and Hungarians in school and religious matters emerged.⁵³

In the fall of 1919, the state faced unprecedented pressures before Romania signed the Minority Treaty on 10 December. For instance, the ultimatum of the Peace Conference addressed to Romania on 15 November was the first poignant text to criticize the procrastination policy practiced by the Bucharest government and Romania’s attitude of trying to deal with the Great Powers from an equal position: “The Romanian Government has continued, for the last three and a half months, to negotiate with the Conference, from Power to Power, taking into consideration no other rights and interests than her own and refusing to accept the charges of solidarity although she wishes to enjoy the benefit of them.”⁵⁴ Romanians were asked to accept immediately the decisions of the Peace Conference concerning the military retreat from Hungary and the cessation of

51 V. V. Tilea, *Acțiunea diplomatică a României, nov. 1919–mart. 1920* (Sibiu: Tipografia Poporului, 1925), 31–2; and Carol Iancu, *Lupta internațională pentru emanciparea evreilor din România, Documente și mărturii*, vol. I (1913–1919) (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2004), 285–91.

52 Temperley, *Peace Conference*, V, 149.

53 David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris with documents*, Vol. XIII New States (Minorities) (New York: Appeal Printing Company, 1924), 267–88, 296–7, 551–62.

54 FRUS, PPC, IX, 183–4.

requisitioning, the signing of both the Treaty with Austria and the Treaty on Minority Protection. Romania had eight days to obey these orders, otherwise it would no longer be part of the Allies, it would be excluded by the Peace Conference. Moreover, the diplomatic missions of the Great Powers would be called back from Bucharest: “the Supreme Council of the Allies would see itself forced to sever relations with Rumania, but it is confident that it has been patient to the very last degree.”⁵⁵

The first reaction of the government led by General Arthur Văitoianu, who had been left in charge by the Liberal leader during September–November 1919, was to reject the conditions imposed by those in Paris. A firm reply was drafted and then forwarded to the Allied ministers in Bucharest on 29 November 1919, but the latter insisted that its sending to Paris had to be postponed and that the next cabinet was to be in charge of the reply.⁵⁶ During the same days, King Ferdinand addressed a letter to the French President, the King of Great Britain and King of Italy to protest the treatment received by the Romanian state at the Peace Conference and request the interventions of those heads of state to the governments of their countries.⁵⁷ The message of the Romanian sovereign stirred fury among the members of the Supreme Council, who were bothered by Ferdinand’s approach, which was not in accordance with the Romanian Constitution.⁵⁸ Ferdinand’s letter was not sent to the American President Woodrow Wilson. The letter would have been considered rude and an indication that the Romanians did not believe they could obtain anything else from the United States given the American delegates’ animosity towards Romania and the Congress’s failure to ratify the acts signed at the Paris Peace Conference. Ferdinand’s attempt to reach out for support was ultimately a failure.

The deadline indicated in the ultimatum of 15 November was subsequently extended several times, given the governmental crisis in Bucharest and the Bolshevik offensive in Ukraine, which reactivated the communist threat against Romania.⁵⁹ When it became clear that after elections Ionel Brătianu would no longer hold an official position in the new cabinet, Georges Clemenceau became less vehement against Bucharest.⁶⁰ At his insistence, seconded by the Italian representative in the Supreme

55 Ibid., 184.

56 DBFP, VI, 445–450; *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale*, V, 236–44; and DBFP, VI, 443–5.

57 *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale*, V, 246–7, 411–2.

58 FRUS, PPC, 1919, IX, 369–70.

59 Ibid., 354, 462.

60 *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale*, V, 305–6.

Council, the term for the Romanian state to accept the ultimatum was delayed.⁶¹ Furthermore, on 4 December the French Prime Minister met with Victor Antonescu, the Romanian plenipotentiary minister in Paris. At the meeting, Clemenceau claimed to be “a great friend of the Romanians” and pledged his support for the Romanian requests concerning modifications of the Minority Treaty.⁶²

On 6 December 1919, the Supreme Council was informed in the plenum that the Transylvanian politician Alexandru Vaida-Voevod would form the government and accept the conditions decided in Paris.⁶³ In fact, Vaida’s cabinet was constituted on 5 December. The new Prime Minister immediately sent a letter to Clemenceau to state his position: Vaida agreed to sign the Minority Treaty but emphasized that “we cannot suppress the hope that, in its wisdom, the Supreme Council will find the right way to admit some minor principle-based alterations, which are without prejudice to the treaty’s spirit or to the rights of minorities but have a decisive importance for the future safety of Romanian and its international relations.”⁶⁴

It is worth highlighting the convergence of opinions between Alexandru Vaida-Voevod and Ion I.C. Brătianu. Both believed that the draft of the Minority Treaty was incompatible with national sovereignty and thus required significant alterations.⁶⁵ By September, Vaida-Voevod had requested authority from Bucharest to negotiate the modifications to the Minority Treaty. His relationship with Ionel Brătianu was a very good one, but not the same can be stated about the subordinates of the Liberal leader in the French capital after Brătianu left Paris. Vaida noted in a letter to Iuliu Maniu, dated 17 September 1919: “I have to go back and forth with such small souls. They are accustomed, even “trained” for only the boss to have initiative; they are castrated of their individuality and cannot stand a man with balls. Luckily, their stupid and childish character matches their cowardice.”

Vaida characterized in severe terms the draft Minority Treaty:

The draft treaty in the matter of minorities contains—besides several infamies—a load of nonsense. [They] mention in several articles the ways of conducting naturalization. They give the Jews what they do not have and do not give them what they could, but they assure them of certain privileges, and no smart Jew knows where they might lead. The entire draft is made by the Jews for the Jews. You can also see

61 FRUS, PPC, 1919, IX, 459–62.

62 AMAE, Fond 71/1914, E2, second part, Paris, 1914–1924, vol. 3, 519.

63 FRUS, PPC, 1919, IX, 508.

64 AMAE, Fond 71/1914, E2, Part I, vol. 153, 122.

65 ANIC, Fond Vaida Voevod, d. 89, f. 2.

that because, while the Jewish issue is treated in detail, they talk about the Szeklers and Transylvanian Saxons for two lines and a half; the style of Article 12 that refers to them is downright gawky.⁶⁶

Following the reply from the new cabinet in Bucharest on 9 December, the Conference leaders held a final talk about the modifications to the Minority Treaty.⁶⁷ They concluded that the preamble would omit references to the independence of Romania and the 1878 Berlin Treaty. They would also add a sentence stating that the Treaty was drafted in agreement with Romania and eliminate Articles 10 and 11, which made special reference to Romanian Jews.⁶⁸ Consequently, on 10 December 1919, the Romanian delegate Gen. Constantin Coandă signed the Treaties with Austria and Bulgaria as well as the Treaty on Minority Protection. The American delegate Frank Polk made a last tactless gesture by signing the Minority Treaty on the previous day, 9 December; hence, he declined to share the table with the Romanian delegation.⁶⁹

Whereas the historians Macartney, Janowsky, and Viefhaus, who first wrote about the racial, linguistic and religious minority protection system at the Paris Peace Conference, argued that it was a victory for the Jewish lobby to the detriment of the Central and South-East European states, contemporary historians consider it a compromise, “a hybrid experiment, balancing the Anglo-American vision of protection against Jewish demands and Franco-Polish opposition.”⁷⁰ The Great Powers tried to limit the explosive potential of the minority issue by making the matter international. They also limited it by charging the League of Nations with the difficult task of transforming a couple of vague terms and certain unclear principles into international practice. Thus, in the words of a contemporary, “the League was treated as a living organism before it existed. All the problems which the Supreme Council found insoluble were reserved for

66 Ibid., d. 95, 15–7.

67 The changes were agreed on during a discussion between Philippe Berthelot and Victor Antonescu (DBFP, II, 412–3), while the Conference experts, except for the Americans, accepted them (Ibid., 422–4, 517–8). Iuliu Maniu also promised the British diplomats that Romania would sign the Minority Treaty (LNA, 1/S336).

68 FRUS, PPC, 1919, IX, 538–40.

69 Spector, *România și Conferința*, 275.

70 Fink, *Defending the Rights*, 264.

its judgement."⁷¹ Although the treaties had a common basis,⁷² there were also differences between them that were hard to explain: the Jewish Sabbath was protected in Poland but not in the other states. The Germans in Romania benefitted from a certain type of autonomy, but not those in Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia. The Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia had an autonomous region, but those in Poland did not.

Note how promptly the Great Powers abandoned their responsibility of minority protection in Romania. Only nine days after the treaty was signed, on 19 December 1919, a report of the Foreign Office showed that the Supreme Council no longer had to deal with the accusations Hungarians addressed to Romanians, stating that that was the task of the League of Nations!⁷³ In the fall of 1919, the Norwegian diplomat Eric Colban was in charge of the operationalization of the Section for minorities within the League (he would head that section for a decade) and was updated thoroughly on the evolution of the minority protection topic to the peace forum by the British diplomats Harold Nicolson and Allen Leeper.⁷⁴

From the Romanian perspective, Ion I. C. Brătianu regarded the protective system for minorities as a channel through which the Great Powers would have exerted economic, political and other types of pressures on Romania. We assume that the experience lived by his father at and after the 1878 Congress in Berlin regarding the intrusions of certain powers in the internal affairs of the Romanian state deeply marked Ionel Brătianu's thinking. What he experienced at the Paris Peace Conference confirmed his darkest fears.⁷⁵ Consequently, he did everything in his power to prevent Romania from signing the Minority Treaty: he had verbal disputes with Clemenceau, Wilson and Lloyd George; he mobilized the other leaders of small states; and, eventually, he opted to resign as prime-minister instead of putting his signature on the Minority Treaty. We do not

71 Dillon, *The Inside Story*, 485.

72 The Archives of the League of Nations contain a copy of the Minority Treaty signed by Poland on 28 June 1919 that was used as a rough draft Treaty that Romania had to sign; thus, the "Polish Treaty" was annotated for the draft of the "Romanian Treaty". LNA, 15/S350.

73 LNA, 1/S336.

74 LNA, 15/S350.

75 Here is the explanation for minority protection provided by Victor Antonescu, whom Brătianu dispatched to Bucharest to inform the government and the King: "The Allies promised the Jews to reconstruct Palestine. This was not possible since Palestine was inhabited mostly by Muslims. Then, the international Israelite alliance sought to force the Conference to create genuine States in States for the Jews. However, the global press met this claim with such indignation and protests that the current formula was established, namely warranties under the protection of the Big in favour of minorities." *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale*, III, 451.

doubt the strength of formal arguments—they were theoretically irrefutable—brought by I. I. C. Brătianu (the lack of minority protection system universality and the presence of legal discriminations between citizens of the same state)⁷⁶ or his justified anxieties about the potential threats of the Great Powers against the newly obtained national Romanian sovereignty.⁷⁷

To what extent did Brătianu's somber prediction became a reality in the subsequent fifteen to eighteen years when the minority protection system was in force? Today, we can firmly state that during the interwar period Romania had to endure economic and political pressure and interferences, but none of them was related to minority protection. The Great Powers did their best not to get involved in the minority system managed by the League of Nations because they knew the explosive potential of the matter with possible harmful consequences for their own multiethnic empires. In other words, Romania's previous experience entitled Ionel Brătianu to deliver a harsh judgement at the beginning of the implementation of the system of international minority rights, but subsequent events did not validate his fears.

Brătianu's replacement in Paris, the Transylvanian Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, preferred to sign the treaties and negotiate further, while the Liberal leader wanted to get as many concessions as possible before signing treaties that would block the work of the Peace Conference. Another difference between the two approaches concerned style: while Brătianu had harsh replies, talked from an equal position and used an implacable logic for a representative of a small power, Vaida-Voevod was unctuous, seemed submissive and built opportunities for compromises. Here is the last paragraph of the note sent to Paris, which announced that Romania would sign the Minority Treaty:

In the hard days of the World War, the conscience of being in alliance with the great nations that represented the ideals of civilization and freedom strengthened the Romanian people to endure full of hope the human and material losses, endless pain and inhumane persecutions of ruthless neighbors. The same way now, when the dawns of peace are bestowed upon us, the entire Romanian nation is enflamed by the desire to consolidate its relations with the Allied powers and thus to ensure a future worthy of a united and free nation, thus contributing through fruitful work to the achievement of the high peace and civilization ideals, alongside the Allied and associated powers.⁷⁸

76 Dillon, *The Inside Story*, 506–7.

77 *Desăvârșirea unității național-statale*, V, 362–4.

78 AMAE, Fond 71/1914, E2, first part, vol. 153, 123.

Between France and Romania, between Science and Propaganda. Emmanuel de Martonne in 1919

Gavin Bowd

Abstract: *In the aftermath of the Great War, the geographer Emmanuel de Martonne, who began his scientific work in Romania and was a vocal advocate of that country's intervention in the conflict, placed his knowledge and prestige at the service of redrawing the frontiers of what would become Greater Romania. This article looks at the role of de Martonne as traceur de frontières during the Paris Peace Conference, notably his manipulation of ethnic cartography. At the same time, as this partisan use of "science" shows, de Martonne is also a propagandist for the Romanian cause and post-war French influence. Thus, his confidential reports on the "lost provinces" of Transylvania, Banat, Bessarabia and Dobrogea must be seen in parallel with his published interventions and the place he occupies in a wider Franco-Romanian lobbying network. During the summer of 1919, de Martonne's participation in a French mission universitaire to Romania plays a diplomatic role at a delicate stage of the Paris negotiations. The fate of his scientific interventions is also subject to the vicissitudes of the war's aftermath and to the weight of lobbies hostile to Romanian territorial claims, notably on Hungary and Russia, two countries plunged into civil war.*

The geographer Emmanuel de Martonne, who had been a vocal supporter of Romanian intervention on the side of the Triple Entente and of the creation of a Greater Romania, was not in Europe at the time of the armistice: he was on a mission to the United States from September to December 1918. This mission allowed him to regain contact with his American friends and colleagues, notably Douglas Johnson, member of The Inquiry, the commission created in September 1917 by President Woodrow Wilson, and presided by Edward House, with the aim of gathering documentation for the future Peace Conference. During this sojourn, de Martonne and Johnson shared the studies already made by the *Comité d'études*, a think tank set up in February 1917 under the leadership of Charles Benoist, and The Inquiry. On his return to Paris, de Martonne provided the Quai d'Orsay with an analysis of the American studies. That said, de Martonne deplored the influence of Jewish and Germanophile circles, and especially that exerted by Walter Lipman, whom

House had named Secretary of The Inquiry. De Martonne was therefore delighted to see that from autumn 1918 onwards, the position of the American experts, like that of President Wilson, became favorable to the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹

From January 1919, the geographical expertise of de Martonne would be put to the test at the Paris Peace Conference, where territorial commissions had to study and propose new frontiers. Sub-commissions were created, bringing together scientific experts such as de Martonne for France or Isaiah Bowman and Douglas Johnson for the American delegation. De Martonne would intervene directly in the debates of the commission for Romanian and Yugoslavian frontiers or submit memoranda to the commission's president, André Tardieu.

On 19 January 1919, de Martonne wrote to George Vâlsan, a former pupil at the Sorbonne and future founder of the Institute of Geography at the new University of Cluj, who, at the time, was recovering from serious injuries sustained in a military train crash. In this letter, de Martonne described his mission to the United States and then the opening of the Peace Conference. He first explained to Vâlsan his success with the Americans:

Vous avez été cruellement éprouvé, mais vous devez maintenant jouir d'autant plus du triomphe de votre cause. Il ne peut maintenant subsister aucun doute sur le fait que la Roumanie sortira de cette crise telle que vous l'avez rêvée. Pendant ma récente mission aux Etats-Unis, qui avait pour but de nouer des relations avec le Comité House pour la préparation de la Paix, j'ai réussi à connaître tout ce qui avait été fait là-bas, et à documenter ces MM très mal informés en particulier des affaires roumaines. C'est à ce moment qu'a paru la note Lansing exprimant *pour la première fois* la sympathie des Etats Unis pour les revendications roumaines *inside and outside*! Je suis ici encore en relation avec les experts américains. Ils ont tous les rapports, cartes.

De Martonne then explained his own use of cartography to influence French diplomacy in favor of the Romanian cause:

Je puis être à même de donner un avis et j'ai déjà fourni à notre Ministre des Affaires Etrangères une série de rapports pour étudier sur les différentes revendications roumaines. J'ai réussi à établir une carte au 1 : 1 000 000 des pays roumains donnant la composition ethnique et la densité de la population, d'après un système nouveau; les données commune par commune en sont la base. En même temps j'ai une carte spéciale du % des Roumains à la même échelle. Tout cela devant paraître dans le volume projeté que je n'ai pu achever. Mais je suis à même maintenant de toucher les hommes directement responsables des solutions.

1 Archives of the Quai d'Orsay, La Courneuve (QO): A-Paix, vol. 220, Résumé des Etudes américaines du Comité de l'Inquiry du Colonel House par Emmanuel de Martonne, 16 December 1918.

At the same time, this French Romanophile expressed irritation at the excessive irredentist claims made by the Romanians in Paris: "Je voudrais seulement que vos compatriotes établis ici pour faire 'de la propagande' montrassent plus de mesure et moins d'ambition. Ils publient des brochures qui leur font plus de tort que de bien, et des cartes dont je suis obligé de dire qu'elles sont fausses."²

Indeed, success was by no means guaranteed for the Romanian delegation that arrived in Paris at the end of January. On 24 January, the Romanian Parliament had ratified all the meetings, including that of Bessarabia, which had pledged allegiance to a post-war Greater Romania. However, France had not immediately recognized the legitimacy of such assemblies, leaving the final decision to the Conference. Besides, Georges Clemenceau had a scarcely favorable attitude to the Romanians and let it be known that the Bucharest peace treaty of 7 May 1918 signed with the Central Powers left null and void the Allies' promises made to Romania in the treaty of 17 August 1916, so that she enter the war on their side. Romania's apparent support for the French intervention against the Bolsheviks in southern Russia unblocked, to a certain extent, the situation: Romania could be considered an ally, but the claimed provinces' automatic right to self-determination was still refused.

However, Emmanuel de Martonne's expertise on the possible frontiers of Romania was supported by an important lobby. At the Conference, he felt at home in diplomatic and military circles. Emmanuelle Boulineau writes: "Grâce à sa personnalité, sa connaissance de dossiers et son insertion dans des réseaux de pouvoir, Emmanuel de Martonne apparaît comme un homme d'appareil, davantage conseiller qu'expert. Ses conseils ont ainsi été suivis lorsque la délégation française était en mesure d'imposer ses choix face aux Alliés."³ Emmanuel de Martonne's actions were two-fold. On the one hand, he led a team, which replaced the wartime *Comité d'études*, whose function was to provide, sometimes at only a few hours' notice, information requested by the French delegation at the Conference, in particular precise calculations on the populations to be found between such and such a possible frontier. On the other hand, de Martonne was invited to participate directly in the work of the Territorial Commission devoted to Yugoslavian and Romanian affairs, presided by Tardieu. He personally took part in the sessions of 7 March (to establish a demarcation line between the Romanian and Hun-

2 Archives of Academia Română, Bucharest (AR): S6 (2) LXXXII.

3 Emmanuelle Boulineau, "Un géographe traceur de frontières: Emmanuel de Martonne et la Roumanie," *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 4 (2001): 367–368.

garian troops), 18 March (the Romanian frontier of Transylvania), 25 March (on the Jews of Romania and the railway line in Upper Tisza), 29 March (on frontiers of Romania and the protection of minorities), 3 April (on the frontiers of Romania) and 20 May (on Banat).

In his four long studies of the provinces claimed by Romania, explains Boulineau, the region, in line with his late mentor and father-in-law Paul Vidal de la Blache, was at the centre of his approach:

Emmanuel de Martonne ne parle pas ici en géomorphologue attaché aux arguments de la géographie physique pour tracer des frontières dites naturelles. Il sous-tend son discours d'une argumentation fondée sur les identités régionales, les solidarités économiques et les intérêts stratégiques. Le géographe déploie une pensée de la région comme individualité spatiale organisée et non une réflexion sur ses limites. Il raisonne ici sur ce qui fait l'unité d'un territoire et non sur la frontière qui le sépare d'autres entités régionales. Sa présentation des quatre provinces roumaines est déjà une première forme de régionalisation qui les extrait de la gangue territoriale des empires.⁴

To support his arguments, de Martonne used cartography. In his memoirs of the Peace Conference, Isaiah Bowman wrote that each of the Central European nationalities had their own statistical and cartographical box of tricks. If statistics failed, a bright colored map could save a sinking territorial argument.⁵ De Martonne joined this struggle, putting cartographical language at the service of the Romanian cause. Taline Ter Minassian emphasizes the effectiveness of this approach:

S'il n'est pas sûr que les rapports rédigés par Emmanuel de Martonne aient été lus avec une grande attention par les « décideurs », les cartes jouent en revanche un rôle bien réel lors des négociations de paix. L'effet quasi-hypnotique des cartes et de leurs taches de couleur donnait sans doute aux négociateurs l'illusion d'une appréciation immédiate de la situation, une illusion qui présida peut-être au tracé des frontières balkaniques de 1919.⁶

The very title of de Martonne's colour map, "La répartition des nationalités dans les pays où dominant les Roumains," published in 1919 by the *Service Géographique de l'Armée*, was far from neutral. His use of the color red to represent the Romanian population made the departments where Romanians dominated stand out to the viewer. What's more, his map eliminated minorities of less than 25 per cent in any department

4 Ibid., 363.

5 Isaiah Bowman, "Constantinople and the Balkans," in *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918–1919*, by Edward M. House and Charles Seymour (New York: Scribner, 1921), 142.

6 Taline Ter Minassian, "Les géographes français et la délimitation des frontières balkaniques à la Conférence de la Paix en 1919," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. 44 (1997): 254–55.

and colored the department according to the rural majority. Urban nationalities were represented by segmented circles of reduced size. As Gilles Palsky has pointed out, this made the rural element of a region's population the decisive factor in the identification of the ethnicity of a territory. An entire region such as Transylvania would be classed as Romanian territory despite the essentially Magyar urban areas.⁷ This cartographical approach tended to favor the more backward and agricultural regions where, it was felt, there was a greater harmony between land and people. Thus, Vidalian regional geography and sympathy for the Romanian peasant walked hand in hand. In his reports, de Martonne would insist upon the continuity, complementarity and interdependence of the "*pays roumains*."

The Frenchman's map therefore contrasted sharply with that of his Hungarian rival, Count Pal Teleki. In his map, Teleki also gave Hungarians the color red, with the psychological advantages it brought. But unlike de Martonne, Teleki did not represent nationalities beyond the Hungarian frontiers, thus precluding the possibility of new divisions of the territory. His map portrayed more an inextricable ethnic mixture, a Hungarian presence on the totality of the territory, and an impenetrable barrier, the Carpathians, traced by nature itself.⁸

During this period, the influence of the pro-Romanian lobby, as well as that of its geographical expert, came up against considerable obstacles. For the British (which, despite the Great War, still had pro-Hungarian sympathies), even the red terror spread by the ephemeral communist regime of Bela Kun did not seem to convince David Lloyd George of the essential place of Romania in the post-war settlement. According to French diplomatic documents, on 27 March, the British prime minister had declared to Allied leaders: "On a parlé de supprimer la révolution en Hongrie. Je ne vois pas pourquoi nous le ferions: il y a peu de pays qui aient autant besoin d'une révolution."⁹ Elsewhere he asked where on earth this much-demanded Transylvania was.¹⁰ In his memoirs, Charles Benoist evoked thus the "*étonnements géographiques*" of Lloyd George:

7 Gilles Palsky, "Emmanuel de Martonne and the Ethnographical Cartography of Central Europe (1917–1920)," *Imago Mundi*, vol. 54 (2002): 115.

8 Zoltan Krasznai, "Géographie scientifique, enseignement et propagande. Les représentations du territoire national en Hongrie à l'époque de l'entre-deux-guerres," PhD thesis, ELTE Budapest-EHESS, Paris, 2010.

9 QO: PA-AP 166 Tardieu, Carton 378.

10 Quoted in Anne-Marie Cassoly, "Les frontières de la Grande Roumanie: approche géopolitique," *Revue roumaine d'Histoire*, 35, nos. 1–2 (1996): 75.

Jean Bratiano lui-même m'a conté cette scène: "Enfin ! s'était écrié M. Lloyd George, depuis le temps qu'on parle de ce fameux Banat, je voudrais bien qu'une bonne fois on m'expliquât ce que c'est." M. Bratiano crut d'abord à une plaisanterie, à cause précisément du temps depuis lequel on en parlait. Mais, voyant le sérieux de son interrogateur, il se décida à exposer l'affaire, du point de vue roumain, le plus brièvement possible. Avec la gravité d'un homme résolu à tout savoir, M. Lloyd George prit sa tête dans sa main, tendit l'oreille, plissa le front, darda ses yeux bleus. Au bout de cinq minutes, toute cette attention s'était dissipée. M. Bratiano s'aperçut que l'illustre Premier ne l'écoutait plus; il eut même l'impression désagréable de l'avoir endormi.¹¹

Foreign Office documents show a strong pro-Hungarian current. The *Handbook* produced by its historical section remarked that Transylvania was at present free of conflict and religious intolerance. The authors were therefore hostile to Ardeal being attached to Greater Romania. This concern for the fate of minorities also colored the Foreign Office's judgment on the issue of Banat.¹² That said, among the British, the Romanian cause enjoyed the support of Robert W. Seton-Watson, Henry Wickham Steed and Frank Rattigan. On 21 April, Rattigan wrote to Lord Curzon: "It should not be lost sight of that this country is at present the only real bulwark against the infection of Bolshevism in South East Europe and if she is allowed to be engulfed, it is difficult to say where the mischief may stop."¹³ On 13 August, after a week in Transylvania, Rattigan expressed cautious optimism on the Romanian future of this province: "I incline to the belief that if Mr [Iuliu] Maniu is accorded proper support they may succeed in time in reconciling the different foreign elements."¹⁴

The Americans were also concerned about Romanian treatment of minorities, and especially that of the Jews, given the large community that had been forced to cross the Atlantic over the past century. Such "interference" offended the representatives of Romania, as well as those of Yugoslavia and Poland. However, The Inquiry, with which de Martonne had forged important links during his sojourns in the United States (Edward House had requested his help in gathering documents concerning Transylvania¹⁵), made recommendations for an enlarged Romania which were close to those made by the French. In addition to the principle of self-determination, Secretary of State Robert Lansing sought to dismember Austria-Hungary in order to weaken Germany.

11 *Souvenirs de Charles Benoist*, Vol. 3, 1902–1933 (Paris: Plon, 1934), 335.

12 National Archives, Kew (NA): FO 373/1/8.

13 NA: FO 608/49.

14 NA: FO 608/55/5.

15 Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *România și Ungaria de la Trianon la Paris 1920–1947* (Bucharest: Editura Viitorul Românesc, 1996).

Beyond diplomatic and specialist circles, doomed propaganda campaigns were waged. In Paris, the Ukrainian Press Bureau had published by the *Imprimerie Slave* statistics concerning Galicia and Bucovina. The Central National Council for Dobrogea-Babadag claimed that the armistice concluded with Bulgaria preceded the abrogation of the last Treaty of Bucharest: Greater Romania could therefore not help herself to the Quadrilateral. Even a rare French voice spoke out in Hungary's defence. In *La revue politique internationale*, Guy de Roquencourt declared: "S'il existe une région de la Hongrie qui ait une vieille histoire, qui présente le cachet, la patine archaïque, appelant le passé, les siècles de vie nationale, les gloires d'antan, tout ce que les nationalités vénèrent, les souvenirs qui constituent le fond de leur conscience nationale, c'est bien la Transylvanie."¹⁶ De Roquencourt appropriated an image, that of rampart of Western civilization, often used by the supporters of Greater Romania:

La Transylvanie (...), c'est la Hongrie d'antan, telle qu'elle serait restée tout entière si elle n'avait pas été, pendant des siècles, le champ de bataille, le théâtre des guerres où le vieil Occident se heurtait contre l'Asie envahissante. Sa nature de bastion imprenable l'a préservée des frénétiques destructions dont la grande Hongrie a été la victime.¹⁷

During these turbulent months, de Martonne proposed frontiers favorable to Romania. In February 1919, on the subject of the Transylvanian frontier, he wrote to Tardieu:

La statistique hongroise exagère le nombre des Hongrois. (...) Dans les villes, il faut compter avec la présence de vrais Hongrois, mais artificiellement introduits (fonctionnaires, leur clientèle commerçante), une population en quelque sorte flottante, qui disparaîtrait avec attribution du pays à une autre puissance. (...) La limite des Roumains dominants peut être plus à l'ouest que la carte ne l'indique. Telle ville à majorité peut en réalité devenir presque immédiatement après l'attribution de la Roumanie, une ville roumaine.

In a second note on the new frontier proposed by the French delegation, he critically examined the following criteria: to follow the limit of compact settlements; not to cut towns from their suburbs; and to leave to Transylvania the outlets of the valleys descending from the mountains into the plain, with a railway linking them so that valleys would not be obliged to pass through Hungarian territory in order to communicate with one another. In light of the facts, de Martonne proposed "un com-

16 Guy de Roquencourt, *La Question de Transylvanie* (Lausanne: La Revue politique internationale, 1919), 3.

17 Ibid., 4.

promis qui satisfait aussi exactement que possible aux exigences de ceux qui considèrent surtout la répartition des nationalités, en même temps qu'à celles des économistes."¹⁸ The French geographer's argument convinced the commission.

Another contentious issue was that of Banat, claimed by both the Romanians and the Serbs and containing a strong German minority. According to the well-worn cliché, the Romanians have only two friends: the Black Sea and the Serbs. But at the end of the Great War, Serbia had the sympathy of the Allies, for the suffering she had endured and for its heroic resistance from the very start of the conflict. At the same time, Romania was tainted by the separate peace it had signed in spring 1918. According to the secret treaty of 1916, the whole of Banat was to be handed over to a victorious Romania, but at the end of the conflict it was the Serbs who occupied this territory. Moreover, Belgrade made a strategic argument: if all of Banat were to be given to Romania, the Serb capital would become an easy target for invasion. Ion I. C. Brătianu held on rigidly to his position, refusing to give a centimetre to the Serbs. In this conflict, the Romanian cause also came up against the expertise of another eminent geomorphologist, the Serb Jovan Cvijić.

In his report to the Conference, de Martonne took the rare step of distancing himself from the Romanian delegation's recalcitrance. He wrote: "La question du Banat est trop brûlante et trop compliquée pour qu'on puisse espérer en trouver une solution parfaite, du moins est-il désirable d'éviter tout ce qui pourrait créer dans l'avenir des possibilités de mésintelligence entre la Roumanie et le nouvel Etat yougoslave." For the Frenchman, the ethnographic map revealed in Banat a veritable "*manteau d'Arlequin*" of nationalities, rendering difficult, and near-impossible, a satisfactory application of the principle of nationalities. Granted, he used the notion of the region to argue for a tendency of Banat to gravitate towards Romania.¹⁹ But using his map, and drawing attention to the viability of railway communications, De Martonne also proposed a redrawing of the frontier that returned to Belgrade the towns of Weiskirchen et Verchetz. After discussion, it was concluded that De Martonne's proposed frontier was the fairest from the ethnic point of view. According to Boulineau, "l'influence d'Emmanuel de Martonne dans l'adoption d'une portion de la frontière ne fait ici pas de

18 QO: PA-AP 166 Tardieu, Carton 378.

19 See Emmanuelle Boulineau, "Fronts et frontières dans les Balkans: les géographes et les enjeux frontaliers sur le Danube en 1919-1920," *Balkanologie*, 10, nos. 1-2 (2008), available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/396> (accessed on 26 March 2019).

doute.”²⁰ But the diplomatic and political circumstances should not be lost sight of: the compromise solution was found partly thanks to the mediation of the Romanian politician Take Ionescu (representing the Conservative Party, not Brătianu’s Liberals): Romania realized that she did not need yet another enemy in Serbia.²¹

Diplomatic issues also took precedence over geographical arguments concerning Dobrogea. In his report of 6 May, de Martonne had pleaded in favor of Romania. For him, ethnic statistics as well as economic and strategic factors justified Romanian claims. But on 6 April 1919, the Allies rejected Bulgarian claims for the following reason: “la commission estime qu’il ne lui appartient pas de proposer ni de recommander une modification de frontière qui entraînerait la cession à un Etat ennemi d’un territoire faisant en droit partie intégrante d’un Etat Allié.”²²

On 6 April, Alexandru Lapedatu, member of the Romanian delegation in Paris, described to Nicolae Iorga the ongoing wrangling over the frontiers of post-war Romania:

Avant-hier, M. de Martonne, qui a été, de fait le référent de la Commission m’a appelé avec M. Mrazec pour nous annoncer les résultats, les décisions sur la base desquelles la Commission va présenter son rapport cette semaine à la Délégation des Quatre. Voilà ces décisions: la Bessarabie entière, la Bucovine également, à l’exception de la partie montagneuse du nord-ouest, inhabitée (...) la Transylvanie, au-delà de Satmar, Carei, Oradea, Arad et Nădlac. La ligne ferroviaire qui relie ces villes, avec une zone suffisante de couverture vers l’Ouest, reste sous notre autorité. (...) En ce qui concerne le Banat, les choses restent plus mauvaises.²³

A fortnight later, Iorga noted in his diary:

Ce soir j’ai trouvé, avec les livres envoyés de Paris (ah, comme notre propagande est ridicule ...), une lettre de Lapedatu, maltraité et ignoré par Misu, mais ramené à la surface par Brătianu, pour qui il professe beaucoup de considération. Il attribue un grand rôle à la conférence à Tardieu, conseillé par de Martonne.²⁴

At the same time, Vâlsan offered de Martonne encouraging words. Certainly, the Romanian intellectuals were not unanimous in their support for the French efforts:

20 Boulineau, “Un géographe traceur de frontières: Emmanuel de Martonne et la Roumanie,” 367.

21 Elena Istrătescu, “Despre Banat la Conferința de Pace de la Paris,” *Magazin istoric*, 35, no. 12 (2001): 12.

22 QO: Conférence de la Paix, Recueil des actes, vol. 53, annexe I.

23 *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*, vol. 6 (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 2002), 60–61.

