

# The Union of Transylvania with Romania in the Discourse to the Central Press of the First Interwar Decade (1919–1929)

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*Adevărul*, 2 December 1919

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## Introduction

FOR THE Romanians, the Great Union of 1918 was the major event of the first part of the twentieth century, but it was also the moment when the main agent of political cohesion from the period before 1918 disappeared. After the accomplishment of Greater Romania, the cultural and political ideal of the Romanians changed from the fulfillment of national unity towards political and cultural modernization.

After 1918, Romanian historians were deeply interested in the Great Union. Due to the extensive treatment of the subject, I will not resume the historiographical analysis, because it was very well done.<sup>1</sup> However, I would like to emphasize that the subject proposed herein has not been addressed.<sup>2</sup> I found that the volumes dedicated to the Great Union<sup>3</sup> or those that targeted the interwar period did not address the topic of the present re-

search.<sup>4</sup> The Romanian Press History Association dedicated a congress to the Great Union press, in whose program I did not identify any communications related to the subject proposed in the present study.<sup>5</sup> More than welcome is the initiative to publish the volumes *Ziare românești despre Unirea Basarabiei, Bucovinei și Transilvaniei* (Romanian newspapers on the union of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania), in which the editors proposed to publish all the articles regarding the union of the three provinces with Romania.<sup>6</sup>

Even if no special studies dedicated to the discourse of the Romanian central press about the union of Transylvania with Romania have appeared, a few analyses have been attempted, dedicated to the local press coverage of the union celebrations in the 1920s.<sup>7</sup>

From the methodological point of view, I chose a quantitative approach based on the press from the period 1919–1929, from the independent one—*Universul* (The Universe), *Adevărul* (The Truth), *Cuvântul* (The Word), *Curentul* (The Current)—to the official press bodies of the most important political parties of the period—*Viitorul* (The Future), *Patria* (The Homeland), *Dreptatea* (The Justness), *Aurora* (The Aurora), *Neamul Românesc* (The Romanian People), *Îndreptarea* (The Reformation), *Apărarea Națională* (The National Defence).<sup>8</sup> Choosing these periodicals was not accidental, because I had in mind the most representative independent newspapers, but also the press of the parliamentary parties, with influence among the electorate of the first interwar decade. Because the volume of information is very large, considering that most of the newspapers appeared daily, I chose to study only the months of November–December, when articles dedicated to 1 December 1918 were published. I have adopted the descriptive method to present the main topics addressed by the periodicals, without discussing the commentaries of each article. In the conclusions I will analyze the main topics critically approached by the press. Regarding the way in which the annual anniversaries were celebrated, I mention here that I will not present the way in which the manifestations took place, focusing instead on the reports/the discourse of the press related to the union and its anniversary. Our aim was to pursue, mainly, the divergent/polemic discourse, and that is why the analysis was made according to each newspaper, in order to underline the thematic approach. The main press articles are presented in order to describe the topics covered by periodicals and then analyzed in parallel discourses. I presented the common theme, as much as possible cumulatively, trying to avoid repetitions. In terms of the approach, I started with the independent newspapers because they had the largest print runs and were spread throughout the whole country, and then moved to the press of the political parties. In the second case, I started with the analysis of the liberal press, because it represented the strongest party of the period, then with the press of the Romanian National Party/National Party/National Peasant Party, followed by the press of the other important parties of

the time. I analyzed the central press because it fostered opinion makers but it also was the main source of information of the population. The second aim of the research was to observe how the discourse evolved during the period after the union of Transylvania, the discourse related to the moment of 1 December 1918, focusing on the anniversary articles that best capture the way in which the press chose to remember the moment. In summary, our approach wants to highlight how the press, considered the social archive of the epoch in which it appears,<sup>9</sup> approached the union of Transylvania with Romania in the period immediately following the event.

From the chronological point of view, I chose the 1919–1929 period, because it represents the moment when Romanian society underwent significant social and political changes. The chronological interval 1919–1929 is also the first major stage of the Romanian interwar policy regarding the remembrance of the Great Union, because since 1930, together with the Carlist Restoration, the festive moments of the union of 1918 gained other valences. The phenomenon is evident starting from the second part of the fourth decade of the twentieth century, when a cult of personality begins to emerge, glorifying King Carol II.

Due to the size and purpose of this article, I will not present the political and social situation of the period.<sup>10</sup> However, I would like to mention the major events that prevented the celebration of the union of Transylvania with Romania during the studied period. The first celebration was overshadowed by the moment when the first government was formed, a government that resulted from the first general elections after the formation of Greater Romania. Furthermore, on 1 December 1919, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod became prime minister of the government coalition called the Parliamentary Bloc. In December 1921, the “crisis” of the Alexandru Averescu’s government again overshadowed the news about the union of Transylvania. In December 1927, due to the death of Ion I. C. Brătianu, no festivity dedicated to the day of 1 December 1918 was held,<sup>11</sup> and the news were confined to the formation of the new government led by Vintilă Brătianu and to commemorative articles dedicated to the man who had been the longest surviving head of government of Greater Romania. Ten years after 1 December 1918, another political event overshadowed the remembrance. In November 1928, the National Peasant Party obtained for the first time the government, with Iuliu Maniu as prime minister. The organization of the elections of December 1928 lead to the postponement of the festivities planned for the celebration of a decade since the union of Transylvania with Romania.

