
F O C U S

RUDOLF GRÄF **Laudatio**



RUDOLF GRÄF

ESTEEEMED RECTOR,
Esteemed Chairman of the Babeş-
Bolyai University Senate,
Distinguished vice-rectors,
Esteemed dean,
Dear Mr. Josef Wolf,
Dear Mrs. Marionela Wolf,
Dear Mrs. Dorothea Wolf,
Mr. Mathias Beer,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Josef Wolf, my dear Seppi, awarding the title of Professor Honoris Causa of Babeş-Bolyai University is justified when the recipient is an outstanding personality in their field and when the person in question demonstrates a genuine attachment to the values promoted by our university, and genuine devotion to the university itself.

Although we knew of one another by reputation, we met in person relatively late, in 1995. Amid the great exodus of the German minority in Romania, which did not spare my own family, amid the general uncertainty

Rudolf Gräf

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The "Focus" section is devoted to researcher JOSEF WOLF, to whom Babeş-Bolyai University granted on 18 May 2018 the title of Doctor Honoris Causa.

generated by the changes affecting the Romanian society of that time, I was in search of a scientific project likely to accommodate my research interests. It was then that I gave myself a piece of advice that was to change my whole life: “Go back to Nae (that is, to Professor Nicolae Bocșan, whom I never addressed as Nae, but only as Professor) and stick with him. That’s the path I should follow.” After that, our scholarly exchanges intensified, and a friendship ensued.

But who is today’s recipient of this title?

JOSEF WOLF was born on 15 November 1952 in Arad, in a family of farmers, and grew up in the village of Horia, in the immediate vicinity of the city of Arad. He still has fond memories of his history teacher, Mrs. Natalia Biticiu (Bitoleanu), and of his Latin teacher, Mrs. Elsa Toma, a former deportee to Auschwitz. He was a model pupil and a top student: ranked first following the admission tests in 1971, when the *numerus clausus* stood at 35 and 15 candidates were competing for one place, and first at graduation in 1975—national valedictorian. He was able to take advantage of a short-lived experiment introduced by Rector Ștefan Pascu and pursued a double degree, majoring in history with English language and literature as a minor. During the student years he married his colleague Marionela Wolf, nee Țugui, a historian and Latinist who, until their departure from the country, worked as a researcher at the Institute of History of the Romanian Academy. Both their children studied in the German section of George Coșbuc High School of Cluj: Robert Christian, currently teaching psychiatry at Heidelberg University, and Dorothea Alexandra, present here today, a teacher of history and French at Dante High School in Munich.

Professor Pompiliu Teodor stirred his interest in the history of historiography and of the Enlightenment, cultivated his research skills and constantly supported him. He was also the one who supervised his graduation paper, devoted to a Saxon personality of the 18th century, Johann Seivert, historian, publicist, and man of letters.

After graduation he was sent to work at the History Museum of Transylvania, where he remained until the year 1980, when he joined the department of social sciences of the Polytechnic Institute, where he taught the seminars on Fundamental aspects pertaining to the history of Romania. The discipline in question was taught under the supervision of the Faculty of History of Babeș-Bolyai University. In May 1986 he was dismissed from his teaching position. A ministerial inspection found that his syllabus was ideologically questionable, with elements incompatible with the official history. Under these circumstances, the Wolfs decided to apply for emigration. They left Cluj in early April of 1989, initially taking up residence in Stuttgart and moving to Böblingen in 1995. He attended the so-called integration classes for the East European immigrants with a higher

education degree—of academic rank, as they are called in Germany—and for a brief period he worked for the Caritas organization of Freiburg and for the German Association of Banat Swabians (*Landsmannschaft der Banater Schwaben aus Rumänien in Deutschland e.V.*), with the headquarters in Munich. After a competitive selection, in June 1990 he became a researcher at the Institute of History and Regional Studies of the Danube Swabians (*Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde*) of Tübingen, an extra-academic research institution subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior of Baden-Württemberg. Three key concepts—migrations, minorities, memory—underpin the research activity of this institute, with which our university has enjoyed a lengthy and fruitful cooperation, running a number of joint programs during the past two decades (publications, seminars, summer schools, exhibitions).

