

# The Petition of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the United States of North America to President Woodrow Wilson

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*“Let liberty be  
our reward...”*

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**T**HE ACTIONS taken by the Romanian immigrants living in the United States are a distinct component of the general struggle for freedom and self-determination of the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to statistical data,<sup>1</sup> most of the Romanians living in the United States came from the Romanian provinces under foreign occupation: Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina and Bessarabia. The Romanians who emigrated from these provinces sought to support those left behind in their struggle for equal rights. The Romanian press in North America

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(*America, Românul American, Steaua noastră, Semănătorul*, etc.) wrote extensively about this struggle and exposed the oppression of the Romanian population by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. The main message that this media campaign sought to convey was that the Romanians were the oldest and most numerous inhabitants of Transylvania, and were therefore entitled to rights equal to those enjoyed by the other nations in the country and to representation in the legislative bodies of the monarchy.

Until the outbreak of the First World War, the tone used by the Romanian American newspapers in the reports concerning the political situation in Transylvania and in the appeals to the Romanian community remained quite moderate. This moderation stemmed from the fact that the Romanian territories were part of an administrative system that enjoyed international recognition, including by the U.S., and the opposition to the existing situation had to be organized using “lawful” protest methods.<sup>2</sup> Over time, the contact with the realities of American political life and with the principles of the country’s democratic system left its imprint upon the Romanian American newspapers and encouraged the community to further promote the cause of their oppressed brothers. The outbreak of the war changed the situation and was felt as a shock by the American public opinion. The United States realized that the failure to become involved would be detrimental to both the American people and the values of freedom and democracy. They were also increasingly aware of the fact that without U.S. support the Entente would be defeated by the Central Powers. Eventually, the circumstances determined the United States to join the allies in their struggle against the Central Powers.

Throughout the war, the Romanian Americans showed great interest in the political developments in the home country, fully supporting the territorial aspirations and the struggle for the unification of the Romanian nation. A first action that went beyond the confines of the previous propaganda and was supported by both newspapers and clergy was the definite refusal of the Romanian Americans coming from Austria-Hungary to obey the conscription order issued by the Hungarian consulate. They completely distanced themselves from the military efforts and actions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Upon receiving the circular letters sent to the Romanian clergy by the consular offices and asking them to publicize this call to arms, the community responded with protest gatherings usually led by priests, and issued the same answer:

*The bravery and courage of the Rumanian is recognized throughout the world. Our fathers and forefathers shed their blood again and again for their country and the emperor; but their rewards were always injustice and abuse. To fight now for Austria-Hungary would be to fight for our ancestral enemies. That is*

*why we give this answer—We, here in America, do not recognize any Austro-Hungarian authority which shall give orders to us or which shall have the right to appeal to us for support. We hereby break the oath of fidelity and allegiance we were forced to give to the King and the Hungarian government and solemnly swear now, that of our own free will, we will fight with all our means and might against them, helping our Allies to crush the Austro-Hungarian empire.*<sup>3</sup>

When Romania entered the war in August 1916, the position of the Romanian American community became more radical. They were once again ready to assist by any possible means in the unification of all Romanians in a single nation state. The newspaper *Steaua noastră* (New York), in its editorial of 30 August 1916 entitled “România a declarat război Austro-Ungariei” (Romania declares war on Austria-Hungary) clearly stated that the main reason behind this decision had been the union of all Romanians in a single body politic. The same article contended that the Romanian Americans must help their brothers and that Romanians had to demonstrate their desire to become a free and united nation.<sup>4</sup>

When it became clear that the United States would join the Entente, the Romanian Americans began to act with even more determination. On 5 March 1917, Woodrow Wilson was sworn in as president and the inauguration ceremony was also attended by a delegation of the Union of the Fraternal Societies of the Romanian Americans, led by Father Ioan Podea,<sup>5</sup> accompanied by a delegation of the League of the Fraternal Societies,<sup>6</sup> led by Rudi Nan.<sup>7</sup> From that moment on, the two undeniable leaders of the Romanian Americans would attend many meetings. In agreement with the leaders of other ethnic communities (Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, etc.) they decided to establish legions of volunteers who would go and fight against the Central Powers.<sup>8</sup>

When the U.S. joined the war on 6 April 1917, the situation, the attitudes, and the general context changed, and the actions taken by the Romanian American community acquired a new dimension. Its efforts were no longer those of a small and marginal ethnic group, operating instead as part of the collective effort of the entire American people. These endeavors demonstrated not only the community’s interest in the situation back home but also their level of Americanization and civic responsibility. Among other things, America’s entry into the war brought the Romanians closer to the fulfillment of their dream of national unity.

