

# The Banatian Revolution from the Autumn of 1918 in the Collective Memory

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*“We, Romanians, are taking upon ourselves the responsibility and the guarantee for the lives and fortunes of our citizens.”*

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**I**N THE autumn of 1918, the disintegration process that had been underway since the end of 1917 was in full swing in the Austro-Hungarian Army. It had been accelerated by the many defeats this army had suffered on various fronts and by the famine that had affected the soldiers on the battlefield and the civilians back home. The protracted war and the utmost deprivation the soldiers had experienced had led to their radicalization in the context of the unrest that prevailed throughout the former empire, the Bolshevik socialist propaganda, the revolutionary spirit and the hardships endured by the families they had left behind. The surge of patriotic sentiment that had accompanied the outbreak of the war in 1914 had presently subsided, being replaced with more and more protests against the war, attempts at defection and national or social uprisings.

In the collective memory, the events that took place in Banat in the autumn of 1918 have remained entrenched as a revolution. Without exception, the writings dedicated to that period, including books, memoirs, journals and comments in the press, consistently

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used the term *revolution*. This was the general perception about the events taking place in Austria-Hungary and, respectively, in Transylvania and Banat at that time.

According to Michel Vovelle, during the first stage of any democratic revolution, there are two levels on which the revolutionary spirit can manifest itself and two types of behavior that can be adopted: one characteristically belongs to peasants and the masses, while the other is specific to the intellectual or political elites.<sup>1</sup> At the popular level, peasant behavior perpetuates archaic attitudes, visible during uprisings ever since the Middle Ages. Such attitudes tend to be manifested locally, against those considered responsible for the wrongs suffered by the population: usually, the perpetrators of such wrongs include great landowners, the political or administrative authorities, the repressive apparatus, the managers of industrial companies, or merchants. In the autumn of 1918, this was the first type of behavior that could be detected among the soldiers who, upon returning from the front, decided to settle their accounts with those they blamed for the hardships they and their families back home had experienced.

During this stage of the revolution, especially in the months of October–November 1918, the manifestations of the population were characterized by violence, anarchy, social disorder, looting and murders, fueled by the power vacuum created by the expulsion of the local authorities, the notaries, the gendarmerie and the military forces. The causes that had spurred such manifestations were economic, social or national. During the last year of the war, both the soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian Army and the civilian population experienced a food crisis of major proportions, to which was added the combatants' low morale and the lack of supplies. This state of affairs was duly recorded in all the memoirs written in Banat. For instance, as Coriolan Băran stated: "During the last year of the war, the food crisis reached unbelievable proportions . . . All we received from the storehouse was bread and, every once in a while, meat, but nothing else." Soldiers, in particular, were affected by the food shortage. Both on and behind the front, famine was the most terrible scourge in 1918. The situation of the soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian Army had greatly deteriorated compared with the first year of the war, when they had received a special dietary regime. Famine was one of the factors that contributed to the soldiers' demoralization and greatly diminished their fighting capacity. "[There were] food shortages, especially in Austria. Food rations had been cut down. Worn-out equipment. Little ammunition, making it imperative to use it very sparingly. Low morale, both in the army and among the civilian population."<sup>2</sup>

Lack of food affected all walks of life, particularly in Austria, forcing many women with a good social standing to join the public service (hospitals, for instance) so as to ensure their daily food supplies. The aforementioned Coriolan

Băran described the sheer scale of this phenomenon: “Scarcity of food had reached unimaginable proportions in Austria. Bread was distributed in very small quantities, on ration cards. A little beef, no pork at all, while potatoes and vegetables lacked altogether.”<sup>3</sup> The memoirist emphasized the contrast with the situation from the beginning of the war: “The situation in 1918 was no longer that of 1914–1915. In the beginning, soldiers had been well clothed and well fed, with access to unrestricted amounts of ammunition. In 1918, they had shabby outfits, small amounts of unwholesome food, they were under orders to save ammunition, the number of deserters had seriously increased and their morale was down.”<sup>4</sup>