24 Nicolae Iorga, *Memorii. Însemnări zilnice (mai 1917–martie 1920) Războiul național. Lupta pentru o nouă viață politică*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Națională S. Giornei, 1930), 192.

Je ne sais pas si c'est un effet de la maladie, mais je vois trop de nullités autour de moi et dans presque toutes les situations importantes. Ce sont elles qui remplissent les journaux de leur bavardage incohérent. Ce sont elles qui introduisent la propagande politique aux villages. Ce sont elles qui nous distribuent d'une manière scandaleuse les vivres. Ce sont elles qui s'éparpillent sur tout l'Occident et donnent des informations fausses et en faisant des bêtises comme celles des « intellectuels » qui ont protesté — je l'ai appris avec stupeur — contre votre action pour nous à Paris. Ce sont les derniers vestiges de la couche fanariote ou fanariotisée. Ces hommes ne comprennent, même quand ils ont de bonnes intentions, ni les aspirations de ce peuple, ni son génie, qui implique une large part de discrétion et de sagesse. Si la guerre, mal préparée par eux, a été portée par le peuple roumain, nous avons eu le malheur d'être représenté toujours par eux à la conclusion de la paix.

That said, there were also, he argued, very honorable men, although their political and therefore diplomatic influence remained limited:

Il y a pourtant ici des hommes très honorables, qui ont le sens exact de la situation, mais dont l'action a encore une faible portée pratique. Ce sont eux qui ont apprécié avec reconnaissance votre travail et à propos de cela je vous envoie un article sur vous par M. Simionescu dans un des plus populaires journaux de Roumanie. On vous aime ici et tout ce qui se rapporte à vous ne nous est pas indifférent. (...) Nous avons été consternés. Peut-être vous aurez un peu de joie en pensant au dévouement que vous portent vos élèves — et ici vous avez comme élèves tous les jeunes étudiants de géographie de Roumanie — qui vous considèrent comme le plus grand géographe de la France.²⁵

Vâlsan's references to hostile and favorable articles in the press showed the keen interest in the negotiations in Paris. De Martonne did not limit himself to providing maps and reports for André Tardieu and the territorial commissions. As in 1915, when he had argued for a Romanian intervention in the conflict, de Martonne was also a public intellectual, placing his knowledge and prestige at the service of the Greater Romanian cause. Hence, in May 1919, he contributed to a series of lectures on Romania at the *Union française*, alongside the historian Georges Lacour-Gayet, the poet Jean Richepin, the Byzantine specialist Charles Diehl and the banker Raphael-Georges Lévy. In "La Terre roumaine avec projections," de Martonne declared:

Si, comme c'est justice, la terre roumaine devient la grande Roumanie, ce sera un Etat bien équilibré, avec des plaines à céréales, de larges ressources forestières, des éléments de vie industrielle, une population saine et croissant rapidement. Des liens de sympathie, scellés dans le sang de la guerre, en feront pour la France une alliée sûre.²⁶

The five lectures were subsequently published in a pamphlet.

25 AR: S 19. LXXXI.

26 *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 16 May 1919, 2.

Such public interventions came at a delicate time. Negotiations still met considerable obstacles. In June, Ion Brătianu was angered by the Allied demand for guarantees to the Jewish minority, the sharing of Banat with the Serbs and the Romanian-Hungarian frontier being prepared by the Allies. He walked out of the Conference. At the beginning of that month, de Martonne was part of a *Mission Universitaire Française*, which also included Lucien Poincaré and Charles Diehl. According to the Quai d'Orsay, this mission had a dual function, both academic and economic. First, "il s'agit, à l'occasion de la réforme des oeuvres d'enseignement en Roumanie, de préparer la pénétration de notre personnel et de nos méthodes dans l'organisation et l'instruction publique de ce pays," and second, "du développement des richesses de la Roumanie — participation directe et aussi étendue que possible de la France à leur utilisation — augmentation de nos achats (céréales, bois, pétrole, etc. ...) (...) industrialisation de la Roumanie (...) exploitation du marché roumain comme débouché pour notre production industrielle accrue — accroissement de nos ventes."²⁷

No doubt it was also a mission aiming at conciliation with the Romanian government. On 9 June, the French delegation was received by the Senate. Iorga wrote acerbically in his diary about the quality of the Romanians in the audience, either too Germanophile or too servile to the French.²⁸ That said, two days later, the French ambassador Saint-Aulaire reported back to Paris:

Notre Mission Universitaire reçoit ici le plus chaleureux accueil. J'adresse au département le compte rendu des manifestations enthousiastes dont elle est l'objet. Ces manifestations ne font pas perdre de vue la tâche pratique de la mission. Elles la facilitent au contraire en créant une atmosphère très favorable autour des discussions avec les délégués roumains.

In his toast, the Prime Minister "a rapproché, non sans amertume, les sacrifices passés et présents de la Roumanie, des déconvenues qu'elle éprouve actuellement, mais il ajoute que cette aventure ne peut, en aucun cas, viser la France qui, par tous moyens en son pouvoir, remplit aujourd'hui, comme toujours son rôle de protectrice naturelle de la Roumanie."²⁹ A convention was signed on academic exchanges between the two countries.

After addressing the Senate on the proposed new frontier for Romania, de Martonne left for Bessarabia, his first visit to this "lost prov-

27 QO: Série Z Europe, carton 142, note on 16 May 1919.

28 Iorga, *Memorii*, 212–13.

29 QO: Série Z Europe, carton 142.

ince." As with the other provinces, Romania's rights did not enjoy unanimous support. Granted, the *Imprimerie Général Lahure* published in 1919, with the support of the Romanian Legation, three texts by Ion G. Pelivan, delegate of the Central Committee of the Peasant Party of Bessarabia and former deputy of the Sfatul Țării.³⁰ But even the British diplomat Frank Rattigan, despite his sympathy for Romanian claims on Transylvania, felt obliged to criticise them over Bessarabia. In a report to the Foreign Office, he declared that Russia had no claim on Bessarabia but went on to criticise the Romanian occupying forces: "they have lost the sympathy of the population through bad administration, the imposition of the Roumanian language and the general oppression of Russian elements."³¹ According to another memorandum, any union of Bessarabia with Romania had to be based on "ethnic principle not military conquest."³²

Of course, the fiercest opposition came from the *Comité pour la libération de la Bessarabie*, led by A. N. Krupenskii and A. C. Schmidt. For them, the decisions of the Sfatul Țării had been voted under the threat of Romanian bayonets and machine guns. They invoked Wilsonian principles to assert that the historical, economic and political rights of Russia could not allow them to consent to the arbitrary annexation of Bessarabia by Romania. This small group of White Russians still counted on the defeat of Bolshevism to stop Romanian expansion.

After his mission to Bessarabia, de Martonne passed back through Bucharest. On 2 July, George Vâlsan wrote to the art historian George Oprescu:

De Martonne a été trois fois chez moi. Nous avons parlé de beaucoup de choses. Bien entendu il a été le mieux informé sur nous à la Conférence de la Paix. Mais en venant dans le pays il a trouvé beaucoup de choses nouvelles qu'il regrette vivement que nous n'ayons pas fait connaître avant. Tu peux imaginer combien il regrette la façon dont la paix a été conclue. Son voyage en Bessarabie l'a beaucoup impressionné.³³

Back in Paris, de Martonne presented a "Note sur la Bessarabie," where he explained the good grounds for the Sfatul Țării's vote for union with Romania in March 1918 and rejected the proposal for a plebiscite on the province's future:

30 La Bessarabie sous le régime russe (1842–1918), L'Union de la Bessarabie à la Mère-Patrie — La Roumanie, Le mouvement et l'accroissement de la population en Bessarabie de 1812 à 1918.

31 NA: FO 608/30.

32 Ibid.

33 AR: S12 (1–46)/LXXXI.

De toutes les provinces qui composent le domaine historique de la Roumanie, la Bessarabie est une des plus nettement roumaine (...) M. de Martonne, l'éminent professeur, vient précisément d'y passer 15 jours, parcourant tout le pays, s'entretenant dans leur langue avec les paysans. Il a pu constater que les études qu'il avait précédemment faites sur le caractère roumain de la Bessarabie, sont plus que confirmées par cette enquête. L'immense majorité du pays est habitée par les paysans moldaves qui parlent le plus pur roumain (...) Les hautes classes seules sont russifiées (...) L'immense majorité des paysans moldaves sait qu'elle est moldave, mais ne comprend pas qu'elle est roumaine, parce qu'étant illettrée, elle ignore la valeur nationale de sa langue (95% d'illettrés). (...) Les paysans moldaves de Bessarabie prendront conscience de leur nationalité, comme leurs frères des autres pays roumains, quand ils seront instruits. Leur ignorance actuelle ne peut être un motif de les river à une puissance étrangère, qui les a volontairement plongés dans l'ignorance pour les dominer. Dans ces conditions, un plébiscite serait une manifestation sans portée (...) L'annexion intégrale de la Bessarabie est conforme à la justice ethnique, à l'histoire et à la géographie. Elle est en outre imposée par l'intérêt des populations.³⁴

On 11 July, the Romanian minister to Paris, Victor Antonescu, informed Ion I. C. Brătianu by telegram of their French friend's opinions and requests, which point to an American Jewish lobby pressuring Secretary of State Lansing to oppose Bessarabia's attachment to Greater Romania:

Martonne m'a communiqué ce matin que les Russes font propagande ... auprès des personnalités conférence contre rattachement Bessarabie à la Roumanie. Ils font conférences dans la maison particulière où ils convoquent des personnalités monde politique diplomatique. Ils ont fait venir un certain paysan roumain de Bessarabie dont j'ignore le nom et qui parle contre l'oligarchie roumaine ... en Bessarabie mouvement pour ... certains juifs allemands sont apparemment à la tête du mouvement. ... Croit en réalité auteurs campagne sont les Juifs d'Amérique qui leur donnent fonds et aide ... influence ... Lansing ... contre rattachement Bessarabie. Martonne se plaint d'avoir pas carte ber. (bonne carte?) au sujet de la Bessarabie on lui a remis carte docteur Meruțiu mais il voudrait carte Major ... sur territoires habités Hongrie qui est mieux faite. Il désire aussi plusieurs exemplaires carte Brătulescu sur Dobroudja ... et plusieurs exemplaires de ces cartes Légation pour distribution membres.

The following day, Antonescu communicated to Bucharest:

Ai vu ce matin [Jules] Laroche et Tardieu. Laroche m'a montré conclusion long rapport fait par lui aux délégués Grandes Puissances au sujet Bessarabie, sur données fournies par Martonne qui vient rentrer de son voyage en Bessarabie. Dans ses conclusions il dit: Il n'y a pas de partie roumaine de la Bessarabie, qu'il n'y a qu'une Bessarabie qui est tout à fait roumaine et fait partie intégrante de la Moldavie, dont les limites naturelles sont au Dniester.

There was, therefore, some good news: "Tardieu se réjouit du départ de Lansing (...) Albert Thomas a écrit dans *L'Information* un très bel article soutient le point de vue roumain sur la question des minorités (...) De

34 QO: PA-AP 166 Tardieu, Carton 378.

Martonne vient d'accorder à *L'Œuvre* et au *Journal des Débats* deux interviews au sujet de la Bessarabie très favorables à la Roumanie."³⁵ In fact, these articles, which appeared on 15 and 19 July, would be combined in a pamphlet, *Un témoignage français sur la situation en Bessarabie*, in order to allow the French public to properly judge the tendentious news allegedly flooding the press.

In "La Vérité sur la Bessarabie," de Martonne asserted that he had spoken Romanian in almost all the villages he had passed through, even in the Bulgarian colonies of the south. Hence, his astonishment at the anti-Romanian propaganda swallowed whole by the French press:

Il me faut réfléchir à la distance qui sépare le Dniester de la Seine, aux lenteurs du soi-disant Express-Orient, qui a mis cinq jours à me ramener de Bucarest à Paris, à celle des télégrammes qui franchissent la même distance en trois semaines pour comprendre comment peuvent circuler ici des idées et des bruits pareils. (...) Tous ont été touchés par la propagande organisée à Paris par un comité de Bessarabiens russophiles.³⁶

This is what he claimed to have seen while driven by car throughout Bessarabia:

Un pays merveilleusement riche, où les moissons ondulent à perte de vue, promettant une récolte magnifique, où la sécurité est parfaite, aussi bien dans les villes, où je suis plus d'une fois arrivé la nuit, que dans les campagnes où j'ai vu femmes et enfants travailler à plusieurs kilomètres du village.³⁷

He had seen no traces of Romanian atrocities, discontent or social trouble. According to de Martonne, the anti-Romanian current was not deep-rooted and the Romanophile current was growing by the day: "Il y a longtemps qu'il se serait manifesté si la Russie n'avait élevé sur le Prut une barrière infranchissable. Mon impression est qu'il doit finir par emporter la masse de la population, si on laisse l'évolution naturelle des choses suivre son cours"³⁸ In the sequel, "En Bessarabie," de Martonne asserted that he had not met a single Bolshevik. He had been shown a forest burned down by the Bolsheviks and a few pillaged properties, but he had seen more than one intact residence. De Martonne recognised the existence of German and Bulgarian colonies, but these inhabitants, he concluded, were favourable to those who ensured order and guaranteed their land rights. The towns of the centre and north, Bender, Chişinău,

35 Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest (MAS): 71/1914 Vol. 58.

36 De Martonne, *Un témoignage français sur la situation en Bessarabie* (Paris: M. Dubois et Bauer, 1919), 5–6.

37 Ibid. 6.

38 Ibid. 8.

Soroca, and Bălți, were cosmopolitan centres where the Jewish element was generally preponderant. But there was no sign of systematic Jewish hostility to the Romanian government: "J'ai été salué à Soroca par une délégation où j'ai photographié côte à côte les notables juifs et les prêtres orthodoxes en grand costume."³⁹ For the French visitor, Bessarabia distinguished itself clearly from Transylvania through the fact that it had been kept untouched by the national renaissance movement in the latter province. For de Martonne, the future belonged to a core of consciously Romanian intellectuals who spoke in the name of the great majority of the population, expressing the confused aspirations of a still amorphous peasant mass. He concluded:

Les réquisitions pour les troupes roumaines ont pu mécontenter tel village ou telle ville. Les esprits peuvent être encore troublés malgré le calme apparent du pays. Il n'en est pas moins vrai que l'assimilation de la Bessarabie à la Roumanie s'accomplit lentement par une évolution naturelle. Il faudrait une secousse brutale pour l'arrêter. Un retour en arrière serait-il possible? Serait-il désirable? Je doute qu'un observateur impartial, même sympathique à la Russie, puisse répondre affirmativement.⁴⁰

The eminent scholar's public intervention seemed to have been a success. On 29 July, Lapedatu wrote to Iorga in an optimistic and combative tone:

Nous pouvons être certains que la résolution va nous être favorable. Comme vous le savez, les Français sont tous pour nous. Par ses articles et ses conversations, M. de Martonne a dissipé les dernières hésitations de ses compatriotes à la Conférence. Clemenceau lui-même — je le sais de deux sources sûres — a cette fois pris notre parti. Le professeur Johnson, représentant de l'Amérique à la commission territoriale roumaine, est également pour nous.⁴¹

As Svetlana Suveica has shown, de Martonne was fighting a propaganda battle over the future frontiers of Bessarabia.⁴² When another text by the geographer, "Choses vues en Bessarabie," was published in the *Revue de Paris* on 1 October 1919, A. N. Krupenskii wrote an indignant letter that accused de Martonne of betraying his scientific vocation: "il formule des appréciations politiques fort éloignées du domaine de la géographie."⁴³ Naïve and ignorant, the French guest to Bessarabia had been manipul-

39 Ibid., 12.

40 Ibid. 14.

41 *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*, 125–26.

42 Svetlana Suveica, "Between science, politics and propaganda. Emmanuel de Martonne and the Debates on the Status of Bessarabia (1919–1920)," *Cahiers du monde russe*, no. 4 (2017): 589–614.

43 *Revue de Paris*, 15 December 1919, 885.

ed by his Romanian and Bolshevik hosts: "M. de Martonne n'a pas fait oeuvre de savant impartial, mais oeuvre d'ami, d'ami très dévoué, des Roumains."⁴⁴ In his reply to Krupenskii, whom he described as a Russian landowner nostalgic for tsarist absolutism, de Martonne wrote: "Mon impression reste (...) que la réassimilation de ce pays moldave est un phénomène naturel. Après dix ans nous saurons si je me suis trompé."⁴⁵

But natural justice or evolution apart, the arguments of Emmanuel de Martonne, A. N. Krupenskii and others weighed little next to diplomatic and military imperatives. The territorial commission was relieved of the Bessarabian dossier, as the Council of Foreign Ministers suspended the attribution of the province for so long as the Russian question was not settled. The situation in Hungary also complicated the Paris negotiations. The Bolshevik revolution in Budapest created the risk of a convergence of Red troops from Hungary and the Soviet Union: Clemenceau took advantage of this to place the Romanian army under the command of General Franchet d'Espèrey. In order to reassure the Romanians, he approved their troops' advance into the totality of Transylvania and the Crişana region, while still not officially recognising the annexation of these provinces or approving an occupation of Budapest. The Hungarian offensive against Czechoslovakia in May 1919 led to the Allies' threatening Budapest with occupation, which Marshal Foch encouraged the Romanians to carry out. This occupation precipitated the fall and flight of Bela Kun, which reinforced Romanian optimism. On 4 August, Antonescu informed Bucharest: "Les grands journaux français de ce matin s'occupent de la chute de Bela Kun et l'attribuent unanimement à l'avance victorieuse sur Budapest de l'armée roumaine. (...) La presse française est unanime en éloges pour l'entrée à Budapest et reconnaît le grand service rendu par la Roumanie aux Alliés et à la civilisation."⁴⁶

However, the press began to publish stories on the Romanian army, which pillaged and brutalised Hungary. Also on 4 August, Georges Clemenceau, president of the Supreme Council, addressed a telegram to the Romanian government:

La Conférence ne dissimule pas au Gouvernement roumain la grande inquiétude qu'elle éprouve à la pensée qu'un incident fâcheux pourrait à Budapest ou à tout autre endroit de la Hongrie compromettre le succès de l'armée roumaine. Tout incident de ce genre pourrait annihiler la perspective d'une paix rapide dans l'Europe centrale, infliger aux populations des souffrances infinies et retarder indéfiniment l'espoir de sa reconstitution économique.

44 Ibid., 890.

45 Ibid., 894.

46 MAS : 71/1914 Vol. 58.

Ten days later, the Supreme Council insisted “sur le fait qu’aucune reprise définitive de matériel de guerre, de chemins de fer, d’agriculture, ni de bétail, etc, ne peut avoir lieu actuellement.” On 25 August, the Council accused the Romanian military authorities of continuing “en dépit des assurances données tant par le gouvernement roumain que par ses représentants à Paris, à vider la Hongrie de ses ressources de tout ordre (...) Une telle attitude entraînera pour la Roumanie les plus sérieuses conséquences.”⁴⁷

The Romanians, they claimed, were looting Hungarian property and refusing a treaty that guaranteed minority rights. The arbitrary requisitions carried out by the Romanians in Hungary and Bucharest’s rejection of legislation protecting minorities, notably the Jews, led the Romanians to reject the treaty with Austria. In the end, the Conference decided to issue Romania an ultimatum, which French diplomats tried to soften, as France needed Romania to help the White Russians. The Romanians did not give in. On 20 September, Antonescu wrote: “Dans la séance d’hier à la Chambre Louis Marin a blâmé l’attitude de la Conférence à l’égard de la Roumanie applaudissements — plusieurs députés ont crié Vive la Roumanie.”⁴⁸

At the end of October, the Supreme Council named Sir George Clerk as extraordinary envoy of the Allied and Associated Powers. Clerk turned out to be favorable to the Hungarians. In a telegram dated 6 November, Clerk wrote:

Roumanian authorities whether with or without connivance of Bucharest Government are using every means to suppress Hungarian elements in country and so during their occupation Roumanize whole province by unscrupulous and arbitrary acts in such a manner as to present a false situation to Allies when moment comes for final decision of Conference in regard to attribution of these regions.⁴⁹

Schools, universities and hospitals were being closed and oaths of allegiance to Romania extorted.

On 9 November, the Romanian troops’ evacuation of Budapest changed the situation, allowing order to be re-established and peace to be definitively negotiated. This evacuation and the signature of peace and minorities’ treaties unblocked Franco-Romanian relations, leading to the promise of recognition of the annexation of Bessarabia. It seemed that the French friends of Romania had finally prevailed at Versailles. The Treaties of Neuilly and Trianon enshrined the frontiers of the new

47 QO: PA-AP 166 Tardieu, Carton 381.

48 MAS: 71/1914 Vol. 58.

49 NA: FO 608/55/5.

Romania. In his fight for Romania to be considered an allied country, André Tardieu had had to struggle tenaciously during the Peace Conference:

Que d'affreux débats, entre les surprises de l'intrigue et les absurdités de la statistique! Frontière transylvaine; voies de communication; question de Bessarabie; question de Dobroudja; question du Banat de Temesvar, — c'est tous les jours, à recommencer. Pour finir, le succès: la Roumanie reconnue dans ses limites et dans son unité nationale, avec la Transylvanie, la Bukovine et la Bessarabie.⁵⁰

Nineteen nineteen was therefore a year in which de Martonne successfully carried out a mission as friend of Romania. His geographical, and notably cartographical, expertise was effectively placed at the service of that country's cause. At the same time, he crossed again the frontiers between science and public engagement, contributing to the propaganda effort of a Franco-Romanian lobby which, helped by military and diplomatic developments, achieved the aim of a Greater Romania. In early 1920, the publication in *Annales de géographie* of his "Essai de carte ethnographique des Pays roumains" gave a scientific imprimatur to his mission. De Martonne would later pass over in silence such activism, preferring to highlight his "non-political" research, starting with geomorphology. But 1919 opened a new phase in de Martonne's relationship with Romania, as he endeavoured to reinforce French influence in Southeastern Europe and, as France's leading geographer, defend his frontiers against the irredentist *ressentiment* of defeated neighbours.

50 Constantin Kiritzesco, *La Roumanie dans la guerre mondiale 1916–1919* (Paris: Payot, 1934), 8.

Humanitarian Aid in the “Bulwark Against Bolshevism”: The American Relief Administration and the Quest for Sovereignty in Post-World War I Romania

Doina Anca Cretu

Abstract: *This article examines the diffusion of humanitarian assistance via the American Relief Administration (ARA) in Romania immediately after World War I. This exploration is articulated around two “arenas” of the assistance process. First, it follows the initial behind-the-scenes negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference and subsequent diplomatic tensions around the conditions of aid. Second, it addresses the practices and meaning of ARA’s assistance beyond Paris, on the Romanian ground. This analysis shows that post-war destruction, social vulnerability and fear of anarchy and Bolshevism enabled the Romanian leadership to seek and access ARA’s humanitarian aid. Romanian state officials of the time contested ARA’s conditional humanitarianism, seeing it as a challenge to economic and political autonomy. Ultimately, the quest for sovereignty defined by the Greater Romania project informed the state leaders’ reception of American humanitarian agendas and efforts after World War I.*

In October 1919, a letter signed by Natalia Costachi, a Romanian peasant, found its way to the American State Department.¹ The letter was specifically requesting the assistance of the American Relief Administration (ARA), a US Congress-backed agency, to feed the fifteen members of her family.² The want for food and clothing was similarly acute in urban areas, particularly among the working class. Vasile Crăciun and Nicu Onofrei, two doormen of a Bucharest-based insurance association, forwarded their needs and requests for alleviation to William Haskell, the chief head of the ARA mission to Romania. Praising the American workers’ “human sentiments,” the aid seekers appealed to the ARA, which they considered

1 Thanks to Davide Rodogno and Lukas Schemper for feedback on various aspects of this piece.

2 Natalia Costachi, Letter to American Legation to Romania, October 1919, Collection USA, Roll 659, Microfilms Collection, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.

a representation of the American “noble nation” in their home country.³ These letters, which came from ordinary people who were some of the many sufferers of war destruction, show the Romanian locals’ need for relief. These war sufferers openly received help from the ARA, as they considered it a charitable endeavor at a time when the American humanitarian workers brought in food, clothing or medicine after the conflict ended in Romania.

A few years prior to the calls for American help, in summer 1916, the in-power Liberal Party led by Ion I.C. Brătianu made the decision for Romania to enter the Great War on the side of the Allies. The decision was politically exploited as an act of bravery, meant to achieve the long-sought Unification and a triumph of sovereignty from the European empires. This was the condition Brătianu demanded for Romania to join the Allies’ military in 1916.⁴ The Allies subsequently won the war and Greater Romania was formally established on 1 December 1918. For this reason, participation in the conflict was an immediate triumph⁵ that followed the “sacrifice” made by Romanians for defining a national ideal reached through unification with Transylvania, Bucovina, and Bessarabia.

However, this narrative underplays the period of hardships and conflict-generated social volatility for the majority of Romanian people during and after the conflict. Further, it hides the tensions and combustibility that arose at the feeble borders of the new Greater Romania and in the newly united provinces of the country. Ultimately, the population suffered from famine, epidemics and infrastructure collapse, largely caused by invasions, looting, displacement or property destruction connected to the conflict. Thus, conventional narratives of political and military victories obscure the state leaders’ challenges in relieving war sufferers during post-conflict reconstruction.

3 Vasile Crăciun and Nicu Onofrei, Letter to Col. William Haskell, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 442, Box 375, Folder 4, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

4 Keith Hitchins, *Ionel Brătianu: Romania, Series Makers of the Modern World: The Peace Conferences of 1919–23 and Their Aftermath* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011), 82.

5 Constantin Kirițescu, *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României* (Bucharest: Editura Casei Școalelor, 1925); C. de S. Wainright, Gogu Negulesco and T. Tileston Wells, *Rumania's Sacrifice: Her Past, Present, and Future* (New York, NY: The Century Co., 1918); Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Românilor, Vol.10: Întregitorii* (Bucharest: no press, 1939); Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977).

During the war state resources were largely focused on sustaining the troops, but various directorates and commissions were created to mediate the effects of civilians' food, clothing or health crises.⁶ Furthermore, private initiatives, mostly led by upper-class women,⁷ were established to build new hospitals, canteens or orphanages. During this time, a network of formal and informal charities emerged in response to wartime emergencies.⁸ But government efforts were hampered by bureaucratic setbacks, lack of administrative continuity and coherence, and the absence of material and human resources.⁹ Furthermore, the private avenues for relief had limited infrastructure and financial capacity to address the ever-growing want in the country. This was best expressed by Queen Marie of Romania, who confessed in an almost defeatist manner in 1917, after many endeavors to relieve war sufferers through her leadership of the Romanian Red Cross, that "there is much need everywhere and my resources for hospitals are ending. I gave and gave and I almost have nothing."¹⁰ Therefore, the Romanian leaders sought foreign assistance during and after the war in order to address hunger, destitution and displacement, homelessness, or spread of infectious diseases.

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- 6 Glenn Torrey, *The Romanian Battlefront in World War I* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 174–7; Decree on the Establishment of a General Economic Directorate, 1 June 1918, Dosar 25/1917, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștrii, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania; Instructions regarding the relief through agriculture for the needs of the army and the population, 24 September 1918, Dosar 25/1917, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștrii, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania; Notes données par Monsieur le Docteur Jean Cantacuzene, Dosar 144/1918, Fond Comitetul de Asistență al Crucii Roșii de la Paris, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.
 - 7 For further framing of women-led philanthropy and Queen Marie's role during this period, see Maria Bucur, "Between the Mother of the Wounded and the Virgin of Jiu: Romanian Women and the Gender of Heroism during the Great War," *Journal of Women's History*, 12, no. 2 (2000): 30–56; and Alin Ciupală, *Bătălia Lor: Femeile din România în Primul Război Mondial* (Bucharest: Editura Polirom), 2017.
 - 8 Branden Little, "State, Civil Society and Relief Organizations for War," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 1914–1918*, no date, available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/state_civil_society_and_relief_organizations_for_war (accessed on 7 April 2019).
 - 9 Oscar Stati, Letter to Ministry of Internal Affairs, 8 October 1918, Dosar 25/1917, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștrii, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania; Gen. Herju, Letter to the Prime Minister, 25 September 1918, Dosar 25/1917, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștrii, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania; Gen. Lucescu, Letter to the Prime Minister, 21 October 1918, Dosar 25/1917, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștrii, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.
 - 10 Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de Război 1916–1917* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 414.

It was in this context that the ARA landed in Romania, as part of a network of American organizations ready to advance relief and rehabilitation on behalf of civilians during the war and in its immediate aftermath.¹¹ In February 1919, Woodrow Wilson issued an Executive Order to create the ARA, an organization charged with acquiring, transporting, and distributing foodstuff to European civilians. Congress funded the organization \$100 million for operations through 30 June 1919, and approved Herbert Hoover's appointment as head of the organization. Hoover had been the leader of the American Food Administration, the national food authority and wartime agency created by Wilson in 1918, and the Commissioner of Belgium Relief, a semi-official body directing food supplies to Belgium and France. Due to his Quaker background, Hoover believed in the power of charity and individual drive and insisted on American voluntary commitment and cooperative action to a common cause.¹² During the war, Hoover became known as a "technocrat-humanitarian, the expert engineer who employed his administrative skills for social betterment."¹³ The institutional history of the ARA was closely tied to Hoover's personality and projections regarding the role and outreach of humanitarianism.

The main assistance method the ARA employed was food relief, the American organizations' preferred channel for aid.¹⁴ For Hoover, food was both a core vulnerability in the international order and an instrument of US influence. Periods of riots in poor corners of American cities and Hoover's European experience during prolonged times of scarcity during World War I confirmed "that bread shortages led to unrest."¹⁵ Moreover, Hoover was convinced that Europe's economic situation and political stability was in danger as the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantling. Ultimately, he informed Wilson that the US would have to undertake food

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- 11 Other organizations in Romania were the American Red Cross, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Young Men's Christian Association.
 - 12 David Burner, "The Quaker Faith of Herbert Hoover," in *Understanding Herbert Hoover: Ten Perspectives*, ed. Lee Nash (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 53–64.
 - 13 Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982), 75–6.
 - 14 For the food-focused American aid, see Davide Rodogno, "The American Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross: Humanitarian Politics and Policies in Asia Minor and Greece (1922–1923)," *First World War Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2014), 83–99; and Mary Elisabeth Cox, "Hunger Games: Or How the Allied Blockade in the First World War Deprived German Children of Nutrition, and Allied Food Aid Subsequently Saved Them," *The Economic History Review*, 68, no. 2 (2015), 600–31.
 - 15 Kendrick Clements, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Imperfect Visionary, 1918–1928* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 72.

relief efforts in 45 nations "if we are to preserve these countries from Bolshevism and rank anarchy."¹⁶ The new ARA then poured food in the open ports of Europe, with Hoover's men taking control of telegraph, offices, port administration, and railways. In this process, the ARA aided both wartime friends and foes,¹⁷ as Hoover was convinced that resources and distribution would make the difference in installing order and peace in agitated areas.¹⁸

Besides the moral duty to aid suffering populations, "the food situation" in Europe could have important strategic benefits for the US in matters of financial gains and management.¹⁹ In Hoover's view, food was also a matter of credits, as he believed that the "European agriculture would recover gradually, but in the short term, many states would have to borrow to feed their people."²⁰ Those loans could only come from the US, which had capital and surplus food. Ultimately, if relief were in the form of loans, not gifts, the US would be able to have open doors for trade and investment via its economic leverage. By helping the needy, the US would win friends and stop any British and French ambitions to take over European business. Self-interest, in the form of markets for American agricul-

16 Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 22.

17 On Hungary, see Friederike Kind-Kovacs, "Compassion for the Distant Other: Children's Hunger and Humanitarian Relief in the Aftermath of the Great War," in *Rescuing the Vulnerable: Poverty, Welfare and Social Ties in Modern Europe*, eds. Beate Althammer, Lutz Raphael and Tamara Stazic-Wendt (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2016); on Poland, see Davide Rodogno, Francesca Piana and Shaloma Gauthier, "Shaping Poland: Relief and Rehabilitation Programmes Undertaken by Foreign Organizations, 1918–1922," in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Sphere: Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s*, eds. Davide Rodogno, Jakob Vogel and Bernhard Struck (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2015), 259–78; Matthew Lloyd Adams, "Herbert Hoover and the Organization of the American Relief Effort in Poland (1919–1923)," *European Journal of American Studies*, 2 (2009), 1–16; Jerzy Jan Lerski, *Herbert Hoover and Poland: A Documentary History of a Friendship. Hoover Archival Documentaries* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1977).