The actions taken by the Romanian Americans intensified after the arrival of a mission from Romania. Amid the dramatic events occurred in the autumn of 1917 and in 1918, the Romanian government that had sought refuge in Iași initiated and intensified a number of diplomatic actions in support of the

Romanian cause. Delegations of politicians, scholars, and other personalities from the territories occupied by Austria-Hungary were dispatched to several Allied capitals.<sup>9</sup> One such delegation, consisting of Vasile Lucaciu, Ioan Moța and Vasile Stoica, went to the United States to gain the sympathy and the support of the American government for the Romanian cause. At the same time, they supported the creation of volunteer units.

The Romanian Americans were among the first to respond to Wilson's plea for a volunteer army. In the space of a few short months, several thousand Romanians joined the army and became American citizens.<sup>10</sup> A number of organizations were created in order to mobilize the efforts of the Romanian Americans, which later united within the National Committee of the Romanian National Leagues in America. The Committee was led by its chairman, Vasile Stoica, assisted by deputy chairmen Ioan Podea and Ioan Sufană. The major objective of this organization was to gain the support of the U.S. government for the unification of all Romanians.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout 1918, the involvement of the Romanian American community in promoting the interests of the home country became even more manifest. In all previous actions, a central part had been played by the Romanian Orthodox clergy in America. This became even more obvious in 1918, when most of the large-scale actions taken by the Romanian American community were organized under the auspices of the Church. In this respect, we shall only mention the gathering that took place in Youngstown on 24 February 1918, which was both a national assembly and a Church congress. The thirteen priests and fifty-seven lay delegates, led by Protopope Ioan Podea, drew up and unanimously endorsed a solemn document entitled *Charter for the Submission and the Dedication of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the United States to the Holy Metropolitan See at Bucharest*. In this document, the signatories declared that they could no longer be bound to the Church of enslaved Transylvania, deprived of rights and humiliated, and accepted the natural authority of the Church of the Kingdom of Romania:

*We, the undersigned Clerics and Laymen, sent here with full powers by the Faithful and by the Rumanian Orthodox Churches in the United States having met in General Assembly, and inspired by a sentiment of Justice and Loyalty towards our Race,*

*Considering, that we were all born in the Rumanian Lands enslaved by the Hungarians, who during ten centuries have not only despoiled us of the hard-earned fruits of our Labor; but have also always devoted their efforts towards destroying our Language, our Faith, and the Customs we have inherited from the Fathers of our Fathers;*

*Considering, that on account of the persecutions endured at the hands of our Hungarian Masters, our true Heads and Lights have been obliged to seek refuge in the blessed Rumanian Kingdom, while we, the poor, the harried common Folk had to cross countless lands and the great Ocean to find a haven in this Land of Sweet Liberty;*

*Considering, that every day of our sad life our thoughts wandered back with deep affection and unshakeable Hope to the free Kingdom of Rumania, from which the deliverance of our people from a harsh and cruel yoke is to come;*

*Considering, that in this Land and in these years of our sore trial we have erected with the work of our hands new Altars unto the Glory of God and unto the Salvation of our Souls of Christians and Rumanians and that these Places of Prayer have remained until today under the control of the Rumanian Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Hungary and Transylvania;*

*Considering, that the Hungarian Government in its wish to crush that part of the Rumanian Race under its sway, has altered the very essence of this Metropolitan Church and of all the Rumanian Churches of Hungary and Transylvania, transforming them from institutions of Culture and Christian Life into instruments of intolerance and tyranny;*