Apart from the annual celebrations or commemorations of the Great Union Day, the union of Transylvania had two festive moments, in 1923 and May 1929.<sup>12</sup> Around the time of the festive moments dedicated to the union of Transylvania, most newspapers of the time published reverential articles dedicated to the day of 1 December 1918. Usually they did not enter into the political or

administrative details related to the preparation and the realization of the union. Even if the day of 1 December was not included in the national holidays calendar, as the Transylvanian leaders would have liked, the ASTRA cultural association marked the event every year<sup>13</sup> through various shows and conferences organized in schools and localities of Transylvania. The Bucharest press constantly presented news about these events,<sup>14</sup> received from the correspondents in Transylvania.

## Independent Newspapers

**T**HE MOST important independent newspapers in interwar Romania, if we look at their circulation and distribution area, were *Universul* and *Adevărul*. They had a balanced attitude towards the remembrance of the union of Transylvania with Romania. Even though they published yearly articles dedicated to the event, their approach was not at the same quantitative level throughout the chronological period 1919–1929.

The daily newspaper *Universul*, with the largest circulation during interwar Romania, dedicated sizable articles to 1 December 1918, during some key moments, at the anniversary of five years,<sup>15</sup> of ten years, and in 1929, when the union of Transylvania with Romania was celebrated at the national level by the government of the National Peasant Party. On 2 December 1928, the issue of *Universul* was entirely devoted to celebrating ten years since the unification. Moreover, all the articles were full of praise and were dedicated to remembering the events that led to the realization of the union.<sup>16</sup>

Around the celebrations of 1929, the *Universul* newspaper sent journalists to the city of Alba Iulia, to analyse how the city was preparing to host events dedicated to the union of Transylvania. Even if the renovation of the Coronation Cathedral, the setting up of a Union Museum, statues of Horia, Cloșca and Crișan, as well as the relocation of the county residence from Aiud to Alba Iulia were intended, none of this was achieved. Instead, tables were set for the participants and the facades of buildings were renovated “to look good during the festivity.” The local administration was criticized for the fact that only the railway station was illuminated, and the rest of the city was plunged in semi-darkness. The repairs to the road from the railway station to the city center were done “in a hurry,” and the author of the article pointed out that “at the parade it will look good but in 10 years it will be full of potholes again,” as the durability of the works had not been taken into account.<sup>17</sup> *Adevărul*<sup>18</sup> and *Curentul*<sup>19</sup> also presented the preparations of the city of Alba Iulia for the union of Transylvania Celebrations in May 1929, which did not differ much from those mentioned above.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the union of Transylvania, the other great daily newspaper of Romania, *Adevărul*, considered that the most

appropriate way to celebrate it was by requesting the publication of the Resolution of the Great National Assembly from Alba Iulia.<sup>20</sup> The desire to respect the programmatic principles from Alba Iulia was resumed in the coming years as well.<sup>21</sup> Two years after the event, *Adevărul* published a short article highlighting the democratic spirit and the tolerance towards minorities which had defined the unification of Romania.<sup>22</sup> The article dedicated to the celebration of 5 years since 1 December 1918 emphasized that without democracy the union could not have been fully achieved.<sup>23</sup>

After the establishment of the first government led by Iuliu Maniu, at the end of 1928, there was much discussion in the pages of *Adevărul* about minorities, amid the expectations that a very promising minority law would be adopted, in accordance with the principles of Alba Iulia.<sup>24</sup> Around the union celebrations of May 1929, *Adevărul* published several articles about the adoption of a law on minorities, presenting the discussions with representatives of the Saxons, as well as with those of Hungarians and other minorities. By adopting the law, they sought to co-opt the minorities' representatives during the upcoming holidays. In the end, the law was no longer adopted.<sup>25</sup>

The 2 December 1928 issue of *Adevărul* was dedicated to the union of Transylvania, being sprinkled with several laudatory articles. The articles recalled the political leaders' contribution to the event.<sup>26</sup> It also included several articles drawing on personal memoirs on topics ranging from the way in which the negotiations from Arad were conducted to the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia.<sup>27</sup> Apart from this information, no other contributions were published, as the newspaper was much more concerned about the parliamentary elections of that period.

As to the presentation of the news about the celebrations of 10 and 20 May 1929 in Bucharest and Alba Iulia, the two major daily newspapers, *Universul* and *Adevărul*, had similar approaches. They dedicated special issues to the Bucharest<sup>28</sup> as well as the Alba Iulia<sup>29</sup> union celebrations, in which they described the events unfolding there, and published background articles on the union of Romanians starting with the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>30</sup> but also testimonies of the participants about the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia.<sup>31</sup>

The newspaper *Cuvântul* fully covered the festive moments dedicated to the day of 1 December 1918. In 1924, studying the minority press, it found that around 1 December, the contributors were obsessively asking for "the fulfillment of the pledges made at Alba Iulia."<sup>32</sup> In an article published shortly after the appointment of the first government of the National Peasant Party, it was stated that 10 years after 1 December 1918, not only the Romanians but also minorities would rejoice, as the latter had been frustrated by the failure to meet the pledges written in Declaration of Alba Iulia. The liberal regime was accused of practicing regionalism, which is why a "national concord of the country" had not been achieved. The author of the article was of the opinion that with the setting up of

