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MARIA VAIDA

The Great Union in Western Transylvania

Foreword by IOAN-AUREL POP,
preface by MIRCEA POPA, translated by
CAMELIA SIGHIARTĂU

Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2019

THIS YEAR marks the passage of one hundred years since the powers of the Triple Entente and Hungary signed the Treaty of Trianon, a document that sanctioned the new political realities on the European map which resulted from the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The dissolution of the dual monarchy was not only the outcome of the First World War and the Paris peace negotiations, but especially the effect of the political embodiment of the will of most nations inhabiting this region of Central and Eastern Europe. This book presents an important episode in this historical process, which unfolded between 1918 and 1919 in today's western Romania, more exactly in the western part of Transylvania, in Crișana or Țara Crișurilor, which makes up the county of Bihor. The book appeared in its Roma-

nian version in 2018 and was translated into English by philologist and authorized translator Camelia Sighiartău.

Maria Vaida, a historian and literary critic, poet and writer, doctor of Philology of 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, born near Beiuș, is a diligent wielder of the pen who has not forgotten her roots, nor the people who broadened the horizon of Romanian culture for her. Following the example of her teachers and of history aficionados, although not a historian herself, in spite of possessing a bachelor's degree in history since before 1989, Maria Vaida drew up this work after a thorough documentary research, having mastered the specialized methodology and employing a critical apparatus fit for a genuine historical monograph.

Reading through the pages of this volume, one discovers an author who does not seek to create literature, nor to mislead, but who knows how to carefully put together testimonies from that time like a professional historian, thus managing to reconstruct the past based on her sources and using truth as her working criterion. It is these very merits that Professor Ioan-Aurel Pop highlights in his cordial foreword addressed to the reader, in which he pays homage to Maria Vaida and, through her, to all the people of Bihor who fostered a new Romania, praisingly deeming the book "not only a history lesson, but also a life lesson" (p. 8). The words of the president of the Romanian Academy are followed by a preface by literary historian and critic Professor Mircea Popa, president of the Cluj branch of the ASTRA cultural association. Himself a native of Țara Crișurilor, Professor Popa provides us with a veritable introduction into the history of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania in general and in Bihor in

particular, dwelling on the presentation of *Tribuna Bihorului* (The Bihor Tribune), the official newspaper of the Romanian National Council of Oradea, which is today a regrettably little-known organ of the Romanian press in Crișana at the time of the Great Union. Thus, these two introductory texts underline the publicistic, historiographic and sentimental importance of the work signed by Maria Vaida.

In the argumentation, as well as in “My Beiuș,” the author confesses to having written this book with her mind and heart out of an inner drive to bring back to the attention of her contemporaries the epic events of 1918–1919 and to commemorate the heroes and all the personalities from Bihor who participated in the Great Union of 1918.

The volume is divided into eight chapters, followed by conclusions and annexes—which comprise documents, maps, and photographs—, as well as a bibliography. The first chapter, “The People from Bihor at the Great Union” tackles the organization of the elections for the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia in the Bihor area and lists the names of the rightful, elected, and alternate members grouped according to the 12 electoral circles in Bihor: Oradea, Salonta, Ceica, Beiuș-Vaşcău, Tinca, Aleșd, Marghita, Ugra, Biharia, Berettyóújfalú, Bărand-Paleu, and Săcuieni. This general presentation is followed by the book’s longest chapter, which comprises the biographical medallions of 111 participants from Bihor (official and unofficial delegates) in the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia—no easy feat, given the diversity and scarcity of available sources. This observation is otherwise reflected by the length of the biographical texts, which range from 3–4 lines to 3–4 pages. The third chapter, which complements the pre-

vious ones, is especially dedicated to “the Romanian women performing the Great Union.” The 61 delegates of the fair sex elected and empowered via mandate who represented the various Associations of Romanian Women from all over Transylvania at the Assembly of Alba Iulia are listed by name. Moreover, the women who wove flags and displayed national insignia in the villages of Bihor are evoked as well, as the author puts together nine biographical medallions of the Romanian ladies who stood out among the members of the Alba Iulia assembly: Elena Ardelean, Eleonora Lemeni-Rozvan, Ersilia Petrovici, Roza Șerban, Elena Munteanu, Sidonia Docan, Elena Căpălneanu, Viora Ciordaș, and Veturia Lapedatu. Distinct sub-chapters are dedicated to Queen Marie, to the Romanian women of Beiuș, and to Romanian folk costumes in the Beiuș area.