*Persuaded, that if our Churches in the United States were to remain under the guidance of the said Metropolitan Church, the Hungarian administration would make us fall prey to the same deteriorating and baleful influence;*

*Remembering, that in the days of our slavery in Transylvania and Hungary the Holy See of Bucharest protected and directed us, sending us godly spiritual Fathers and Bishops, the only Leaders of our People in those times;*

*Therefore, to secure all our Religious Rights, to secure our Faith, our Language and our Customs upheld with honor by our Fathers during so many centuries,*

***Of our own accord and free will,***

*We hereby decide, that none of us, sons of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the United States, be he Cleric or Lay, will be hereafter submitted to or entertain any relation whatsoever with the Rumanian Metropolitan Church of Hungary and Transylvania; the ties existing now are to be broken and new bonds are to be made only when Transylvania and the other Rumanian Lands of Hungary will be redeemed and will be at one with the free Kingdom of Rumania;*

*We establish in this Land of Liberty a Rumanian Episcopate of our Oriental Greek Rite, which forever henceforth will bear the name of "The Rumanian Orthodox Episcopate in the United States of North America;"*

*We submit this Episcopate to the Holy See of Bucharest, Rumania, having to follow the faith and the decisions of that Holy See, which alone will have henceforth the Right to direct our Church unto her salvation.*

*In the same time we hold it our duty before God and Mankind to declare with our outmost strength, that we are speaking not only in behalf of the one hundred and fifty thousand Orthodox Rumanians in the United States, but also for the millions of Brothers under Hungarian domination, whose voices, always and to-day more so than ever, have been stifled by threats and violence and with whom we have fought and sacrificed ourselves so long for the sake of Unity in the bosom of an independent and Liberty loving Rumania.*

*We have drawn and signed this solemn covenant in the City of Youngstown, in the State of Ohio, on this Twenty-Fourth Day of February in the Year of our Lord and Savior One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighteen according to the Reckoning of our Holy Oriental-Orthodox Church, and in the One Hundred and Forty Second year of Independence of the United States of America.*

*So help us God now and in the hour of our earthly Death, Amen.*<sup>12</sup>

The document is important in the sense that for the first time it speaks of an Episcopate for the Orthodox Romanians in the United States. After deciding to establish a Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the United States of North America, the 70 signatories decided to place it under the authority of the Holy See of Bucharest, thus foreshadowing at ecclesiastical level the Great Union.

ON 15 NOVEMBER 1918, at the initiative of the same Ioan Podea, arch-priesthood administrator and a member of the Romanian National Council of Paris, a petition<sup>13</sup> was sent to President Woodrow Wilson, on behalf of all Romanians under Austro-Hungarian rule, described as “a nation with few liberties and with heavy burdens resting upon our shoulders, tillers of the soil but always without bread, lovers of freedom and at the same time slaves in our ancestral lands.”<sup>14</sup>

Wilson’s position on the political future of the oppressed nations of Austria-Hungary had been stated in the famous 14 points presented to the U.S. Congress on 8 January 1918. In its point 10, this statement, underlying many of the decisions later taken at the Paris Peace Conference, anticipated on the need for an autonomous development of the oppressed nations of Austria-Hungary.<sup>15</sup>

In the context of the preparations for the Paris Peace Conference, the petition in question was meant to determine the U.S. president—described by the signatories as one of “the men who have been selected, in the providence of God, to create a new world of free and happy peoples”—to support the union of all Romanians in a single nation state.

*By the victory of the Allies, Rumania, crushed in 1916 and humiliated by the peace of Bucharest in the spring of 1918, was liberated from the heavy yoke of tyrant victors and her boundaries enlarged by the addition of Besarabia, a*

*Rumanian province and a part of the old Moldova, formerly under Russian dominion. But we, Transylvanians and our brothers from Banat and Bucovina, over four million governed by Austria and Hungary, must wait until our future is settled at the peace conference.*<sup>16</sup>