the new government, a new era began in relation to minorities that would bring about dispute resolution, because the Transylvanian leaders had experience in this field, as only 10 years prior they had been a minority themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Established in 1928, the newspaper *Curentul* published numerous articles about the union of Transylvania. Regarding the celebration of 1 December 1928, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers issued a statement which announced the following at point I: “Due to the lack of time, much needed for the organization of the elections, and to the fact that there have been considerable delays in the necessary preparations, until the change of government, the jubilee celebrations of the union of Transylvania and Banat, which were to take place in Alba Iulia on 1 December, will be set for a later date (10 or 3/16 May 1929).” 1 December was to be celebrated by a Te-Deum at the Patriarchy in the presence of the royal family, the regency, the government, and high dignitaries. In Alba Iulia, Curtea de Argeș, Mărășești, and Bucharest, religious services had to be officiated in the presence of a government delegate and of the civil and military authorities. Religious services and parades were to be held in all county capitals. The event was to be celebrated in every school in the country.<sup>34</sup> Writer Cezar Petrescu welcomed the fact that the government had postponed the celebrations of a decade since the union of Transylvania with Romania. The postponement was meant to allow for the events to be organized as the new government wanted, not as established by the previous liberal government led by Vintilă Brătianu.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the date of 10 May was set for the celebrations in Bucharest and Mărășești, and that of 20 May for those in Alba Iulia. The dates were set at the beginning of May, after many hesitations by the authorities.<sup>36</sup> This information was provided by all the newspapers investigated, but the most accurate and detailed reports came from the newspaper *Curentul*, which is why I also presented the detailed information in the account of the periodical led by Pamfil Șeicaru. We must keep in mind that the information transmitted by the newspapers about the date when the government choose to celebrate the passing of a decade since the union of Transylvania with Romania was the main vector through which the population was kept informed about the events.

The last anniversary of the union of Transylvania from the first interwar decade, the one of 1 December 1929, was presented almost in unison by all the newspapers that I have analyzed above. Namely, it was highlighted in a brief note that the moment was marked in Bucharest by an event organized by the Astra association and Cultural League at the headquarters of the latter in the capital of Romania.<sup>37</sup> In addition to this information, *Curentul* and *Cuvântul* also featured separate pieces. In the article dedicated to the celebration of 11 years since 1 December 1918, the bitterness of Pamfil Șeicaru is rather obvious. He was of the opinion that 11 years after the elation of 1 December 1918, the political parties “succeeded in wasting all the moral force of the enthusiasm.”

The director of *Curentul* was unhappy, because “I counted the coming to government of the National Peasant Party as a conclusion of a process of decomposition, as a vigorous point in the painful controversy without any purpose between the Old Kingdom and Transylvania. In the 11<sup>th</sup> year, we were given this disappointment.”<sup>38</sup> *Cuvântul* was not far from its previous opinions, although there is greater leniency towards the government of the National Peasant Party, to which it still granted political credit.<sup>39</sup>

## The Official Press of the Political Parties

**T**HE PRESS of the most important political parties in Romania in the third decade of the twentieth century was different from the independent one when it came to the remembrance of the moment of the union of Transylvania with Romania. After 1918, the factor of political cohesion which had been the ideal of Romania’s union disappeared, and the parties tried to use this event to attract adherents in the struggle to gain power. For this reason, the criticism of the political adversary, to whom no merit was recognized, and utter intransigence are often found in the pages of the official parties’ newspapers.

The press of the National Liberal Party, through the official newspaper *Viitorul*, recalled annually the moment of the union of Transylvania with Romania. An acid criticism was made in 1926, when the liberal press accused the Transylvanian leaders that, during the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, they had wanted a real autonomy of the province, while “the masses gathered in the fortress” had forced the leaders to declare an administrative autonomy until the Constituent Assembly was elected. The leaders of Transylvania had hoped that the Ruling Council<sup>40</sup> would remain in existence “for at least 30 years.”<sup>41</sup> Thus was explained the radicalism of the Romanian National Party/National Peasant Party towards the liberals and their political actions in the 1920s.<sup>42</sup>

The ten years since the union of Transylvania were marked by a special issue of *Viitorul*. The main merit in achieving the union of Romania was ascribed to Ion I. C. Brătianu and King Ferdinand I.<sup>43</sup> A constant reproach of the liberals towards the National Peasant Party leaders, throughout the first interwar decade, was their attitude of non-participation in national celebrations such as the Coronation of Alba Iulia in 1922 and the celebrations dedicated to the union of Bessarabia in 1924 and 1928. When the National Peasant Party formed the government and decided to organize the celebrations dedicated to a decade since the union of Transylvania, in May 1929, the liberals began to accuse them that in times of financial restraint they wanted to spend very large sums for the event.<sup>44</sup> The liberals accused Maniu’s government of turning a national holiday into a

party event.<sup>45</sup> Even though the president of the National Liberal Party, Vintilă Brătianu, was not present in Alba Iulia, a number of important leaders of the party participated in the celebrations dedicated to a decade from the union of Transylvania with Romania.<sup>46</sup> The celebrations of May 1929 were welcomed by the liberal press with laudatory articles.<sup>47</sup> As in December 1928, the “makers of Greater Romania” were, in the liberals’ point of view, King Ferdinand I, Queen Marie, Ion I. C. Brătianu, and Gheorghe Pop de Băsești. I noticed that the official newspaper of the liberals gave less editorial space to the union of Transylvania with Romania than to the one dedicated to the union of Bessarabia.

In contrast, the newspaper *Patria* featured articles dedicated to the festive moments of the union of Transylvania with Romania. In 1920, it stressed that the union was celebrated by the “general public” (students, university professors, supporters of the Romanian National Party) in Union Square in Cluj, but the authorities did not attend the event, considering that the official celebration of the unions had already taken place on 24 January.<sup>48</sup> In December 1922, when the Constitution was discussed in Parliament, the official newspaper of the National Party was of the opinion that the principles contained in the Resolution of the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia should be introduced in the new Constitution, as well as the requirements of the other provinces united in 1918.<sup>49</sup> Even though the press of the National Party’s political opponents diminished the role of the Transylvanian leaders in the accomplishment of the Great National Assembly of 1 December 1918, it was said that they were the ones who had made the union possible and their merits had to be acknowledged, even if they had been helped by the other Romanians.<sup>50</sup>