For five days, from 15 to 20 July 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Army launched attacks on all fronts, unsuccessfully. The Battle of the Piave River shed light on a paradox. Despite the destructive fire of the Italians, the Austro-Hungarian troops had insisted on advancing “because they knew,” as Lae from Banat wrote, “that there was food to be found in the Italian territories, for the Austro-Hungarian armies had been starving.” The memoirist considered that the Piave had been crossed only so that the soldiers could “grab a piece of bread,” because every 12 soldiers had been given just one loaf of bread, which was full of sand anyway. The author added that the Italians had left food on the banks of the Piave River, knowing full well that the Austro-Hungarian Army had been decimated by hunger. Moreover, the Italians had deliberately withdrawn to Montello, up to the railway tracks, from where they counterattacked. “The poor soldiers died for a piece of bread from the Italians, believing that it would appease their hunger.” Lae from Banat went on to compare the situation with the Görz offensive, from the autumn of 1917, following which the Austro-Hungarian soldiers had found shops full of supplies and well-stocked wine cellars.<sup>5</sup>

The same situation was recorded on the home front. Having come to Budapest to take his exams at the university in the autumn of 1918, Coriolan Băran noted that “the people didn’t have a clear sense of the events that were going on in the world. Food-related concerns and the high cost of living preoccupied them more than the so-called ‘big politics.’”<sup>6</sup> After being wounded in battle at the Piave River, Lae from Banat was admitted to a hospital in Vienna. Then he was granted a 30-day leave. He had the opportunity to visit the city and to observe the contrast between its beauty and all kinds of hardships the population of the capital had to cope with: “I walked up and down Vienna, everything was beautiful, but the Viennese population suffered greatly. Women, children and old people assailed you at the train stations, asking for a bit of bread.”<sup>7</sup> Mihail Gropșianu came across a similar situation in Oravița at the beginning of November 1918: “Hunger, which not even the Good Lord, in His infinite Mercy, can appease, is turning humans into beasts. They are screaming and crying out for blood.”<sup>8</sup>

Under these circumstances, the end of the war was eagerly awaited everywhere, both on the front and among the civilian population. In the Austro-Hungarian camp, the *élan* of the first year and confidence in victory had made room for apathy, anxiety and fear. “In these conditions,” Coriolan Băran wrote, “it was obvious that the war could not last. The Austrian officers were apathetic and waited for the end, whatever the future held in store for them. The Hungarians, high and mighty in the years before, had got off their high horses and were concerned, even apprehensive about the future. They had been considering an entire array of solutions and the concessions that would have to be made to the minorities. The only solution that hadn’t been thought about was the dismantling of Hungary.”<sup>9</sup>

The collapse of the fronts, shortages and all manner of adversities, and Bolshevik socialist propaganda led to the outbreak of the revolution in Austria-Hungary. This event was to hold the attention of several memoirists. Lae from Banat even accredited the idea that the socialists in Hungary had had a plan for unleashing the revolution, which had been presented to him by an agent of the Central Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party in Hungary, at the Budapest railway station. According to this plan of the socialists, the revolution was to break out on 15 October 1918, with István Tisza’s assassination. Then 16 special trains were to leave in different directions, announcing the end of the war. On the same day, 16,000 convicts were to be released from prison and entrusted with the mission to devastate the Parliament building, the General Headquarters and the commandants’ offices. The socialist organization in Budapest was connected to the socialists in Vienna and across the country. The memoirist claimed that “the Romanians, the Croats, the Czechs and the Poles vigorously supported the actions of the revolution.”<sup>10</sup>

The outbreak of the revolution in Hungary was an event that held the attention of several memoirists. Soldiers were the first to adopt a revolutionary conduct, bringing news of the revolution to Banat. Coriolan Băran referred to the echo of these events in his native village of Nerău. A group of soldiers got off the train that had arrived there at 8 pm. They were local villagers who had done military service in the Szeged garrison: “The soldiers had no badges with the emperor’s initials on their peaked caps and the non-commissioned officers had no shoulder straps . . . They told us that the revolution had broken out that afternoon. The soldiers had torn off the epaulettes on the officers’ shoulders and had cut the badges off their peaked caps.”<sup>11</sup> This was the first image of the initial manifestations of the revolution. According to Băran, it had broken out on the Italian front on 30 October and had spread, within 24 hours, throughout the monarchy. Nicolae Badiu discussed “the delirious enthusiasm” of the Hungarian soldiers in Komorn: “There was a commotion and when I raised my eyes, I could see how the officers, headed by the general, ripped the effigy of the king