The signatories did not demand revenge, nor sacrifices or dominion over others, stating that “All that we ask is the right of self-government and self-determination, to be united with Rumania to form one country and one people.” Their demand was based on the historical right of Romanians over the territories they inhabited: “we do not desire any territorial acquisitions, but merely the retention of what has rightfully belonged to us for more than a thousand years.” In support of this idea, they invoked all major moments in the history of the Romanian nation in Transylvania, as well as the crucial episodes in the history of their existence alongside the local Hungarians, Saxons, and Szeklers<sup>17</sup>:

*After their exodus from Asia in the years 896 to 900 the hordes who were the progenitors of the Magyars overran Transylvania and subjugated the shepherds and peaceful farmers who occupied the land. First the invaders stole the liberty of the Transylvanians and then seized their lands, casting the original inhabitants into a state of slavery in which they continued until 1848. The first Magyar elements who settled in Transylvania were the Szeklers, who wore comparatively small in numbers compared with the Rumanians. In two instances they settled colonies of Germans in the prettiest and most fertile parts of our country under King Geza the Second, 1141 to 1161, and also under King Andrew the Second in 1211. At a great council in Turda in 1432 representatives of the three ruling nationalities, the Magyars, Szeklers and German Saxons decreed that the Rumanians should have no voice in the government. Under this restriction, rigidly enforced, our political institutions waned, but the spirit of Rumanian independence grew in the hearts of the people who writhed under the rule of their conquerors. . . . In 1848, a year of momentous issues, the Rumanians made a new effort to gain their freedom. On May 15, 1848, about 40,000 of them assembled on the field of Blaj, later called the Camp of Liberty, and formally requested that their condition of servitude be improved and they be granted equal rights with the other peoples. They also swore renewed fidelity to the emperor. When the Magyar revolution broke out Rumanians rallied to the emperor and fought and died for him. When peace was finally restored the Rumanians, instead of being rewarded for their stand, were further placed under subjection to the Magyars. Later, in 1868 the Law of Nationalities was passed, granting the Rumanians certain rights which, however, have been largely abridged and curtailed by the enactment of other laws since then.*<sup>18</sup>

On a different note, the signatories of the petition described the pro-Hungarian propaganda carried out by Count Apponyi and other representatives of the Hungarian government, as well as the anti-Romanian media campaigns waged by the Hungarian and German newspapers, as an authentic attack against the sense of freedom and justice of the American people:

*In 1911 Count Apponyi came to the United States from Austria-Hungary and in his public utterances grossly misrepresented conditions there with respect to the government and the rights of the various nationalities. Shamelessly he declared subjects of the dual empire enjoyed freedom, when he knew we were living under one of the most autocratic forms of government. Our children were forced to learn the Hungarian language in the established schools, our leaders were thrown into jail on the slightest pretext, fearless newspapers condemned to pay hundreds and thousands of crowns when they exploited our cause and our people were kept down in countless ways. When Count Apponyi declared in interviews and in his speeches that he came as the apostle of peace, he knew that his words were hypocritical and that his mission to this country was principally to mislead the American people about actual conditions in Austria-Hungary. While the Americans accepted his views, we knew the poison hidden by the sweetness of his words and were accordingly filled with indignation. Subsequent events have proved the correctness of our position.*

*Count Apponyi came to prepare the American people for peace while in his own country preparations were being made on a large scale for war. He came primarily to create a sympathetic attitude toward the Magyars and the ruling class and to spread propaganda detrimental to the oppressed nations under Austro-Hungarian rule. Elaborate receptions accorded Count Apponyi in this country and the wide publicity given his addresses encouraged the Magyar autocrats to start passionate outbursts against us. At that time our passion for revenge and desire to right our wrongs was awakened, but we restrained ourselves, respecting the constitution and rulers of this country who treated us with justice. Count Apponyi placed a wreath at Cleveland, Ohio, on the monument to Kossuth, hero of the Hungarian revolution in 1848, but to us, in the country which we defended with our blood in all times of danger, this count and his associates did not grant the right to erect a monument to anyone of our own martyrs. We did succeed in placing a solitary Cross with the representation of the crucified Christ, on the Camp of Liberty near Blaj, in commemoration of the national conference in 1848, but even this was destroyed by our enemies.*

*While in this country Count Apponyi took occasion to commend the Hungarians who had emigrated from their native land on their improved conditions. He also referred to the lack of culture and education among the mass-*