Five years after 1918, they found that instead of a genuine democratic system, the “archaic model of the Old Kingdom” was strengthened, pointing out that the leaders of the National Party did not challenge the union, but rather the way in which the unification was understood from the legal point of view, administratively and politically. These inconsistencies dampened the enthusiasm of the Romanian society of the time. Even though at the time of the union it was believed that all politicians would mobilize to ensure the progress of the country, in a short time the political passions had their say and thus the country reached the point of “fragmentation and non-productive work.”<sup>51</sup> Even in 1926, the Transylvanians could not enjoy the remembrance of the union, but they had hope and demanded patience because they were convinced that the day would come when the “unifiers of Transylvania,” as they were called, would initiate “a new era in the history of Romania,” once they got to form the government.<sup>52</sup> It can be noticed that the dissatisfaction with the union increased every year from 1919 to 1927 in the pages of the official press body of the Romanian National Party of Transylvania published in Cluj.

The official newspaper of the National Peasant Party, *Dreptatea*, which had been published in Bucharest since 1927, had the same attitude as *Patria*, after

the merger of the National Party with the Peasant Party. This is why I will not revisit here the topics similar to those of the newspaper published in Cluj. I will focus on their attitude after the coming to power of the National Peasant Party. Obviously, after the moment when the party led by Iuliu Maniu came to power, his official newspaper changed his acid discourse towards the union celebrations. The issue of *Dreptatea* dated 2 December 1928 published ample articles related to the union of Transylvania, on various topics, from the anniversary ones to the publication of the Resolution of the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia and the description of the role of Iuliu Maniu, Ștefan Cicio-Pop, or Alexandru Vaida-Voevod in the achievement of the Great Union.<sup>53</sup>

*Dreptatea* responded to the charges of the liberals regarding the waste of funds for the May 1929 celebrations.<sup>54</sup> The government justified the way in which it had organized the union celebrations, through the voice of Minister Sever Bocu, who said that all nations are due to honor their great events “of life and history.”<sup>55</sup> A special issue dedicated to the celebration of 10 May 1929 was published. Along with the portraits of Michael the Brave, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Carol I, Ferdinand I, Queen Marie, the members of the Iuliu Maniu government were presented on a separate page.<sup>56</sup> The articles were laudatory and recalled the moment of the union of Transylvania with Romania and the contribution of the Transylvanian leaders in this endeavor. There was also a special page about the union of Bessarabia,<sup>57</sup> as well as articles about the union of Bukovina<sup>58</sup> and the perspective of the 10 years that had passed since the Great Union.<sup>59</sup>

Eleven years after 1 December 1918, *Dreptatea* published a short article highlighting the role of those who had fought in the Great War and praising the Transylvanian leaders who had been at the forefront of the union.<sup>60</sup>

The attitude of Nicolae Iorga regarding the remembrance of the union of Transylvania with Romania is quite interesting. As long as he had good relations with the leaders of the Romanian National Party/National Peasant Party, he considered that the union had been achieved by the Transylvanian leaders,<sup>61</sup> but later he changed his opinions. In the newspaper led by him, *Neamul Românesc*, several articles dedicated to the union of Transylvania were published.<sup>62</sup> The author of an article was of the opinion that the celebrations should be organized annually, to set an example to posterity. He noted that the moment of the union of Transylvania was not celebrated properly, although it was considered the “great millennium point” that underpinned Romanian politics.<sup>63</sup> The article dedicated to the first decade of the union is quite mellow,<sup>64</sup> due to the deterioration of Nicolae Iorga’s relations with the Transylvanian leaders, following the merger of the National Party with the Peasant Party, because the great historian did not agree with the union of the two political parties and as a result he left the party whose co-chairman he had been. In December 1928, Nicolae Iorga

emphasized that all the “commemorations” were organized under the sway of the current political situation. He did not forget to rebuke the Transylvanian leaders because previously they had not taken part in the national festivities, but after a decade of union they were pleased to participate because “they were given satisfaction when coming to power.”<sup>65</sup> After the festivities held at Alba Iulia on 20 May 1929, Nicolae Iorga demanded “more work and fewer parades. We have to get up through work, because we are down.”<sup>66</sup>

The official newspaper of the Peasant Party, *Aurora*, did not insist very much on the remembrance of the union of Transylvania with Romania, and the published articles focused on the international situation in which the union was realized.<sup>67</sup> The authors who published in this newspaper considered that the Transylvanian leaders were the ones who had achieved the union, despite the inability of the liberal authorities to understand the moment, a fact demonstrated by the difficulties of the unification process.<sup>68</sup> In 1926, an article lamented the bad governance, but emphasized that both Transylvanians and the Romanians from the Old Kingdom wanted to maintain the unity of the state, even if they had different perspectives on the unification.<sup>69</sup> I noticed that there were few articles published by the newspaper run by Nicolae Lupu, *Aurora*, regarding the festive moments of the anniversary of the union of Transylvania.

The newspaper of the People’s Party, *Îndreptarea*, was not very concerned about the remembrance of the union of Transylvania with Romania. In 1927, it published an article focusing on the fact that the Hungarians were the only ones who did not recognize the union and wanted to amend the Treaty of Trianon.<sup>70</sup> In 1929, the newspaper was “upset” because the Maniu government wanted to celebrate in May the union only for Transylvania and Bukovina, Bessarabia being excluded from a festive moment otherwise deemed to be “of all Romanians.” The newspaper considered that this brought a disservice to Bessarabia, especially when the Soviets insisted on regaining the province.<sup>71</sup> It should be emphasized that Bessarabia celebrated the 10 years since the union with Romania with a parade organized by the Vintilă Brătianu government in April 1928. This was also the reason why the government of the National Peasant Party chose not to celebrate once again the anniversary of the province in May 1929. Also interesting is the article that alluded to a military coup, even if it was otherwise dedicated to the union celebrations of May 1929.<sup>72</sup> In the third decade of the twentieth century, the official newspaper of the People’s Party dealt more with the political situation and less with the celebrations of the union.