off their peaked caps and trampled it underfoot, the non-commissioned officers in the courtyard emulating the officers in the balcony. There was a general uproar: 'Long live the Republic.' And then, spontaneously, tumultuously, everyone started chanting the Hungarian 'Hymnusz.' They all took off their caps. Only we, the Romanians and the Serbs (about 200), kept our heads covered." This was the signal for a full dissolution of the regiment, as "the crowd had already left for the station," despite the opposition of the superiors. A state of anarchy set in right away. The officers were terrified, "the soldiers were demanding that the officers and the non-commissioned officers remove the distinctive stars. Nobody gave a military salute anymore, discipline crumbled and chaos ruled over these souls, anxious to experience new sensations."<sup>12</sup> In the army from Hungary, the revolution began with a removal of the insignia pertaining to the House of Habsburg.

Another significant image, the second in the timeline of revolutionary manifestations in the Army, was that of trains filled with repatriating soldiers. These returning soldiers had abandoned their regiments, after having been transferred, during the war, to Bohemia and Austria. The train from Szeged was full, as Nicolae Badiu wrote, "not only inside, but also on the outside. The roofs, the decks, the stairs, they were all packed with people."<sup>13</sup> The enthusiasm of the civilian population at hearing this news was captured by several memoirists. One of the recorded images was that of stations teeming with people. It was also described by Badiu, as he encountered it on his way to his native village: "In all the stations, tears of joy and embraces. The population, dealt a brutal hand by the war, could finally breathe freely and express their unbridled passions, each according to their temperament, which had been shackled for so long by the chains of oppression. And all the stations were filled with people waiting."<sup>14</sup>

The revolution in Hungary was preceded by the naval units' revolt in Pola. Telegraph operators on ships permanently kept in touch with the revolutionary hotbeds in Germany and elsewhere. Caius Brediceanu experienced these events: "Telegraphist non-commissioned officers, most of them harboring communist sentiments, organized on 26 October 1918, at the exact same time, a revolt of the sailors; both in Germany and in Austria, this revolt started out as a purely Bolshevik manifestation." He claimed that the Czech soldiers and sailors, educated in Sokol organizations before the war, had "managed to steer the Bolshevik revolt towards a national revolution."<sup>15</sup>

Lae from Banat, who had been temporarily swayed by the socialist propaganda, described the events in Hungary after Tisza's assassination as follows: "Trains carrying revolutionaries set off. Cries of freedom resounded from the hearts of thousands. Down with the stars, down with the *ruia* [emblem], everyone should go home, the war is over. The mail service and the railway transportation system carried out their important mission beyond reproach. History

will speak. The Red Guard had seized control over Budapest. In fact, the whole of Europe was threatened by the fist of the proletariat, which previously had never had the courage to clench it. The revolution was welcome, through and through. The subjugated nations were liberated; the terrible fire that had ravaged Europe subsided. The people are free and happy, as the Lord's will has been done."<sup>16</sup>

**A**NNE DUMÉNIL has emphasized the fact that violence was one of the constant images of the Great War. On the front, violence was “radicalized, decisive for the denouement of the conflict.”<sup>17</sup> Violence on the battlefields was a consequence of technological warfare, of the new types of weapons and of the different kinds of hardships that had compelled the combatants to commit atrocities and engage in mass killings of enemy soldiers and civilians. Lae from Banat captured an episode on the Italian front, during an offensive of the Austro-Hungarian troops: “Toward evening, the Austro-Hungarian troops stormed about like Sturm savages, shooting and looting everything in their path. Intoxicated from drinking wine in the grandiose Italian cellars, the soldiers were no longer aware of what they were doing, but kept firing their weapons in a frenzy, mercilessly slaying people and cattle. It was horrendous to see how bayonets pierced the chests of those who wanted to protest or defend their property.”<sup>18</sup> Violence also affected the civilian population. The same memoirist recounted another episode on the Italian front: “When the assault of San Dona took place, thousands of elderly people, women, girls and children were killed, for the invasion of the troops was barbaric and the cannons felled the wounded and there were dead people lying everywhere in the field.”<sup>19</sup>

Behind the front, the violence wrought against the civilian population was depicted in the writings dedicated to the war through terms such as “barbarians” or “savages,” used to designate the occupants.<sup>20</sup>