18 Cullather, *The Hungry World*, 22.

19 For Hoover's financial planning around aid, see Norman Gordon Levin Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Arno Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918–1919* (No place: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

20 Taken from Clements, *The Life of Herbert Hoover*, 73.

tural surplus, converged with the public display of American magnanimity that humanitarians displayed.²¹ Hoover regarded these two goals as compatible, and even complementary.

In Romania, the ARA practices led to a diffusion of assistance primarily via food relief in the first months of 1919. As Natalia Costachi, Vasile Crăciun or Nicu Onofrei's calls for help revealed, in the eyes of some of those relieved and saved, the ARA was a symbol of charitable nobility and benevolence that the American humanitarians sought to display in the public arena at home and in the territories of their actions. However, this story of reception paints an incomplete picture of ARA-driven humanitarian aid in Romania. The loan-based *modus operandi* that Hoover and his associates developed for this organization competed with the aspirational politics and policies promoted by Romanian political elites after the war. More specifically, for the Romanian leaders, ARA's conditional aid challenged the basic pillars of the Greater Romania project: sovereignty and political, social, and economic autonomy. At the same time, Romanian political leaders' fear of anarchy and Bolshevism shaped the rather pragmatic reception of humanitarian aid for addressing social turmoil.

This article explores the oft-incongruous and fluid nature of American humanitarian via the ARA in Romania. Its two core sections trace the assistance process from its incipient negotiation around conditional methods to practices on the Romanian ground. The article further aims at addressing the varied ways in which state leaders interpreted and received ARA's humanitarian aid. On one hand, war sufferers, the direct aid recipients, believed in American altruistic manifestations of charity. On the other hand, the Romanian state leaders feared interventionism that threatened the status quo achieved after Unification. However, humanitarian aid also represented a pragmatic avenue to block Bolshevik invasions, anarchy from below, and general social tensions.

The "humanitarian" story in post-war Romania remains un-explored in the broader context of interwar international aid diffusion. This article addresses this historiographical elision, by complementing other studies mostly focused on the institutional nature of humanitarian efforts

21 This meeting of agendas was emphasized in the case of relief for Russia. See Bertrand Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 87; Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 75–7, 117–8; and Benjamin Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921–1923* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1974).

abroad.²² Moreover, the article highlights that the foreign assistance lens and the particular focus on the ARA reveal political dilemmas and social complications that arose in the immediate aftermath of war and after the creation of Greater Romania in December 1918. This was a period of tensions between Romanian leaders' idealism in the Greater Romania project and the realism of widespread suffering across the new country. Ultimately, access to American humanitarianism emerged as a practical avenue to address political, social, and economic volatility.

This analysis relies on an investigation of humanitarian assistance (the conditions, practices and reception of aid) in post-war Romania via sources that encapsulate the voices of the Romanian and American actors involved. In this, it examines the Paris Peace Conference through the lens of the tensions around aid conditions negotiated behind the scenes and their related significance on the Romanian ground. This exploration is based on transnational intersections and interactions that underscore the uneven relationship between the giver and the recipient of aid.²³ The article uses sources of the ARA and Romanian state and non-state actors to highlight significant tensions between the leaders of the American organization and the Romanian political elites, as well as the perceptions and practices of workers in the field. Historians have often lamented the lack of recipients' voices in narratives of humanitarianism. Without a doubt, in the ARA sources, the recipients' voices are often stifled, reduced to mere statistics. This article reveals that the process of humanitarian assistance in Romania (and elsewhere) was arguably elitist, as the American organizations and their representatives sought to transfer assistance through formal local channels (government, public figures or established non-gov-

22 On institutional establishment, management of relief, motivations and practices of the American Red Cross, the American Relief Administration or the Jewish-American Joint Distribution Committee during the Great War, see Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); Branden Little, "Band of Crusaders: American Humanitarians, the Great War, and the Remaking of the World," PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2009; and Jaclyn Granick, "Humanitarian Responses to Jewish Suffering Abroad by American Jewish Organizations, 1914–1929," PhD Thesis, The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland, 2015.

23 Patricia Clavin, "Introduction: Conceptualising Internationalism between the World Wars," in *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, ed. Daniel Laqua (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 3. For a conceptual analysis of inequality between donor and giver, see Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).

ernmental associations). These broad interlocutors were primarily the local and national elites, the formal and informal leaders of institutions and communities. These, in turn, wrote reports, corresponded with American representatives and among themselves, or were objects of domestic and international media attention. Accounts of war sufferers were found, if at all, mostly in narratives of the Romanian elites and of the American humanitarian workers or organization leaders. This article follows these sources to show that the Romanian state leaders' underlying quest for sovereignty in the aftermath of the 1918 Unification ultimately informed interactions with international humanitarian aid.

The Conditionality of Aid

The immediate period after the Unification and the formal creation of Greater Romania were tied to the ideological architecture of the Liberal political leadership. Under this governance, the Greater Romania project meant the building and consolidation of a Romanian national consciousness and the forging of extremely diverse regions into a centralized nation-state. During this first post-Unification phase, the political leaders fundamentally believed that economic development and social and political modernization depended on respect for the sovereignty of the new state. This was directly related to the ideology of the Liberal leaders, who envisioned sovereignty as a form of "development from within" in all possible dimensions: social, political, and economic.²⁴ The party's motto "by ourselves"²⁵ (*prin noi înșine*) captured the Liberals' protectionist and nationalist concerns and belief in self-help as a means of social, political and economic modernization and overall autonomy. It meant an economic policy pursued strictly with the aid of state institutions, and mobilization of all productive national resources, human and material, against the prevalence of foreigners and their capital in the Romanian economy.²⁶ The guiding policy of sovereign establishment was, thus, the creation of a

24 Ion G. Duca, "Doctrina Liberală," in *Doctrinile Partidelor Politice: 19 Prelegeri Publice*, ed. Dimitrie Gusti (Bucharest: Editura Națională, 1923), 103–5.

25 Term coined by Vintilă Brătianu. See Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1994), 387.

26 Duca, "Doctrina Liberală," 3; Diana Mishkova, "Balkan Liberalisms: Historical Routes of a Modern Ideology," in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans-Volume Two: Transfers of Political Ideologies and Institutions*, eds. Roumen Daskalov and Diana Mishkova (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 99–198; Apostol Stan and Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996), 207–9; Thomas Kiel, *Romania's Tortured Road towards Modernity* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2005).

state-protected national industry without involvement of foreigners in trade, a defense for the properties of "local owners."

Guided by this ideology, Brătianu arrived at the Paris Peace Conference on 13 January 1919 with his own conception of the new Greater Romania's place in the world. He was determined to ensure that the unification of all ethnic Romanians and all territories where they lived, the primary condition of Romania's entry in the war in 1916, remain intact. However, in light of the signing of a peace treaty with the Central Powers and its effective capitulation in May 1918, Romania was treated as a defeated country in Paris. The Great Powers excluded Romania for commissions dealing with territorial boundaries and minorities, matters which the Romanian delegation regarded as crucial to the country's future. Despite these setbacks, behind the dramatic diplomatic scenes, Brătianu and the other Romanian delegation members tried to ensure Romania's post-war economic survival by using its oil resources to leverage relief.

The Romanian Prime Minister and his administration first appealed to France, a political and military ally.²⁷ He believed that France would respond positively to Romania's needs, and was even ready to receive "any conditions" regarding oil.²⁸ Minister of Finance Victor Antonescu drafted a first loan request to France on 19 February 1919. But more than a month passed before the French officials communicated to the Romanian delegation that they had approved a credit of 10 million French francs.²⁹ This apparent act of goodwill was accompanied by successive, aggressive demands, including a limitation of future initiatives in matters of oil policy. Aware of the consequences of the French claim, Brătianu rejected it. He pointed out that "it was in their common interest to postpone the oil question as Romania would be in a political situation that would hinder its free decisions and there was the fear of the intervention of Great Britain and the United States."³⁰

In Paris, the Romanian representatives exchanged opinions with the members of the US delegation at the Peace Conference. Behind the closed doors, they discussed the question of Romania being assisted by the ARA, and the Romanian and American delegates signed an agreement on 28 February 1919. Despite this formalization of ARA's aid to Romania, Hoo-

27 Traian Sandu, *La Grande Roumanie Aliée de la France: Une Peripetie Diplomatique des Années Folles? (1919–1933)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999).

28 Gheorghe Buzatu, *A History of Romanian Oil, Vol. I* (Bucharest: Editura Mica Valahie, 2011), 220.

29 Ibid., 220.

30 Ibid., 223.

ver's workings through the American organization, particularly the conditions of loan-based assistance, were at odds with Brătianu's and his domestic political allies' aspirations regarding Romania's sovereign status quo. In this context, multiple contentions emerged during the negotiations of ARA's aid conditions.

The first crisis around the conditionality of ARA aid and the Romanian channels of reception was connected to the Brătianu-backed oil leverage. The Americans knew about the French-Romanian negotiations and the French attempts to obtain a "perpetual grant" on the oil fields in Romania. On 18 March 1919, Norman Davis, the US Treasury representative, informed Washington about the efforts of the French and his personal wish to warn the Romanian Prime Minister that the US would not allow Romania to place some "allied" oil magnates in a "more favorable position" than the North American ones.³¹ Bernard Baruch, one of Wilson's closest associates during the Paris Peace Conference, solicited an immediate meeting with Brătianu, demanding that the Romanian communicate to Bucharest that "his country did not allow that, through agreements hostile to it, we give the other countries exclusive granting of the oil."³² Baruch also told the Romanian Prime Minister that this measure was in Romania's "own" interest, as he knew that Great Britain and France "wanted to take advantage of [our] difficulties in order to exploit us."³³ Brătianu denied that he had granted the oil monopoly to the British and the French. This did not reassure Baruch, who threatened that, if Romania closed any oil agreement contrary to the interests of the Americans, then the US government would cease aid through the ARA. Baruch concluded that Romania could not hope for the help of the US "in any other areas either."³⁴ In effect, a refusal from the Romanian government was met with cynicism by the ARA leadership:

The Relief Administration could only conclude that the food situation is not considered serious by the Roumanian Government or that it can be met without our assistance, and, therefore, on account of the serious world shortage of foodstuffs and the necessity to help many other countries that are employing every resource at their command, the ARA had decided to withdraw further assistance from Roumania in view of diverting it elsewhere.³⁵

31 Ibid., 223.

32 Ion I.C. Brătianu, Radiogram to Mihail Pherekyde, 23 April 1919, Fond. 71/1914, E2 Petrol, Vol. 223, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, Romania.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Unsigned Letter to Robert Taft, Bucharest, 6 May 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 443, Box 376, Folder 3, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

Despite being present at the negotiation table at the Paris Peace Conference, Hoover despised its "indescribable malignity," often feeling alone in his beliefs that safety could not be assured by treaties or redrawn borders.³⁶ This disdain for Paris did not stop Hoover from addressing a note to Brătianu in which he threatened the Romanian Prime Minister with the interruption of aid supply to his country if oil agreements were not reached.³⁷ Hoover insisted that the Romanian government commit to exporting oil either to Serbia, where food might be purchased, or to Western Europe, where exchange could be created. This, Hoover considered, would allow the Romanian government to avail itself of the \$5 million monthly loan credits initially granted by the US Treasury³⁸ as reparations towards the Allies.³⁹ Subsequently, Brătianu wrote to Bucharest that the tone of Hoover's threatening note was "hardly amicable." Its message conditioned the continuation of deliveries to Romania on the satisfaction of several claims, "all serious," connected to the question of oil. Brătianu considered that this form of aid practice was subverting his political power and Romania's sovereignty in economic and even broad minority matters. Brătianu publicly accused Hoover in Paris: "He will not permit us to have loans, or food, except in return for oil—land and concessions. Without these we can expect no help, he says."⁴⁰ Ironically, Hoover condemned these Romanian policies, although he eventually agreed to use the blockade as a bargaining chip in bringing down the unwanted communist government of Béla Kun in Hungary.⁴¹ When Brătianu accused Hoover of trying to secure oil fields for himself, the ARA leader reportedly reacted emphatically: "Brătianu is a liar and a horse thief; that's all there is to it. I hope God will help the Romanians, I cannot."⁴²

36 Cullather, *The Hungry World*, 22–3.

37 Buzatu, *A History of Romanian Oil*, Vol. I, 230.

38 Unsigned Letter to Ion. I.C. Brătianu, 24 April 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 443, Box 375, Folder 6, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA; F.C. Nano, "Studiu asupra memoriului domnului ministru Titulescu, din 10 Martie asupra aranjamentului ref. la Relief Bonds, Seria A (CICRE) și datoriile României către USA," 1925, Problema Economică, România relații economice financiare cu SUA, Referitor la Datoriile de război ale României față de Statele Unite, Fond Washington, Vol. 118, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, Romania.

39 For more on the "indebtedness" of the Allies to the US, see Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 477–502.

40 Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles* (London: Simon Publications, 2001), 202.

41 Tibor Glant, "Herbert Hoover and Hungary, 1918–1923," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2002), 106.

42 Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants*, 202

In the big European capitals, rumors of Hoover's pressure on Romania were rejected, as he was "too well known on both sides of the Atlantic as a high-minded servant of humanity to render any such suggestions credible."⁴³ However, the Romanian Prime Minister felt that the ARA was interfering in Romanian domestic issues. Once the agreement was achieved under the auspices of aid conditionality, the economic impositions for food relief furthered Brătianu's suspicions of possible prolonged control of the US over the local economy. New tensions thus emerged around the financial dimensions of aid diffusion.

A second impasse in the negotiations regarding ARA's scheme of conditional aid was related to the food remittance program, as suggested by the American organization. The initial conditions imposed on the Romanian government noted that the ARA accepted local currency as payment for food and as remittances from the US to Romania. This was to be done by crediting the food account of the Romanian government with the dollars received in the US. The proposal noted that the exchange rate was to be higher than the actual market value of *lei*, but sufficient to encourage remittances.

The ARA leaders argued that Romania's need for food was probably greater than what could be supplied through a basic credit strategy. Further, they claimed that this payment method would increase the shipments of food if available supplies were insufficient for the program.⁴⁴ While the newly appointed Minister of Finance, Alexandru Constantinescu, agreed to this plan, Brătianu initially refused on the grounds that any official acknowledgement of the imposed rate would damage the Romanian exchange and increase its economic dependence on the US. Further, he argued that the Romanian government was already able to borrow money that could be repaid on a more advantageous basis by April 1919.⁴⁵ Robert Taft, counselor for the ARA, assessed Brătianu's antagonistic position as a blatant refusal to use available sources for the purchase of food at a time when the Polish or Czechoslovak governments had already agreed on the conditions.

43 "The Physiology of the Conference," translation from the Romanian newspaper *Iz-bânda*, 12 June 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 441, Box 374, Folder 9, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

44 Robert Taft, "Memorandum for Mr. Hoover," 23 April 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 443, Box 376, Folder 3, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

45 Ibid.

Yet, for Brătianu, ARA's relief practices, their conditions around its reception, and the impositions on Romania were threatening Romanian sovereignty. He excoriated European statesmen, especially France's Aristide Briand and Great Britain's David Lloyd George, for imposing obligations on small states, while the Great Powers had avoided minority-protection clauses in the League of Nations covenant. In addition, he accused the Great Powers of attacking Romania's honor and sovereignty, condemning foreign involvement in domestic affairs as alien to peace or national consolidation.⁴⁶ By conflating economic interests and minority issues, particularly surrounding the contentious Jewish Question in Romania, Brătianu accused Hoover of interference and support from American Jewish lobbyists:

I have been advised that no assistance of any kind will be forthcoming unless special privileges are granted to our Jewish minority. The American Jews, bankers and big businessmen, seem to think that our country is to be turned over to them for exploitation. Their agents, in the thin disguise of food organization officials, are on hand and they are earmarking the industries and concessions they must have, otherwise no assistance can be expected. Once and for all I say that these people may go to Palestine, or to Hell for all I care, but I shall not let them settle down upon my country, devouring locusts that they are!⁴⁷

These accusations arguably reflected Brătianu's conviction that a nation conquered by economic means would be "destroyed forever, legally, as well as factually."⁴⁸ In his view, "foreigners," especially Jews, were burdens in economic sectors that the Liberals considered crucial for their own modernization vision and projects.⁴⁹ It was a fundamentally nationalistic logic, which not only aligned the nation-building project with the assimilation of a liberal doctrine and institutions but also positioned the major social and economic issues as a system of "national priorities."⁵⁰ In this context, the pressure for national resources to be exchanged for food relief and the adjustments to domestic financial structures were considered aggressive foreign interventions in domestic affairs.

46 Carole Fink, *Defending the Right of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 232–3.

47 Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants*, 202; Ion. I. C. Brătianu, Letter to M. Pherekyde, 27 April 1919, Fond 71/1914, E2 Petrol, Vol. 223, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, Romania.

48 Ion C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, Vol.2, Part 1 (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1938), 249–50.

49 William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1991), 139–64.

50 Mishkova, "Balkan Liberalisms: Historical Routes of a Modern Ideology," 174–5.

However, while economic and industrial interest in exclusive rights to Romania's resources were part of the ARA agenda at the time of negotiation, evidence that they were related to involvement in Romania's minority rights question is absent. Still, Brătianu interpreted Hoover's positioning of the ARA in relation to national resources and aid conditions as a fundamental threat to Romania's economic nationalism.

In the domestic public arena, news of consistent pressure from the Great Powers on the Romanian political, economic and social agendas was met with disdain. *Expresul*, a Romanian publication, called for the entire Romanian nation

to not receive strangers into our internal business because this intrusion means the breaking up of our national sovereignty, which our country had maintained for so many years. Roumania is not a new state like Poland or Czechoslovakia and therefore cannot be subjected to tutelage. [...] We have to protect our national industries, and we do not wish to commence in this protection [...] through American industries.⁵¹

In a similar vein, in June 1919, the independent newspaper *Izbânda* published a cautious article that investigated the economic impact of the US in European territories. The article noted that peace was essentially conditioned by the great economic powers in search of markets: "in the place of Germany, who has disappeared, comes America, whose economic 'action' is facilitated by the fact that she has no territorial claims. [This] does not mean that she is at all disinterested in what is going on in the Conference."⁵² Hoover's active influence on the conditionality of humanitarian relief was never, however, mentioned.

Hoover saw himself and the ARA humanitarians, his "band of crusaders," as saviors of the world through their relief enterprises. While the Romanian state leadership understood the negotiations around oil production for aid diffusion as a shrewd way to take ownership of Romanian capital, Hoover situated all his work under the umbrella of humanitarianism. Without a doubt, the ARA brand of relief had multiple colors. Hoover thought that economic leverage opened the door for trade and investment. Therefore, he was angered by the Romanian government's decision to sell the credited \$5 million loan to the National Bank and insisted that the drafts be bought back from the bank and used to pay for flour and

51 "We Do Not Receive," translation from *Expresul*, 17 June 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 441, Box 374, Folder 9, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

52 "The Physiology of the Conference."

other foodstuffs sent from America.⁵³ ARA's presence in Romania mirrored his vision of compatibility between the American economic interests and the moral obligation to relieve the suffering.⁵⁴

Despite this period of contention, Romanians conceded and the ARA mission marched on with food cargoes within the planned three months. Brătianu initially rejected ARA's conditions and interpreted them as an underlying threat to autonomy. However, the material and moral despair in the country did not allow for such political and economic liberties. In effect, the Romanian political officials deemed the rise and migration of Bolshevism and the internal spread of anarchy as imminent dangers to the nation-state and its sovereignty. Hoover's and ARA's food cargoes were ultimately an alternate way to address such urgent menaces. The ARA was a governmental agency through which Hoover and his associates tried to capture economic and political opportunities. However, beyond the closed doors of the Paris Peace Conference, on the Romanian ground, the American relief workers shaped an image of apolitical humanitarianism and enabled aid diffusion on the basis of national and local cooperation.

Aid on the Ground

Despite tensions around the conditions of humanitarian aid, the ARA sent a small commission, made up of five members, volunteers of "a new army of peace and goodwill [...], organized to fight a new war in former enemy as well as allied countries, a war against starvation, disease and anarchy."⁵⁵ Once in Romania, the ARA workers seemed surprised and worried by the destitution in this small country. Gen. William Haskell, the chief head of the mission to Romania, bluntly noted that they "generally had no idea of the serious conditions which then existed across No Man's Land in the war-torn and half-starved countries of Central Europe—the Balkans, Russia in Europe and the Near East."⁵⁶ What the ARA workers found in Romania was certainly disconcerting, and they often were amazed by its

53 Charles Vopicka, Letter to ARA Paris Office, 30 April 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 443, Box 375, Folder 6, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

54 Branden Little, "An Explosion of New Endeavours: Global Humanitarian Responses to Industrialized Warfare in the First World War Era," *First World War Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2014), 1–16.

55 William Haskell, "The Armistice and the Balkans," *Memoirs*, Collection William Haskell, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

56 Ibid.

bleakness. In one such case, Joseph Green, another chief of mission in Romania, reported that in the rural areas he saw “the most starved looking people I have seen in Europe,” including women and children “without shoes or stockings,” while many “had died from lack of nourishment.”⁵⁷

As part of ARA’s *modus operandi* to work on a very short-term “get in/get out” basis, the emergency food relief provided by the American workers was relatively short-lived in Romania. For three months, the ARA delivered food under its strategic scheme to relieve the hunger of the population. However, the mission faced important trials on the ground. Initially, the weak post-war infrastructure challenged food distribution. From 4 February 1919 (even before the agreement had been signed) until 21 February 1919, the first people to receive relief were those who could be reached by ox or pony carts from the Black Sea port of Constanța. Afterwards, the situation changed abruptly and the work of the ARA expanded into more northern regions, carrying 8,000 tons of flour across the eastern part of the country. By March, the ARA had distributed 14,000 tons of flour in fourteen days, with ARA reports claiming that “by the end of that time while American flour was in every village in Roumania, death from starvation practically stopped.”⁵⁸

As the state of emergency persisted, the conflict and negotiation around the relief conditions became non-issues on the ground. This disconnect was arguably shaped by the humanitarian dimension of the organization’s presence in Romania, the recipient population’s need for food, and the fear of Bolshevik insurrections. This was augmented by a divide within the ARA, as the relief workers’ public image and relationship with the Romanian political leadership and the direct aid recipients departed from the bitter contentions around conditions of relief. This divide was best expressed by Green, who confessed in a letter to his father:

I have entirely thrown off the lethargy and depression, which followed the armistice and the beginnings of the Paris Peace Conference. We are far enough away from Paris here to hear nothing, but the remote echoes of the meetings, which made me so sick at heart. The atmosphere of the Peace Conference, I mean its real atmosphere, not the false glamour, which is reflected in the newspapers, is enough to make an optimist and idealist despair of the human race.⁵⁹

57 Ibid.

58 Robert Green, “With the ARA in Roumania,” Collection Joseph Coy Green, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

59 Joseph Coy Green, Letter to his father, 18 February 1919, Collection Joseph Coy Green, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

Green's words were indicative of ARA workers' general feeling of detachment from Paris, the tensions of the Conference, the diplomatic negotiation over territories and minorities, as well as the off-the-record discussions about the Romanian oil leverage, monetary conditions and humanitarian relief. For the in-field humanitarians, these contentions seemed a far cry from the everyday needs on the ground. Diplomatic tensions in Paris, and the constant backbiting between Brătianu and Hoover, meant very little in the daily struggles to defeat hunger, anarchy and the seemingly impending threat of Bolshevism. And this influenced the ways in which the ARA workers presented themselves and approached their relief work in Romania.

The "on the ground" mission led by Green followed a blueprint of first-hand assistance that had already been tested in Belgium, France, Austria, and Poland. Generally, relief workers delivered food through national and local authorities. In fact, while Brătianu was in Paris other ministers of the Romanian government and Liberals at home were reportedly very collaborative with the representatives of the organization.

However, ARA's methods followed a paternalist approach, a feature of American humanitarian aid during the post-war period. From the humanitarians' viewpoint, Romania was part of the "backward" Central and Eastern European space, where American modern programs could essentially civilize local people and thus sustain peace, democracy and prosperity. Accordingly, the ARA mission committed to an advisory role to the Romanian officials in charge of the reception and distribution of food relief. In theory, the assumed purpose of the ARA workers was supervision of the distribution of food, purchased by the government against the credit granted by the US. However, off the record, they claimed that this was a job that, in practice, was an endless task "to pour some American speed and business-like methods into the heads of these semi-oriental Slavs."⁶⁰ Indeed, the ARA relief workers were often suspicious of the Romanian politicians and certain of the country's deep political and moral backwardness, often taking matters into their own hands in the coordination of relief.

In this light, the ARA reports rarely mention any local agency in the first few months of aid. Despite a few scattered mentions of collaborative local authorities (prefects, mayors of smaller towns and villages, doctors or priests), the ARA workers were convinced that proper results could not be "accomplished by the Roumanians," and thousands would perish without American assistance. In attempting to enable the recipients' capacity

60 Green, "With the ARA in Roumania."

for “self-help,” the mission proposed an intensive supervision scheme, an instance of the deep-seated paternalism of American humanitarian organizations. This was at odds with the public ARA mission, as workers formally insisted that Romanians should “bestir themselves, and not rely on foreign aid.”⁶¹ In this way, the ARA representatives discursively enabled the agency of aid recipients and maintained an image of benevolence, while Hoover and Brătianu were negotiating the conditions for assistance.

Removed from Paris diplomacy, territorial infighting and negotiations around conditions of ARA aid, the relief workers’ advisory position arguably opened avenues of collaboration with the Romanian political elites and local authorities, such as mayors and county prefects. Any accusations of hidden agendas were quickly and publicly dismissed. In January 1919, a translated version of an anti-Brătianu article from the left-wing newspaper *Chemarea* circulated among ARA representatives in Romania. This piece stated that, ultimately, US cooperation on a relief and economic basis would benefit Romania’s development:

Mr. Hoover brought to mind all the assistance which America has given to Roumania, in grave moments, when nobody could even think of this sacrifice. Mr. Hoover sketches the immense advantages that Roumania would have through an economic and financial cooperation with the US. He shows, on the other hand, the impression that [Roumania’s] favoring other states through petroleum concessions would leave among the American financiers and evokes the difficult situation in which Roumania would find herself if deserted by the help of the US—the World’s financial arbiter.⁶²

Surprisingly, Haskell accused the paper of publishing “Standard Oil propaganda” and insisted on the clear separation of the mission on the ground from the article’s assertions. The company apparently contacted Hoover to add extra pressure on the conditionality of food relief during negotiations with the Romanian government.⁶³ Nonetheless, the ARA representatives in the field, such as Haskell, insisted on their detachment from these tensions and protested against accusations of hidden agendas.

In a similar vein, in his unpublished memoir, Haskell claimed that when a French officer asked him whether ARA’s presence was related to Standard Oil’s interest in the Romanian oilfields, he responded: “Certainly

61 Joseph Green, Letter to Herbert Hoover, 6 March 1919, Collection Joseph Coy Green, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, CA, USA.

62 Text is directly taken from the translated source in William Haskell, Letter to James Logan, Bucharest, 11 June 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 442, Box 375, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

63 Gheorghe Buzatu, *România și trusturile internaționale până la 1929* (Iași: Junimea, 1981), 102.

not. [...] We are trying our best to help the Roumanian government get back on its feet and take care of its people. We have no other motive."⁶⁴ Thus, publicly, Haskell and other mission representatives relied on a rhetoric that excluded the implementation of aid conditions and the country's domestic turmoil. While it remains unclear how much they knew of the tensions around aid conditions and general institutional fractures, these disputes and blockade threats did represent a political concern for the American representatives in Romania. Ultimately, food was deemed to stabilize the population and eliminate the danger of Bolshevism. In this context, any hurdle in aid diffusion was worrying.

Hoover's relief program chiefly aimed at challenging political problems from an economic and technical standpoint, with food aid at the center of activities. His political goal in the rapid movement of food and medical supplies into Central and Eastern Europe after the end of the war was to stabilize new governments against the influence of Bolshevism. The American policy-makers feared that governments modeled on the radical new Soviet regime might spring up in the uncertain political climate of Central and Eastern Europe and perhaps spread to Western Europe as well. Commenting on post-war Eastern Europe, one of Hoover's assistants said: "bread is mightier than the sword."⁶⁵ Ultimately, for Hoover, fighting Bolshevism was a humanitarian endeavor equal to saving lives from famine.⁶⁶

The Romanian state leadership was, by all accounts, also opposed to Bolshevism and fearful of the menace of potential insurrections. Romanian police records of the time show many investigations of "Bolshevik propagandists" and agitators infiltrating Romanians from Odessa and inflaming fears of the "Russian danger." Brătianu and his administration believed that such insurrections could be stifled through the use of extreme policing and military action. Certainly, the Romanian officials were paying attention to what was happening in Hungary.⁶⁷

In March 1919, Béla Kun's revolutionary government was established in Budapest after he united the Communist and Social Democratic Parties and proclaimed the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Motivated by

64 Haskell, "The Armistice and the Balkans."

65 Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 76–8.

66 Little, "An explosion," 10.

67 Bessarabia Reports, Dosar 29/1918, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania. This series of documents contains investigations of individuals suspected of bringing Bolshevism from Odessa and Bessarabia. The files include newspaper clippings that emphasize the "Russian danger."

Transylvania's incorporation into Greater Romania, Brătianu was determined to push the new frontier with Hungary as far west as the Tisza River. In the process, he sent the Romanian army into Hungary and occupied Budapest by 4 August 1919, with the intention to install a government willing to negotiate and make peace with Romania over the Transylvanian territory. In Paris, he announced that his army had effectively "protected European civilization against the destructive wave of Bolshevism."⁶⁸ At the Peace Conference, he demanded that Romania be rewarded for "having saved Salonika, decongested Verdun, and stopped Bolshevism."⁶⁹

There was a similar level of concern among the ARA relief workers regarding potential Bolshevik insurrections. Reports regarding strikes against a backdrop of scarce food, low wages, precarious infrastructure and corruption worried the ARA workers, who were set to create an anti-Bolshevik shield through food relief. Before the ARA's intervention, the Americans were already worried that riots in Bucharest were caused by Russian and German agitators who had tried to bring Bolshevism into Romania.⁷⁰ The ARA workers in Europe also claimed that American help was needed for Romania to defeat Bolshevism and protect its sovereignty in these early post-war days. Notes that circulated between ARA's European offices stated that unless canned meat, tea or war biscuits but also shoes, uniforms and rifles were sent,

Bolshevism may also break out in Roumania, and then the danger to the whole of Europe will be very great. [...] If the Allies are serious, Bolshevism should be stopped and Roumania should be the guardian against it; it is absolutely necessary that the things required and asked for by the Roumanian Government should be sent immediately.⁷¹

For Hoover and the ARA workers, the emergence of Bolshevism in Romania was more alarming than anywhere else in Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary had already succumbed and Poland was stuck in a war with the

68 Sherman David Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of the Diplomacy of Ioan I.C. Brătianu* (New York, NY: Bookman Associates, 1962), 145; Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804–1920* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2012), 307.

69 Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*, 137.

70 Charles Vopicka, *Secrets of the Balkans* (Chicago, IL: McNally & Co., 1921), 287–9.

71 Horton Telegram, 28 February 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 443, Box 375, Folder 8, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

Soviet Union. However, the ARA leaders acknowledged that Romania represented "the one bulwark of the world against Bolshevism."⁷² Indeed, Romania's political authorities and civilians were arguably committed to the anti-Bolshevik fight. Thus, from the viewpoint of the ARA representatives, "food, and plenty of it, is the only thing that can save the situation, for the Roumanian hates the Russian and all his works, and he will hold out as long as he has sufficient food in this stomach."⁷³

The ARA representatives' anecdotes regarding local aid reception noted that food relief was what the population needed in territories deemed susceptible to Bolshevik insurrections. Speaking of Bessarabia and an attack near the city of Hotin, near Chişinău, in May 1919, John Kaba, the supervising officer of the ARA in Bessarabia, observed that the population was keen to receive the "saving" American assistance of bread, clothing and medicines. "Everybody hailed me as the representative of the Great America, the Saviour of mankind," Kaba boasted.⁷⁴ While Kaba's description of local reception in Bessarabia might have been exaggerated, public sentiments of gratitude and an implicit acknowledgement of American humanitarian aid as an anti-Bolshevik move came in more official forms.

Despite Brătianu's public hubris regarding the role of Romania in European stability, he and his associates feared social disorder at home. Thus, America's food assistance and appeasement of anarchic forces⁷⁵ seemed like an appealing path to social equilibrium. By holding to Romania's barely settled status quo, Brătianu and his ilk saw the protection of the country from Bolshevism as a recognition and legitimization of borders and the Romanian nation-state. The Romanian Prime Minister did not publicly claim this inherent dependency on external aid in order to secure borders and internal autonomy. But Charles Vopicka, the US plenipotentiary minister in the country, recollected Brătianu's acknowledgement of the nexus between humanitarian aid and the defeat of anarchy and Bolshevism. In his memoir, Vopicka quoted the Romanian Prime Minister as

72 Joseph Green to E.A. Peden, 19 March 1919, Bucharest, Collection Joseph Coy Green, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

73 Joseph Green to Robert Taft, 1 March 1919, Register of the American Relief Administration European operational records, Reel 443, Box 375, Folder 6, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

74 John Kaba, "Basarabia," *Politico-Economic Review*, 30 June 1919, taken from Collection USA, Roll 616, Microfilms Collection, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.