Chapter IV is dedicated to the Romanian heroes and martyrs imprisoned and brutally killed before and after the union, namely the Memorandists, as well as to the massacres of Aleșd, Sighiștel, Beiuș, Târgu-Lăpuș, Vașcău, Drăgănești, and other places in Transylvania. In chapter V, “Reflections of the Great Union in Several Literary Works,” a series of poems, songs, soldering songs, excerpts from the press of the time and from two novels (*Sacrificiul/The sacrifice* signed by Mihail Diaconescu and *Joia Patimilor/Maundy Thursday* signed by Horia Bădescu) are reproduced and analyzed, thus providing today’s readers with the possibility to gain a deeper understanding of the effervescent mood that dominated the year of the Great Union. Titled “From the Porches of the Faith,” chapter VI evokes several episodes from the history of Bihor’s Romanian Church and schools, naturally focusing on the contribution of these two fundamental insti-

tutions of the Romanians in Transylvania—which were intimately and closely connected to each other until 1920—to the accomplishment of the 1918 union. Finally, chapter VII presents a few “Echoes of the Great Union” by selecting a series of texts signed by several illustrious figures of the time such as Sir Arthur Nicolson, Vasile Goldiș, Alexandru Boieriu, Basiliu Bașiotă, King Ferdinand I, Nicolae Iorga, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, and Vasile Stoica, who organized the National League of Romanians in the United States of America. The author’s text is accompanied by photographs of the Bihor participants in the Great Union, by the mandates, and by pictures of certain historical monuments dedicated to Transylvania and the 1918 union.

Through her book *The Great Union in Western Transylvania*, Maria Vaida redeems an important page in the history of the Romanians of Bihor of the year 1918, thus rescuing from oblivion the figures of those who forged Greater Romania within the blessed region of Țara Crișurilor. Thoroughly researched and written in an accessible language which reveals a love for the truth and for the Romanian nation, Maria Vaida’s book also possesses pedagogical, national and sentimental value, as it is both a model of Romanian thinking and feeling on the occasion of the centenary of the Great Union and, more than anything else, a plea to get to know the history of the Romanians, thus cultivating the memory of those who sacrificed themselves for the national cause during the years of the First World War (1914–1919). The publication of the book in its English version offers a wider, international public the chance to access pertinent information regarding the events that took place

in Transylvania at the end of the year 1918 and their protagonists, thus providing the opportunity to become better acquainted with Romanian history.

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MIRCEA-GHEORGHE ABRUDAN

À l’Est, la guerre sans fin 1918-1923

Sous la rédaction de FRANÇOIS LAGRANGE,
CHRISTOPHE BERTRAND, CARINE LACHÈVRE,
EMMANUEL RANVOISY

Paris, Gallimard ; Musée de l’Armée, 2018

CERTAINES OBSERVATIONS sur le catalogue de l’exposition sont nécessaires pour offrir aux lecteurs du texte sur la Roumanie, signé par Roman Krakovsky, la possibilité de se former une image correcte sur les événements de 1918-1923.

Le texte commence avec une erreur. L’auteur croit que le Royaume de Roumanie a été créé en 1866 : c’est faux ; depuis 1866, quand Charles de Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen est arrivé dans les Principautés Unies, il a dirigé les affaires du pays, qui était dépendant de la Porte ottomane, en tant que prince régnant, jusqu’à 1881, quand la Roumanie indépendante (1877-1878) est déclarée royaume et Charles devient roi.

Comment l’auteur sait-il que les Roumains, avant 1914, n’étaient pas intéressés à intégrer le Royaume de Roumanie – c’est, peut-être, à l’aide d’une Machine à lires les pensées, aux dires d’André Maurois – et qu’ils s’intéressaient seulement à élargir leur autonomie ? D’abord, les Roumains n’avaient aucune autonomie politique en Hongrie et en Russie. Affirmer le contraire, c’est faire preuve d’ignorance concernant les structures internes de la Hongrie dua-