The High Command of the Central Powers applied martial law to defectors, shooting or hanging all those accused of treason against the motherland. “Thousands upon thousands of souls were laid to rest,” as Lae from Banat wrote, “dying as heroes for our dear homeland.” The Banatian memoirist presented the case of the members of a Czech battalion, taken prisoners at the Battle of Montello. They had enlisted in the Italian Army, but their Czech nationality had been betrayed by a spy, causing them to be shot behind the barracks in Conegliano: “The barracks walls had been stained with blood and brain tissue, and in order for the scene to be even more appalling and deter the soldiers from surrendering to the enemy, they hanged 20 leaders of the Czech battalion, leaving their bodies in plain sight.”<sup>21</sup>

The outbreak of revolution in the autumn of 1918 and the return of the soldiers from the fronts, brutalized by war and radicalized by their suffering and by the socialist and Bolshevik propaganda, as well as by the ordeals endured by

their families back home, gave rise, in the months of October and November, to various types of revolutionary violence, specific to traditional, popular violence. Like in the medieval uprisings, those who were targeted were held responsible for the suffering of the villagers—the notaries, the gendarmes, the landlords and the merchants. C. Buracu described the devastation of the villages and Nicolae Badiu mentioned the rebels on Count Csekonics's estates who had looted the storage warehouses.<sup>22</sup> The manifestations of violence reached the paroxysm in Arad County, where, as Coriolan Băran wrote, “the revolution was truly a revolution. The aristocrats' castles were ransacked and almost all the village notaries were banished from the community. Several days passed before the spirits of the soldiers who had returned from the front could be appeased; their wives, back home, also had their reckoning with the village notary, who, in most cases, was a foreigner and had behaved abusively.”<sup>23</sup> Notaries suffered the most from the spontaneous uprising of the population. “In villages, the situation was clarified on the first day. Foreign notaries who had not behaved humanely during the war were simply driven away, without any other harm being done to them.”<sup>24</sup> Nicolae Badiu discussed the population's attitude towards notaries more extensively: “The fact is that this official in the villages embodied the Hungarian scourge afflicting the Romanians and the Serbs. He executed orders coming from the terrible Tisza Pișta [István], distributed the women's alms, requisitioned the necessary things for the army, registered those who had to join the army and, finally, it was up to him to grant the *fălmăntăș* [military waiver] to those who were entitled to stay at home. However, in their blind arrogance, the notaries, most of them Hungarians, had not fulfilled these duties humanely. These officials paid through the nose for all the sins committed by the Hungarian governments.”<sup>25</sup>

Aside from the notaries, the targets of popular violence also included the Hungarian gendarmes, who were also held accountable for the suffering of the inhabitants. Like the great landowners, notaries and gendarmes were particularly targeted during the upheaval and unrest of the population, who regarded these individuals as emblematic of the Hungarian regime: “The Hungarian gendarmerie was dismantled and disbanded on the very first day of the revolution. The creation of a body that would ensure order was both urgent and necessary.”<sup>26</sup>

The demolition of the institutions and symbols of the old regime also took place in Mehadia: “The national flag, wrapped in mourning, was unfolded and we set off to the town hall chanting national songs. There we put up a sign with a Romanian inscription, then went to the gendarmerie station, where there were five guys. We disarmed them, placed a Romanian sign and installed a group from the National Guard, organized on that day,” as C. Buracu wrote.<sup>27</sup> On his return to Romania, Pavel Jumanca commented on a similar manifestation that took place in Caransebeș: “When the Austro-Hungarian Army was disbanded,

the soldiers on all fronts headed to their homes. Like an invading horde, they sought vengeance against the authorities—notaries, mayors and gendarmes—who had robbed, in their ravenous greed, those who had been left without help and protection at home.”<sup>28</sup>

The soldiers who had returned from the front targeted the symbols that evoked the former empire and its political or military representatives. One of the forms this attitude took consisted in demoting the officers encountered in the street: “They snatched off their stars and badges and crushed them frantically, stamping them with their shredded boots.” It was an act of protest against a regime they no longer endorsed and marked the end of their loyalty to the good emperor. For Nicolae Linția, this was one of the “many forms of revenge against those who had sent them to die for causes unrelated to their own ideals.”<sup>29</sup>

The destruction of the symbols that were reminiscent of the emperor and the former regime took center stage during the revolutionary events from the autumn of 1918. A Romanian soldier putting up the tricolor flag in the streets of Budapest was considered a “symbolic demonstration, with manifold meanings: the joy experienced at the collapse of the Habsburg Empire and the end of the war, the certainty that it would not be long before the nation’s millennium-old dream was fulfilled, etc.”<sup>30</sup>