*es of the people of Hungary, but failed to state that this deplorable state of affairs is due mainly to the Magyar aristocracy and rulers, who persecuted our educational institutions, our churches and our leading men. A small body of Magyars in this country, comparatively speaking, has accomplished many things deserving commendation because of the privileges we enjoy and the opportunities at hand, but we, a nation of millions, failed to progress in a thousand years under Magyar autocracy. This, it would seem, is conclusive evidence that the ruling powers of Austria-Hungary have aimed to keep us in darkness and ignorance. While Count Apponyi was met everywhere with flags and the singing of the Magyar national songs, we did not have the right to carry our own flag or sing our own national anthem in the land of our fathers. Not without cause did our souls revolt against Apponyi and did we cry out against his mission.*

*Inspired by identical motives, in the year 1919 Count Karolyi with a party of national representatives, visited America and under the guise of Magyar liberalism, which never existed, committed the same offenses against the good-natured credulity of the American people as Count Apponyi had done, misrepresenting the situation in Austria-Hungary purposely to deceive this country. But God ordained differently and justice will ultimately prevail, we are confident. For when the hour struck for the United States to cast its influence in the world war the Magyar counts and the governments which they represented received the rebuke they so justly deserved. Their purpose was the same as that of Dumba and Bernsdorff, but different in execution in that the latter employed plots and bribery, while the former used the weapons of diplomacy.<sup>19</sup>*

Also, the signatories reminded the U.S. president of the gestures of solidarity made by the Romanian Americans in regard to the American people and its actions and interests during the war: the refusal to obey the call to arms issued by the Austro-Hungarian authorities; the refusal of any form of financial support to the war effort of Hungary; the Romanian contribution to the U.S. war loans; the enlistment of many Romanians in the U.S. Army and the creation of Romanian volunteer legions, who fought in defense of the ideals of the American nation.

*The Magyar and German press immediately started to threaten us. We understood whose hand was threatening but we remained firm and our men continued faithfully in the munition factories, despite the efforts of agents and spies who tried to intimidate them by telling them they would lose their property and even their lives. To decisively and effectively resist these attempts to change their attitude on the war our people organized first, "The Association for War Relief," next "The National Committee" and finally "The National League," all formed to help the Allies win the war, the means of our own liberation as well. Our*

*activities caused unspeakable joy in Transylvania, proof that our brothers in Europe felt the same as we and that only the fear of death kept them quiet. . . .*

*Immediately after Rumania's entrance into the war in August, 1916, Rumanians in the United States started an active movement in her behalf. Insults were heaped upon our heads by the German and Hungarian press in this country and we were termed traitors, barbaric hordes, wild Rumanians and bandits. A Saxon priest even applied the epithet "pig" to us. Accustomed to such treatment, however, in our native land from the governing classes, our people paid little or no attention to these diatribes. Instead they donated large sums of money in the aggregate to the Rumanian Red Cross and hundreds of our men prepared to return to Europe to enter the Rumanian army, believing that France or Great Britain would furnish the ships to carry them across. This proved impossible, however, and our volunteers were forced to remain in this country.*

*Naturally against such obstacles we became somewhat discouraged and our morale ebbed. We prayed, however, that the Almighty would not forsake us and our prayers were answered. . . .*

*After Rumania's catastrophe our hopes were shattered, until the time came when the United States cast its balance in favor of the Allied cause, declaring war on Germany and later on Austria-Hungary. Our men left their jobs in the mills and factories by the score and enlisted under the Stars and Stripes. At the first call for volunteers our brave boys responded beyond our expectations, presenting themselves in large numbers at the recruiting stations to be enrolled for immediate service. In some centers, as in Youngstown, Ohio, for instance, where there is a large colony of Rumanians, our men formed entire companies of volunteers. The Rumanian colony in this one industrial center contributed to the United States army 117 volunteers, while a large number of others entered the military service through operation of the selective service act. Throughout the country our young men showed a similar degree of loyalty and with just pride we can say that of all nationalities represented in America, the Rumanians, in proportion to their numbers, gave the largest percentage of volunteers to the United States forces. . . .*