75 Alexandru Averescu, Letter to Prefects in Transylvania, 22 March 1920, Fond Ministerul de Interne, Dosar 91/1920, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.

asking “to send another appeal to [our] American government for food and relief, because he fears that Roumania, which all through the war has resisted the Bolshevik influence, might offer a new home for it if the famine is not immediately remedied.”⁷⁶

Queen Marie expressed similar sentiments as the ARA food cargoes entered Romania. Marie had established herself as a lobbyist of Romanian interests in Paris⁷⁷ and an ally of the American humanitarian organizations that were relieving people at home. During and after the war she travelled the country with representatives of the American Red Cross and collaborated with this mission to help the suffering populations, especially children and invalids.⁷⁸ Her relationship with Hoover and the ARA workers was less close, as rarely did she work with this organization on the ground. Yet, in her public statements regarding this mission, she commended America’s “liberality” as key to the consolidation of the Romanian nation-state. While the Romanian political leaders found ARA aid conditions contentious, she publicly stated that through Hoover’s work, the Americans brought “large-hearted and efficient organizers who are helping us to found a work that will remain a national institution that Roumania will carry on after they are gone, an organization that ought to become a blessing throughout the country.”⁷⁹

Overall, as humanitarian efforts via the ARA developed on the ground, Romania’s state leadership considered that social stability and the relief of suffering populations across the country would appease many social challenges, boost sovereignty, and strengthen social, political or economic autonomy. Ultimately, while aid conditionality initially generated the suspicions and tensions among Romanian state leaders, the fear of Bolshevism and anarchy, enhanced by the civilians’ post-war suffering, informed the collaborative nature of the formal reception of ARA’s relief and its workers.

76 Vopicka, *Secrets of the Balkans*, 288.

77 An account of Marie’s lobbying schemes can be found in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), 125–35.

78 Many of these experiences and humanitarian initiatives are collected in Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de Război, 1916–1917*; and Regina Maria, *Povestea Vieții Mele Vol. 3* (Bucharest: Rao, 2013).

79 Queen Marie Memorandum, May 1919, Fond Casa Regală, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania.

Conclusion

In a reflection of the lust for horrific images in the midst of war savagery, Susan Sontag wrote: "War tears, rends. War rips open, eviscerates. War scorches. War dismembers. War ruins."⁸⁰ What Sontag dramatically described in 2003 was true for Romania during and after World War I. By all accounts, Romania's survival of the war became a success story. The conventional narrative claims that this small country defied the odds in its favor, emerging victorious from the brink of total defeat. However, Romania's belligerence brought widespread war destruction, subsequent suffering among the most vulnerable civilians, and an overall inability to address these adversities via state institutions. In this context, American humanitarian aid in the emergency periods of the war and immediately after alleviated suffering.

American humanitarian aid had three intertwining features important for the Romanian arena of reception. First, it was promoted as an expression of American benevolence. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the American relief workers transferred and administered resources for emergency relief in a direct response to the widespread famine, disease and general poverty. Consequently, thousands of Romanian civilians were at the receiving end of a process of assistance sustained by the American humanitarians' conviction of their saving grace. Second, it was political. Romania was, in many ways, a non-exceptional territory of aid giving. In Central and Eastern Europe, Poland captured the most attention from the American humanitarians, followed by Czechoslovakia or post-war Hungary. But Romania's ally war status and feeble position on the fringes of Bolshevik insurrections defined the ways in which the American leadership of humanitarian organizations conceptualized the political implications of aid to this country. Third, it was meant to civilize. In principle, American progressive methods were to be applied to Romania's "primitive social organizations that derived from tribal forms," swarming with "corrupt public officials and politicians."⁸¹ This way, aid was meant not only to address emergencies but also to redeem social, political, and moral "backwardness."

These principles were found in the ARA agenda, which carried multiple missions: charitable, political, and profoundly civilizing. These were coupled with the underlying economic interests developed in credit-

80 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY: Picador, 2003).

81 This was a recurrent assessment of Romanian villages. See "Romania's Internal Policy Since World War I," Romanian Internal Policy Collection, Box 36, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA, USA.

schemes embedded in relief management. These dimensions met in the applicability of conditionality, this organization's primary *modus operandi* in the process of aid diffusion. In this context, Romania's ruling Liberal Party interpreted this brand of humanitarianism as interventionist and a significant threat to the status quo achieved through the 1918 Unification. At the same time, domestic fears of Bolshevik invasion, social combustibility, and anarchy took precedence over and highlighted the arguably disjointed political reception of ARA aid. Ultimately, if emergency relief meant immediate survival for war sufferers, it also tied into the long-term national ideal of Greater Romania.

The lens of humanitarian aid reveals a transnational history of Romania immediately after the war that draws attention to new narratives and interpretations regarding a period of deep sociopolitical transformation. It further challenges the conventional narratives of diplomatic success, with the Paris Peace Conference representing a zenith of Romanian political prowess. In fact, the story of humanitarian aid diffusion, and its reception primarily via the Romanian political leadership, reveals that the post-war period was one of tension between the ambitious aspirations of nation-building under the umbrella of the Greater Romania project and the realities of hardships and related social and economic challenges "on the ground." The story of humanitarian aid via the ARA is one of contention, compromise and political limits generated by Romania's sociopolitical volatility at the time.

Against the “Imposition of the Foreign Yoke”: The Bessarabians Write to Wilson (1919)

Svetlana Suveica

Abstract: *This article discusses the little-known effort of the “Bessarabian delegation” in Paris against the recognition of the 1918 union of the region with Romania. During the Paris Peace Conference, representatives of the former Bessarabian elite worked along with Russian political émigrés and diplomats to gain Allied support for the anti-Bolshevik campaign and the recognition of Russia’s interest in her former Western gubernias, including Bessarabia. While planning Bessarabia’s return to Russia, the Bessarabians claimed that allowing the inhabitants to express their will through a plebiscite was the only “just” solution for the territory contested by Russia and Romania. The three appeals, addressed in 1919 to the American President, offer “evidence” of the Romanian regime’s abuses in the region, the failure of the American Relief Association in Romania to reach Bessarabia, and the unfair and abusive character of the food distribution in the poorest Romanian region. While appealing to issues of high sensitivity for the Americans, the “Bessarabian delegates” hoped to persuade the American delegates to reject a decision over Bessarabia that legitimized Romania’s rights over the territory, and back Russia’s interest in the region instead.*

On 1 April 1919, *The New York Times* informed its readers that a “Bessarabian delegation” composed of Alexandr N. Krupenskii and Alexandr K. Schmidt had arrived in Paris with a “direct mandate” from the Bessarabian people, who “elected the delegates by popular vote.”¹ In Paris, the “delegates” claimed that the Romanian “occupation” of the region, which had occurred in April 1918, caused “deep indignation and unrest” among the local inhabitants, namely the Russians, who would never accept Romanian rule. According to the article, the Romanian-speaking Moldavians constituted 47 percent of the Bessarabian population, while the rest of population was comprised of other ethnicities, such as Slavs (Russians

1 Charles H. Grasty, “Bessarabians Object to Roumanian Rule. Paris Delegation Says a Plebiscite Would Show Determination to Remain Russian,” *The New York Times*, 1 April 1919. Hoover Institution Archives (further, HIA), Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box VIII Clippings and miscellaneous correspondence, March 1919–August 1919, f. 2.

and Ukrainians), Greeks, Bulgarians, Germans, among others.² Once given the right to express their will, the latter groups would be “overwhelmingly for Russian sovereignty.”³ The refusal of that right would drive the region into Bolshevism, which ran “against her natural inclinations.” The author suggested that Bessarabia could have resisted the Bolsheviks by itself and that the Bolsheviks were Romanians who cooperated with the Bolsheviks “to make trouble” in the region. The article further claimed that the advancement of the Romanian army “would result disastrously for the Allies.”⁴ Created in Odessa in February 1919 to “achieve the liberation of Bessarabia from Romanian annexation and the realization of the aspirations of the people of Bessarabia,”⁵ the “delegation,” led by Alexandr N. Krupenskii, represented the former “old” imperial elite and part of the “new” (revolutionary) elite of the region, who accepted the 1918 Bessarabian autonomy within Romania as a political compromise in the context of the perceived Bolshevik danger.⁶

In the French capital, the Bessarabians worked together with Russian émigrés for the restoration of Greater Russia and the return of Bessarabia under her protection. Whereas the Russian representatives of the Kolchak government defended the case of Bessarabia at Quai d’Orsay, the Bessarabians Alexandr N. Krupenskii and Alexandr C. Schmidt became active in the propaganda sphere. An important part of their activity consisted of drafting memoranda and appeals to the decision-makers in Paris and other European capitals. This article reveals an important segment of that effort by analyzing the strategies and means that Krupenskii and Schmidt used to persuade the American government and its representatives in Paris to contest Bessarabia’s new status as a Romanian province and to impede the international recognition of Romanian claims to former Russian territories.

2 According to the 1897 census, the Moldovans represented 47,58 percent of the population. *Pervaja vseobščaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 goda. T. III Bessarabskaja Gubernija*, pod redaktsiej N.A. Trojnitskogo (Saint Petersburg: Tsentral'nyj Statističeskij Komitet MVD, 1905), XXI.

3 Grasty, “Bessarabians Object to Roumanian Rule.”

4 Ibid.

5 Deklaratsiia, Odessa, 10 February 1919. HIA, Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box II Subject File, Folder Bessarabian commission of the Paris Peace Conference (here and further translations belong to the author).

6 Svetlana Suveica, “Between the Empire and the Nation-State: Metamorphoses of the Bessarabian Elite (1918),” *Euxinos. Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region*, nos. 14–15 (2014): 34–46.

The Americans and the “Bessarabian Question” in Paris

Before World War I, few Americans were acquainted with Bessarabia.⁷ The only event that made newspaper headlines in the United States was the 1903 Jewish pogrom that occurred in Chişinău, at the western periphery of the Russian empire.⁸ The name of the territory reappeared in the American press in 1918 in connection with the fate of Eastern European regions that had faced the disaster of war. After the dissolution of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, the Americans showed willingness to support the populations of new nation-states that faced, in addition to economic breakdown, the spread of Bolshevism. Among the organizations that reached Bessarabia was the American Relief Association (ARA), whose representatives came to the region together with those of the Jewish Distribution Committee and the Belgian Red Cross. The detailed reports of the ARA’s mission representative in Bessarabia, Captain John Kaba, stated that the Romanian regime was met favorably by the majority of inhabitants.⁹ The reports were subsequently issued to the American delegates at the Paris Peace Conference in order to acquaint them with the region.

Before April 1919, the American government had tacitly agreed to change Bessarabia’s status in favour of Romania.¹⁰ The “Black Book,” designed by The Inquiry, recommended to the American delegation at the Paris Peace Conference that “the whole of Bessarabia be added to the Rumanian state.”¹¹ Nevertheless, Romania’s refusal to sign the Minorities

7 Among them was Louis Guy Michael, an Iowa farmer whose notes about Bessarabia were published in the 1980s. Louis Guy Michael, *More Corn for Bessarabia: Russian Experience, 1910–1917* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1983).

8 Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

9 Captain John Kaba, *Politico-economic Review of Bessarabia* (30 June 1919), available at: <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/7313/> (accessed on 26 March 1919).

10 Former US Minister to Romania, Charles J. Vopicka, lobbied for the Romanian cause. He sympathized with the national aspirations of the Romanians and considered Austria-Hungary “the main source of trouble for peace in Europe.” Charles J. Vopicka, *Secrets of the Balkans. Seven Years of a Diplomast’s Life in the Storm Centre of Europe* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1921), 320; On Vopicka’s career in Romania, see Glenn E. Torrey, “The Diplomatic Career of Charles J. Vopicka in Romania, 1913–1920,” in *Romania between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu*, eds. Stephen Fischer-Galati, Radu G. Florescu and George R. Ursul (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1982), 319–35.

11 A map of Romania with Bessarabia included was attached. Outline of Tentative Report and Recommendations Prepared by the Intelligence Section, in Accordance

Treaty, especially the articles granting special protection to the Jews, the advancement of the Romanian army in Hungary and the start of the Hungarian crisis prompted the US government's reticence toward Romania's territorial claims, including the recognition of Bessarabia as a *de facto* Romanian territory.

At the Paris Peace Conference, the Romanian delegation tried to assert the claims included in the 1916 agreement, which the Romanian government had signed with the Allies as a condition for the country's entrance into the war: the restitution of the formerly Austro-Hungarian territories of Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina. The delegation, led by Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu, claimed that Romania had historical and ethnic rights to the former Russian territory of Bessarabia, whose union with Romania in April 1918 fulfilled the people's will. In fact, the Central Powers agreed on the Bessarabian issue,¹² and then the Romanian government negotiated the union with the Bessarabian leaders. On 9 April 1918, the regional diet, Sfatul Țării, voted for Bessarabia's union with Romania, under the condition of regional autonomy. Among the voters was Ion Pelivan, former minister of justice in the Bessarabian Directorate, who joined Brătianu as a technical expert within the Romanian delegation. On 10 December 1918, Sfatul Țării adopted the declaration of a definite union with Romania, and then the body ceased to exist.

In Paris, Romania's claims to Bessarabia were contested by Russia's representatives. Although a Russian delegation was not admitted to the conference sessions,¹³ the Great Powers were willing to recognize the Kolchak government, which made efforts to unite all anti-Bolshevik forces inside Russia. Former Russian diplomats and politicians residing in Paris and elsewhere were given two tasks: to defend Russia's vital interests at the conference and delay a decision on the Russian question until the formation of a widely accepted Russian government after the merger of all

with Instructions, for the President and Plenipotentiaries, 21 January 1919, in David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris with Documents* (New York: Appeal, 1924), 233.

- 12 The peace treaty, signed in Bucharest on 7 May 1918 by Romania, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, did not touch on the status of Bessarabia, but Romania was given a "free hand" to reacquire the region.
- 13 The American delegate Lloyd George favored the inclusion of a Russian delegation in the conference, but Clemenceau opposed it. David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 211–2.

of the anti-Bolshevik fronts. Russia's "vital interests" concerned the borders of Finland, the Eastern borders of Poland, and the borders of Bessarabia, the Caucasus, and the Straits.¹⁴

On 2 July 1919, the Committee of Five invited Brătianu and the Russian ambassador to Paris, Vasilii A. Maklakov, to Quai d'Orsay for separate hearings on the "Bessarabian question."¹⁵ Maklakov, who advocated the Russian position, argued that it mattered little how the vote for the union of Bessarabia with Romania was obtained. Of real significance was how the Bessarabian people would be consulted in the future. He proposed a plebiscite in the region, specifically in the four districts with a Romanian majority, as he assumed that the dominant minority groups in the five remaining districts would automatically opt for Bessarabia's return to Russia. In turn, Brătianu vehemently rejected the possibility of a plebiscite, assuring the Committee that the earlier vote of Sfatul Țării represented the will of the local inhabitants. While admitting the revolutionary character of the Bessarabian diet, he reminded the audience that in Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries, similar bodies expressed the people's will.¹⁶

No specific decision on Bessarabia followed that day, but the Russian representatives felt that they had scored a point against their opponents. Writing to his counterparts in Odessa, Alexandr N. Krupenskii noted that "Brătianu left [Paris] the same evening with his suite and we got the second moral victory, moral because the Conference did not issue any decision, although orally it recognized the need of a plebiscite in those four counties, where the Moldavian population prevails."¹⁷ Convinced that Maklakov "spoke excellently and left a good impression," Krupenskii optimistically observed that the American and English representatives recognized the presence of the "Bessarabian delegation" in Paris, whereas "the French only privately recognize us, not officially."¹⁸

14 A. Neratov—S.D. Sazonov, 2 June 1919 (ru). HIA, Mikhail N. Girs Papers, 1917–1926, Box 43, Folder Russia (Terr[itories] under White armies, 1918–1920). Dobrovol'cheskaja Armija, Denikin, Gen., Mil[itary] oper[at]ions in Don Region and So[uth] Russia. April–May 1919.

15 Among the participants were Lansing (the US), Balfour (the UK), Tardieu (France), Tittoni (Italy) and Baron Makino (Japan).

16 Secret Notes of the Meeting of the Heads of Delegations of the Five Powers held in Mr. Pichon's Room at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, on Wednesday, July 2, 1919, at 3:30 p.m., F.M. Records 15–29, May 14–July 2, 1919, vol. 2, American Commission to Negotiate Peace, 3–4.

17 A.N. Krupenskii—V.N. Tverdokhlebov, copy (Ru). Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box I Correspondence, 1918–1935, Folder Tverdokhlebov, V.N., HIA.

18 Ibid.

At the hearings, the American representative Robert Lansing, who earlier expressed no doubt that "Roumania, in addition to her former territory, should ultimately be given sovereignty over Bessarabia,"¹⁹ showed clear support for Maklakov's position. Already in his earlier correspondence to the Russian Minister to Washington, Boris A. Bakhmetev, Lansing wrote about Poland's ambitions, Bessarabia, and impression that Allies intended to dismember Russia,²⁰ thus, viewing Bessarabia part of the Russian world. Unlike other delegations, the Americans did not support the idea of using Bessarabia as a tool for pressuring Romania to withdraw from Hungary.²¹ Their position, interpreted by the "Bessarabian delegates" as an optimistic sign, motivated the latter to intensify their activity toward securing the Americans as allies.

Bessarabia under Romania's "Oppressive" Regime

Starting in autumn 1919, the Bessarabians most active in the propaganda sphere addressed three appeals to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. The first appeal, issued on 24 September 1919 by Alexandr N. Krupenskii and Alexandr K. Schmidt, aimed at informing Wilson on the state of affairs in the region and persuading him "to compel the Romanian Government to bring to an end the hideous reign and terror now prevailing in Bessarabia owing to the unjustifiable and atrocious conduct of the Romanian authorities there."²²

Krupenskii and Schmidt wrote that the conditions in the region had worsened after the Romanian army, authorized by the Allies and the Central Powers to enter Bessarabia in January 1918 in order to safeguard it from the Bolsheviks, "has taken root there." They claimed that the region had never experienced a serious Bolshevik danger, "owing to the free and prosperous conditions of the country."²³ This position, however, contradicted the argument formulated by the Romanians in Paris: they entered

19 Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations. A Personal Narrative* (Fairfield, IA: First World Library Literary Society, 2004), 190.

20 Wednesday, 9 April 1919. HIA, Robert Lansing miscellaneous papers, XX121, f. 99 (photocopy).

21 Marcel Mitrasca, *Moldova: A Romanian Province under Russian Rule. Diplomatic History from the Archives of the Great Powers* (New York: Algora, 2002), 356–7.

22 A.N. Krupenskii wrote the draft by hand in Russian (here and elsewhere, translated by the author). Prezidentu Wilsonu. Belyi Dom, Washington D.C., Sentjabr' 22, 1919. HIA, Vasili A. Maklakov Papers, Box 27 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Paris Peace Conference. Bessarabian Delegation. Protests to President W. Wilson.

23 Ibid.

the region at the repeated request of the Bessarabian elite due to the violent attempt by the Bolsheviks to take over the region. According to the document, Romania had no right to behave as “the supreme master of the country” and impose “ruthless imperialism” and “Romanianization.” The authors assured Wilson that “the whole civilization and sympathies of the country are Russian and anti-Romanian.” However, the new regime abolished regional autonomy, and dismantled the *zemstvo* and other institutions that were considered “purely Russian in character.”²⁴ The Romanian public employees and gendarmes, apparently notorious throughout Europe for their corrupt practices, started to demand bribes and extort goods from the Bessarabian population; various social groups were exposed to oppressive measures. The intelligentsia “suspected of Russo-ophile tendencies” was “tortured” until it “consented to give information concerning men and women who have become obnoxious to the Romanian authorities.”²⁵ For those with the right to vote in the first parliamentary elections (planned for November 1919), the vote was declared compulsory: a fine would be imposed on those who did not vote.²⁶

The authors underlined that Romania’s “oppression” of Bessarabia was worse than that of the Austro-Hungarian regime in Transylvania: “The worst features of the Magyar persecutions from which the Romanian population of Transylvania suffered before their liberation are being thrown into the shade by the atrocities that are to-day perpetrated by the Bucharest Government in Bessarabia.” The “abusive behavior” of the Romanians referred to their treatment of professional and social groups, whose members refused to take the oath to the Romanian king. This included 250 judges who refused to serve in the newly established tribunals,²⁷ and “hundreds of schoolmasters and priests [who] have been flogged or imprisoned or deported—sometimes all three—while many others have been shot down in cold blood.”²⁸ According to the appeal,

24 The *zemstvo* was a local institution of self-administration introduced in Bessarabia in 1864.

25 According to a hand-written draft in Russian, a British officer and several French officers who travelled to southern Bessarabia confirmed the described situation in the despatches addressed to their governments. Prezidentu Wilsonu. Belyi Dom, Washington D.C. Sentjabr’ 22, 1919, f. 2.

26 The indicated sum of 1,000 lei did not coincide with the 20 to 500 lei indicated in art. 53 of the Decree-law on electoral procedure of 14 November 1918 (*Monitorul Oficial*, no. 191, 16 November 1918).

27 “Spisok lits Kishinevskogo Uezdnogo Siezda Mirovykh Sudei” named 32 judges. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), P3439 Komitet Spasenija Bessarabii, opis 1, d. 15, f. 38–40.

28 The school teachers Nadezhda Terletskaia and Nikolai Musatov claimed that 133 teachers from Chişinău city, on which 463 family members relied, refused to take

"whole villages have been burned down because the inhabitants have refused to take the Romanian oath." This latter declaration was an exaggeration without documentary support. The appeal also touched on the US support given to Romania through the ARA. The signatories claimed that the foodstuff sent to Bessarabia from the US and other countries was "appropriated by the Romanian authorities for their own people," with only a small quantity reaching local Bessarabians. Thus, people died "as a result of the Romanian barbarity of this kind."²⁹

Since the conference turned down Romania's appeals for permission to annex the region,³⁰ the appeal signatories argued that the Bessarabians should be allowed to decide their own fate³¹: "we should be allowed to determine our own future by means of a plebiscite, taken under control of the Great Powers and guaranteed against Romanian interference. We are content to stand or fall by this test alone." Wilson was expected "to intervene immediately and bring to an end these abominable atrocities, this intolerable persecution" that the local inhabitants suffered.³²

The authors gave up their initial idea to "ask for complete independence from both Romania and Russia," as inserted in the first draft of the document. The appeal did not clearly advocate for the recognition of an independent Bessarabian state, toward which neither Romania, nor Russia could express territorial claims. Rather, the authors indicated support for a plebiscite as a way to determine the future status of the region. It was expected that the minorities in the region would return a favorable decision that would serve as basis for rejecting Romanian rule. The Russian minority, in particular, had never been happy with Bessarabia's new political status and expected a political change: first, against Romania,

the oath to the king. Another document signed by Musatov mentioned 124 teachers serving 426 family members. *Kak prisjagali učitelja Bessarabii v nachal'nykh shkolach*. 26 avgusta 1919 g. HIA, Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box 8 Cuttings, Envelope: Tsyganko.

29 Prezidentu Wilsonu. Belyi Dom, Washington D.C., Sentjabr' 22, 1919.

30 The authors hinted at the apparently favourable result of the 2 July hearings.

31 This phrase, inserted in the draft, was crossed out: "We ask for complete independence from both Romania and Russia. We ask for nothing more and nothing less, and nothing better than that we should be allowed to express our will as to our future by means." The idea that Bessarabia should exist as an independent country was not inserted in the final version of the document.

32 Alleged Atrocities by Romania. Bessarabian Appeal to President Wilson. Remarkable Statements (Paris, 24 September 1919), 5. According to Krupenskii's personal notes, the text was reproduced in *The New York Times* and *The Morning Post* of 26 September 1919.

then, in favor of Russia. Copies of the appeal were distributed among Russian émigrés in Paris and elsewhere and published in the press. There is no documentary proof on an official response to the appeal.

For a Plebiscite, or What the Bessarabians Wanted

On 28 October 1919, the “Bessarabian delegation” issued its second appeal to US President Woodrow Wilson. This time, the signatories, who pretended to represent large parts of the Bessarabian population,³³ sought to make Wilson aware of the “will” of the Bessarabian people. The ten-page document echoed the first appeal in describing the abusive nature of Romanian rule in the region, that Romania’s annexation of the region “enforced in defiance of all right and justice, of the expressed will of Peace Conference, of the sacred right of peoples to determine their own fate, and in flagrant abuse of the laws of civilisation.”³⁴ Apparently, the Bessarabians expressed “legitimate resistance” against the imposed “foreign yoke,” thus proving that they did not desire a union with Romania. What the local inhabitants sought was for “their wishes to be ascertained by means of a plebiscite, taken under Allied control and free from Romanian interference, exactly similar to that which was taken a few weeks ago in Luxembourg.”³⁵ The claimants assured Wilson that the number of those who expressed their will against the Romanian regime “has been seriously reduced by wholesale deportations, deliberately carried out by the Romanian Government in order to prevent the voice of free Bessarabia from being heard.”³⁶

33 The Odessa Committee for the Salvation of Bessarabia, which also included Krupenskii, initiated the mandate of a “Bessarabian delegation” to Paris. The four “Bessarabian delegates,” Alexandr N. Krupenskii, Alexandr C. Schmidt, Alexandr D. Krupenskii (a relative of A.N. Krupenskii), and Vladimir V. Țiganko, held mandates from several social-political organizations, such as the Union of Bessarabian Great Landowners, the Bessarabian Central Peasants’ Committee, the Bessarabian Provincial Council of Zemstvo, the Union of Cooperatives of Southern Bessarabia, and the Union of the Unions of employees of government and public institutions of Bessarabia.

34 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America. Paris, 28 October 1919. HIA, Vasiliu A. Maklakov Papers, Box 27 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Paris Peace Conference. Bessarabian Delegation. Protests to President W. Wilson.

35 In the referendum of 28 September 1919, the population of Luxembourg voted in favour of the monarchy and for an economic union with France.

36 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 28 October 1919, f. 2.

The arguments on which the Romanian government based its claim on the right to annex Bessarabia—historic rights, the nationality principle, and Sfatul Țării's vote in favor of the union with Romania—were vehemently rejected. "Romania has not and has never had historic rights over Bessarabia," since in 1812, when Bessarabia became part of the Russian Empire, Moldova and Wallachia were still "two Turkish provinces." The fact that the Ismail county was part of Romania from 1856 to 1877 was insignificant, compared to 107 years of Russian rule.³⁷ The appeal acknowledged the principle of nationality as the main structuring concept in the creation of the post-war order, a principle crucial for the Bessarabians who possessed "the right to determine their own future by means of a plebiscite." The authors further considered the Romanian claim to the nationality principle as "fallacious," since only 47.5 percent of the population belonged to the "Moldavian race, and between the vast majority of these and the Romanian people there is no sympathy of any kind." The appeal pointed to the different Latin and Cyrillic alphabets used by the Romanians and the Moldavians to support this claim. Moreover, the local population apparently insisted on referring to itself as "Russian Moldavians," in order to purposely dissociate themselves from the Romanians. "The Bessarabian Moldavians, who are mostly of the peasant class, consider it useless to study any other tongue than Russian."

The appeal also challenged the legitimacy of the vote of Sfatul Țării in favor of Bessarabia's annexation to Romania. The authors argued that the vote occurred in the presence of the Romanian troops, which "were occupying Bessarabia with the consent of the German Government alone."³⁸ Additionally, Sfatul Țării was not a representative body, but "a fake or bogus organization, expressly created and maintained by the Romanian Government, in flagrant defiance of the wishes of the Bessarabian people, and used to delude the Entente Powers." It was a "purely Romanian instrument, willfully and intentionally used by the Romanian government to infringe constitutional methods," and therefore, "the so-called votes in favor of annexation were obtained by fraud and violence, under the actual physical pressure of Romanian machine guns and bayonets in

37 The document specified that "in exchange for the Ismail county, taken from Romania in 1878, she was given a much more important territory, the region of Dobrogea," and the act "more than compensated her for any loss she may have suffered." On Romanian rule in Southern Bessarabia and the "Ismail anomaly" within the Russian empire after 1878, see Andrei Cusco and Victor Taki (with O. Grom), *Bessarabia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2012), 234–61.

38 According to the first appeal to Wilson, the Central Powers and the Entente consented to the occupation of Bessarabia by the Romanian troops.

the meeting place of the Sfatul Țării itself.” Those who attempted to oppose the vote had no chance, risking deportation or imprisonment. The appeal claimed that under such “questionable” circumstances, the pro-union resolution lacked any constitutional value.

Based on these arguments, the Conference’s delegates could not support Romania’s “impudent attempt to bluff the Entente Powers.” Without the right to possess Bessarabia, Romania “deliberately created conditions of Bolshevik anarchy” in the region, and then refused to withdraw after order was re-established. The document stated that after the 1917 Revolution reached the Russian western periphery, the situation in the region “remained calm, and was free from the disorders and excesses that swept over the rest of the Russian Empire.” Apparently, Romania was to blame for allowing a large number of emissaries from Petrograd to enter the region, “to stir up trouble” in Bessarabia. The leaders of these emissaries, former members of the Petrograd Soviets of the Workers and Soldiers, Ion Inculeț and Constantin Erhan, labelled as “Romania’s Bolshevik agents,” began to “raise the Moldavian national question in a way inimical to Russia.”³⁹ They advocated the annexation of the region to Romania together with Constantin Stere, “a pronounced pro-German Romanian, who had carried on a covert pro-Romanian campaign in the province.”⁴⁰ Consequently, Bessarabia fell into a state of anarchy.⁴¹

The “Bessarabian delegates” tried to convince the American president that the locals responded with reticence, despite the joint efforts of the Romanians and the Bessarabians to raise the national question in favor of Romania. Apparently, a condemnation by the Bessarabian public of the agitation “for annexation to Romania, and expressing fidelity to Russia” followed. Once the Romanians understood the gravity of the situation, that people opposed the annexation, they proceeded to create Sfatul Țării, “an instrument that should provide it with some kind of apparently constitutional justification for annexing the Province.” The diet was monopolized by the Moldovan soldiers of the Russian army from the Romanian front. At the same time, bodies like the zemstvo, elected by universal suffrage, were allotted one seat each. The zemstvo and municipality representatives “assumed an actively hostile attitude” and the “Socialist parties entirely withdrew,” so that only soldiers and peasants remained in Sfatul

39 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 28 October 1919, f. 3.

40 Constantin Stere persuaded the Bessarabian delegates to vote for the union. Andrei Cușco, “Constantin Stere, the ‘Bessarabian Question’ and the Romanian Foreign Policy Debates in the Early XXth Century,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 60 (2012): 204–25.

41 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 28 October 1919, f. 5.

Țării. The authors concluded that the vote for the union was expressed by “a typical Soviet, organized, maintained and protected by the Romanian Government,” a “travesty of a National Council.”⁴²

Despite their critique of the vote, the authors framed it as the “last stand” of the “Bessarabian national spirit” against the annexation: “In spite of its absolutely non-representative and undoubtedly Bolshevik character, there was still sufficient Bessarabian national spirit left among the members of this so-called Sfatul Țării to render it impossible for the Romanian Government to obtain from it a vote for the unconditional annexation without considerable difficulty.” The signatories claimed that one group of deputies was shot dead just before voting,⁴³ and other acts of intimidation caused the deputies of the Peasants’ Faction of Sfatul Țării to abstain from the vote.⁴⁴ Thus, the only members who voted for the union were the militaries and representatives of the Moldovan Bloc, which held pro-Romanian ideas.

Although accepted by the Romanian government on 9 April 1918, the guarantee of regional autonomy, understood by the “Bessarabian delegates” in key for the preservation of all “Russian democratic governmental institutions” and Russian laws, was never respected. Therefore, the cancellation of autonomy after several months of “a reign of terror” came as no surprise to them.⁴⁵

42 Ibid., f. 7.

43 The representative of the Gubernial Executive Committee of the Soviet of Deputies of Soldiers and Workers T. Cotoros, the vice-minister in the Directorate of Agriculture of Bessarabia Pavel Ciumacenco, the former president of the 3rd Peasants’ Congress Vasile Rudiev, as well as the deputies V. Vranov, I. Panzîr, D. Prahnițchi and Litvinov were shot. Iurie Colesnic, *Chișinăul și chișinăuenii* (Chișinău: Ulisse, 2012), 131. The president of the Gubernial Executive committee of Peasants of Bessarabia Panteleimon Erhan saw Rudiev’s body at the scene of the crime and described the murder to the Peasants’ deputies. V.V. Țiganko—A. N. Krupenskii, Paris, 30 okteabrea 1919 g. HIA, Vasili A. Maklakov Papers, Box 17 Subject file, Folder Bessarabia. Correspondence—Krupenskii, 1919.