Another newspaper that was little concerned about the festive moments of the union of Transylvania with Romania was *Apărarea Națională*, the official newspaper of the National Christian Defense League. It was more interested in other festive moments, such as 10 December, the day of the Christian students, or 10 May, the independence day of the Romanian state.

The newspapers of the political parties must be approached in light of their intention to attack the political opponents. They did not represent independent attitudes but were the voice of the elites of the political groups they represented. For this reason, some showed more interest in the commemoration of the union of Transylvania with Romania, and others less, because they had few adherents in the province concerned. I noticed that the articles dedicated to the union of Transylvania with Romania had a decent language, compared to those in which political opponents were attacked, especially those published during the election campaigns.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusions

AS I HAVE stated in the introduction, in the following I shall draw some conclusions regarding the press approaches concerning the union of Transylvania with Romania. I found that all the analyzed periodicals had some common points. The first would be the unanimous declaration of the eternity of the union. Another was the description of the events that took place in the localities of the intra-Carpathian province year after year. The celebrations organized by the Romanian state in other countries, but also what the foreign press reported about the union of Transylvania with Romania, were mentioned by all the investigated newspapers. Another set of common themes was the publication, year after year, of the Resolution of the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, the speeches of the political leaders and of the authorities on the occasion of the anniversary of the union, but also the festive meetings of the Parliament or Romanian Academy. For this purpose, the newspapers had as a common point the presentation of the national celebrations program dedicated to Transylvania in 1929, as well as of the events, participants, of the historical remembrance of the moment of union, or of the battles for national unity, with references to significant moments in this endeavor. Comparing the discourse of the independent and party newspapers, I found that the former offered less information related to the anniversary of the union as compared to the party press. The latter tried in such moments to ascribe the merits of the union to the leaders of the parties they supported. For example, *Adevărul* and *Universul* gave large spaces on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, and in the other years the articles on the union of Transylvania were short, usually almost not identifiable in the newspaper columns. On the other hand, the press of the political parties, especially that of the Romanian National Party/National Peasant Party, never missed an opportunity to write about 1 December 1918.

I also noticed that the independent newspapers condemned the way in which the National Peasant Party government organized the festivities of May 1929,

considering that the preparations were made in haste, even though they had been postponed to the end of 1928, precisely in order for them to be organized thoroughly. A sensitive issue discussed by the independent press, but especially by *Universul* and *Cuvântul*, had to do with attracting the minorities in Transylvania to the celebrations of the first decade since the union with Romania. While the Hungarians were reluctant, in the case of the Saxons, it was stressed that they asked, on the occasion of the celebrations of the union of Transylvania with Romania, a fulfillment of the promises contained in the Resolution of the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia of 1 December 1918. Despite the numerous laudatory articles, there were also some that condemned the “Romanian practices.” For example, the tendency of the Romanians to celebrate in any situation was condemned, but also the fact that they did not want to work. The newspaper *Văitorul* tried to induce the idea that the merit of the union of Transylvania belonged to the liberal leaders. Also, during the celebration of May 1929, they accused the national-peasant leaders that in times of financial restraint, they spent large amounts on the festivities. The liberals returned the rebuke to the national-peasants, who, in their turn, had accused them of the same practices in the case of Bessarabia’s union celebrations of 1924 and 1928. The champion of the anniversary articles of the union of Transylvania was the newspaper *Patria*. It strongly condemned the unification policies devised by the liberals, considering that political-administrative centralism was not a solution for the modernization of the new state. The major role in the union of Transylvania was ascribed by this periodical, supported by *Dreptatea*, to the Transylvanian leaders led by Iuliu Maniu. Nicolae Iorga, in his newspaper, *Neamul Românesc*, displayed a changing attitude towards the event. As long as he had good relations with the leaders of Transylvania, he claimed that they had been the main artisans of the union. After the formation of the National Peasant Party, because he did not agree with the merger of the two component parties, he accused them of not participating in the national celebrations held during the first interwar decade, because they were not given the satisfaction of being brought into government. Even though it was not concerned with the celebrations of the union of Transylvania, as in the case of Bessarabia, the newspaper *Aurora* dedicated some articles to the event, largely in order to criticize the liberal political opponents. The newspaper *Îndreptarea*, on the other hand, accused the national-peasant leaders of transforming the celebrations of the union of Transylvania with Romania, held in May 1929, into an event dedicated exclusively to Transylvania. As a common feature, I can point out that all the political opponents of the Romanian National Party/National Peasant Party focused on the non-participation of the leaders of these parties in the official celebrations of the 1920s. In the year 1929, the opposition press accused the National Peasant Party of turning the commemoration of the union of Transylvania into a party event, just as they had done over time with the liberals.

The celebrations of the union should have brought everyone together, but after analyzing the press I found that the political struggle continued even during festive times. Regarding the attitude of the independent newspapers, there is a uniformity of the information transmitted and a veiled criticism of the political situation. If, in the first years after 1918, the press discourse praised the unification, over time it gained critical overtones, especially about the way in which the unification process had been carried out. While the politicians from the Old Kingdom of Romania approached the organization of the state from centralist positions, those from the united provinces wanted a much more permissive administrative autonomy, an aspect highlighted by the political discourse of the leaders from Transylvania. It can be seen that in the anniversary moments the critical tone was milder than the one commonly used in political debates, especially during the election campaigns.