*That a still larger number did not enlist can easily be explained. Twice the United States government was requested to permit the formation of a Rumanian legion, but this prayer was denied. Guided solely by the dictates of their own consciences, nearly 15,000 Rumanians, of all ages, reported their willingness to join the proposed legion. . . .*

*After the introduction of compulsory military service fewer men were accepted as volunteers and consequently our men were compelled to stay behind. They continued, however, in munition factories, producing arms and ammunition, giving liberally of their earnings to the Liberty Loans, subscribing*

*generously to all war appeals and in other ways performing just as important a function as though they were in the trenches.*<sup>20</sup>

The duplicity of the Hungarian official policies was exposed and cast against the actions of the Romanian nation:

*But now the situation is changed. The furious lions of yesterday are meek and tame and the devastating wolf has retreated to his own lair. The tyrants of so many oppressed peoples have been subdued by the Allied arms, their countries are on the verge of dismemberment and subjugated nations are about to win their independence, forever, let us hope. Forced by changed conditions, in her hour of extremity Hungary, the unrelenting enemy of yesterday, now extends the olive branch to Rumanians. Hungary now offers to give us the privilege of franchise, the right to take part in the government and its administration, participation also in the government through positions, the use of the Rumanian language as the official language in Rumanian districts and perfect freedom in the conduct of our schools and churches. They complain that the dismemberment of Hungary would be an injustice, that they had no part in starting the war, that the oppressions and abuses emanated from Vienna and the Emperor.*

*Only a few still cling to the claim that they have the right to govern us on historical bases, as they know this argument is fallacious and has lost its value.*

*Is it right that only the Rumanians, of all small nationalities, must stay under foreign rule? We have endured a thousand and more years of autocratic rule. Isn't that sufficient for us also? We cannot accept the offer of friendship of the Magyar nation, but must regard it in the light of the Greek bearing gifts, and beware. We begged them long enough to give us what is rightfully ours; many times our leaders requested the enforcement of the Law of Nations of 1868, but they obstinately refused to accord us recognition and treated our requests derisively.*

At the same time, they expressed their joy and satisfaction with the fact that “the President of the United States and leaders of the Allied Powers have proclaimed that they are championing the principles of democracy and the rights of small peoples for self-determination,” seeing in this context the cause of the Romanian nation as a reasonable request, legitimized by history, justice and common sense.<sup>21</sup>

The conclusion of the petition addressed to President Wilson and signed by more than 100 people expressed in a synthetic form the aspirations and the expectations of the Romanian Americans at the end of the First World War, when the victors were ready to decide the fate of the peoples of Europe:

*The Rumanians of Transylvania and Austria-Hungary have risked all for justice and freedom. Let liberty be our reward, so that, united with our brothers in the Rumanian kingdom, we may form a Greater Rumania, to create in the east of Europe a mighty democratic country in which brotherhood, political, economic and religious equality and freedom shall reign supreme for all its citizens without distinction of nationality.*<sup>22</sup>

This petition and the *Charter for the Submission...* are also important in the sense that they mark one of the few moments of that period when the Romanian clergy and laymen joined hands and acted in unison,<sup>23</sup> placing the interests of their nation and of their Church above the petty squabbles that had divided them so often before.

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## Notes

1. For the most pertinent statistical data, see Christine Avghi Galitzi, *A Study of Assimilation Among the Romanians of United States* (New York, 1929). According to her estimates, 86.9% of all Romanian immigrants came from the territories under Austro-Hungarian rule.
2. Alexandru Nemoianu, "The Romanian-Americans in World War I," *Buletinul Informativ al Centrului de Studii și Documentare Valerian Trifa* (Jackson, MI), no. 6 (1998): 15.
3. Cf. the *Petition of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the Unites States of North America to President Woodrow Wilson*, Youngstown, Ohio, 15 November 1918. A brochure with the Romanian and English text was published on the same date.
4. Nemoianu, 16; see also Gheorghe I. Florescu, "Românii Americani și Unirea cea Mare," *Buletinul Informativ al Centrului de Studii și Documentare Valerian Trifa*, no. 6 (1998): 20–22.
5. Father Ioan Podea was a complex ecclesiastical and social personality of the Romanian American community. As a clergymen, he was one of the first missionary fathers who founded and organized parishes, setting up and leading the first Romanian Orthodox Archpriesthood in the United States. He also militated fervently for the establishment of the Missionary Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the United States. At the social level, he contributed to many cultural, social, and political initiatives, being for a while the opinion leader of the Romanian Orthodox Community in the United States. At a certain moment he was seduced by socialist ideas, being eventually defrocked by Metropolitan Bishop Nicolae Bălan. The communist authorities in Romania rewarded him for his active support of the socialist cause, offering him a position as editor with a Brașov newspaper and then making him the director of the Museum located in the same city. For a comprehensive presentation of his activities in the United States, see Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, *Episcopia*