44 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 28 October 1919, f. 7. On the position of the leader of the Peasants Faction Vladimir V. Țiganko on the union act, see Svetlana Suveica, “The Bessarabians “between” the Russians and the Romanians: The Case of the Peasant Party Deputy Vladimir V. Țiganko (1917–1919),” in *Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania. Perceptions, Mentalities, Propaganda*, eds. Sorin Radu and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), 215–50.

45 The document claimed that the final declaration of the union of Bessarabia with Romania of 10 December 1918 was voted on by 38 deputies, and rejected by 8; thus, 114 of the 160 deputies were absent (To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 28 October 1919, f. 8). The minutes of the last session of Sfatul Țării were very brief (Ion Țurcanu, *Sfatul Țării. Documente. Procesele-verbale ale ședințelor în plen*, vol. 1 (Chișinău: Știința, 2016), 738–41). The personal notes of former Sfatul Țării

According to the appeal, Brătianu admitted that Sfatul Țării was a revolutionary body but refused to accept that the population of Bessarabia should be allowed to decide upon its own future by means of a plebiscite. However, Lansing had allegedly expressed this idea during the hearings. The appeal pleaded with the US President to “intervene in aid of the oppressed people of Bessarabia” and ask for the withdrawal of the Romanian troops that “entered Bessarabia under entirely false pretences, which have fomented and maintained disorder in the province instead of suppressing it, treated the helpless population with unheard of ferocity, and deliberately deceived and misled the Entente Powers as to their real aims and policy.” Wilson would not dare to ignore the plea, since “all Bessarabia asks is to be delivered from the tyranny of Romania, and to be left free to work out her own economic and political salvation under the protection of the Powers of the Entente.”⁴⁶

The Russian representatives in Paris were well aware of the fact that the “Bessarabian delegates” tried to persuade the Americans. The note, issued on 8 December 1919 to the American delegate Frank Polk, is a proof in this sense:

“The regime established by the Romanians in Bessarabia continues to raise a number of complaints formulated by the people against the actions of the Romanian authorities. It would be very desirable if the American Government in Bessarabia sends an official delegate to take the account of the scenes of persecutions to which the population is exposed.”⁴⁷

The private correspondence between two Russian diplomats, Vasili A. Maklakov in Paris and Boris A. Bakhmetev in Washington, offers further details on the matter:

Under the heavy oppression of the Romanian authorities, the Bessarabian population is desperate and constantly complains about the violent Romanianization of the region. The initiative to send an international commission to investigate cases on the spot allows for insufficient impartiality on the part of the representatives of certain powers. Therefore, it would be highly desirable to send an American delegate to Bessarabia who could personally attest to the unacceptable administration of the Romanian authorities. Such a business trip could take place on the same basis as Hoover’s trip to Czechoslovakia and Poland, Morgentau’s to Lithuania and Gade’s to

deputies suggest that the voting was held in the middle of the night without quorum, and implied pressure and tricks (Moja beseda s deputatom Sfatul Țării Pânteii 27 nojabria 1918 g., by Teodor Buciușcan. HIA, Vasili A. Maklakov Papers, Box 18 Subject file, Folder 18.4. Bessarabia. Protests against Romanian authorities).

46 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 28 October 1919, f. 8.

47 Peredano lično bar[onom] Schillingom amerikanskomu delegatu Polku, Paris, 8 December 1919. HIA, Mikhail N. Girs Papers, Box 42 Subject file, 1916–1926, Folder 42.7 Romania, conditions and events, November–December 1919.

the Baltic States. Of course, a careful selection of the right person is needed. The need for such a business trip should not be motivated by our request, but by a recent appeal of the Bessarabians to Wilson. Polk, to whom I expressed these views before his departure, treated them with sympathy and promised to carefully consider the issue upon returning to America. Please do us a favour and talk with the American government and, if possible, influence the sending of the aforementioned delegate.⁴⁸

Vasilii Maklakov shared the opinion of his counterpart: "If America uses this request, it should be done as if it was not our initiative, but a response to the plea of the representatives of the local population, to whose situation we could not stay indifferent. Such a position would ease the solving of the issue, thus justifying America's position before Romania."⁴⁹

The appeals of the "Bessarabian delegation" were presented as proof of the will of the Bessarabians, which was considered essential for the cause. It was easy for the Conference delegates, namely the Americans, to justify a decision based on the "will" of the people.

A Proposal for an American Commission in Bessarabia

On 20 December 1919, the "Bessarabian delegation" in Paris made another attempt to inform the US President that American intervention was needed to solve the Bessarabian issue against Romania's will. The appeal, signed by Alexandr N. Krupenskii only, was sent to Washington D.C. through Frank Polk.⁵⁰

Whereas the previous two appeals, of 22 September and 28 October 1919, attempted to present the state of affairs in the region and describe the "tragic situation" that Bessarabians faced as the result of the "barbarous methods employed in the Province by the Romanian authorities," the third appeal pointed to the stringent necessity of finding a solution to the "cry of distress of the people of Bessarabia." During the first all-Romanian parliamentary elections held in the region in November 1919, "innumerable acts of savage oppression and unwarrantable coercion" allegedly took place. Subsequently, the region's inhabitants expressed "an even

48 S.D. Sazonov—B.A. Bahmetev, 11 dekabnja 1919 g. HIA, Russia. Posol'stvo (U.S.), Reel 23 (Box 22, Subject file, 1897–1947, Folder 22.5 Bessarabia, 1919).

49 Ministr—Bakhmetevu—Washington, Paris, 29 dekabria 1919 g. HIA, Mikhail N. Girs Papers, Box 42 Subject file, 1916–1926, Folder 42.7 Romania, conditions and events, November–December 1919.

50 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, 20 December 1919. The first draft was written in French by A.N. Krupenskii on 12 December 1919 (A son Excellence Monsieur le President W. Wilson, Washington, U.S.A., 12 December 1919). HIA, Vasilii A. Maklakov Papers, 1881–1956, Box 17, Folder Bessarabia. Paris Peace Conference. Bessarabian delegation. Protests to President W. Wilson.

more intense hatred of everything that is Romanian"; they hated not only the Romanian administration, but also everything related to Romania. Krupenskii claimed that the general dissatisfaction grew and intensified, reaching a boiling point.

According to the text, Polk was on the side of the Bessarabians, thinking that Romania "had no right to treat Bessarabia as a conquered country and as territory forming part of the Romanian realm," and that the issue "can only be definitely settled when a Russian Government, recognized by the Powers, shall again exist at Petrograd or Moscow." Polk repeatedly informed the Romanian government of his position, but the Romanians paid no attention to it and instead, he said, continued to speculate on the "fallacious and immoral principle of *beati possidentes*" (blessed are the possessors), which favored Romanians while obliging the Russians to prove their claims. In such a situation, further action was required. "Moved by the pleadings and the cries of suffering" that reached them in Paris, the "Bessarabian delegates" asked the Peace Conference to dispatch a commission of the representatives of the Great Powers to the region. "Armed with full authority to control the conduct of the Romanians there," the commission would record the complaints of the local population against the new regime. Therefore, "for the purpose of making a thoroughly independent investigation" into the state of affairs in the region and informing the US Government of the situation, the appeal asked Wilson to send an American commission, or a single representative, to Bessarabia.⁵¹ Krupenskii appeared convinced that the Romanian authorities were ready to prevent an independent investigation in Bessarabia. Despite the request, the commission had little chance to succeed. The "Bessarabian delegates" anticipated a display of excessive "courtesy" towards the Americans by the Romanian authorities and expected that local Bessarabians would fear speaking out and testifying on Romanian abuses.⁵² Such behavior would serve as additional proof that the Romanian authorities had something to hide. However, the "delegates" expected that a positive decision "would do much towards lessening the sufferings and improving the unhappy lot of our 2,700,000 compatriots" and thus have a greater effect than verbal instructions, which went unnoticed

51 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 20 December 1919, f. 2.

52 Such a situation occurred in July 1919, when the French geographer and professor Emmanuel de Martonne was dispatched to the region as the technical expert in the Tardieu Commission. Svetlana Suveica, "Between Science, Politics and Propaganda: Em. de Martonne and the Debates on the Status of Bessarabia (1919–1920)," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 58, no. 4 (2017): 591–614.

by the Romanian authorities. Krupenskii mentioned that the Russian representatives in Paris would not oppose the proposal. The appeal concluded that with the help of Wilson's "humane intervention, an enormous amount of undeserved suffering will be avoided and the lives of many helpless people spared."

The annexes attached to the appeal further supported the need to send an American commission to Bessarabia. The newspaper excerpts in Annex 1 detailed the manipulations and abuse carried out by the authorities during the first parliamentary elections in Bessarabia. According to an extract from the Bucharest newspaper *Dimineața* (13 November 1919), various irregularities were observed during the electoral campaign: the population was not properly informed about the election procedure; not all citizens with the right to vote were registered, due to the incapacity of the Ministry of Interior representative Vasile Bârcă; the authorities imposed a strict censorship on the opposition newspapers; no election propaganda was permitted; and the campaign materials of the Bessarabian Peasants' Party were printed at public expense. Annex 2 contained an extract from the Bucharest newspaper *Epoca* (11 November 1919), which characterized the parliamentary elections as a "farce" and a "parody." The "votes for the Government candidates have been torn from the people under threats of the worst reprisals" executed by gendarmes. Only 25 percent of the ballots were distributed to the voters, the rest being dropped into the ballot boxes by secret agents. The author of the appeal expected the invalidation of the elections in both Bessarabia and the rest of the country.⁵³ An independent American commission was thus required to investigate the oppressive Romanian regime in Bessarabia.

The State of Affairs in Bessarabia: An Account of the Belgian Red Cross

Annex 3 was an extract from *Enquête en Serbie, Roumanie et Bessarabie sur les conditions sanitaires de ces pays et sur les besoins en médicaments et pansements de leurs habitants*. That report, written on 15 September 1919 by Dr. Georges Brohé, a surgical assistant in a Belgian hospital and member of the Belgian Red Cross Society, described the condi-

53 Despite various illegalities, the elections were validated. Svetlana Suveică, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic (1918–1928): modernizare prin reforme* (Chișinău: Pontos, 2010), 64–81.

tions of hospitals in Serbia, Romania, and Bessarabia that Broheé had visited. The draft text of the report, kept in the A.N. Krupenskii files, was apparently reviewed by the head of the "Bessarabian delegation."⁵⁴

While describing the disastrous situation of the health system in general, and of hospitals in particular, the author made reference to the Romanian administration in Bessarabia. He mentioned the attitude of the local inhabitants toward the new measures and the employees responsible for their implementation. The author claimed that the lack of medical staff in hospitals was due to the refusal of the Russian doctors⁵⁵ to take an oath to the king. Consequently, these doctors were fired and replaced with young and incompetent medical students with "no knowledge of the minds and souls of Bessarabians," an important quality for one who sought to work with and for the population. Broheé mentioned that besides doctors, teachers, servants, lawyers, clergy and militaries refused to take the oath to the king. This was a conscious action that demonstrated group resistance toward the new regime:

One cannot but admire the action of this galaxy of educated people in showing, by stubbornly refusing to take the oath, their opposition to the brutality and the arbitrary and violent policy of the Romanians, despite the bitter poverty and suffering which must inevitably follow their decision to sacrifice their sole means of earning a livelihood, and also despite the innumerable petty annoyances which their so-called "liberators" inflict upon them.⁵⁶

Broheé also compared the Romanian and the Russian regime in the region. Thus, Romanian manners and customs are totally different from the Russian manners and customs. Moreover, the Romanians are directly regarded as an Army of Occupation, which is applying a very strict regime, filled with all kinds of vexations for the population—a reign of arbitrary methods, wholesale bribery and corruption in the era of gendarme. Bessarabia reminded him of "a new Alsace-Lorraine": similar to the Germans who did not accept French rule, the Bessarabians, "including even the Moldavians, will never accept the Romanian yoke." This was apparently due to the harsh Romanianization measures implemented in the province.

54 The draft text of the report suggests that Krupenskii reviewed the report. *Enquête en Serbie, Roumanie et Bessarabie sur les conditions sanitaires de ces pays et sur les besoins en médicaments et pansements de leurs habitants*, 15 September 1919. Alexandr N. Krupenskii Papers, Box III Speeches and Writings, 1919, Folder Sanitary Conditions in Serbia, Rumania and Bessarabia, HIA.

55 The author meant doctors who had served in the Russian empire, not necessarily ethnic Russians.

56 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 20 December 1919, f. 2.

At the same time, Russia, “will never endure the amputation from her territory of the rich and fertile land of Bessarabia,” and therefore the author considered *reconquista* to be Russia’s next step.

Broheé avoided mentioning that in his willingness to regain the “lost land”, Russia played an important role in fuelling the above-mentioned “collective opposition” to the new regime. Instead, he insisted that the intellectuals who opposed the new regime “support themselves by the most menial labor, while awaiting their liberation by their real country, Greater Russia, when it shall have been freed from the nightmare of Bolshevism.” According to Broheé, bribery and corruption were at large in Romania. Goods were sold in Bessarabia at twice the price as in other parts of the country:

In Romania everything is for sale, anything can be bought, even in broad daylight—honours, services, permits, passports, decisions of the courts of justice. The man who is prepared to pay enough can get everything he wants. At the moment of my departure from Bessarabia the Royal authorities have just arrested the Prefect of Kishinev and some of the Divisional Commissioners on charges of forgery, theft, sale of permits, passports, etc.⁵⁷

According to the author, the Bessarabians who did not accept the Romanian regime, and opposed it in one way or another, had made a conscious choice. Their actions were based on life experience, feelings of loyalty, and disappointment with the Romanians who did not tolerate “the other.” Opposition groups could be found across various social strata, not only among former elites, claimed Broheé. These groups hoped that one day they would continue to serve their “own” country, (Greater) Russia.

The American Relief Association in Bessarabia

The third appeal also included an “interview” with the American Red Cross delegate to Hungary, Romania and Serbia, Charles Nelson Leach.⁵⁸ Leach was an American physician who had been asked by Herbert Hoover to work within the Commission for Relief in Belgium until the US entered

⁵⁷ Ibid., Appendix 3.

⁵⁸ It was not a proper interview but rather a reflection by Broheé on their discussion in Bucharest. Although the date was not specified, the discussion probably took place sometime between September and 20 December 1919, the date of the appeal. The text of the annex was presumably reviewed by the author of the appeal, A.N. Krupenskii.

the war in 1917. Afterwards, he served in the American Relief Administration in Vienna, followed by Budapest.⁵⁹ In the Hungarian capital, Leach witnessed the last ten days of the Bela Kun regime, after which he moved to Bucharest where he met Broheé. During their discussion, Leach shared news regarding the occupation of Budapest by Romanian troops, followed by the suppression of communication means and a shortage of the necessary hospital supplies. "Shocked at the Romanian methods and profoundly disgusted with their violence," Leach qualified the Romanians' behavior as "actions of Tziganes in a state of delirium."⁶⁰

At first glance, the Romanian occupation of Budapest did not relate directly to the "Bessarabian question," but the issue was perceived as being of great interest to the conference delegates. Following the occupation, the Great Powers began to pressure the Romanians to retreat from Budapest. The Russian representatives and the Bessarabians, both of which sought the restoration of a Greater Russia, tried to further their cause by discrediting Romania before the Great Powers.

In discussions with his Belgian counterpart, Leach made direct reference to the situation in Bessarabia and the obstacles that the American suppliers encountered on their way to the region.⁶¹ Apparently, Leach was worried that the "Romanian authorities appropriated the goods and, instead of distributing them among the people for whom they were intended, sold them to traders, who in turn resold them to the public at an enormous profit." In such a situation, he saw himself as being forced to stop a shipload of supplies intended for unloading at Galați. Instead, he ordered the vessel to proceed to Istanbul, and then to the Caucasus, with the intention of handing the cargo to Denikin's White Army.⁶² The annex further indicated that the US government refused "the assistance in the form of Red Cross supplies to Romania," planning to extend ample aid to Serbia instead.⁶³

Broheé and Leach agreed that US aid was greatly needed in Bessarabia. "Serbia, Romania and Bessarabia have a great need of medicaments, bandages, linen for the sick and bedding. The whole hospital situation is

59 Leach's personal papers are to be consulted at: HIA, Charles Nelson Leach Papers, 1917–1944.

60 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 20 December 1919, Appendix 3.

61 The issue was briefly mentioned in the first appeal to Wilson on 24 September 1919.

62 Vadim Guzun also mentions that the Denikin army benefitted from the American relief. Vadim Guzun, ed., *Rusia înfometată. Acțiunea umanitară europeană în documente din arhivele românești 1919–1923* (Târgu-Lăpuș: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2012), 43.

63 To the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, 20 December 1919, Appendix 3.

bad" and "Romania has supplied herself from Hungary, at Budapest." Moreover, the Romanian authorities, "owing to their purely Oriental manner, cannot be relied upon to guarantee the honest division and distribution of the goods entrusted to them." Therefore, the ARA should focus on a speedy delivery of supplies to Bessarabia, which was "poorer and more destitute than Romania, depends on the Romanian authorities." To monitor more closely the distribution of pharmaceutical and other products to the local inhabitants, the ARA delegates had to receive additional powers. With the support of the Belgian Minister at Bucharest and the French Consul at Chisinau, the two delegates planned to ask to be entrusted with the division and distribution of the goods in the region.⁶⁴

Several sources suggested that the distribution of American aid was not going smoothly in Bessarabia. Thus, a report of the Jewish Distribution Committee on the situation in Bessarabia, written by Baruch Zuckerman, who visited the region in June 1919, indicated the disastrous situation in the Bessarabian Jewish hospitals, but not the abuses committed by the Romanian authorities. Zuckerman interacted with Cpt. John Kaba, the ARA representative in Bessarabia, who praised the positive changes the Romanian regime had brought to Bessarabia. His account was widely cited by the members of the Romanian delegation in Paris as well as the French and Swiss press sympathetic to the Romanian cause.

Compared with the previous two appeals of the "Bessarabian delegation" to Wilson, the last appeal touched on the American relief for Eastern Europe, an especially sensitive topic for the American government and public. The American politicians were concerned with the efforts made by the American relief organizations in Southeastern Europe in general, and in Romania in particular, because the new democracies in the region faced post-war economic difficulties and the challenge of resisting the "Red Scare." As Doina Anca Cretu put it, "Hoover's relief program chiefly aimed to challenge political problems from an economic and technical perspective, with food aid at the center of activities."⁶⁵ In a report to Wilson, Hoover pointed out that the famine in Russia directly affected the new democracies, and therefore the US had to support the establishment of an "orderly government in these places and getting their people back to production unless they can raise food and necessities for the next year

64 Further research is needed to find out whether certain activities were performed.

65 Doina Anca Cretu, "For the Sake of an Ideal": Romanian Nation-Building and American Foreign Assistance (1917–1940), PhD thesis, The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland, 2018, 114.

and they can or be relieved of the constant threat of Bolshevik invasion.”⁶⁶ In this context, the Congress approved financial assistance to Romania in the sum of \$5,000,000.⁶⁷ The Romanian-US agreement was signed on 28 February 1919.⁶⁸

The Romanian government was conscious of the need for external help. External factors, such as the Civil War in Russia and Ukraine, which led to famine and emigration to the West, further aggravated the post-war economic situation in Romania. A great majority of refugees from Russia and Ukraine, who entered Romania during and after 1919, settled in Bessarabia.⁶⁹ The spread of Bolshevism was greatly feared, and even charity organizations were suspected of spying for Bolshevik Russia.⁷⁰ Therefore, a series of security measures were implemented in Bessarabia, including the state of siege, which gathered harsh critique from the local administration and the population.⁷¹ Sources suggest that food, clothes, and medication were sorely needed in the region, which faced an economic and social disaster.⁷² Given the Bolshevik threat, the food supply that covered the daily needs of local population should be seen as an economic and social stabilizer.

66 Copy, 21 April 1919. HIA, Herbert Hoover Subject Collection, Box 9 Hoover-Wilson Correspondence, 1914–1920, Folder Hoover-Wilson Letters, 1914–1920 (duplicate set).

67 The table on “Preliminary estimate of expenditures of American Relief Administration out of \$100,000,000 fund,” approved by Congressional Act on 25 February 1919, shows that by that date Romania had been granted \$500,000 of the total \$100,000,000. HIA, Folder Wilson, Woodrow, July–November 1919.

68 Gheorghe Buzatu, *O istorie a petrolului românesc*, 2nd. edition (Iași: Demiurg, 2009), 142.

69 The refugees who entered Romania from the east represented one of the biggest challenges for the country after 1918. This immigration took place when the state’s attitude was marked by “nationalist feelings, combined with strong anti-Russian feelings,” and fear for the spread of Bolshevism. Vadim Guzun, *Indezirabilii: aspecte mediatice, umanistice și de securitate privind emigrația din Uniunea Sovietică în România interbelică* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2013), 15, 36.

70 Note of the Bucharest Prefecture on the intelligence activity of the “Garbovetskaya Obshchina” charity sisters within the Red Cross in Chișinău, 2 March 1919, in Guzun, *Rusia înfometată*, 117.

71 Ludmila Rotari, *Mișcarea subversivă din Basarabia în anii 1918–1924* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004); Vitalie Ponomariov, “Zakordotul și activitatea subversivă comunistă din Basarabia în anii 1920–1921,” *Danubius*, 35 (2017): 95–116; and Suveică, *Basarabia*, 85, 89.

72 John Kaba’s observations are revealing. Cited in Cretu, *For the Sake of an Ideal*, 118–9.

By mid-1920, the ARA budget for Romania, Serbia and Czechoslovakia had been reduced.⁷³ Hoover denied involvement in the matter. Some Romanians speculated that Hoover was given privileges in the oil industry, which were later rejected by the government, thus prompting him to negatively influence the US government in regard to the level of aid sent to Romania.⁷⁴ He later received official apologies from the Romanian government.

Conclusions

"After taking into full consideration the general aspiration of the population of Bessarabia and the Moldavian character of that region from the geographical and ethnographical points of view, as well as the historic and economic arguments,"⁷⁵ on 3 March 1920, the Allied Powers pronounced themselves for the union of Bessarabia with Romania. The London declaration stipulated that the interests of the local inhabitants, including the protection of minority rights, were to be respected, and a complete withdrawal of Romanian troops from Hungary had to take place before the Treaty on Bessarabia was to be signed. The treaty that recognised Bessarabia as part of Romania was signed in Paris on 28 October 1920. The US delegation, which showed reticence towards the Romanian claims at the Peace Conference, kept a similar position with regard to Bessarabia. Ultimately, its members refrained from signing the treaty.⁷⁶

This article has asked whether, and how, the activity of the "Bessarabian delegation" in Paris, which worked together with the Russian political émigrés to defend Russia's interests in the former western borderland region, contributed to US positioning on the matter. From September to December 1919, Alexandr N. Krupenskii and Alexandr C. Schmidt addressed three appeals to the US President Woodrow Wilson to draw the

73 The "Preliminary financial report based on estimated expenditures of ARA. European Children's Fund" indicated that for 1 August 1919–1 June 1920 public donations for Romania totalled \$5,135.50, while "A.R.A. stock on hand were proved sufficient to complete feeding program." HIA, Folder Wilson, Woodrow, March 1920–July 1920.

74 Buzatu, *O istorie a petrolului românesc*, 148.

75 Mitrasca, *Moldova*, 96.

76 Recent studies have questioned the earlier interpretation of the 1933 inclusion of a Bessarabian immigration quota within the Romanian quota as a *de facto* recognition of the union act by the United States. Mitrasca, *Moldova*, 391; and Mihai Țurcanu, "Diplomația românească și problema recunoașterii unirii Basarabiei de către Statele Unite (1930–1933)," *Archiva Moldaviae*, 10 (2018), 267–301.

attention of the American leadership to the issue of Bessarabia. The “Bessarabian delegation” sought to influence the US position on the matter so that the Americans would behave reticently towards Romanian interests and favorably towards those of the Russians. The appeals argued that the “Romanian yoke,” installed in Bessarabia in April 1918, involved illegalities, abuses and economic exploitation, and that the local population not only detested it, but actually took an active stance against it. The signatories expected an American commission to visit Bessarabia and document the local situation, which remained unknown outside the region due to the censorship the local population faced from the Romanian authorities. The excerpt from the reports of the representatives of the Belgian Red Cross and the ARA in Romania were attached to the last appeal as proof that Romanian abuses in the region endangered the distribution of American material support which had been offered to the local population in a time of extreme need. The texts, apparently authored by the representatives of the Belgian Red Cross and the American Relief Association, were reviewed by the head of the “Bessarabian delegation” Alexandr N. Krupenskii, the author of the three appeals. The details described in the annexes and the state of mind of the former elite (their life experience, loyalty towards Russia, and disappointment with Romania), which motivated them to take an active stance against the new status of the region, speak for themselves.

The Americans treated with sensitivity and care any public information that cast doubt on their noble effort or revealed any obstacles on the ground that impeded its implementation. The “Bessarabia delegation” leveraged this American expectation to their advantage. They wisely used the Romanian-American diplomatic reticence, which was partially due to tensions over oil concessions in Romania, to fuel rumors about the unfair distribution of American goods in Bessarabia.

At first glance, it appears as though the written appeals addressed to the US President Wilson were an initiative of the “Bessarabian delegates,” but private correspondence between the Russian émigrés shows that in fact the Russians framed the appeals as expressions of the “will” of the local population. This was in line with the post-war guiding principle of self-determination, and allowed the Americans not to justify their harsh position toward the Romanians. The appeals avoided mentioning a pro-Russian perspective with regard to Bessarabia.

There is no indication that the US government took immediate action concerning the pleas in the appeals; official responses to the appeals were missing. Although the pleas had little chance for success, the “Bessarabian delegation’s” efforts fueled the already existing tension between

the US and Romania. The Americans had access to the pleas of the Bessarabian population, which motivated the delegates to claim that the status of the region as a Romanian province could be reviewed based on the "population's will." This strengthened the belief of the Bessarabians who were against the Romanian regime that Russia's interests in the region could be successfully defended.

Made in Paris? Contested Regions and Political Regionalism during and after Peacemaking: Székelyföld and Banat in a Comparative Perspective

Gábor Egry

Abstract: *After World War I, when boundaries were redrawn in Europe, two territories were contested. Székelyföld, the eastern-most part of the defunct dualist Hungary, was predominantly inhabited by Hungarians. Banat, which was to become a borderland of Greater Romania, was home to four significant ethnic groups (Serbian, Romanian, German and Hungarian) and a thriving Jewish community. These historically distinct regions were united with Hungary after the Settlement (Ausgleich) in 1867, but when borders were redrawn they were portrayed as specific entities within distinct national spaces. This article compares how different state and non-state actors capitalized on the distinct nature of Banat and Székelyföld, how different types of arguments were deployed, and how proxies for a plebiscite (national councils, mass assemblies and demonstrations, deputations and memoranda to the Paris Peace Conference) were used to sway the decision to include these regions in Hungary or Romania. These efforts were part of a broader repertoire championing national goals, but in both cases the historical peculiarities and the pre-1918 local social realities fueled regional identities that were distinct from Transylvanianism. The symbolic recognition of these regions as the most authentic Hungarian and Romanian ones during the mobilization of the masses around the Peace Conference reinforced Banat and Székely regionalism, which was then used by rival Hungarian and Romanian nationalist politicians to question the other nationality (distinguishing Székelys from Hungarians or emphasizing the loyalty to Hungary of certain Banat Romanian groups before 1918) leaving the Banat and Székelyföld entangled with different varieties of nationalism.*

Asking someone in Hungary about the Treaty of Trianon would most probably yield an answer resembling a lament about injustice, intolerable loss, mourning, truncation and amputation, and incredible suffering of ethnic kin beyond the Treaty-imposed borders. While most people would use this tone, rooted in the aftermath of World War I, hardly any would

believe that the same tropes, metaphors and emotions dominated debates in the Romanian Parliament during the 1920s. Romania was, after all, the “winner of Trianon,” Hungary’s triumphant neighbor, the nation that to this day defiantly celebrates the anniversary of 1 December to frustrate Hungarians. Most Romanians would be perhaps astounded to learn that during the 1920s the Hungarian political parties sought scapegoats for an alleged national tragedy, warned about the catastrophe that befell the nation, and invoked truncation and injustice when they debated responsibility for the loss of one-third of Banat.

Such unexpectedly similar emotions, surprising as they are, serve only as a secondary motive for taking two symbolically important geographic areas, Székelyland and Banat, and comparing the ways in which the diplomatic struggle for these regions were waged around 1919–1920 related to the phenomenon of regionalism. After all, the making of nation-states in 1918–1920 was the result of a series of decisions over the affiliation of regions with states. These were sometimes simple entities defined by geography or functional regions fostered by economic and communication lines, but some of them had dense histories and symbolic significance for certain national projects, and the people residing in such regions often nurtured a sense of community. However, at the time the broad claims to inclusion or exclusion were mostly based on the idea of national self-determination, and the wide array of ethnic, historic, economic and strategic arguments employed in those debates allows us to interpret the struggles over those regions predominantly as part of the greater national struggle that obscured the specificity and peculiarity of each region.

Both Banat and Székelyland represent cases in which people were mobilized within and outside the region around issues related to regional peculiarity. Both cases figured strongly in the debates of 1919–1920 over the new boundaries of Hungary and Romania. Therefore, I argue, they offer useful insights in the way in which peace-making affected and even transformed regionalism, enhanced the potential of the Székely elite to push back against attempts of subordination from Budapest, and made the interwar regionalism of Banat more dependent on Bucharest, despite the permanent confrontation between the self-claimed Banat regionalists and the Old Kingdom (Wallachia and Moldova) elites.

This article will start by outlining the basics of peacemaking, including the typical arguments put forth by diplomatic contestants, followed by an analysis of the different forms of popular mobilization that took place within and for these two regions. Finally, I will connect the events of those tumultuous years with their interwar afterlife, pointing out the

way in which the struggle of 1919–1920 affected the tenets of regionalism and the debates around these regions' role and status within the nation-states of Hungary and Romania.

Red Lines, White Spots: Peace-making and the Arguments for a New Boundary

The collapse of the dualist Monarchy took place at a breathtaking speed after the Bulgarian armistice was signed on 29 September 1918. While Franchet d'Espérey's troops moved to the north, pushing back a gradually disorganizing Austro-Hungarian army,¹ national councils were formed in the capital cities of the Monarchy and its provinces. In Hungary, István Tisza admitted military defeat on 17 October 1918, and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod announced in the lower house of the Hungarian Parliament that only the Romanian National Party represented Hungary's Romanians and was entitled to decide their fate. A Hungarian National Council was formed on 24 October 1918, and a Romanian one was created on 30 October that same year. Both councils invoked national-self-determination as the guiding principle of their activities. When the Monarchy concluded an armistice on 3 November, the state itself no longer existed. Romania's second entry in the war on 10 November found no real resistance in the then extinct Habsburg army.

The slogan of the day was national self-determination, and national councils acted as the sole representatives of millions of people in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Prague, Turčiansky Sv. Martin, Budapest and Arad, competing for influence and power with councils of workers and peasants.² While advancing armies pushed forward to acquire the territories claimed by their governments, ethnic minorities also founded their national councils: Jews in Cluj, Sighetul Marmației, and Timișoara; Saxons in Sibiu and Kronstadt; and Germans in Timișoara and Budapest. By the end of the year, the Serbian troops had settled on a long demarcation line that left in their possession even more territory than the new South Slav kingdom saw as its rightful share, including Banat, and the Romanian army reached the

1 Hannes Leidinger, *Der Untergang der Habsburgermonarchie* (Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 2017), 292–300.

2 Hatos Pál, *Az elétkozott köztársaság* (Jaffa: Budapest, 2018), 101–20, 128–31, 172–86; Hjdú Tibor, *A magyarországi polgári demokratikus forradalom* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1968); and Gábor Egry, "Negotiating Post-Imperial Transitions: Local Societies and Nationalizing States in East Central Europe," in *Embers of Empire. Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918*, eds. Paul Miller and Claire Morelon (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 15–42.

boundary of the historic province of Transylvania. The Ruling Council (*Consiliul Dirigent*) acted as the government of these territories, whose annexation by Romania was declared at Alba Iulia on 1 December.

A curious moment in the process of imperial dissolution was when important dignitaries and politicians of the Hungarian state set up in Budapest a Székely National Council on 9 November. A few days later, this body was transformed into a broader representative institution, despite the fact that its members, like Miklós Bánffy, István Bethlen or Dénes Sebest, were not necessarily of Székely origin. The Council adopted a plan to erect an independent Székely Republic, tied to Hungary in foreign policy and customs union, which was to be represented at the Paris Peace Conference too. It also organized a mass demonstration in Târgu Mureș on 28 November, but the Romanian authorities soon arrested in Székelyland the key figure of the movement, Árpád Paál, the deputy lord-lieutenant of the Udvarhely county.³ Nevertheless, the situation on the ground remained tenuous,⁴ and a number of Budapest-based organizations conducted propaganda internationally to obstruct the annexation of the region to Romania.

While Hungary's opposition to the annexation of Székelyland was predictable, given that region's predominantly Hungarian population (which represented well over 90 percent of the inhabitants of Csík, Udvarhely, Háromszék, and Maros-Torda counties), its opposition to Banat's inclusion in Greater Romania was difficult to digest in Bucharest. The Entente promised the whole region to Bucharest according to the secret treaty of 1916, but the area was occupied by Serbian troops in November 1918, after which Serbia laid claim to the entire area too.