Among the authors of the articles dedicated to the union of Transylvania, regardless of their perception of the event, we find important names of the Romanian interwar press, such as: Stelian Popescu, Pamfil Șeicaru, Nicolae Iorga, Constantin Bacalbașa, Cezar Petrescu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Iosif Nădejde, Ion Agârbiceanu, etc.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the fact that, in analyzing the discourse of the press, I have referred only to the discourse of the elite. The attitude of the press is largely the attitude of the elite, political or not. Therefore, as a result of the research carried out, we cannot say that this was the general attitude of the population towards the remembrance of the union of Transylvania with Romania, but only that of the press, represented by the authors who signed the researched articles.



## Notes

1. Valer Moga and Sorin Arhire, eds., *Anul 1918 în Transilvania și Europa Central-Estică: Contribuții bibliografice și istoriografice* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2007); Ion Zainea, "Istoriografia anilor 1968–1975 cu referire la Marea Unire sub lupta cenzurii comuniste," in *Unirea din 1918: Act fundamental al istoriei României*, eds. Vasile Ciobanu and Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2008), 261–281.
2. Given the numerous scientific events dedicated to the centenary of the Great Union, which took place in 2018, a series of studies and works related to this topic may yet appear in the following period. I tried as much as possible to integrate the research that I could consult until the time of the completion of the study, in October 2019.
3. Ioan Scurtu, *Marea Unire din 1918 în context european* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică; Editura Academiei Române, 2003); Ciobanu and Radu.

4. I shall mention here only a few of the contributions dedicated to the topic, which I deem relevant: Ioan Scurtu, *Din viața politică a României 1926–1947: Studiu critic privind istoria Partidului Național-Tărnănesc* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983); id., *Istoria civilizației românești: Perioada interbelică (1918–1940)* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2012); Ioan Scurtu and Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918–1948)* (Bucharest: Paideia, 1999), 17–219; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultura și naționalism în România Mare 1918–1930*, transl. Vlad Russo (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 64–224; Gabriel Moisa, *Istoria Transilvaniei în istoriografia românească 1965–1989* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003); Keith Hitchins, *România 1866–1947*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, transl. George G. Potra and Delia Răzdolescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), 374–413, 441–451. For the historical evolution of Transylvania in the interwar period see: Victor Jinga, *Probleme fundamentale ale Transilvaniei*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, eds. Mihai D. Drecin and Margareta Susana Spănu (Brașov: Consiliul Județean Brașov; Muzeul Județean de Istorie Brașov, 1995), 493–640; Anton Drăgoescu, ed., *Istoria României: Transilvania (1867–1947)*, vol. 2 (Cluj-Napoca: Societatea Cultural-Științifică “George Barițiu,” 1999), 617–1227; Harald Roth, *Mică istorie a Transilvaniei*, transl. Anca Fleșeru and Thomas Șindilariu, foreword by Ovidiu Pecican (Târgu-Mureș: Pro Europa, 2006), 119–148. For brief details about the union of Transylvania with Romania see: Jacob Mârza, “The Union between Transylvania and Romania,” *Transylvanian Review* 12, 4 (2003): 83–95; Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Paula Bolovan, “From the National Assembly in Blaj to the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia: Church and Nationality,” *Transylvanian Review* 27, 4 (2018): 31–44.
5. [http://presa-marii-uniri.uvvg.ro/wp-content/uploads/files/BROSURA\\_PROGRAM\\_CONGRES\\_PRESA\\_MARII\\_UNIRI.pdf](http://presa-marii-uniri.uvvg.ro/wp-content/uploads/files/BROSURA_PROGRAM_CONGRES_PRESA_MARII_UNIRI.pdf), accessed 28 Jan. 2019.
6. Six published volumes: Marius Diaconescu and Andrei Florin Sora, eds., *Ziarele românești despre Unirea Basarabiei, Bucovinei și Transilvaniei*: vol. 1, *Promovarea idealului Unirii Basarabiei, Transilvaniei și Bucovinei 21 Martie–15 Decembrie 1917*; vol. 2, *Basarabia pe calea Unirii cu România 16 Decembrie–8 Aprilie 1918*; vol. 3, *Entuziasmul Unirii Basarabiei 9 Aprilie–7 Mai 1918*; vol. 4, *Proiectul României Mari între cenzură și provocările Unirii Basarabiei 8 Mai–11 Octombrie 1918*; vol. 5, *Pregătirea Unirii Transilvaniei și Bucovinei 12 Octombrie–27 Noiembrie 1918* (Bucharest: Ars Historica, 2018); vol. 6, *Presa din România despre pregătirea Unirii Transilvaniei și Bucovinei 12 Octombrie–27 Noiembrie 1918* (Bucharest: Ars Historica, 2019).
7. Barbu Ștefănescu, “Presa românească din Oradea despre Unirea din 1918,” *Crisia* (Oradea) 8 (1978): 229–252; Daniel Crețu, “Sărbătoarea Unirii în presa sibiiană 1919–1928,” in *Viața cotidiană în Sibiul secolilor XIX–XX*, eds. Mihaela Grancea and Ioan Popa (Sibiu: Astra Museum, 2015), 155–160; Cristina Culiciu, “La un deceniu de la Unire: 1 Decembrie 1928 în presa bihoreană de limbă română,” in *Beiușul și lumea lui*, vol. 5, *Lupta pentru Unire (1918–1919): Oameni, fapte, întâmplări din Bihor*, eds. Ioan Degău and Viorel Faur (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane; Oradea: Primus, 2018), 928–942; Florin Ardelean and Gabriel Moisa, eds., *Marea Unire: Ecouri în presa culturală din Oradea-Mare (1920–1943): Familia și Cele Trei Crișuri* (Oradea: Editura Muzeului Țării Crișurilor, 2018).
8. *Universul* (1884–1953), *Adevărul* (1888–1937), *Cuvântul* (1924–1934), *Curentul* (1928–1944), *Viitorul* (1909–1938)—the official newspaper of the National Lib-