The students at the Theological-Pedagogical Institute of Caransebeș also engaged in such manifestations. They protested directly against the representatives of the old regime and its symbols in the town of Caransebeș, accusing the authorities of being docile tools in the denationalization process. Student Andronie Botoș prohibited the headmaster of the state high school in town, Kalkbrenner, to walk underneath the Romanian flag hoisted at the town hall because in 1917, when he was appointed government commissioner to the Pedagogical Institute, he had attempted to close it.<sup>31</sup> Another case presented by Linția and confirmed by Paul Jumanca and Gheorghe Neamțu referred to the fact that the student Gheorghe Crăciun had painted the Romanian flag “across the chest” of the statue representing Empress Elisabeth, “turning the symbol of the eternal dominion of the Habsburg monarchy . . . into a symbol of victory for the Romanian people.”<sup>32</sup>

In the streets of Timișoara, the imperial-royal officers no longer wore the gilt badge with the sovereign’s initials, but tricolor cockades representing the various national assemblies. Given that anarchy had set in throughout the city, with different military and national councils vying for leadership positions in the administration of public affairs, conflicts appeared. The old bodies of local government and military units continued to exist, but they no longer had any power. Escaped inmates, prisoners and vagabonds looted the shops, causing the cadets from the officers’ school to take aim and fire at them without warning. There was a state of emergency in the city, bullets swished by the bystanders’ ears, and



the inhabitants were forcibly armed to fight against those who caused such excesses. Officers were stripped of their rank in the streets of the city. This was the atmosphere in Timișoara, as seen by the student Ioan David at that time.<sup>33</sup> This image was characteristic of the events happening in the entire Banat because these manifestations of the revolution were encountered everywhere. Trains were vandalized and looked like armored vehicles, for the soldiers who had returned from the front “were firing gunshots like they do at weddings,” glad to have escaped the global carnage. The author captured a similar atmosphere in Caransebeș, another town in turmoil, where anarchy brought the threat of bloody clashes: “Soldiers are coming demoralized from the front, in utter disarray, having seen all those bad examples out there, wherever they have been.” He was referring to those who had returned from Lenin’s Russia, about one dozen in each village, and who had been spreading alarming news.<sup>34</sup> Anarchy gave rise to abuse and pillaging. Ioan David invoked the example of the destruction of a castle belonging to the Mocioni family in Foeni, which provided the gendarmes and the soldiers with the opportunity of killing several innocent peasants.<sup>35</sup>

The collapse of the Dual Monarchy was also evoked by the primary school teacher Gheorghe Neamțu, who wrote: “At the end of the war, hybrid Austria-Hungary was seized by great, frantic confusion. Lack of discipline spread out especially among the military, a body that had never been solidly organized, having nothing to cement together the dozens of nations incorporated within its ranks, with different mother tongues, customs and, above all, ideals.” The primary school teacher from Caransebeș wrote that the crowd had set out “with whatever they could get their hands on, in all directions, free, without concerns, ruthless, depraved, pouring out like a flood threatening to engulf quieter places.”<sup>36</sup>

The outbreak of the revolution was also captured by Mihail Gropșianu. The date was Saturday, 4 November, a market day in Oravița. Captain Gropșianu was notified that “there is an uproar in the streets, the beginnings of a revolution. The crowd gathered at the fair are on the verge of rebellion, Hungary is aflame in the turmoil of a revolution, and the emperor has been dethroned.”<sup>37</sup> The lawyer from Oravița also reflected on several manifestations of violence during the revolution: “In villages there were murders, Romanians killed one another, set fire to things and committed other wrongdoings against their fellows as well.” The list of these events mentioned by Mihail Gropșianu was significant for the population’s violent manifestations. The notaries were murdered at Prigor and Moldova Nouă; Paul Mica, a notable villager, was assassinated by a Romanian at Sasca Montană; the schoolmaster’s house was set fire to in Potoc “and there were other endless savageries committed by beastly people during the revolution.” Acts of vandalism were carried out at the Hard Liquor Company in Oravița Română, where the “horde descended upon the storehouse of