*Ortodoxă Română din America—parte a Ortodoxiei americane* (Cluj-Napoca, 2007), especially pp. 154–200.

6. The Union and the League were the two major organizations of the Romanian American communities. They incorporated most of the cultural and mutual assistance associations established beginning with the year 1903 by the Romanian immigrants. The Union included chiefly the workers' associations, while the League grouped together the associations set up by intellectuals. For more on the history of these organizations see Șofron S. Fekett, *Istoria Uniunii și Ligii Societăților Românești din America* (Cleveland, 1956).
7. Nemoianu, 16.
8. The attempts to set up these legions are described in Gelu Neamțu, *În America, pentru Unirea Transilvaniei cu România* (Cluj-Napoca, 1997).
9. Gheorghe Iacob, "Românii în perioada edificării statelor naționale (1859–1918)," in *Istoria României: Compendiu*, eds. Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca, 2004), 526–527.
10. Nemoianu, 17.
11. Alexandru Nemoianu, "The Romanian-American Community and the Unification of Transylvania with Romania," *Buletinul Informativ al Centrului de Studii și Documentare Valerian Trifa*, no. 6 (1989): 6.
12. *Charter for the Submission and the Dedication of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the United States to the Holy Metropolitan See at Bucharest*, Archives of the Valerian Trifa Studies and Documentation Center, Jackson, MI.
13. For the Romanian text of the petition see also N. Streza, "Petiția Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din Statele Unite ale Americii de Nord, către președintele Woodrow Wilson," *Glasul Bisericii* 37, 9–12 (1978): 1132–11135. The text published by N. Streza features several errors, probably occurred during transcription.
14. *Petiția Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din Statele Unite ale Americii de Nord, către președintele Woodrow Wilson*, Archive of the Metropolitan Library of Sibiu, *Văria* collection, 1626, f. 2.
15. For a complex analysis of the political choices made by Woodrow Wilson see Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York, 1992).
16. *Petiția Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române*.
17. See also Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Transylvania until World War I: Demographic Opportunities and Vulnerabilities (I)," *Transylvanian Review* 17, 4 (Winter 2008): 15–40.
18. *Petiția Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române*.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. See also Nicolae Bocșan and Liana Lăpădatu, "Préliminaires doctrinaires de l'autodétermination des Roumains en 1918," *Transylvanian Review* 17, 4 (Winter 2008): 41–50.
22. *Petiția Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române*.

23. See also Sorin Radu, “Une variante inedite de la Résolution d’Union d’Alba Iulia,” *Transylvanian Review* 18, 4 (Winter 2009): 121–129.

### **Abstract**

The Petition of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the United States of North America to President Woodrow Wilson

On 15 November 1918, the Romanians living in the United States submitted a petition to President Woodrow Wilson. In the context of the preparations for the Paris Peace Conference, the petition was meant to determine the U.S. president to support the union of all Romanians in a single nation state. The signatories did not demand vengeance for the centuries during which Romanians had been deprived of rights in Transylvania, nor domination over other inhabitants of the same province, but merely the right to self-determination for the Romanian majority and the possibility to unite with their Romanian brothers. Also, the signatories of the petition described the propaganda carried out by the representatives of the Hungarian government as an authentic attack against the sense of freedom and justice of the American people.

### **Keywords**

petition, union, Romanians, self-determination, Woodrow Wilson