eral Party, *Patria* (1919–1938)—the official newspaper of the Romanian National Party/National Peasant Party, *Dreptatea* (1927–1947)—the official newspaper of the National Peasant Party, *Aurora* (1921–1926)—the official newspaper of the Peasant Party; *Îndreptarea* (1918–1938)—the official newspaper of the People’s Party, *Apărarea Națională* (1922–1938)—the official newspaper of the League of National Christian Defence, *Neamul Românesc* (1906–1940)—the official newspaper of the National Democratic Party headed by Nicolae Iorga. The party press had between 5,000 and 200,000 copies, while the independent press reached a print run of 200,000 copies. Ioan Scurtu, ed., *Istoria românilor: România întregită (1918–1940)* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), 646–653.

9. Pierre Albert, *Istoria presei*, transl. Irina Maria Sile, foreword by Marian Petcu (Iași: Institutul European, 2002), 8–9.
10. For more explanations regarding the evolution of Greater Romania in this period see: Scurtu and Buzatu, 17–219; Scurtu, *Istoria românilor*, 22–280, 646–653; Hitchins, 374–413, 441–451.
11. Ion I. C. Brătianu died on 24 November 1927, being buried on his estate in Florica, Argeș County, on 27 November. For more details see: Nicolae-Alexandru Nicolaescu, “Funeraliile lui Ion I. C. Brătianu, un model de organizare a funeraliilor naționale,” in *De la lume adunate...* Lucrările Conferinței Naționale *Viață cotidiană, familie, alimentație și populație în secolele XVIII–XXI*, eds. Crucița-Loredana Baciuc, Anamaria Macavei, and Roxana Dorina Pop (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2011), 117–128.
12. Because it is very well presented in the study signed by Valer Moga, I will not discuss here the way in which the union of Transylvania was celebrated on 20 May 1929; Valer Moga, “Serbările Unirii, Alba Iulia: 20 mai 1929,” *Apulum* (Alba Iulia) 22 (1985): 265–280.
13. Valer Moga, *Astra și societatea 1918–1930*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, foreword by Marcel Știrban (Șebeș: Emma Books, 2011), 481–483.
14. “În Ardeal,” *Universul*, 6 December 1923; “Aniversarea unirii Ardealului,” *Universul*, 6 December 1925; “Sărbătorirea zilei de 1 Decembrie la Cluj,” *Universul*, 4 December 1927; “Comemorarea unirei Ardealului la Brad,” *Universul*, 4 December 1927; “Ziua de 1 Decembrie la școlile secundare din Cluj,” *Universul*, 7 December 1927; “1 Decembrie la Oradea,” *Universul*, 6 December 1929.
15. “Desbateri parlamentare,” *Universul*, 24 March 1923.
16. “Istoricul Unirii Ardealului cu Regatul României,” *Universul*, 2 December 1928; Stelian Popescu, “1918–1928,” *Universul*, 3 December 1928.
17. Alex. Hodoș, “Pregătiri pentru serbările de la Alba Iulia,” *Universul*, 29 April 1929.
18. “La Alba Iulia, în așteptarea serbărilor,” *Adevărul*, 21 May 1929.
19. “Cum vor decurge serbările Unirii la Alba Iulia,” *Curentul*, 5 May 1929.
20. “Rezoluția de proclamare a unirei Ardealului cu Regatul,” *Adevărul*, 2 December 1919.
21. Traian Vlad, “Aniversarea unirii Ardealului,” *Adevărul*, 2 December 1925.
22. Ad., “Aniversarea unirei Ardealului,” *Adevărul*, 2 December 1920.
23. Ad., “Unirea,” *Adevărul*, 2 December 1923.
24. “Drepturile minorităților: În jurul principiilor de la Alba Iulia,” *Adevărul*, 17 November 1928; “Politicianismul și problema minorităților,” *Adevărul*, 25 November 1928.