When the Paris Peace Conference opened in January 1919, Székelyland and Banat were contested regions.⁵ Despite the undeniable Hungarian character of Székelyland, initially no decision-makers wanted to retain it within the borders of Hungary, and the envisioned new Romanian border made such an arrangement impossible. Its future became questioned once the Hungarian delegation arrived in the French capital in January 1920. The Hungarians made a series of proposals that essentially were rejected by all of the other Conference participants, but they still

3 Bárdi Nándor, *Otthon és haza. Tanulmányok a romániai magyar kisebbség történetéből* (Csíkszereda: Pro print, 2013), 62.

4 Judit Pál, "Főispnok és prefektusok 1918–1919-ben. A közigazgatási átmenet kérdése Erdélyben," *Századok*, no. 6 (2018): 1179–214, 1195–98.

5 Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003).

tried to make an argument over the future of Székelyland outside Romania. Banat, a region that was multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan, urban and much more developed than the Székely areas, was a more immediate flashpoint. The Serbian-Romanian struggle for Banat was resolved months before the Hungarian treaty was drawn up in late 1919. After months of diplomatic wrangling, the Conference drew a line and divided the region between two rival states.⁶ The mostly agrarian western plains were annexed by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, whereas the fertile north, the industrial south and the mountainous east went to Romania. Thus, the entire Székelyland was incorporated into Romania, later becoming a so-called “cultural zone,” an area that the Romanian state needed to (re)conquer through energetic Romanianization policies.⁷ By contrast, Banat became a divided area and a symbol of Romania’s failure at the Peace Conference.

What were the most important arguments presented by diplomats at the Peace Conference? How did they reflect the alleged uniqueness of the regions? How were these regions conceived in Paris? Székelyland’s existence at the center of Romania’s national territory was considered an accident. As even the plans least favorable to Romania drew the border hundreds of kilometers westward of this region,⁸ the Romanian politicians never doubted its possession by Romania, and therefore the Romanian delegation did not need an elaborate argument to justify its claim on this specific territory. They emphasized instead the more general arguments according to which the region naturally belonged to Greater Romania: the geographical spread of the Romanian inhabitants in Transylvania, the new state’s strategic need to attain certain natural borders with Hungary and the communication lines cutting across the Székelyland and along the new borders. When it came to mentioning the Székelys, the Romanians carefully distinguished them from the Hungarians, while admitting that the two groups were closely related. Submitted on 8 February 1919, the memorandum presented statistical data on ethnicity in Transylvania and argued that, since the region had strong economic ties with the surrounding Romanian areas, its inhabitants would prefer Romania

6 Ionela Moscovici, “Banatul în așteptarea păcii. Premisele unei misiuni franceze,” *Analele Banatului* (2010): 241–50; Ionela-Felicia Moscovici, *La France et le Banat entre 1916–1919. Les convulsions de la guerre et de la paix*, PhD thesis, Université du Strasbourg, 2013; Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, 120–35.

7 Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation-Building and Ethnic Struggle 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 138–42.

8 Ignác Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: The Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920* (Boulder, Co.: East European Monographs, 2002).

over Hungary.⁹ While the Romanian view easily prevailed in this regard, the Hungarian population remained a thorn in the flesh, despite all its alleged favorable views of the new country. The discomfort they caused in Bucharest was best manifested in a provision of the Minority Treaty for educational autonomy for the Székely and Saxon communities, a provision which the Romanian government originally rejected as an unacceptable violation of sovereignty.¹⁰

Regarding the borders, the Hungarians in Paris proposed a similar argument and emphasized the natural economic, hydrological and cultural unity of the Carpathian Basin and the strategic role of an integral Hungary as the defender of Europe and a necessary cornerstone of European peace. No specific proposals regarding the Székely region were made.¹¹ Surprisingly, the lack of focus on this manifest violation of national self-determination was logical, since the Hungarian delegation considered it realistic to achieve a plebiscite on the entire territory assigned to Romania and did not aim at preserving specific zones with different arguments.¹² In a separate note (No. VIII) the Hungarian delegation did raise the issue of Transylvania, but again without singling out Székelyland. Instead, they proposed a comprehensive reorganization as an autonomous region of a semi-independent Transylvania that would only loosely belong to the Hungarian state. The latter was basically Oszkár Jászi's plan presented in late 1918.¹³ The Székely "anomaly" was only scarcely mentioned,¹⁴ the Hungarian delegates putting more effort in convincing the Peace Conference to return to their country the Hungarian-inhabited strip located along the new borders.

The case of Banat brought to the fore strikingly similar official arguments. Although it never was a distinct political entity like the Principality of Transylvania, Banat was mentioned among the provinces claimed by Romania alongside Transylvania, Crișana, and Maramureș. A separate section of the memorandum detailed the official argumentation, starting from the assumption that "Banat is not a geographic name, but rather a reality, a proper geographic unit and a real province in a political sense, which is an indivisible entity today just as it was throughout history."¹⁵

9 Miklós Zeidler, ed., *Trianon* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 52–8.

10 Lucian Leuștean, *România, Ungaria și Tratatul de la Trianon 1918–1920* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 128–40.

11 Zeidler, *Trianon*, 110–28, 136–45.

12 Ibid., 134–5.

13 Ibid., 128–9, 131.

14 Ibid., 135.

15 Ibid., 56.

However, the Romanian argument, presented by Ion. I. C. Brătianu, aimed primarily at forcing the Great Powers to acknowledge the binding nature of the Bucharest Treaty of 1916,¹⁶ all other points being of secondary importance. Still, to prevent the division of the region between Serbia and Romania, Brătianu elaborated on the uniquely unitary character of Banat, mentioning the presence of a Romanian majority throughout the centuries, the economic complementarity of Banat's sub-regions, the importance of a unified control over the waterways provided by the rivers on and within its borders, and the non-threatening character of the Romanian presence for the South Slav state.¹⁷ The region's ethnic composition was also mentioned, first by arguing that the Romanians constitute the majority of the local population and also populate Banat's western areas, and then even by claiming that the Hungarians and the Germans would prefer to become part of Romania, not of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS).¹⁸

Brătianu's opponents, the South Slav and the Hungarian delegates, did not make strong and specific arguments regarding Banat. The Serbs invoked arguments related to ethnicity, the local contribution of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the economic benefits of acquiring Banat's fertile plains to provide food and raw material for Belgrade. Later, after the South Slavs modified their demands to about one-third of the region, they emphasized strategic considerations such as a significant distance between the capital, Belgrade, and the border.¹⁹

As in the case of Székelyland, the Hungarians made an argument about the unitary character of the country, Banat being one of its important and well-developed parts. Contradicting Brătianu, they also insisted on the willingness of the Banat Germans to side with Hungary and the Hungarians in case a plebiscite was ever organized. Thus, they also questioned the ethnic arguments of the Romanians, pointing out that the Germans and the Hungarians formed together the majority in the region.²⁰

16 Leuştean, *România*, 53.

17 Zeidler, *Trianon*, 56–8; Gulyás László, "Küzdelem egy multietnikus régióért, avagy a Bánság felosztásának (1918–1920) probelamtikája multidiszciplináris megközelítésben," *Múltunk*, no. 3 (2018): 150–205, 169–73; and Moscovici, *La France et le Banat*, 293–305, 312–34.

18 Gulyás, *Küzdelem*, 171.

19 Gulyás, *Küzdelem*, 176, 188; Moscovici, *La France et le Banat*, 135, 394.

20 Zeidler, *Trianon*, 122–3, 134–5.

Masses and Memoranda: Mobilization within and without

Whereas diplomatic arguments and documents on Romanian, Hungarian and Serbian sides refrained from using the particularity of Banat and Székelyland as a strong argument in favor of either one of the claims, in both regions the people felt a sense of being different. Székelyland was a distant, mountainous area, secluded from the center of Transylvania and not easily accessible, apart from its southern part close to the city of Braşov. In the Székely areas mountain agriculture was the dominant economic sector, with light industry (glass making, lumber mills, stitching within households, tobacco) developing in the south, and the exploitation of natural reserves (mainly stone) across the region. Its largest city, Târgu Mureş, was a developing industrial center, but the small towns were often just marketplaces and centers of secondary education.²¹ Western and northern Banat were fertile plains, but the region also included a mountain zone in the east and south, which held rich deposits of coal and iron that could be useful as an industrial base. Thus, Banat had a southeastern industrial zone with steelworks, mines, forestry and lumbermaking that attracted a significant number of immigrant workforce. In the northern and western parts of the region, agriculture was the basic activity, but the richness of the land soon allowed the emergence of food processing industry in large factories. Finally, Banat's unofficial capital and its largest city, Timişoara, was a commercial, industrial and transportation hub. Its labor force reached some 7,000 persons, all working in large factories ranging from machinery production to chemical industries. The city had its own stock exchange and port on the Bega channel.

Thus, the inhabitants of the two regions were also significantly different. The most important aspect in this regard was probably not Banat's larger industrial labour force and the breadth of its educated, modern middle-class, formed mainly of immigrants to the region. What made the Székelys distinct was a long past of feudal privileges that set them apart from the nobility of Hungary and Transylvania and allowed for the region to be reimagined as a collective "feudal nation."²² Those privileges were abolished in 1848, when the Székelys enthusiastically embraced the Hungarian nation and nationalism, but they remained a vivid memory even

21 Judit Pál, *Városfejlődés a Székelyföldön 1750–1914* (Csíkszereda: Pro Print, 2003).

22 According to its constitution, the principality of Transylvania had three privileged groups divided into *nationes* (feudal nations): Saxons (German-speaking Lutherans) and Székelys, both with collective privileges, and Hungarian nobles living outside these regions with individual privileges. All three group sent a specific number of delegates to the legislative body, the Diet.

during the negotiations of 1920.²³ The erstwhile distinct status of the Székelys was often legitimized by their separate descent and ethnic difference from Hungarians: Székelys were descendants of the Huns, but still widely considered the best and the most authentic among Hungarians.²⁴ At the turn of the 20th century this reasoning was adopted on a semi-official basis, when large-scale government-sponsored development projects started in the region. They were justified by the need to save the Székelys, the “best” Hungarians, from being gradually dissolved into the Romanian nation or from being forced out of their backward homeland.²⁵

Such a strong and focused sense of historical peculiarity was absent with regard to Banat. The area was reconquered from the Ottoman Empire in 1716, and until 1778 it was administered directly from Vienna as a laboratory of enlightened absolutist development policies, thus receiving successive waves of colonization.²⁶ The new administration had overlaid almost everything that had remained from medieval Banat, without fostering a common regional identity. Most intellectuals opted for integration into either the Hungarian or the Romanian national movement and retold Banat’s history as part of either Hungarian or Romanian history.²⁷ The Romanian version emphasized the Dacian roots of the territory, the long local presence of the Romanians, and the history of the military frontier with its single Romanian regiment headquartered in Caransebeș. Politically, the region became a battlefield between the pro-Hungarian Romanians, the Romanian national activists, and the repre-

23 Gusztáv Hermann and Zsolt Mihály-Orbán, *Csillagösvény és göröngyös út. Mítosz és történelem a székelység tudatában* (Kolozsvar: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2018), 227–358; Ákos Egyed, *Erdély 1848–1849* (Csíkszereda: Pallas Akadémia, 1998); and Gusztáv Mihály Hermann, *Náció és nemzet. Székely rendi nacionalizmus és magyar nemzettudat 1848-ig* (Csíkszereda: Pro Print, 2003).

24 Hermann, *Náció és nemzet*; Hermann and Mihály-Orbán, *Csillagösvény*.

25 Petra Balaton and Csaba T. Reisz, “A székelyföldi ipari akció,” *Levéltári Közlemények*, no. 2 (2006): 55–122.

26 Irina Marin, *Contested Frontiers in the Balkans: Ottoman and Habsburg Rivalries in Eastern Europe* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

27 Varga Bálint, “Writing Imperial History in the Age of High Nationalism: Imperial Historians on the Fringes of the Habsburg Monarchy,” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, 24, no. 1 (2016): 80–95; and Varga Bálint, “In the Middle of the Nation, on the Margins of the Academia: Historiography in Banat in the Long 19th Century,” *New Europe College Yearbook*, 2012–13, 305–40.

sentatives of the liberal Hungarian governing parties (who often were local large landowners) and their opposition (recent immigrants active in modern professions that flourished due to the richness of the region).²⁸

At the end of World War II, Banat and Székelyland became scenes of revolutionary mobilization against the state administration and for the establishment of national councils. This mobilization, often bearing a violent character, occurred first in the larger cities and later reached the villages.²⁹ In addition, Banat was the scene of a peculiar phenomenon. On 31 October 1918, Social Democratic lawyer Otto Roth announced the establishment of a People's Council and "declared" the Republic of Banat.³⁰ Roth, who henceforth assumed the title of People's Commissioner, referenced the peculiarity of Banat by saying: "We showed the world, we showed our later descendants, that the people of Banat and Temesvár could fight for the republic and a better future without [shedding] blood."³¹ He portrayed the region as a multiethnic one where national differences were of secondary importance.

This was a curious declaration, as most people in the region had a more limited horizon than the social democrat Roth, whose mental map was rooted in this multiethnic movement of organized labour, composed of people who often moved from one place to another. Villagers and inhabitants of smaller urban centers thought in different terms. When months later the counties were reconfigured, the local inhabitants showed that their immediate environment was where they felt most at home. The proposal of the inhabitants of Beliņ is a case in point.³² Around the end of the war the village was transferred from Timiș to Lugoj county (set up by the French occupation authorities in March 1919), a change

28 Ovidiu Emil Iudean, "From Budapest to Bucharest. The Parliamentary Elite of the Banat before and after the Great War," *Banatica*, no. 25 (2015): 375–89; and Elemér Jakabffy, "Krassó-Szörény vármegye története. Különös tekintettel a nemzeti kérdésre," *Magyar Kisebbség*, no. 17 (1940): 386–93.

29 Tibor Hajdu, *A magyarországi*, 92–103; Hatos Pál, *Az eléltakozott köztársaság*, 172–186; Ionela Moscovici, "Violence Variables in the Banat at the End of World War I," *Banatica*, no. 22 (2012): 277–93; and Andreea Dăncilă Ineoan, "Reconsiderations of the Banatian Revolution from the Aftermath of the Great War," *Banatica*, no. 25 (2015): 417–30.

30 It was rather a misunderstood telegram or telephone communication from Budapest stating that the Republic was already announced in the capital. "Konstituierung des Banater Volksrates in Temeswar," *Temeswarer Zeitung*, 1 November 1918.

31 Transl. by Christopher Wendt. See, Christopher Wendt, "Hungary—Republic: The King has Abdicated, A Report from Timișoara/Temesvár," 1 November 1918, available at: <https://1918local.eu/100-years-later/>, accessed on 4 February 2019.

32 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (hereafter, ANIC), Consiliul Dirigent (hereafter (CD), Direcția Administrației Generale, d. 5/1919, f. 49.

that was reversed by the Romanian administration. As the locals' petition pleaded against their re-annexation to the Timiș county, before the transfer to address administrative matters they had to travel to the more distant Timișoara. In fact, the villagers had strong connections with Lugoj, and their economic activity was centered around that city, whereas Timișoara was only a distant administrative center and thus more of a burden than a point of attachment.

Roth's attempt failed to unify Banat's Romanian, German, Serbian and Hungarian national councils, through which the most significant mobilization of masses occurred in the region. In the Székely region non-Hungarian councils were a rarity, but in Banat they were numerous. The Romanian councils politely and diplomatically rejected attempts to become involved with the Hungarian state administration instead of exercising Romanian sovereignty but co-operated with it to preserve public order.³³ But their time arrived only after the withdrawal of the Serbian troops and after the French occupation authorities replaced the Hungarian administration of Lugoj county with a Romanian one in June 1919.³⁴

The Székely National Council was established on 9 November 1918 in Budapest. Initially it was supported only by a few marginalized figures, who sought to use this initiative for restoring their position in politics. These figures eventually entered into conflict with some more influential politicians, who managed to gain control over the Council together with experts such as Miklós Bánffy, Dénes Sebes, István Bethlen, Gábor Ugron and Elemér Jancsó.³⁵ The Council sought national self-determination for the eastern parts of Hungary. The Council did not remain confined to Budapest; Székely National Councils were set up in many cities outside the region, even as far as Sighetul Marmăției.³⁶ In that locality, the initiator was from Miercurea Ciuc, while the vice-president was active in other Székely societies. Such societies had mushroomed all over Hungary after the Székely Congress of 1902, where a large-scale development program was initiated for the region.³⁷

The Council carried out its activity mainly in Budapest. Some demonstrations were organized in Székelyland before the arrival of the

33 Hajdu, *A magyarországi*, 103; Elemér Jakabffy and György Páll, *A bánági magyarság húsz éve 1918–1938* (Budapest: Studium, 1939), 18–9.

34 Jakabffy and Páll, *A bánági magyarság*, 30–2.

35 Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 58–60; “Primipilus”: *A Székely Hadosztály és a Székely Nemzeti Tanács*, “Új Magyar Szemle”, no. 3 (1920): 272–81.

36 *Máramarosi Független Újság*, 23 November 1918, 1–2.

37 Petra Balaton, “A székely társadalom önszerveződése: a székely társaságok I,” *Korunk*, no. 1 (2010): 78–85; and Petra Balaton, “A székely társadalom önszerveződése: a székely társaságok II,” *Korunk*, no. 2 (2010): 71–7.

Romanian troops. The assembly in Gheorgheni was greeted by Gábor Ugron, former Minister of Interior and Royal Commissioner for the reconstruction of Transylvania in 1918. In a declaration addressed to the public, the council announced that the Székelys must fulfil their millennial role of defending Hungary's eastern borders. Ugron called for a new Székely people's assembly at which the Székely leaders would offer guidance.³⁸ But when the Budapest council attempted to organize a mass demonstration against the advancement of the Romanian troops to Târgu Mureş on 28 November, the local Hungarian National Council, whose leaders represented Oszkár Jászi's Civic Radical Party, warned against violence and thus scaled down the event. They were also critical of the way in which Bethlen and his peers "abused" the term Székely because that could distance the Székelys from the Hungarians.³⁹

The Székely National Council actively contested the claims of the Romanian National Council and the Alba Iulia Assembly of 1 December 1918. In mid-November they issued a declaration countering the Romanian historical arguments, most notably the thesis of the Romanian continuity in those lands. It also proclaimed that Transylvania was for four centuries the common homeland of Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons and Székelys. Therefore, any arrangement that would have violated Hungary's territorial integrity was rejected.⁴⁰ A reply to the Alba Iulia Declaration was drafted, the text detailing the specificity of the Székelys. However, the text's reasoning with respect to the inviolability of Hungary's territorial integrity as an economic, cultural and geographic necessity echoed their earlier reply to the Romanian National Council. A clear distinction between the Székelys and the Hungarians was made, postulating that the Székelys preserved their Hungarianness but had been detached from their mother country for one millennium. The text claimed that Romania's annexation of the whole province of Transylvania would lead to the extinction of the thousand-year-old Székely culture, even if the promise of autonomy were respected. The Romanian territorial demands made Székelyföld's secession from Hungary inescapable. Only an independent nation could avoid incorporation into Romania. Based on this argument,

38 A székelyek nemzetgyűlése. Magyarország, 22 November 1918, 2. The tone, style, and phrases used (Székelyland labelled a "Hungarian California") suggest that the declaration was drafted by Ugron's long-time collaborator and supporter, P. Arthur Vákár, a journalist from Gheorgheni. Gábor Egrý, "Regionalizmus, erdélyiség, szupremácia. Az Erdélyi Szövetség és Erdély jövője, 1913–1918," *Századok*, no. 1 (2013): 3–32, 27.

39 János Fodor, "Impériumváltás Marosvásárhelyen 1918–1922," *Múltunk*, no. 2 (2016): 158–60.

40 "A székelyek szava. Az Újság," 26 November 1918, 3.

the Székely National Council handed an ultimatum to the Hungarian government: if there was no chance to retain Transylvania, the Council was to proclaim an independent Székely Republic.⁴¹

This plan was elaborated by Árpád Paál, the deputy lord-lieutenant of Odorheiu county and chairman of the local Székely National Council. The proposal combined Paál's social ideas and the Hungarian national idea, and showed him as an adept of Jászi's civic radicalism and progressivism.⁴² Paál's Székely Republic was imagined as a communitarian state with a dominant public property and a state-managed economy, a state where private initiatives were reduced to the family sphere and a youth labour service provided the workforce for state infrastructure projects. The legitimacy of this Székely republic relied on historical and geopolitical arguments. The historical ones included the unique Székely history, but Paál added that the Székelys, whose territory had been a theater of operations since 1916, suffered more during the war than other Hungarians. In geopolitical terms, Paál drew an analogy between Székelyland and Switzerland, a country he understood as a necessary neutral zone at an important boundary between four major powers. He argued that Székelyland fulfilled the same function in Eastern Europe, mitigating the dual threat of communism and the "yellow Asian race," both coming from the East. For him, the Székelys were especially adept to ward them off due to their traditional communitarianism and Asian origins.

The first activities of the Székely National Council ended with the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In early 1919, the Council issued a few declarations, among which the one discouraging the Székelys to get involved in armed action against the Romanian occupation was the most important.⁴³ Around that time the Romanian political activities in most of Banat were stalled by the Serbian authorities,⁴⁴ only to restart in June 1919. Meantime, in late May and early June, a series of demonstrations and assemblies were organized by cultural and political associations

41 "Székely Köztársaság," *8 Órai Újság*, 7 December 1918, 6; Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 58–60.

42 On Paál, see Horváth Sz. Ferenc, "Utak, tévutak, zsákutcák. Paál Árpád két világháború közti politikai nézeteiről," in *Folyamatok a változásban. A hatalomváltások társadalmi hatásai Közép-Európában a XX. Században*, eds. Ablonczy Balázs and Fedinecz Csilla (Budapest: Teleki László alapítvány, 2005), 117–60.

43 "A székelyek a magyar államterület egységéért," *Budapesti Hírlap*, 8 January 1919, 5; and "A székelyek kiáltványa," *8 Órai Újság*, 26 January 1919, 4.

44 Moscovici, *La France et le Banat*, 225–36, 261; Jakabffy and Páll, *A bánási magyaraság*, 19–22.

with the support of the administration in Transylvania and the Old Kingdom to protest the partition of the region.⁴⁵

At those protests few local dignitaries delivered speeches that outlined arguments in favor of the Romanian claims. The speeches offer a vivid picture of how Banat was constructed for an audience which had only very limited personal experience with the region and the Romanians inhabiting the territory. For example, at the assembly held on 24 May 1919 in Ploiești,⁴⁶ a local secondary school teacher gave a speech, which started by asserting the indissoluble geographic and economic unity of the Banat lands and then gave a detailed historical overview that was not echoed in other speeches. The historical argument asserted the Romanian continuity since before the Roman conquest and aimed at countering historical arguments of the Serbians, not the Hungarians. According to the teacher, the Geto-Dacian civilization built a state that was as developed as the Roman Empire, and Traian conquered Dacia through Banat, resulting in the early Latinization of the territory. The Romanians preserved their civilization throughout the *Völkerwanderung* (migration) that lasted until 1326, when the Hungarian king Károly Róbert conquered Banat and found no Slavs there. Skipping the entire Ottoman period, the teacher mentioned the arrival of the Serbs in 1690, with Arsenije, the Patriarch of Ipek, in exile. This event turned Banat into a scene for often violent clashes between Serbs and the local population and oppression of the Romanians within the local Orthodox Church. Emperor Joseph II admitted that the Romanians were the original inhabitants in the region, but the oppression continued first within the Voivodina province (1849–1860), and then in post-1867 Hungary. Instead of being a rhetorical flourish, the conclusion threatened that if the history of the region is not understood, no Romanian would allow foreign gendarmes to trample upon the soil of Banat, Transylvania's entry gate, where the great Traian had entered the province.⁴⁷ These historical arguments were not the only way to assert the Romanian claims. In Soroca, a city in the annexed Bessarabia, another secondary school teacher focused on the more recent "innumerable sacrifices" the "small Romanian people" made during World War I. The question of Banat's annexation should not be used for political purposes, he

45 For the extremes, see "Cererile musulmanilor din Dobrogea," *Românul*, 7 June 1919, 2.

46 ANIC, Direcția Generală a Poliției, d. 8/1919, f. 116–7.

47 It was a fairly conventional Romanian Banat history (see Varga, *In the Middle of the Nation*, 314–6, 327).

continued, since every Romanian should feel that Romania belongs to all Romanians.⁴⁸

The most important rally was the one held at Şiria on 9 June 1919, which was modelled after the Alba Iulia Great Assembly. The Romanian villages sent their delegations for an event that finally gave expression to the Romanian demands.⁴⁹ According to press reports, there were tens of thousands of Romanians, many more than the few thousands Hungarians who protested in Târgu Mureş on 28 November 1918. The luminaries present at the event were from the region (Ştefan Cicio Pop, Victor Beleş and Iustin Marsieu), but the emphasis on Banat's specificities was very weak. In his speech, Cicio Pop recalled the moment when he was the first time a candidate at an election in Şiria in 1905, and continued by presenting the events related to the war. Somewhat surprisingly, he asserted that the national unity was fostered in August 1916, when Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary, and concluded that Romania deserved payment for its suffering and that all of the territories inhabited by Romanians, including Banat, should belong to Romania. The next speaker, Amos Frâncu, also constructed his argument around national unity, without distinguishing among different sub-groups of Romanians or mentioning any Banat specificity. He delivered a not so veiled threat by urging the liberation of every Romanian, beyond the Dniester, in Ukraine, the Timoc valley and Nego-tin.⁵⁰

The tone of the speeches delivered in Lugoj on 10 June 1919 was similar. George Popoviciu spoke to the congregated peasants (tens of thousands, according to the local newspaper). After outlining the Romanians' historical continuity in the province, Popoviciu invoked a similar mass gathering organized in Lugoj on 15 June 1848, where the Romanians demanded Banat's autonomy and the Romanianization of its administration.⁵¹ It was one of those rare occasions when the speeches made more than a passing reference to Banat as a distinct region and asserted Banat's autonomous status in the history of modern Romania. The speaker con-

48 Ion Novăcescu, "Chestiunea Banatului între politica națională și politica de partid. Mari polemici politice și parlamentare (Decembrie 1923)," *Analele Banatului. Seria Arheologie/Istorie*, no. 21 (2013): 465–85; and ANIC, Direcția Generală a Poliției, d. 8/1919, f. 172.

49 "Marea adunare națională pentru alipirea Banatului," *Românul*, 11 June 1919, 2.

50 Ibid.

51 George Popoviciu, *Memorii cu privire la integritatea Banatului* (Caransebeș: Tiparul Tipografiei Diocezană, 1929), 65–9. Popoviciu authored the most detailed Romanian history of Banat written before 1918 by a local intellectual. See Varga, *In the Middle of the Nation*.

cluded that Banat should merge with Greater Romania. Finally, the declaration adopted at the event complained about the persecution and martyrdom of the Romanians under the "Serbian" occupation.⁵²

Both Székely and Romanian mobilization used the tropes of the established historical mythology. However, the Romanians presented Banat not as an area of a distinct Romanian identity but as the cradle of the whole nation. The difference was even more evident with respect to perceptions of the relationship between the center and the region. The Székely National Council asserted a special role for the Székelys and Székelyland and was ready to propose independence from the Motherland, this argument being complemented with the idea of national martyrhood during World War I. Meanwhile, the Romanian speakers were eager to emphasize the unity of all Romanians, without acknowledging differences among them. These different perceptions of the regions are hardly astonishing, since the Székelys wanted to preserve as much of the Hungarian nationhood on their territory as possible, and an independent republic was considered a better alternative to Romanian rule, especially if aligned with Hungary in terms of economy or in foreign policy. The Hungarian governments supported these plans⁵³ because, from Budapest's perspective, they were better than Romanian sovereignty as a default outcome. On the contrary, the Banat Romanians wanted to avoid offering any new argument for the South Slav state and also realized that it was easier to foster solidarity among Romanians elsewhere if differences were not mentioned. In addition, there was not much in the Banat Romanian tradition that was understood as an expression of Banat's specificity and character since Banat was more of a geographic concept, developed as a result of its administrative separation from Transylvania.

As these efforts to mobilize the masses and demonstrate the active support of the whole nation for the cause of Banat were aligned with diplomacy, the content of another genre of lobbying (memoranda) resembled these public speeches. As underlined above, the Hungarian government cautiously avoided qualifying the Székely region as distinct, and neither Paál's proposal nor the separate memorandum of the Székely National Council reached the Peace Conference. In early 1920, when the Hungarian delegation arrived in Paris, the council did not exist anymore, and Paál resided in Odorheiu, which was firmly under Romanian control.

52 Ibid., 73–5.

53 Especially after it was clear that Hungary would not be provided with a plebiscite on its lost territories, the Hungarian politicians and experts lent practical and financial support to those circles in the Székelyland which imagined a new Székely Republic. Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 79–86.

The Romanian intellectuals from Banat prepared a series of memoranda and submitted them to the Ruling Council, the Bucharest government and several French generals, including Franchet d'Espérey.⁵⁴ The memos were of a generic nature, as the historical argument was hardly original but was based on the assumption of Romanian continuity.⁵⁵ The Banat Romanians were presented as the purest Romanians, who preserved their Romanian soul at every moment in history.⁵⁶ The longest memo prepared by George Popoviciu mentioned Traian's entry into Dacia through Banat, the early colonization and Latinization, the dubious claim that Banat was an autonomous part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, and the fact that the local Romanians received autonomy. This text is essentially a long and detailed history of the region along well-known lines, which emphasized the Romanian national struggle against oppression and pointed out that the Romanian nationalist candidates in parliamentary elections were most successful in Caraș-Severin county. This was taken not as a regional specificity but as proof of their stronger Romanianness. Thus, the region was again subordinated to national unity.

Afterlife: Two National Peripheries and One Region

Curiously, Banat's distinctiveness, enhanced by the recent Serbian occupation and the martyrdom it brought, became more evident after mobilization efforts during the Peace Conference subsided. Still, the main difference between Székelyland and Banat persisted after the Peace Conference: the Székelys imagined themselves, and were seen by the Hungarians, as a distinct people and the most authentic Hungarians, a repository of the best national character traits. By contrast, Banat and its Romanians got attached to Romania and the Romanian nation without asserting a peculiarity, like those in the Székely region.

I do not mean here that the struggle for borders during the Paris Peace Conference did not affect the way in which these regions were imagined by Romanians or Hungarians within and outside of these regions. First, the two regions became avatars for specific injustices, which resonated well beyond their geographical borders. The Székelys' national self-determination was violated. Therefore, the Hungarian propaganda mentioned it in hopes of obtaining a revision of the peace treaty, to be signed

54 "Bănăţenii prezintă din nou memorandumul conferinţei de pace," *Românul*, 1 July 1919, 3; and Popoviciu, *Memorii*.

55 Varga, *In the Middle of the Nation*, 327.

56 Popoviciu, *Memorii*, 5–6.

on 4 July 1920, and repeatedly reminded the Hungarians within the country of it.⁵⁷ It enhanced the notion of a better Székely Hungarianness and fueled an entitlement for redemption and compensation.⁵⁸

The Banat Hungarians were also portrayed as sufferers, but most important for them was how their region was moved on the mental map from “Southern Hungary” to “Eastern Romania.” A series of clandestine agencies of the Hungarian government channeled support from Budapest to the lost territories. Initially, Banat was part of the support scheme dedicated to the southern parts but was later incorporated into the Keleti Actio, an agency operating in Transylvania and the former Eastern Hungary.⁵⁹ The new Hungarian minority party, established in 1922, still retained its regional difference. For example, instead of county organizations typical for other areas, Banat had a single regional party organization although the region had multiple counties.

While less apparent in the case of Banat Romanians, their carefully constructed martyrdom during and after the South Slav occupation placed them in a similar position as the Székelys.⁶⁰ It allowed Romania to argue that it suffered injustice at the Peace Conference, and it was a handy leverage in political struggles within the country. Politicians of the Romanian National Party (RNP), who in 1919 served in the Ruling Council and later joined Alexandru Vaida-Voevod’s cabinet, did not participate in this debate, and the National Liberals, active in the diplomatic efforts in 1919, attempted to change the initial boundary proposal of the Peace Conference. The two parties clashed over who was responsible for the failure to get the entire Banat. As soon as Vaida-Voevod signed the treaty, the RNP leadership, who earlier had accused the Liberals of incompetence, wanted to brush off Vaida’s responsibility for losing part of Banat.⁶¹ The RNP’s electoral manifesto of April 1920, drafted when the party was in opposition, asserted that the party would seek to recover the lost parts of Banat and Maramureș.⁶² The “loss” of part of Banat was used as an argument of

57 Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary: 1920–1945* (Boulder, Co.: East European Monographs, 2007); and Gábor Egrý, “Endangered by Alienation? Raising a Minority Elite between Nationalizing Higher Education Systems: The New Generation of Hungarians in Interwar Romania,” in *Universities and Elite Formation in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe*, eds. Florian Bieber and Harald Heppner (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015), 39–58.