plum brandy and pomace, grunting by the fermentation vats,” so much so that greed dealt a heavy blow to some of them.<sup>38</sup> On 5 November, the population of Oravița and the surrounding areas was on the verge of engaging in large-scale looting. The crowd kept shouting: “Let there remain no stone unturned, we are hungry, we’re going to the shops, prepare the carts, and there were other exclamations of malicious spirit made by the rabble.”<sup>39</sup> The situation had turned downright menacing. In the streets, the starving population threatened to rebel. Acts of violence were perpetrated in Marila, where the crowd set fire to forests, pillaging and looting the sanatorium there. To end the state of unrest, Mihail Groșșianu demanded the STEG (The Privileged Imperial Royal Austrian State Railway Company) leadership in Oravița to make the food supplies of the company available to the population. In the ultimatum he addressed to STEG, enjoining them to open the storehouses, he said: “Hunger itself is screaming out loud and there’s no telling what will happen in a few hours if it is not appeased.”<sup>40</sup>

At Sasca Montană, the gendarmes had fled, leaving the area without a police force to ensure public order. Under these circumstances, as of 2 November, “the soldiers from all fronts, starving to death, facing a harsh winter,” together with villagers from the area, took wood from the storage of STEG, gathered wood from the forests, confiscated flour and food from the STEG and the village storehouses.<sup>41</sup>

In Caransebeș, the autumn of 1918 was similarly dominated by the revolutionary spirit of the population, severely affected by the war. This state of mind was especially visible among those who had recently returned from the front and wished to settle their individual or collective accounts with the notary or the merchant in the village. Many deemed this to be an auspicious time for such events. Looting, robberies and even homicides were perpetrated at Mărul, Delinești and Ohabîța. In the latter two villages, when the landowner and the merchant were slain, the Hungarian soldiers intervened, shooting 12 peasants in Delinești. In Slatina, six peasants were shot in the village square, before the entire community.

There was also another kind of violence, committed by those who had been overthrown from power and who responded, in turn, with acts of aggression. The representatives of the old regime engaged in ransacking, homicides and arson in villages of the Banat Highlands. The most infamous cases occurred at Domașnea, Cornea and Cănicea, where the gendarmes summoned the Honvéd forces of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment from Szeged, which were passing through Orșova, claiming that these villages had rebelled. At Borlova, the soldiers shot a girl and opened fire on the villagers on sight.<sup>42</sup>

The revolution found Grigore Mihăiutuțiu at the train station in Franzensfeste. He reported that this station had fallen “prey to a destructive revolution, with ransacked shops and terrible commotion among the distressed passengers.”

Trains from the Italian front had been pulling up in the station. Mihăițiu recounted that he had taken refuge in a “revolutionary train,” which the crowd had taken by storm. He called it a “revolutionary train” because “it was run and operated by revolted soldiers returning from the Italian front,” who refused to obey any authority. When attempts were made to stop it at Innsbruck, they swept across the platform with bursts of gunfire, shooting from the rooftops of the passenger cars and leaving dead and wounded people on the platforms.<sup>43</sup>

**T**HE VIOLENT outbursts of the population gradually subsided and ceased at the end of October and the beginning of November, when the next stage of the revolution, with a national agenda, started. This stage was coordinated by representatives of the local elite, such as priests, teachers, lawyers, former officers, local leaders of the Romanian National Party and of the Romanian section of the Social Democratic Party. During this stage, the most important manifestation of the revolution consisted in the recalibration and organization of power structures. More specifically, efforts were made to create an institutional system that would sanction the self-governance of the population after the collapse of the political regime and the administration in Hungary. National guards and councils were representative institutions that made an impressive effort to organize and manage public life. The setting up of national councils or assemblies was specific to this period, marked by the collapse of empires, and was found among all the nations of the former Austro-Hungarian or Russian monarchies. It was the work of soldiers who had fought in armies whose structures had unraveled and was also adopted by the civilian population, as the old local political and administrative bodies had been ousted. In some areas, they replaced the old institutions, while in others they served as an alternative to them, representing the interests of the population that had hitherto been deprived of such political or administrative bodies.

The Banatian collective memory has retained these events as a significant moment for the revolutionary manifestation of the Romanian population, because they were coeval with the Romanian nation’s takeover of power in a revolutionary manner. At Oravița Montană, the representative of the National Council and of the Romanian Guard told the praetor: “You have lost the power! We, Romanians, are taking upon ourselves the responsibility and the guarantee for the lives and fortunes of our citizens. This is the day when we are taking hold of public power.”<sup>44</sup> In Caransebeș, Gheorghe Neamțu wrote that the Romanian nation had “succeeded in having a disciplined revolution, however paradoxical this may sound.” The expression “disciplined revolution” illustrates the fact that the takeover of power by the Romanian nation was a peaceful process, without violence or bloodshed.