25. Vasile Ciobanu, "Din politica guvernelor național-țărăniște din perioada 1928–1933 față de minoritățile naționale," in *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, vol. 1, eds. Vasile Ciobanu and Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga," 2006), 102–132.
26. Ad., "Zece ani..."; "Zile istorice, zile de glorie..."; Mihail Sadoveanu, "Impresii din Ardeal," *Adevărul*, 2 December 1928.
27. "Comemorarea aniversării unirii," *Adevărul*, 2 December 1928.
28. "Unitatea națională a românilor," *Universul*, 10 May 1929; "Zece ani de la Unire," *Adevărul*, 12 May 1929.
29. Al. Ciura, "1 Decembrie 1918," *Universul*, 20 May 1929; Ad., "La Alba Iulia," *Adevărul*, 21 May 1929; Iosif Nădejde, "Serbările de la Alba Iulia," *Adevărul*, 23 May 1929.
30. "Carta de vizită 'unionistă';" "Cum a scris Vasile Alecsandri 'Hora Unirii,'" *Universul*, 10 May 1929.
31. "Serbările de la Alba Iulia," *Universul*, 22 May 1929.
32. "Punctele de la Alba Iulia," *Cuvântul*, 14 December 1924.
33. Perpessicius, "Noul regim și minoritățile," *Cuvântul*, 18 November 1928.
34. "Cum se va sărbători ziua de 1 Decembrie," *Curentul*, 24 November 1928.
35. Cesar Petrescu, "Aniversarea Ardealului," *Curentul*, 30 November 1928.
36. "Cum vor decurge serbările Unirii la Alba Iulia," *Curentul*, 5 May 1929.
37. "Comemorarea Unirii," *Universul*, 4 December 1929; "'Astra' și aniversarea zilei de 1 Decembrie," *Universul*, 23 November 1929; "Comemorarea Unirii," *Adevărul*, 3 December 1929; "Comemorarea unirei," *Cuvântul*, 3 December 1929; "'Liga Culturală' și 'Astra' sărbătoresc Unirea," *Curentul*, 3 December 1929.
38. Pamfil Șeicaru, "După unsprezece ani," *Curentul*, 2 December 1929.
39. Alexandru Kirițescu, "1 Decembrie," *Cuvântul*, 2 December 1929.
40. About the Ruling Council see: Gheorghe Iancu, *Contribuția Consiliului Dirigent la consolidarea statului național unitar român (1918–1920)* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1985); id., *The Ruling Council: The Integration of Transylvania into Romania 1918–1920*, transl. Magda Wächter, rev. by Virgil Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Center for Transylvanian Studies, The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1995).
41. I. Mateiu, "Actul de la Alba Iulia și învățămintele lui politice," *Viitorul*, 2 December 1926.
42. "Învățăminte pentru viitor din înfăptuirea României Mari," *Viitorul*, 7 December 1926.
43. "Zece ani de la înfăptuirea României Mari," *Viitorul*, 3 December 1928.
44. "Serbările unirei," *Viitorul*, 19 April 1929.
45. "Sărbătoarea Guvernului," *Viitorul*, 4 May 1929; "Sărbătoare de partid?," *Viitorul*, 7 May 1929.
46. "Serbările de la Alba Iulia," *Viitorul*, 21 May 1929.
47. "Zece ani de la integrarea neamului," *Viitorul*, 9 May 1929.
48. "Aniversarea Unirii la Cluj," *Patria*, 5 December 1920.
49. "Patru ani," *Patria*, 1 December 1922; "Războiul, unirea și liberalii," *Patria*, 1 December 1922.
50. "Făuritorii Unirei," *Patria*, 1 December 1921.
51. "După cinci ani," *Patria*, 1 December 1923.
52. "Ziua Ardealului," *Patria*, 1 December 1926; Delacrasna, "Cu prilejul unei aniversări," *Patria*, 1 December 1926.

53. "Sărbătorirea zilei de 1 Decembrie," *Dreptatea*, 3 December 1928.
54. "Proporțiile grandioase ale serbărilor Unirii," *Dreptatea*, 14 April 1929.
55. "Ce-am urmărit prin serbările unirii," *Dreptatea*, 8 May 1929.
56. *Dreptatea*, 10 May 1929.
57. Pan Halippa, "Unirea Basarabiei," *Dreptatea*, 10 May 1929.
58. Iancu Flondor, "Cum s-a înfăptuit Unirea Bucovinei," *Dreptatea*, 10 May 1929; "Din viața culturală a Bucovinei," *Dreptatea*, 10 May 1929.
59. "Unirea în perspectiva celor zece ani," *Dreptatea*, 10 May 1929.
60. "1 Decembrie," *Dreptatea*, 2 December 1929.
61. N. Iorga, "Aniversarea unirii ardelene," *Neamul Românesc*, 2 December 1923.
62. I. Băilă, "Sărbătorirea Unirii," *Neamul Românesc*, 5 December 1923.
63. "Sărbătorirea Unirii," *Neamul Românesc*, 5 December 1925.
64. N. Iorga, "1-iu Decembrie 1918," *Neamul Românesc*, 2 December 1928.
65. "În jurul comemorării," *Neamul Românesc*, 4 December 1928. In his memoirs, Nicolae Iorga stated that the Union celebrations that took place at the University of Bucharest, in December 1928, were politically hijacked by Iuliu Maniu: N. Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. 5, *Agonia regală și regența (1925–1930)* (Bucharest: "Națională" S. Ciornei, 1939), 320.
66. N. Iorga, "După Alba Iulia," *Neamul Românesc*, 24 May 1929.
67. "9 ani dela unirea Ardealului," *Aurora*, 2 December 1927.
68. "Șapte ani de la Alba Iulia," *Aurora*, 2 December 1925.
69. "Opt ani de la unirea Ardealului," *Aurora*, 3 December 1926.
70. "Ardealul și ungurii," *Îndreptarea*, 2 December 1927.
71. "Basarabia și serbările Unirii," *Îndreptarea*, 13 May 1929.
72. "10–20 Mai 1929," *Îndreptarea*, 26 May 1929.
73. See Ion Novăcescu, "Communication and Propaganda in Romanian Interwar Politics: The Election Campaigns of 1919 and 1922," *Transylvanian Review* 22, 4 (2013): 99–115; Alexandru Nicolaescu, "Alegerile parlamentare din 1926 reflectate în presa vremii," *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane Sibiu* 25 (2018): 139–171.

## Abstract

The Union of Transylvania with Romania in the Discourse to the Central Press of the First Interwar Decade (1919–1929)

In the present study, I set out to present the way in which the discourse about the anniversary of the union of Transylvania with Romania evolved in the independent and political press of the first interwar decade. I chose the period 1919–1929 because it was the moment when the Romanian society experienced significant social and political changes. I will take into consideration the press, because it represents the most important social and political archive of that period, but also because the analyzed articles were signed by outstanding personalities of Romanian culture and politics. The documentary approach will draw on the articles published in the newspapers of the time, the memoirs of politicians, and the specialist bibliography.

## Keywords

press, union of Transylvania with Romania, media discourse, Greater Romania