58 Gábor Egrý, *Az erdélyiség színeváltozása. Kísérlet az Erdélyi Párt ideológiájának és identitáspolitikájának elemzésére* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2008), 125–34.

59 Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 297–8.

60 Novăcescu, *Chestiunea Banatului*.

61 Moscovici, *La France et le Banat*, 364–80; and “Discursul d-lui Iuliu Maniu,” *Românul*, 27 December 1919, 1.

62 “Congresul de la Alba Iulia,” *Românul*, 27 April 1920, 1.

electoral propaganda against the Liberals and the People's Party (PP) candidates. Furthermore, the memory of the Serbian occupation was used to discredit the Romanian politicians from Banat who followed the example of Octavian Goga and Vasile Goldiș and joined General Alexandru Averescu around 1920. The Banat RNP press attacked these figures vigorously and ridiculed them with reports of alleged electoral campaign incidents during which the peasants booed them. It maliciously remarked that these politicians, who before 1918 followed Vasile Mangra (whose pro-Hungarian stance was censured), bowed down in front of King Petar's throne, a gesture of obedience to the Serbian state.⁶³

Such symbolic repositioning could not change the fact that Banat, one of the most developed regions of Hungary before 1918, became a periphery of the new Romanian state. The developed Banat and its elites did not necessarily need the support of the center, but to Romanianize the province Romanians had to rely on resources provided by Bucharest, especially in the economic sphere. Thus, Banat's multiethnic nature—an important element for the Hungarian side—made it impossible to "detach" the region from the Romanian national unity,⁶⁴ even if complaints over the conduct of the new state administration were growing and led to assertions that the Old Kingdom's rule brought chaos and decline.⁶⁵

There were attempts to assert the superiority of the Banat Romanians over their Old Kingdom peers, often with implicit suggestions that their presence and leading role in Greater Romania would strengthen the new country's morality and Romanianness, an argument frequently used in relation to the Hungarians and the Székelys.⁶⁶ Such attempts were rarely made without emphasizing the Romanian national credentials, and even the anti-Bucharest Banat regionalism was dissolved within the joint anti-Old Kingdom political stance and movement led by Transylvanians.⁶⁷ According to this anti-Old Kingdom discourse Banat was symbolically different, but in practice the region had grievances and demands similar to any other new province of Greater Romania. The Banat Romanians

63 "Adunarea Partidului Popular în Sănnicolau Mare," *Românul*, 16 May 1920, 2.

64 There were attempts to deny this fact: Glasul Minorităților—Magyar Kisebbség, 1923, 697; "Mi is itt volnánk," *Magyar Kisebbség*, 1924, 318–9.

65 Gábor Egry, "Crowding Out. Experiences of Difference, Discourses of Identity and Political Mobilization in Interwar Transylvania," *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historica*, no. 9 (2012): 203–24, 215.

66 "Noul mitropolit primat al României," *Românul*, 4 January 1920, 1.

67 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*; and Florian Kührer-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger? Zentralstaatliche Integration nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2014).

avoided strengthening a specific regional consciousness but furthered the common Romanian national goals.⁶⁸

Finally, the most conspicuous element of these developments, which drew the most distinct boundaries within the national groups, was the way in which external actors used these regionalist notions to divide their national opponents. The leading Hungarian politicians abandoned the idea of a Székely republic and replaced it with Hungarian national autonomy meant to preserve the unity of the Hungarian minority. By contrast, the Romanian politicians tried to capitalize on Székely difference. As early as January 1919, a Ruling Council emissary approached Paál, who was under arrest at the time, with an offer. If Paál organized a Székely manifestation to declare the Székelys's willingness to join Romania, the region would receive broad autonomy from Bucharest.⁶⁹ The offer was declined, but the idea was revived later, when several Hungarian figures, like Béla Maurer, Géza Kiss or Árpád Fáy, ran for Parliament as pro-Romanian Hungarian candidates in Székelyföld. Later, as representatives of the Székelys in the Chamber of Deputies, they willingly declared that their "nation" was to freely unite with Romania.⁷⁰ Unsurprisingly, even the State Security followed news of any Székely republican movement to suppress and manipulate it and to separate the Székelys from the Hungarians.⁷¹ In the 1930s, serologic research was carried out by eugenicist racial anthropologists like Petru Râmneanțu and George Popovici (a professor of medicine in Cluj) to prove that the Székelys were Magyarized Romanians.⁷²

The Hungarians in Romania had to carefully avoid censorship, but they had ample material to make a similar assertion with regard to the Banat. As the accusations targeting the People's Party politicians show, in pre-World War I Banat a large group of Romanian intellectuals were aligned with pro-Hungarian parties. Some of them left politics around 1920; others joined Romanian parties, such as the People's Party and the National Liberal Party; and even the RNP stalwarts had a past in Hungary that was sometimes less anti-Hungarian than they claimed. Thus, any retrospective intervention recalling the dualist era was capable of implicitly challenging the nationalist credentials of interwar Banat regionalists. Elemér Jakabffy, a Hungarian politician from Lugoj who was active before

68 "O mare adunare în Alba Iulia," 28 August 1927.

69 Paál, *Emlékirat a semleges*, 132.

70 Bárdi, *Otthon és haza*, 109, 395, 422–3.

71 György Kristóf, "Magyar avagy székely?," *Pásztortűz*, no. 27 (1921): 396–9.

72 Marius Turda, "The Nation as Object: Race, Blood, and Biopolitics in Interwar Romania," *Slavic Review*, 66, no. 3 (2007): 428–34.

and after 1918, provided ample material in his journal, *Magyar Kisebbség*.⁷³ It did not directly attack anyone, but it questioned certain assertions, like the unshakable nationalism of the Banat Romanians to reveal a much subtler local world that was obscured by the dominance of Romanian nationalism over Banat regionalism.

73 Elemér Jakabffy, "Adatok a magyarországi románság történetéhez," *Magyar Kisebbség*, no. 12 (1927): 446–8; no. 13 (1927): 493–4; and no. 5 (1928): 187–8.

“A Fertile and Flourishing Garden.”

A Political Assessment Ten Years after Versailles

Florian Kühner-Wielach

Abstract: *The present study examines reflections on the institutional and mental unification process of “Greater Romania” ten years after it was recognized by the Peace of Versailles and the subsequent treaties of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919) and Grand Trianon (1920). A first section outlines the relationship between the government and the opposition or the struggle for the future design of state and society. The second section subjects the paradigmatic text “10 Years of Greater Romania” by the important Transylvanian politician Alexandru Vaida-Voevod (1872–1950) to critical discourse analysis with a focus on the interplay between discursively awakened hope and real-political disillusionment, which led to a sustained loss of faith in the possibility of realizing a democratic, pluralist society.*

On 6 May 1928, the opposition, led by the National Peasant Party, mobilized many thousands of its supporters in the central Transylvanian town of Alba Iulia to protest against the National-Liberal government. Newspapers reported around 100,000 people—a symbolic figure at no less symbolic a site. That is because almost ten years earlier, on 1 December 1918, it was claimed that 100,000 Romanians assembled with a resolution proclaiming the union of eastern and southeastern Hungary with the Kingdom of Romania.¹

When the day of the “Union” is discussed, mention is usually only made of the resolution’s first paragraph, which proclaimed “the unification of those Romanians and of all the territories inhabited by them with Romania.” However, this text, composed in the name of the “National Assembly of all Romanians in Transylvania, Banat and the Hungarian Country,” was not a declaration of unconditional annexation. Rather, it represented the skeleton of a program of democratisation addressing the needs of the various social classes and groups of the nascent “Greater Romania.” The most important demands made by this “resolution” were, after the proclamation of “provisional autonomy until the meeting of the Constituency chosen by suffrage universal,” “full national freedom for all the co-

1 Klaus P. Beer, *Zur Entwicklung des Parteien- und Parlamentssystems in Rumänien, 1928–1933: Die Zeit der national-bäuerlichen Regierungen*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1983), 231–2.

inhabiting peoples,” “equal rights and full autonomous religious freedom for all the religions in the State,” a “full democratic system in all the realms of public life.” Suffrage should be universal, direct, equal, secret, in each commune, proportionally, for both sexes, 21 years old at the representation in communes, counties or parliament, “full freedom of the press, association, and meeting, free propaganda of all human thoughts,” a “radical agrarian reform,” and “the same rights and privileges that are in force in the most advanced western industrial states” for the industrial workers.²

These demands not only represented an invitation to the “non-Romanian” and “non-Orthodox” sections of the population—accounting for roughly one-third of the total population—to accept the new Romanian “fatherland” as their own, but were also formulated on the basis of the negative experiences the Romanians had had as a “nationality” in the former “fatherland” of Hungary.³ The various regional, historical, cultural and social characteristics were to find their legitimate place in a “Greater Romania” that had sprung up virtually overnight. At the same time, they were well aware of what remained extremely feudal conditions under a narrow political and economic elite in the “Old Kingdom” (Vechiul Regat); from the perspective of the representatives of the “Habsburg” Romanians, the “new” expanded Romania should orient itself towards the “West,” which was perceived to be more democratic and developed.⁴

The present study examines reflections on the process of institutional and mental unification in the “Greater Romanian” state ten years after it was recognized by the Peace of Versailles and the subsequent treaties in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919) and Grand Trianon (1920).⁵ To this end, a first section outlines the relationship between the government and the opposition or the struggle for the future design of state and society. The second section subjects the paradigmatic text “10 Years of Greater Romania” by the important Transylvanian politician Alexandru Vaida-Voevod (1872–1950), one of the Romanian “chief negotiators” in Paris in

2 *The Resolution of the National Assembly in Alba-Iulia on the 18th of November/the 1st of December*, available at: http://www.cimec.ro/Istorie/Unire/rezo_eng.htm, accessed on 13 December 2018.

3 Ludwig Gogolák, “Ungarns Nationalitätengesetze und das Problem des magyarischen National- und Zentralstaates,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*. Vol. 3: Die Völker des Reiches, Part 1, eds. Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: ÖAW, 1980), 1207–303.

4 On the “Habsburg legacy,” see Florian Kühner-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger?: Zentralstaatliche Integration und politischer Regionalismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014).

5 Magda Adam, *The Versailles System and Central Europa* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2004).

1919/1920, to critical discourse analysis with a focus on the interplay between discursively awakened hope and real-political disillusionment, which led to a sustained loss of faith in the possibility of realizing a democratic and pluralist society.

The Years of Hope: 1918–1920

The economic situation in the immediate aftermath of the Great War—the subsequent war that broke out between Hungary and Romania did not end until August 1919⁶—was an obstacle to the process of unification towards a nation-state. The National-Liberal Party (Partidul Național-Liberal, PNL), which came back to power at the end of 1918, thus found itself confronted with a good deal of social unrest. With the help of the military, it brutally put down a workers' uprising and declared a state of siege that was still very much applicable in Transylvania and Bessarabia for the rest of the country. In the absence of an elected parliament, the Liberal Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu (1864–1927) and his cabinet ruled via a series of decrees that merely had to be sanctioned by the king. In this way, they confirmed the annexation of the new territories and resolved to undertake the promised agrarian reform.⁷

From March 1919 onwards, Vaida-Voevod accompanied Brătianu at the peace negotiations in Versailles as a representative of the former Hungarian territories,⁸ which at that point were autonomous and governed by a Directory Council (Consiliu Dirigent).⁹ Following Brătianu's resignation in September 1919 (intended as a protest against Romania's exclusion from the negotiations for the Austrian peace treaty and as a means to avoid signing the Minority Treaty,¹⁰ a precondition of the peace treaties), it fell to a transitional government led by army General Artur Văitoianu (1864–1956) to organize the first all-Romanian elections.¹¹

6 Andrea Schmidt-Rösler, *Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Die Grenzziehung in der Dobrudscha und im Banat und die Folgeprobleme* (Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 1994).

7 Ioan Scurtu, ed., *România întregită. 1918–1940. Istoria Românilor*, vol. 8 (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), 244–5.

8 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii*. Vol. I (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1994), 6.

9 Aurel Galea, *Formarea și activitatea Consiliului Dirigent al Transilvaniei, Banatului și ținuturilor românești din Ungaria: 2 decembrie 1918–10 aprilie 1920*, Vol. I–II (Târgu Mureș: Tipumur 1996).

10 Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians: From Roman Times to the Completion of Unity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 547.

11 Scurtu, *România întregită*, 247.

The political landscape would quickly change with the parliamentary elections. The Conservative Party (Partidul Conservator, PC), until 1918 one of the leading political groups in the Old Kingdom, suffered a dramatic loss of significance due to the introduction of general suffrage and broke up into individual factions. In the first years following World War I the Popular League (Liga Poporului, after 1920 the People's Party, Partidul Poporului, PP) founded in Iași in April 1918 was particularly influential within the declining conservative camp. It was led by the army General Alexandru Averescu (1859–1938), who had made a name for himself as a “war hero” in the Battle of Mărășești (1917).¹² Before the war was over, from January to March 1918, he had headed a government cabinet. Particularly because of its leader's position as an eminent historian and a “moral authority,” the small Nationalist-Democratic Party (Partidul Naționalist-Democrat, PD) under Nicolae Iorga was also able to develop a certain influence, due more to a well-disposed king than the will of the voters. Of the large parties of the Old Kingdom, only the National-Liberal Party, dominated for decades by the Brătianu dynasty, was ultimately able to survive—and achieve long-term dominance of the political scene.

However, the 1919 elections, organized separately due to the various electoral laws and the autonomous administration of Transylvania, initially resulted in a surprising defeat for the Liberals. The Romanian National Party (Partidul Național Român, PNR), founded in Hungary in 1881,¹³ took over a third of the vote, or 169 of 568 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, even though it only stood in the regions of the Directory Council. In the “rest” of Romania, i.e., “Greater Romania” minus the former Habsburg territories, the Peasant Parties (Partidul Țărănesc, PȚ, and Partidul Țărănesc din Basarabia) gained 46.3 percent of the vote, or 133 seats), while the Liberals took 21.88 percent (103 seats).¹⁴ The first “Greater Romanian” parliament that emerged from the elections was to serve as a constituent assembly and draw up a new constitution for the Kingdom of Romania. In a coalition with the Peasant Parties and several smaller parties,¹⁵

12 Stefan Minkov, “Der Rumänienfeldzug und die Dobrudscha-Frage 1916–1918 im Kontext des Verhältnisses zwischen Bulgarien und dem Osmanischen Reich,” in *Die unbekannte Front: Der Erste Weltkrieg in Rumänien*, eds. Gundula Gahlen, Deniza Petrova and Oliver Stein (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 2018), 425.

13 Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1860–1914* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1999).

14 Marcel Ivan, *Evoluția Partidelor noastre politice în cifre și grafie, 1919–1932: Studiu comparativ al rezultatelor oficiale ale alegerilor pentru Camera Deputaților din anii 1919–1932* (Sibiu: Krafft & Drotleff, 1933), Tab. IV.

15 Besides the PN and the PȚ, the other parties involved were the Bessarabian Peasant Party, the National Democratic Party, the Bucovinian Democratic Union

a “parliamentary bloc” was created under the leadership of the PNR, which formed the government under Alexandru Vaida-Voevod.¹⁶

The government lasted only a few months, until March 1920. The old elites exploited the internal disunity of this “new Romanian” government and convinced the king to dismiss Vaida-Voevod’s cabinet. One of the government’s great weaknesses was that Prime Minister Vaida-Voevod spent most of his time at the Paris Peace Conference and lost control of affairs in Bucharest. However, within just a few months the declarations of the union with Transylvania, Bessarabia,¹⁷ and Bucovina were ratified by the Bucharest Parliament and partly in Paris—now all that was needed was international confirmation of the areas ceded by Hungary. The plans for the agrarian reform also underwent further development in this phase. Leasing the plots to be distributed by the reform in the interim could have quickly and unbureaucratically countered the severe lack of agricultural land held by the populace. By lifting the state of siege and censorship in the Old Kingdom, removing the army from the leadership of industry, reducing the extensive powers of the police, and temporarily calming conflicts among the workers, the government defused the tensions in the country resulting from the war and the post-war situation.¹⁸

As mentioned above, the government of the “parliamentary bloc” also had the task of representing Romania at the ongoing peace negotiations in Paris following the Treaty of Versailles. Prime Minister Vaida-Voevod once again travelled to Paris and replaced Ion I. C. Brătianu as the chief negotiator.¹⁹ The transition was not made easy for him:

In Paris, the intrigue was spread that the Transylvanians would stick by the Habsburgs and that credits would be annulled; Bucharest refused to provide the francs for the prime minister’s train ticket via the National Bank. Later [followed] the theft and disappearance of my telegrams from Paris and London, the falsification of my name by radiotelegram sent from Bucharest when I was in London [...].²⁰

Party, and the independent group around Nicolae Lupu. Scurtu, *România întregită*, 247–8.

- 16 Victoria F. Brown, “The Movement for Reform in Rumania after World War I: The Parliamentary Bloc Government of 1919–1920,” *Slavic Review*, 38, no. 3 (1979), 456–72.
- 17 Svetlana Suveică, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic (1918–1928): Modernizare prin Reformă* (Chişinău: Pontos, 2010).
- 18 Scurtu, *România întregită*, 248; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
- 19 Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii*, vol. I, 6.
- 20 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii*, vol. II (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1994), 50: “La Paris se lansează intrigi că ardelenii țin la Habsburgi și se anulează creditele; la

Thus, Romania's representative General Constantin Coandă (1857–1932) signed the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 10 December 1919, finally sealing the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy and confirming the territorial expansion of the successor states, "the kingdoms and countries represented in the *Reichsrat*," at the cost of the Austrian half of the empire. For Romania, this meant Bucovina.²¹ The same day, the Minority Treaty was signed between Romania and the victorious powers, guaranteeing Romanian citizens who were not of Romanian nationality complete freedom and lawful treatment irrespective of their "race, language, or religion." Special mention was made of the situation of the Jews, subjected to extensive discrimination despite international pressure since the founding of Romania: provided they live on Romanian soil and not claim belonging to another state, their Romanian citizenship was to be finally recognized.²²

When the peace treaty governing the cession of the future Romanian territory from Hungary was signed in Palais Grand Trianon in Versailles on 4 June 1920, with Averescu's cabinet another "Old Romanian" government was already back in power. For Hungary, the treaty famously sealed the end of the lands of the crown of St. Stephen in its "historical" expansion, whereas for Romania the international recognition of the annexation of Transylvania, the majority of Banat and the Partium meant that the "Greater Romanian" unification process had been successfully completed.

Opposition with a Transylvanian Motor

The signing of the treaties of St. Germain and Trianon thus internationally recognized the borders of "Greater Romania" established by military intervention²³ and civilian mobilisation in 1918/1919. The realisation of

București se refuză de a pune la dispoziție, prin Banca Națională, a francilor pentru biletele de tren ale primului-ministru. Mai târziu, furtul și escamotarea telegramelor mele, de la Paris și Londra, falsificarea numelui meu, sub o radiotelegramă, dată din București, când eu mă găseam la Londra."

- 21 Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung der Bukowina: Die Durchsetzung des nationalstaatlichen Anspruchs Großrumäniens, 1918–1944* (München: Oldenbourg, 2001).
- 22 Scurtu, *România întregită*, 13–4; Erwin Viehhaus, *Die Minderheitenfrage und die Entstehung der Minderheitenschutzverträge auf der Pariser Friedenskonferenz 1919: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Nationalitätenproblems im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1960).
- 23 Cornel Grad, "Contribuția armatei române la preluarea puterii politico-administrative în Transilvania: Primele măsuri (Noiembrie 1918–Aprilie 1919)," *Revista de Administrație Publică și Politici Sociale*, 2, no. 4 (2010): 51–78.

the vision of Alba Iulia now seemed tangible, despite all the internal political problems and loss of power suffered by the National Party. However, the “surviving” old elites close to the Brătianu political dynasty or the PNL and their “satellite parties” were soon able to push through their concept of a centralist Romania.

At the same time, during the 1920s Romania slid into a permanent crisis affecting all areas of public life: the institutional unification process between the “Old Kingdom” and the new territories was sluggish, the economic situation barely improved, and the population was starving. The parliamentary and governmental dominance that the Liberal Party had established after World War I via a combination of pressure and incentives—institutional violence, falsification, and election gifts—meant that the process of cohesion remained slow on the mental level too.²⁴

The representatives of the PNR, which was obviously especially active in the former Hungarian territories, exploited the dissatisfaction among the populace for a mass protest movement. The inception of the constitution in 1923, largely based on the centralist principles of its “Old Romanian” predecessor, intensified the ideological real-political conflict surrounding the question as to how the “Greater Romanian” state was to be structured. In 1926, the Peasant Party, supported predominantly in the east and the south of the country, merged with the National Party to form the National Peasant Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc, PNȚ). After several smaller mergers, this represented the most effective step for increasing their political profile to create as unified an opposition as possible²⁵; the PNR, which looked back on a long tradition as a product of the Dual Monarchy, had largely been an ethnic umbrella party before 1918 and had operated with a rather regionalist profile²⁶ in the first years following the Great War. It could now expand its largely positive “western” image with the PT’s socio-political program, thereby sharpening its ideological profile to further increase its popular appeal. The intention was to appropriate the stance and vocabulary of social revolution without irritating communist or radical nationalist movements.²⁷

24 Kührer-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger*, passim.

25 Beer, *Entwicklung*, 118.

26 Ovidiu Pecican, *Regionalism românesc: Organizare prestatală și stat la nordul Dunării în perioada medievală și modern* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009).

27 Kührer-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen*, 251–8.

The “Re-enactment” of May 1928

In this context, the mass proclamation in May 1928 represented an increasingly stronger oppositional movement. Since 1918, Alba Iulia was not just a *lieu de mémoire*, but had also become a repeated *lieu de mobilisation*. The “re-enactment” of 1 December 1918 was already planned for 1927, but the government was able to prevent it from happening. The fact that it could have taken place on said 6 May 1928 can be considered an indication that the government could barely resist the opposition’s pressure to mobilize any longer.

The proclamation centred on the return of Charles (Carol) of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who in 1927 had relinquished his claim to the throne in favour of his son Michael, then a minor. Despite the fears voiced by figures close to the government, the proclamation neither declared Transylvania’s secession from the rest of Romania, nor did it declare a republic. Nor did a planned “march on Bucharest” in the style of Mussolini take place. That the proclamation passed without larger incidents was also in the interest of the opposition leaders: the PNTJ were determined to present themselves as statesmanlike and peaceful. They nevertheless employed the art of “moderate mobilization” by having the masses swear a solemn oath not to rest until the government had resigned.²⁸

Hence that 6 May saw the crystallization of a long-running campaign against the National-Liberals or the “Brătianu system.” This struggle against the “Centralists” had intensified in late 1927, when Vintilă Brătianu (1867–1930) took over the leadership of the National-Liberal Party and the government after the death of his brother Ion. Vintilă was considered the architect of the Liberal economic program; he had yet to achieve his goal of finally stabilizing the Romanian currency—and was blamed for the crisis.²⁹ The PNTJ had begun to protest and agitate against the inward-looking nationalist economic policy characterized by the motto “*prin noi înșine*”³⁰ (by ourselves).³¹ The opposition exploited the outraged international press’ reaction when a government-sanctioned student congress in the border town of Oradea (also known in the interwar period as Oradea Mare) descended into anti-Semitic violence: they claimed that the government could not guarantee order throughout the country and promoted

28 “Proclamarea adunării naționale,” *Românul*, 13 May 1928.

29 Scurtu, *România întregită*, 265.

30 Angela Harre, *Wege in die Moderne: Entwicklungsstrategien rumänischer Ökonomen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2009), 89.

31 Scurtu, *România întregită*, 257; Beer, *Entwicklung*, 223.

industrial enterprises and banks that had close ties with them, thus fostering oligarchy, rather than pursuing policies that would serve the peasant population. The Transylvanian Iuliu Maniu, the figurehead of the opposition, was stylized as the nation's saviour and redeemer.³² The terms "Transylvania" or "Ardeal" and "Alba Iulia" became not only metonyms and symbols as territorial capstones of a Romanian *Risorgimento*, but also a political program in itself: even before the merger of the Hungarian National Party with the Old Romanian Peasant Party, its leaders had turned against the centralization and nationalization of the new state. "Transylvania" in the broader sense stood for a competing societal and political vision that had been clearly formulated on 1 December 1918 in Alba Iulia.

The country's economic situation deteriorated from one day to the next, while the loan that was hoped for was rejected by the financiers, not least because of the opposition that had turned opinion abroad against the government. In view of the hopeless situation, Vintilă Brătianu submitted his resignation on 3 November 1928.³³ Within just a few months, the National Peasant Party would come to power with a resounding victory.

Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, a Habsburg Aristocrat for the 'Little Man'

The increasing resonance enjoyed by the opposition's campaign both in newspaper reports and on the streets was not in the least bit due to Maniu's closest fellow campaigner, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod: in contrast to Maniu's rather circumspect argumentation, Vaida-Voevod offered catchy slogans and statements that provoked the wrath of his opponents.

Vaida-Voevod, who like his late archrival Ion I. C. Brătianu had made a name for himself with the successful peace negotiations at Versailles in 1919, forced the battle cry "Transylvania to the Transylvanians," alluding to the declaration allegedly made by premier Brătianu in the course of the union of 1918/1919 that Romania wanted Transylvania but preferably without Transylvanians. Depicting the difficult handover of leadership of the negotiations from Brătianu to himself in his memoirs compiled in the early 1950s,³⁴ Vaida-Voevod not only described the situation in Paris in 1919 but ultimately portrayed the domestic political situation in Romania

32 Sextil Pușcariu, "Regionalismul constructiv," *Societatea de Măine*, 2, no. 6 (1925): 85: "Ardealul era arbitrul situației politice în România."

33 Scurtu, *România întregită*, 265–9.

34 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii*, vol. 1–4 (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1994–1998).

during the 1920s as a battle between two camps: the National-Liberal "Centralists" and the National-Peasant "Regionalists."

Vaida-Voevod, who probably very much enjoyed regularly being at the centre of the debate with his populist rhetoric, came from the Transylvanian landed gentry. He had been an early supporter of Romanian emancipation, but before 1918 he had advocated a solution within the Dual Monarchy.³⁵ Still going by his full family name Vajda von Felső-Orbó,³⁶ when the Kingdom of Romania entered the war on the side of the Entente in 1916, he published a piece in the *Österreichische Rundschau* proclaiming the Hungarian Romanians' unconditional loyalty to the Habsburg Empire.³⁷ Hence it may come as no surprise that his opponents made much of the "dynastic, patriotic and traditional feelings" of the former Budapest parliamentarian and his fellow campaigners.³⁸ Awkwardly, it was a Transylvanian compatriot, the literary talent and increasingly politically radical Octavian Goga, who escalated this conflict. Goga was one of those Transylvanian activists who even before the war had advocated a realpolitik union of all regions inhabited by Romanians that went beyond a feeling of cultural belonging. He considered his "countrymen" from Transylvania active in the National Party or, after 1926, the National Peasant Party, as political opponents whose opposition to the resolution of 1 December 1918 was harmful to the victory of Romanian "national unity" achieved in Paris. He considered politicians like Maniu and Vaida-Voevod ghosts of the past, calling them "revenants of loyalty to the Habsburgs" (*strigoi fidelităței pentru Habsburgi*).³⁹ Like the "Ghosts" (*Strigoi*) in Henrik Ibsen's play, they haunted Bucharest to avenge Budapest for the end of the old Hungary.⁴⁰

35 Vasile Curticăpeanu, *Le Mouvement culturel pour le parachevement de l'Etat national roumain* (Bucharest: Edition de l'Académie de la République socialiste de Roumanie, 1973); Stephen Fischer-Galați, "Nationalism and Kaisertreue," *Slavic Review*, 22, no. 1 (1963): 31–6; Keith Hitchins, ed., Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. *The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. The Reports of Alexander Vaida to Archduke Franz Ferdinand's Chancellery* (Brill: Leiden, 1974).

36 Oliver Schmitt, "Vaida-Voevod (Vajda von Felső-Orbó), Alexandru (1872–1950), Politiker," *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon*, available at: http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1/oeb1_V/Vaida-Voevod_Alexandru_1872_1950.xml, accessed on 7 January 2019.

37 *Österreichische Rundschau*, 15 September 1916.

38 Dr. A. v. Vajda, "Românii din Austro-Ungaria," [*"Oesterreichische Rundschau* din 15 Septembrie 1916] *Țara Noastră*, 4, no. 12 (1923), 387–9. The author of this reprint, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, is identified as "dr. A. of Vajda, Member of the Hungarian Parliament."

39 "Un document ...," *Țara Noastră*, 4, no. 12 (1923): 386.

40 Octavian Goga, "Regionalismul," *Țara Noastră*, 3, no. 2 (1922), 43.

His criticism was slightly off target, however, in relation to Maniu, Vaida-Voevod, and his fellow campaigners, for Vaida-Voevod too was a talented communicator who was able to use his international contacts and foreign policy experience, his language skills, and the contacts he had made at the Paris Peace Conference in order to create political pressure. It was not least for this reason that the PNȚ was able to gain 78 percent of the vote in late 1928.⁴¹ Maniu became Prime Minister, while Vaida-Voevod became Minister of the Interior but clearly remained the “spin doctor” and an important spokesman of the party. The tenth anniversary of the Paris Peace Conference conveniently coincided with the creation of the new government, and hence Vaida-Voevod grasped the opportunity to depict the new situation in Romania on the international level, publishing an article in London’s *Slavonic and East European Review* in January 1929, immediately after Maniu’s first cabinet took up office. Entitled “Ten Years of Greater Romania,” this paradigmatic text will be the subject of analysis in terms of both content and discourse strategy in the second part of this article.

A Story of Redemption: “Ten Years of Greater Romania”

Vaida-Voevod narrates the process by which the PNȚ came to power as a story of redemption in which the fronts between good and evil are to be clearly distinguished without qualification or the slightest hint of self-criticism. In portraying his party’s role, he employs three narrative levels: (1) the fight and victory of the Transylvanians or consequently the PNȚ and the “redemption” of Romania that went with it. In order to emphasize this aspect, he had to depict (2) the shortcomings of the governments dominated by his political opponents from 1918 onwards. To make clear the causes and the extent to which things had gone awry, Vaida-Voevod outlined (3) the initial historical situation of the development of “Greater Romania” by describing and assessing the various regional characteristics of the country. These three narrative levels are preceded by an introduction emphasizing the unity of Romanian intentions on both sides of the Carpathians prior to the union of 1918. Here the focus is on military sacrifice and political foresight: “Thus, Greater Roumania was born from military glory and the wisdom of the Roumanians of the old kingdom and the new provinces.”⁴²

41 Ivan, *Evoluția*, Tab. XIII.

42 Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, “Ten Years of Greater Roumania,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 7, no. 20 (January 1929): 261.

Here Vaida-Voevod evokes the initial unity of the Romanian elites, irrespective of whether they were from the “Old Kingdom” or “New Romania.” This portrayal, obviously selected as a narrative strategy, stands in contradiction to both the contemporary perception of the phase following 1918 and the situation Vaida-Voevod depicted in his memoirs concerning the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. However, the extent of the betrayal of the ideals of Alba Iulia and the victory achieved in Versailles, of which he accuses the elites close to the Brătianus, can be represented in even more drastic terms. Following the rosy moment of national, indeed “Transcarpathian,” unity, there rapidly descended a darkness, only brightened briefly by the hope of the Vaida-Voevod government, which, as outlined above, was in power for a few months in late 1919/early 1920. Referring to the swift end to the “New Romanian” government’s *intermezzo*, the second paragraph begins with the statement: “Ten years of anxiety, disillusionment and experience followed.”⁴³

Within the first page of his brief but paradigmatic piece, Vaida-Voevod predicts the end of the years of darkness by praising the foresight of the Regency’s taking care of affairs on behalf of the underage king Michael, saving the country from “bankruptcy, both political and social” and “catastrophic upheavals” with the appointment of “that most popular statesman, Mr. Julius Maniu.”⁴⁴ The elections of 1928, which had escaped the usual direction and intervention by executive powers, are contrasted with the elections organized by the old elites over the previous decade:

The elections held under the successive governments of Averescu and Brătianu have remained memorable for their electoral frauds, by the aid of which the nominees of those in power were able to defy the will of the electors and assure to themselves a majority. The use of the gendarmerie—which had been raised to the number of 40,000—to prevent citizens from reaching the poll, the arbitrary transfer of votes to the Government Party, the falsification of returns by dishonest officials, the rejection by Parliament of all electoral petitions and the ratification of all the mandates of majorities which owed their election to “fraud, violence and the theft of ballot boxes”—such were the methods employed in Roumania during the past ten years.⁴⁵

Vaida-Voevod makes it clear that his party also fought for a new style of politics when he depicts the methods that the Liberal government or its smaller satellite parties used to stay in power. In this context, he emphasizes the transregional nature of the opposition movement and thereby declares the regionalism of its early years (during which the “Trans-Sylvanian” National Party and the “Cis-Sylvanian” Peasant Party still fought

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 262.

separately) to be a thing of the past: "A violent and unceasing struggle against the Liberal Party was the result of these electoral methods—a struggle by the leaders of the masses in the old kingdom and the new provinces aided by the discontent and public conscience of those masses."⁴⁶

When in the subsequent lines he focuses on the strategic mistakes made by the previous governments, he makes clear the themes that the opposition had plumped for, thus enabling it to win the election:

The Liberal Party had failed to adapt itself to the changed situation produced in the first place by agrarian reform, in consequence of which the peasantry had virtually acquired the status of a "petite bourgeoisie," and in the second place by universal suffrage, which from year to year, from election to election, revealed more and more the effects of education. Led by men who had grown old in the antiquated methods of oligarchic government, ignoring the masses and anxious to curb their aspirations, the Liberal Government, in order to assure itself of a sufficient number of adherents, introduced without any proper selection many doubtful elements into all branches of the administration.⁴⁷

Embedded in the context of the radical and extensive political, social, and economic transformation after World War I that doubled the size of the Romanian state, he portrays the Liberals as an *ancien régime* that had failed to adapt to the new circumstances beyond political monopolies and the dominance of the estates. He consciously chooses the term "the masses,"⁴⁸ who could now participate in political and economic life and who had been shorn of their right to adequate representation by the oligarchic intrigues of past governments. For instance, Vaida-Voevod comments that the presently elected parliament is the first to offer a representative reflection of society. Correspondingly, he brings into focus two important preconditions of political and economic participation: suffrage and agrarian reform.