The formation of national councils and guards in almost all the localities of Banat marked the takeover of power by the Romanian nation, which assumed, via its elected representatives in these political and administrative bodies, the responsibility for maintaining order and ensuring the safety of the citizens and of the inhabitants' assets at a time of revolutionary effervescence, fostered by the absence of authorities, by a power vacuum and by a sentiment of uncertainty about the outline of the future borders.



(Translated by CARMEN-VERONICA BORBÉLY)

## Notes

1. Michel Vovelle, *La mentalité révolutionnaire: Société et mentalités sous la Révolution française* (Paris: Messidor, Éditions sociales, 1985), 19 sqq.
2. Coriolan Băran, "Amintiri," in *Marele Război în memoria bănăţeană (1914–1919)*, vol. 1, anthology, edition, studies and notes by Valeriu Leu and Nicolae Bocşan (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 242.
3. Ibid., 246.
4. Ibid., 267.
5. Lae din Banat, "La Regimentul 43 nimic nou!?" in *Marele Război în memoria bănăţeană (1914–1919)*, vol. 3, anthology, edition, studies and notes by Valeriu Leu, Nicolae Bocşan, and Mihaela Bedecan (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană; Academia Română/Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2015), 351.
6. Băran, 270.
7. Lae din Banat, 353.
8. Mihail Gropşianu, "Revoluţia anului 1918 din Oraviţa-Caraş," in *Marele Război*, 3: 209.
9. Băran, 247.
10. Lae din Banat, 353.
11. Băran, 276.
12. Nicolae Badiu, "Aduceri aminte," in *Marele Război*, 1: 145–146.
13. Ibid., 147.
14. Ibid., 148.
15. Caius Brediceanu, "Răsboiul mondial," in *Marele Război*, 1: 474.
16. Lae din Banat, 354.
17. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Jean Jacques Becker, eds., *La prima guerra mondiale*, vol. 1, ed. Antonio Gibelli (Turin: Einaudi, 2007), 208.
18. Lae din Banat, 337–338.
19. Ibid., 339.
20. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, 391.
21. Lae din Banat, 356.
22. Badiu, 149.
23. Băran, 281.

24. Ibid., 277.
25. Ibid., 147–148.
26. Ibid., 277.
27. C. Buracu, “Amintiri,” in *Marele Război*, 1: 525.
28. *Marele Război în memoria bănațeană (1914–1919)*, vol. 2, *Memoriile lui Pavel Jumanca*, anthology, edition, studies and notes by Valeriu Leu, Nicolae Bocșan, and Mihaela Bedecan (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană; Academia Română/Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2013), 583.
29. Nicolae Linția, “O generație privilegiată,” in *Marele Război*, 3: 368.
30. Ibid., 369.
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37. M. Groșianu, 190.
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40. Ibid., 209–210.
41. Ilie Groșianu, “Sasca Montană (1918–1919): Memorii,” in *Marele Război*, 3: 173–174.
42. See the chapter “Revoluția,” in *Marele Război*, 3: 94–95.
43. Grigore Mihăuțiu, “Nepotul țăranului bănațean pe cărările vieții,” in *Marele Război*, 3: 387.
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## Abstract

### The Banatian Revolution from the Autumn of 1918 in the Collective Memory

In the autumn of 1918, following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Army and the collapse of the front, a revolution broke out in Banat. The patriotic enthusiasm that had marked the beginning of the world conflagration had died out, triggering national revolts and social riots and fueling protests against the war. The revolutionary events from the autumn of 1918 were characterized by violence, anarchy, looting and assassinations, made possible by the power vacuum ensuing from the dismantling of the older political, administrative and military structures. Revolutionary violence was a specific type of behavior encountered among the former combatants who had returned from the front and wished to take revenge on those they held responsible for all the hardships endured during those years. Military failures, a major food crisis and the Bolshevik propaganda led to the outbreak of revolutionary actions in Austria-Hungary. The moment was captured in Banatian memoirs, being described in the texts of several authors.

## Keywords

1918, Banat, memoirist writings, revolutionary violence