If we consider the course and the result of the 1928 elections, the opposition did indeed have a better understanding of how to deal with mass democracy, which was new to Romania. According to contemporary reports, unlike earlier election winners they did indeed barely need to resort to pressure tactics (which would certainly have been available to them as the governing party organising the elections and nominated by the king). It was apparently sufficient to exploit the existing political macroclimate of crisis and to develop a vision that appealed to the masses of voters shaken by those crises.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 262.

48 Ibid., 262 and 265.

Selective Regional History

Vaida-Voevod devotes a great deal of time and space in his text to a historical analysis of the various regions of Romania. On the one hand, this demonstrates awareness of the cultural disparity of “Greater Romania” as confirmed by the Paris treaties and expressed not ultimately, but certainly most clearly, by the spatial demarcation lines: “Parallel with the ever-increasing tension caused by the discontent of the entire population, there were certain social, economic and intellectual factors of historic importance.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, the sense of civilizational superiority felt by the “Habsburg Romanians” is quite clear: for Vaida-Voevod, the “Old Kingdom” is mainly characterized by the subjugation of the masses working in agriculture; he cites the time of Turkish suzerainty and Phanariot rule, the legacy of which could not be overcome within one-and-a-half generations and which he clearly considers the long-term cause of the style of politics the old elites had carried into the new Romania.⁵⁰

Conversely, in describing Transylvania he takes care to mention its status as an “autonomous principality” until 1848, despite the fact that the region was under Habsburg rule from the seventeenth century onwards and lost the status of an administrative unit with the introduction of the centralist system of counties under the Crown of St. Stephen following the *Ausgleich* of 1867. He names Maria Theresia a “prototype of an enlightened, absolute monarch” and associates her mainly with the regulation of property for the submerged peasantry—thereby placing the topic of “agrarian reform” in a long-term, Central European tradition. The reforms under her son, Joseph II, however, receive extremely critical treatment: even though he attempted to emancipate the population from “medieval darkness” with his “idea of unification through Germanification” and social reforms, this idea was a long-term curse, since it laid the foundations for the later attempts at Germanification in Cisleithania and Magyarisation in Transleithania. This pressure to assimilate led to the eventual collapse of the Dual Monarchy.⁵¹

For Bucovina, he again emphasizes the province’s autonomous character and the “system of decentralization” practised there. The Romanians in Bucovina had prospered due to an electoral system based on proportionality; as a national group they found their place in all areas of public life, there was funding for Romanian schools, and the Orthodox

49 Ibid., 262.

50 Ibid., 262–3.

51 Ibid., 263–4.

Church had enjoyed autonomy.⁵² In Bessarabia, he considered 1918 to have ushered in an improvement in conditions, since the population had hitherto been isolated from the rest of Europe and held back in their development.⁵³ Remarkably, despite his relatively nuanced analysis of the historical conditions in the various regions now constituting “Greater Romania,” Vaida-Voevod does not even mention the differences between the principalities of Moldavia and Walachia, although this would be fitting for a “regionalist” like himself. Here we clearly see remnants of a discursive practice that was particularly characteristic of the first phase of oppositional politics when the Carpathian border—then already a phantom border—stood at the centre of the debate: here Transylvania, there the Old Kingdom, an internal enemy bloc without differentiation. In this context, it is quite consistent of him to make no mention of Dobrogea.⁵⁴

The “Broad Middle” Way

It is no coincidence that the Hungarian lower aristocrat or Romanian upper bourgeois Vaida-Voevod uses the term “class” (peasant class,⁵⁵ ruling classes,⁵⁶ various social classes,⁵⁷ etc.) in a programmatic text written for an international audience and in criticizing the old elites writes of a “yoke of a new serfdom.”⁵⁸ In doing so, he alludes to the study *Neoibăgia* published by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855–1920) in 1910,⁵⁹ thus citing a Marxist with Jewish-Ukrainian roots, something the bourgeois Vaida-Voevod would have appreciated neither biographically nor ideologically, but which was clearly of strategic value. The ideology of agrarianism (*țărănism*) was conceived as a specific response to the communist movement that appropriated not only elements of this ideology, but also certain terms, including the concept of a “green International.”⁶⁰ In this

52 Ibid., 264.

53 Ibid., 263.

54 Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878–1913* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers, 2002).

55 Vaida-Voevod, *Ten Years of Greater Roumania*, 262.

56 Ibid., 264.

57 Ibid., 266.

58 Ibid., 263.

59 Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Neoibăgia: Studiu economico-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare* (Bucharest: Editura Viața Românească, 1910).

60 Dietmar Müller, *Agrarpopulismus in Rumänien: Programmatik und Regierungspraxis der Bauernpartei und der Nationalbäuerlichen Partei Rumäniens in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (St. Augustin: Gardez! Verlag, 2001); Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre, “Agrarianism as Third Way: Between Fascism and Communism and

respect, one of the preconditions of the party merger of 1926 was the programmatic moderation of the Peasant Party.

Vaida-Voevod describes the path taken by the government as the political centre. He underlines, certainly with an eye on his western recipients, that it was to the credit of the majority of voters that neither an anti-Semite nor a communist had managed to get into parliament. In contrast, he names the various battle lines that the Liberals had drawn across the Romanian society over the years but describes these problems as having been solved in a heartbeat by the inauguration of Maniu's government:

"One encouraging symptom is that the antagonism artificially provoked by the Liberals while in office, and also by their substitutes in the Averescu party, between the new provinces and the old kingdom, between the various social classes, between the Roumanians and the minorities, even between different religious creeds, has disappeared as if by magic."⁶¹

Admittedly, he does not mention that at times the very eloquent anti-government discourse, which he had largely shaped in all its facets as the spokesman of the opposition, had played a significant role in starting these battles or at least making them more widespread.

Conclusion

On the occasion of the official ten-year existence of "Greater Romania," coinciding with "his" government coming to power, Vaida-Voevod is writing for an international audience and attempts to portray the reasons for the election victory and the government's policy and goals through a combination of analysis and propaganda, critique of transformation, and optimism for the future. At the same time, Romania was to present itself in positive fashion on the international stage. Given the Great Depression, the impact of which was gradually manifesting itself in Romania, Vaida-Voevod had to describe his country as politically stable and a solid trade partner and site of investment in the global context. Correspondingly, the article can be read as a representative, albeit radically subjective and one-sided, assessment of the first decade after the Paris Peace Conference.

between Capitalism and Collectivism/Agrarismus als Dritter Weg: Zwischen Faschismus und Kommunismus sowie zwischen Kapitalismus und Kollektivismus," in *Transforming Rural Societies. Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre (Innsbruck, Wien, Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2010), 7–22; Helga Schultz and Angelika Harre, eds., *Bauerngesellschaften auf dem Weg in die Moderne: Agrarismus in Ostmitteleuropa 1880 bis 1960* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010).

61 Vaida-Voevod, *Ten Years of Greater Roumania*, 266.

The Maniu government's taking office is portrayed as a radical turning point, the end of a "nightmare,"⁶² a return to the values and aims formulated in Alba Iulia recognized on the international level in Paris. Vaida places the focus on a portrait of his fellow campaigner Maniu as a redeemer, resorting to a combination of sober presentation and sacred connotations, appealing to both the intellect and the emotions, as well demonstrated by the expression "economic salvation."⁶³ His article develops a societal vision based on the terms "moral," "peace," "fairness," "confidence," "harmony," and access to "resources."⁶⁴ Differences and diversity are depicted as surmountable phenomena; the ethnic, social, historical-cultural, and confessional battle lines will be overcome to the benefit of a strong, united society.

In this logic, the conflict is one between political generations: the *ancien régime* versus the democrats, despotism versus rule of law, oligarchy versus parliamentary representation. This all takes place before the background of the rise of mass democracy, multiple transformative crises, and especially economic blunders and, related to all these factors, the escalation of ideological tensions throughout Europe as a whole. The National Peasant Party could present itself as a "catch-all" party, as a people's party, and score points with the issues of fair representation ("free elections"⁶⁵), redistribution of resources, and decentralization. In this fashion, they countered the three big transformation processes of the first decade after "Alba Iulia" and "Versailles," points of criticism voiced by various interest groups: centralization, nationalization, and Romanianization.

On the emotional level, use is made of the image of the party leader Iuliu Maniu as a redeemer, but above all the image of Transylvania in general. Via these efforts, condensed in the mass proclamation of May 1928, the National Peasant opposition operated more like a movement than a party. It is both striking and characteristic that Vaida-Voevod supplements the concept of the *national*, in the Romanian discourse something fundamentally positive, with the concept of *patriotism*,⁶⁶ thereby also creating something the country's non-Romanian citizens could identify with. Hence for a brief moment Maniu, Vaida-Voevod, and others succeeded in providing a country shaken by crisis with a new vision that appealed to both rational interests and the emotions. This is how Vaida-Voevod ends

62 Ibid., 265.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., *passim*.

65 Ibid., 264.

66 Ibid., 265.

his article: "Then, most certainly, in a short time the abandoned Roumania of the Brătianus will become a fertile and flourishing garden, both for the Roumanian people as a whole and also for the racial minorities, on the basis of common interests and a sincere common patriotism."⁶⁷

The decisions made by the international community at the Paris Peace Conference were to be portrayed as having been correct. However, things would turn out differently: great hopes transformed into great disillusionment, and the National Peasant governments of 1929–1933 increasingly went against their own principles. The extent of this disillusionment corresponded to the magnitude of the prior promise of a "flourishing garden" of democracy and prosperity. Thus, the road to authoritarianism was paved.

67 Ibid., 267.

Bratu, Roxana. *Corruption, Informality, and Entrepreneurship in Romania*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 279 p.

Review by Clara Volintiru, Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Informal linkages have long been credited to explain many of the mishaps of post-communist governance and politics in Central and Eastern Europe. The underpinning informal culture of these societies is often linked to the legacies of the former regime plagued by corruption, politicisation, and cognitive dissociation between formal rules and everyday societal practices. What Roxana Bratu's recent book *Corruption, Informality, and Entrepreneurship in Romania* adds to the existing corpus of research is a systematic investigation of the effects of European funding on local practices. Key questions in the Europeanization field of study are: To what extent can international norms alter or change embedded practices in different societies? Has the European Union truly managed to create transnational practices and norms of conduct?

This book starts with the assumption that European-derived "transnational policies" are intrinsically distinct (if not opposed) to "local praxis"—an idea clearly highlighted in the first chapter. Roxana Bratu builds her analysis on the idea that in the case of Romania, and of any other member state, there is a concomitant process of top-down integration through the adoption of transnational regulation and bottom-up integration through the assimilation of such regulation into the vernacular. She pivots from the empirical analysis of EU funding to the issue of the broader compatibility between transnational regulations and local practices. Therefore, the main argument of the book is the following: "EU funding—as an economic process shaped by EU anti-corruption practices, policies, and assumptions—configures new political and economic subjects through intertwined vocabularies of corruption and crime, a mix of formal and informal entrepreneurial practices and commodification of finance" (p. 4).

While the subject of investigation is generally regarded as being a dry, administrative matter (i.e., EU funding), the author manages to construct an interpretative conceptual platform that makes it academically appealing and engaging. It may not be the ethnographic study of Clifford Geertz, but the exploration of entrepreneurial culture and its failures in Romania makes for a refreshing approach in the field of corruption studies. Throughout the second chapter, the book embeds a narrow subject of investigation (i.e., corruption and EU funding) into the vast literature on

post-communist challenges (e.g., poor institutionalisation, fast-tracked economic transition, patronage, and politicisation). This systematic framing makes for an important addition to the existing studies.

However, there is a persistently poor fit between the general policy perspective focused on corruption, explored in depth in the third chapter, and the broader academic perspective of a culture of informality in the post-communist setting. The interchangeable nature with which corruption and informality are used throughout the book leaves important aspects on the side: Why are informal practices better institutionalised than formal requirements? Do informal linkages manifest as a way to survive and navigate in a faulty regulatory environment (a point that seems implicit in the empirical chapters 4 to 6)? It is clear that the author acknowledges the tension, as she explores in different parts of the book the way top-down anti-corruption efforts fail in altering local informality. However, the issue does not seem to be dealt with decisively and conclusively in this book. And indeed, the nature and causality of informality in the contemporary Romanian and post-communist setting could constitute the topic of an entirely distinct study in itself.

The aforementioned systematic theoretical framing is well matched by the empirical coverage (i.e., interviews, anecdotes, in-depth description of mechanisms and procedures, economic flows). The rich descriptions of the behaviour and perceptions of entrepreneurs, consultants, and bureaucrats in Romania make a vivid picture of what seems at times to be essentially a challenging, yet ongoing, process of Europeanization. The alternation of micro- (i.e., individual level behaviour) and mezo- (i.e., EU funding flows and performance indicators) perspectives supports the diagnosis of a distorted effect in the case study of Romania. While EU funding is supposed to be “a process of policy learning to comply with EU regulation” (p. 223), this book suggests that the “local praxes” are much more resilient and manage to capture such sources of financing and to reinforce their own norms of informality.

Corruption, Informality, and Entrepreneurship in Romania is most certainly one of the books that can be read by academics and policy-makers alike. It is insightful, well-researched, and well-grounded. Most of all, the informative case studies offer an ultimately refreshing perspective on what seems to be a slightly saturated literature on corruption in European new democracies.

Vasilescu, Mircea. *Cultura română pe înțelesul patrioților*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018. 258 p.

Review by Cătălin Constantinescu,
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In 1998–2015, Mircea Vasilescu was the Editor-in-Chief of one of the best-known and influential cultural journals in post-communist Romania, *Dilema Veche*, as well as founder and Senior Editor of *Dilemateca*. His volumes illustrate how literary studies should sound in order to reach a larger audience. The polemical aspect of his most recent volume is present in the title: *Cultura română pe înțelesul patrioților* [Romanian Culture for Patriots]. The book provides interrogatory, reflexive, and nuanced tones that define Vasilescu's answers to important questions. It is combative but not radical, rigorous but not fastidious. "What does culture mean in Romanian society today?" is a haunting question not just for current authors. Vasilescu engages with several polemical stances since the 19th century (Garabet Ibrăileanu, Eugen Lovinescu, Mihai Ralea, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, and Lucian Blaga). To conceptualize culture, he appeals to relevant authors and their definitions of (Western) culture: Matthew Arnold, Edward Burnet Tylor, Alexis de Tocqueville, Clifford Geertz, F.R. Leavis, Raymond Williams, Dwight Macdonald, Umberto Eco, and Denis McQuail.

Vasilescu reformulates "What is Romanian culture today?" as "What does Romanian culture look like today?" Answering this question requires a clear realistic contemporary approach, with insights into recent developments, as after the fall of communism Romania became a mass society (implying mass culture) and a consumer society. The necessity of analyzing how culture works in Romanian society is more acute than providing new possible definitions or conceptual frameworks as the presence of culture in everyday life, how culture shapes mentalities, and what it offers in terms of perceived values are issues of great interest. The distinction between general culture and specific cultures of certain domains helps to explain why in so many aspects the public institutions are non-functional.

In Vasilescu's investigation four lines structure the chapters of the volume. The first one is the financial dimension of 'running' culture. The chapter *Banii pentru cultură. Între sărăcie, emoție și demagogie* [Money for culture. Between Poverty, emotion, and demagoguery] raises questions about public and private domains and whether culture falls under the obligation of the state or under the remit of private businesses. The second one is

the issue of readership and editorial markets, addressed in the chapter *Lectura. O temă strategică fără strategii* [*The Act of Reading. A strategic theme without strategy*]. The problem here is that there are no clear statistics of the number of readers in Romania; instead, questionable estimations are used to inform public debates. The focus on culture in the media—covered in the chapter *Patria, poneiul și polonezul. Cazul ICR* [*The homeland, the pony and the Pole. The ICR Case*] highlights perceptions of culture in the media and critiques the irrelevant public debates that dominate the field, the lack of ideas and adequate discourse, and the focus on public scandals concerning culture, with a focus on the Romanian Cultural Institute, H. R. Patapievici, and poet Mircea Cărtărescu. The final dimension concerns the so-called patriotic discourse present in the debates about Romanian culture, which is developed in the chapter *Câte culturi încap într-una singură?* [*How many cultures can be fit into one?*].

The book highlights a visible lack of competencies and knowledge in public institutions, generated by the deformed specific features of professional associations: the lack of an active culture of debating, civic solidarity, public discourse, public service or, as Vasilescu names it, “culture of freedom.” Among institutions lacking efficiency is the Ministry of Culture. Inspired from the public discourse, the debatable question of the necessity of having a Ministry of Culture gets a reasonable answer from Vasilescu: surely there is a need for such a ministry, but only if it is a strong institution, capable to introduce and implement consistent cultural policies that transgress political dynamics and office holders. Unfortunately, this is not the case now.

Elegant and well-informed, the analysis is marked by lucidity. Vasilescu wittily highlights the vacuity of the claims regarding the “post-communist reading problem” as presented in the Romanian public sphere. Claims such as “no one reads,” “young people today are watching the Internet all-day long instead of reading,” “only 500,000 Romanians are reading a book per month,” “in communism there were more readers,” “the Romanian book market is the smallest in Europe,” and “more than half of the population has never read a book” are taken for granted. The reality is more complex: no one knows exactly how much people in Romania read. “No one!”—emphasizes Vasilescu. (In Romania no readership figures, figures of revenues, or market-share exist; only estimates.) As for the communist period, statistics regarding readership were never released. Moreover, to conflate the book market and the act of reading is a mistake in itself.

Finally, Vasilescu suggests that the so-called patriots stating their love for Romanian culture should understand that this kind of emotional

rhetoric sends us back in time, to before modernity. Culture has not died, as it is often claimed, concludes Vasilescu. The scandals and polemic attitudes suggest an immature culture, as the localist and nationalistic forces are still arguing with pro-Western and cosmopolitan supporters. The author emphasizes that the discourse on the position of Romanian culture in the world is always seized by the fear of not being visible in Western culture, as the term *Occident* has developed into an unhelpful mantra for all intellectuals.

In examining the cultural policies, trends, and debates from the last years on the cultural scene implying the main cultural institutions, Vasilescu is suggesting that if Romanians want a developed, full-fledged society, they should create those institutions able to give “culture a better life, not only a survival kit.”

Researchers, academics and cultural journalists, but also a wide audience including those for whom the “patriotism” mantra strikes a deep chord may benefit from the no-nonsense “reading” of Romanian culture by Mircea Vasilescu.

Review Essay

Antisemitism, Holocaust and Memory in Eastern Europe: Romania from the Peasant Revolution until Today

Review by George Kordas,

Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens, Greece

Marin, Irina. *Peasant Violence and Anti-Semitism in Early Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 304 p.

Dumitru, Diana. *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 268 p.

Florian, Alexandru (ed.). *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018. 291 p.

The rising intensity with which antisemitism is present today, not only around the globe but also in Europe,¹ vindicates its place at the center of research interest for both political scientists and historians. Until now, the focus has largely been on the macro-level, emphasizing the historical recording of the phenomenon, globally and nationally. Specifically, historical research has been monopolized by the attempt to describe how the totalitarian regimes between the two World Wars acted against the Jewish population and how war affected this process. Absent from the literature was the micro-level (microhistory). Moving from a general to a more specific position, the individual becomes the leading actor of this new literature, making her decisions and choices the crucial part of research.²

Microhistory consists of two levels: the former concerns the individual as the main actor, while the latter has to do with public memory. The sensitivity of public memory marks the difference in its handling in Western and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the delayed transition to democracy of the Central and Eastern European countries acted as a barrier against possible attempts to comprehend and accept the past, before trying to connect it to current events. Those memory wars, combined with the refusal to accept newly discovered historical facts, represent in Eastern Europe the main issues this review essay seeks to cover. The works it

1 ADL GLOBAL 100, *An Index of Anti-Semitism*, available at: <http://global100.adl.org/public/ADL-Global-100-Executive-Summary2015.pdf> (accessed on 4 March 2019).

2 Cl. Zalc and T. Bruttman, "Introduction: Toward a Microhistory of the Holocaust," in *Microhistories of the Holocaust*, eds. Cl. Zalc and T. Bruttman (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), 4–5.

discusses focus on Romania and on those communities that historically were once part of its territory, often switching hands between the Russian and the Hapsburg Empires. At the center of these new publications is antisemitism, which becomes visible through the timeline included below, offering the opportunity to follow the critical phases of modern and contemporary history of the Romanian state.

Irina Marin's *Peasant Violence and Anti-Semitism in Early Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* focuses on the outburst of violence and antisemitism in the peasant population during the first decades of the 20th century. What is obvious from the very beginning is that we are dealing with historical research; hence, the importance of examining the archival material. The starting point of Marin's research is the dawn of the 20th century when Romania had already entered the modernization path. Nevertheless, as a former province of the late Ottoman Empire, the feudal system remained powerful, resulting in very low living standards for the peasants and finally triggering a peasants' uprising in the spring of 1907. While the uprising affected the way in which the young kingdom fulfilled the expectations of the peasants, it also turned against the Jewish population. That was because antisemitism was prevalent in the country at the time, as it was in tsarist Russia.

The book analyzes the dynamics of the uprising, as well as the role played by the communication networks between the villages, the press, and the railroad for the dissemination of news. This offers an opportunity to observe the state's attempt to control the news, the way in which village inns worked as places where the information came from other regions, and the first steps in the creation of a state secret police. Chapter 3 focuses on state propaganda, showing that the Romanian authorities blamed Russian anarchists for the uprising and discussing the ideas they spread in the region. Note that this period was key for state-building; thus, state sovereignty was regarded as more important than the problems of the population—low living standards, poverty, and precarious hygiene.³

Another critical part of Marin's research is represented by the comparative analysis of the peasants in Romania and in the Hapsburg Empire's regions adjacent to the borders of Romania and tsarist Bessarabia. Through this comparison, she presents different ways in which the Jewish population was targeted by the state authorities: integration in the Hapsburg Empire versus exclusion in Romania. Marin highlights the absence of differences between the quality of land and agricultural knowledge but

3 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 113–114.

also emphasizes the contrasting views of the populations living in those territories about the threat that Jewish economic activities presented for them.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the administrative and policing systems in Romania during the rebellion and the way in which the press in the neighbouring countries reacted to those events. More precisely, Marin describes those systems in order to emphasize the weaknesses in the state apparatus that helped the uprising to spread out. Describing the reactions of the press published on the Austro-Hungarian and Russian sides of the border, Marin attempts to present the fears born by the uprising and the way in which the local authorities counteracted the uprising through the news. The concluding chapter emphasizes the role of diplomacy in understanding the position of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian governments toward the rebellion. The work offers a clear picture of how the balance between the two Empires and the new-born kingdom was shaped, while also providing an understanding of how the secret diplomacy worked and defined the future of the local populations.

The timeline of events is further pursued by Diana Dumitru's research on the Holocaust in Romania, titled *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union*. The author focuses on the relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations of Bessarabia and Transnistria. A shift from the macro- to micro-history is visible in this study, in its attempt to explain the behaviour of civilians during the Holocaust. Dumitru's work examines the legacy and evolution of antisemitism in areas with multi-ethnic populations that find themselves under different occupation forces.

Dumitru's investigation starts with a chapter on the Russian Empire, where the levels of anti-Semitism were extremely high and, when mixed with religious intolerance, they ended in bloody pogroms. Of interest here is the fact that both the state and the masses favoured attacks against the Jewish population. Chapter 2 moves to the post-1918 period, when Bessarabia became part of the Romanian state. The rise of Greater Romania coincided with the appearance of the first fascist organizations in the country.⁴ Corneliu Z. Codreanu's Iron Guard and Alexandru C. Cuza LANC

4 Constantin Iordachi and Blasco Sciarrino, "War Veterans, Demobilization and Political Activism: Greater Romania in Comparison," *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 6, no. 1 (2017), 105–108.

(whose members were known as the Cuzists) were key actors in the anti-semitic pogroms, in a period when democracies declined in favor of fascism across Europe.⁵

While antisemitism was very powerful in Bessarabia, the Soviet occupation worked differently in Transnistria. As Dumitru explains in Chapter 3, the newly born Soviet Union fought antisemitism as it followed the internationalist spirit of communism, connected the existence of antisemitism with capitalism, and saw it as an obstacle to its desire of establishing the socialist society. In the two regions of Bessarabia and Transnistria, terror and hope started with World War II, when the Nazi occupation followed the Russian retreat. Although Bessarabia was well-known for its antisemitism, Dumitru points out in Chapter 4 that its population was not very happy with the arrival of the Nazi and Romanian armies. Regarding the civilians' behaviour against the Jews, Dumitru describes a plethora of both favourable and negative attitudes. Her use of the archival material, the existing literature, and interviews makes it possible to present the complex mixture of feelings prevalent among the population: fear, hate, apathy, kindness.

In Transnistria, the Soviet past worked differently for the Jewish population, as explained in Chapter 5. As Dumitru's interviews highlight, the survivors' memories about the local peasants are full of gratitude; one cannot over-generalize, as cruelty was also present. To understand those feelings and attitudes, it is important to turn to those who recorded episodes of assistance: Jews begging for and receiving help, and local residents offering food, clothes, shelter, and even adopting Jewish children, all the while putting their own lives in danger. Apart from those two regions, the author also focuses on the relations between Jews and ethnic Germans as well as between the Jews and the non-Jews of Odessa. In both cases, the general population was not entirely hostile towards Jews.

The last chapter of the book illuminates the changed relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the region. To strengthen her findings, Dumitru uses both quantitative and qualitative materials derived from archival documents and interviews with Jewish survivors. She puts under her microscope the effect of the Soviet experiment on antisemitism in Transnistria during a time period when in Romania, including Bessarabia, nationalism was on the rise.

5 Nancy Bermeo, "Getting Mad or Going Mad? Citizens, Scarcity, and the Breakdown of Democracy in Interwar Europe," CSD Working Paper, 1997, available at <https://escholarship.org/content/qt8xf4t3t0/qt8xf4t3t0.pdf> (accessed on 10 March 2019).

This review essay ends with *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*, edited by Alexandru Florian. Its value lies in bringing forth the importance of memory in the public space of a post-communist country. Through a sophisticated approach, the contributors attempt to frame what Holocaust means for contemporary Romania. In Chapter 1, Alexandru Florian offers a very brief literature review of memory studies, while attempting to follow their importance during the 20th century and using Romania as a case study. The volume is divided into two parts. The first one discusses the obfuscation of antisemitism that has occurred in historiography. Ana Bărbulescu's contribution follows Florian's work by emphasizing 2004 as the year when responsibility for the Holocaust of the Romanian Jews was finally assumed officially by the Romanian state authorities. As Bărbulescu points out, the memory imprinting was so strong in post-communist Romania that the Holocaust entered history textbooks only a full decade after the collapse of the communist regime. To strengthen her thesis, she records both historical positions that blame Romanians and positions that praise them as saviors. Remaining in the field of historical memory, George Voicu's contribution investigates the relation between the Holocaust and the Romanian intellectual elite's view of its importance in comparison to the communist Gulag.

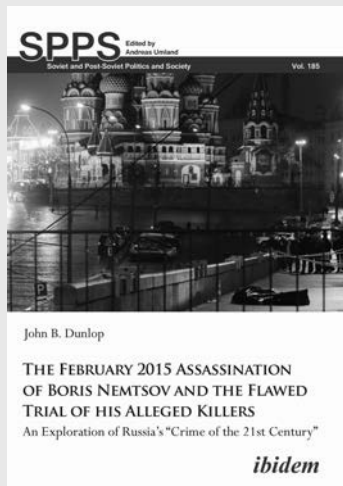
The relationship between law and the memory of the Holocaust is the subject of Alexandru Climescu's contribution. His analysis focuses on trials launched against war criminals between 1945 and 1989 as well as trials about criminals' public cult, Holocaust denial, and fascist propaganda in an attempt to understand how justice is administered in post-communist Romania. The first part of the volume includes two other contributions. In the first one, Michael Shafir seeks to understand Romania's efforts to join international organizations such as NATO and the European Union and to abandon its denial that the Holocaust ever occurred in the country. The second contribution engages different aspects of knowledge. In it, Simon Geissbühler exposes the defensive approach to the Holocaust by depicting the "wanting-not-to-know" view present in Romania.

In the second part of the volume, the authors attempt to clarify the relationship between public memory and public-private memory. Two controversial public figures, Mircea Vulcănescu and Ion Antonescu, are examined by Alexandru Florian and Marius Cazan. As Florian explains, by studying such notable personalities, one can discern the thin line between heroes and perpetrators. The chapter briefly describes how the state deals with the role of those controversial figures, its own connection with communism, and its task as the protector of human rights, historical memory, and democracy. The relationship between the state and those

controversial figures becomes more visible in Marius Cazan's chapter, which examines the public idealization and heroization of the former dictator. The volume ends with Adina Babeş's questioning the worldview that the young people are constructing today and the critical role the Holocaust can play in understanding human behavior.

In conclusion, Marin's volume attempts to comprehend the difficulties of modernization in a society where feudalism was dominant. Through the narratives of the peasants who participated in the uprising, the local, central, and diplomatic authorities' reaction to those events, and the use of rich archival material, the book succeeds in depicting not only the uprising but also its primary target: the Jewish population, portrayed as enslaving the Romanian peasants. By focusing on a period when the entire Southeastern Europe was concerned with the peasants' situation, the Romanian case offers the opportunity to understand how complicated those problems were for the new kingdom. By researching the period before World War I, Marin sketches the complex creation of nation-states when prejudices are deeply rooted within those societies. This was especially visible in the relationship between the state, the landowners and the peasants. Dumitru's research highlights the peasants' behavior in Bessarabia and Transnistria to understand how different occupiers affected the local populations and the Jews. It is in that work that memory makes its appearance; in addition, Dumitru presents the relation between the Jews and the Romanian state, and the Jews and communist Russia. Finally, the volume on the public memory of the Holocaust in post-communist Romania edited by Florian contributes to the field by outlining the political and social reality after 1989 and dealing with the ghosts of the past. Learning has been constructed around particular views about Romanian historical personalities from pre-communist and communist times, the victims of the successive regimes that have controlled the country, and the role simple people played. All three works deepen our knowledge of precisely this point by focusing on the role of the peasantry and on their prejudices. Because prejudices offered impermanent solutions to the peasants' problems, we see the popularity of antisemitism and its transformation over the decades, resulting in the Holocaust. Public memory remains very sensitive in the former communist countries, and as such, further studies are required to understand the historical roots of antisemitism in Central and Eastern Europe and the young and inexperienced nature of democracy, vulnerable to authoritarianism and populism.

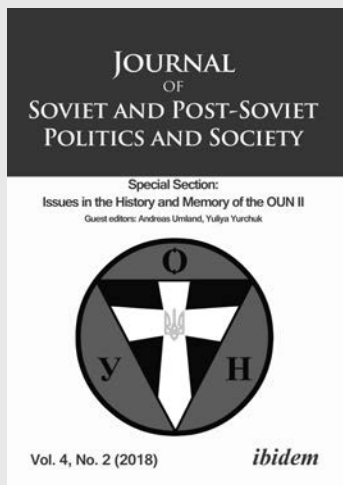
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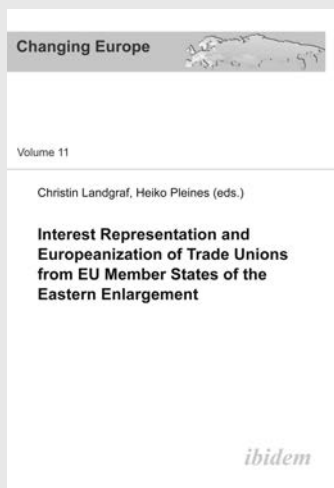
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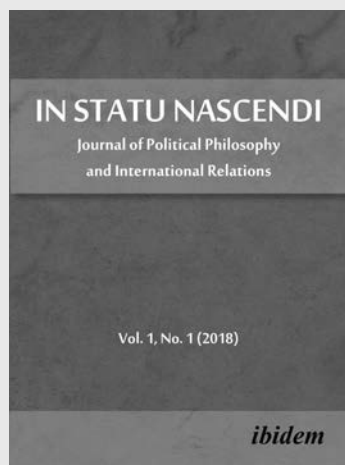
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