At this institute Josef Wolf is in charge of the field called “The Historical Investigation of Settlements” (*Historische Siedlungsforschung*). For many years he has curated the collection of historical maps, which he developed in terms of quality and covered topics by way of a planned procurement strategy. Together with another colleague he is responsible for the archive of the institute, which has reached a considerable size for a research institute—approx. 600 meters total shelf length, of which 180 meters of minutely inventoried collections. A joint project that brought together the Tübingen institute and the Archives of Baden-Württemberg, on the one hand, and the Cluj County Division of the National Archives of Romania was meant to ensure the preservation of document collections important for regional history and for the history of the Transylvanian Germans (the Town Magistrate of Bistrița and the Prefecture of Satu Mare County), and to provide the Cluj archives with a restoration laboratory.

He is a member of several associations, such as the Commission for the History and the Culture of the Southeast Germans (*Kommission für Geschichte und Kultur der Deutschen im Südosten*). For a long time, he chaired the Association of Banat Historians (*Arbeitskreis Banater Historiker*), affiliated to the Cultural Association of Banat Swabians (*Kulturverband der Banater Schwaben*).

DIRECTED TOWARDS research activities by Prof. Pompiliu Teodor, Josef Wolf made his Romanian debut with pieces devoted to the cultural history of Transylvania and especially of the Transylvanian Saxons, and to the history of ideas (Herder and the early national ideology of the Romanians in Transylvania). Quite frequently quoted is his paper on the uprising led by Horea (1784) and on the revolt in Bohemia (1775), at the time a methodological novelty in the sense that it offered a comparative approach to the two social revolts that broke out during the late reign of Maria Theresa and during the time of Joseph II, when reforms were being implemented in the empire. In Germany he

specialized in regional history, focusing on the sizeable areas inhabited by Germans in Southeast Europe. The main point of interest for his research has been the area of Banat. In chronological terms, his research spans both the modern and the contemporary periods. In keeping with his early concerns, which date back to his student years, Josef Wolf has always shown a special interest in the 18th century.

In a volume of studies which he himself edited, *Historische Regionen und ethnische Gruppenbewusstsein in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa: Grenzregionen—Kolonisationsräume—Identitätsbildung* (Historical regions and group ethnic awareness in Central and Southeast Europe: Border regions, areas of colonization, emergence of identities) (2010), he defined the concept of historical region in contrast to other forms of spatial and territorial organization. The regional history proposed by Josef Wolf is not interpreted exclusively on the basis of the evolution of the constitutive national community of a state, but rather integrated into a broader interpretative outlook, imperial until World War I and European for the current period. The thematic structure of his investigations of the 18th century is rather compact: the beginnings of Timișoara Banat as a domain of the crown, its form of government, the spatial representation of this Habsburg province in descriptions of the land or in manuscript or printed maps, the colonization of Banat and the subsequent ethnic conflicts (the so-called ‘transfers’ of the native Romanian or Serbian population), the emergence of a group identity of the colonists. A remarkable achievement is the collection of documents titled *Quellen zur Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Bevölkerungsgeschichte des Banats im 18. Jahrhundert* (Sources regarding the history of the economy, the society and the population of Banat in the 18th century) (1995). Among other things, it features the first description of this land, the so-called Hamilton report (1734). Typical for his texts is the recourse to archive material, quite often previously unpublished.

A number of his more comprehensive studies deal with the emergence of a group consciousness among the Banat Swabians in the 18th century and at the beginning of the following one, and with their political life, in terms of its ethnic conditionings, mechanisms, functions, and even of the way in which it was staged. As we all know, staging something means to illustratively convey the content of an event or phenomenon by means of art and literature. The political stakeholders are interested in achieving a good, successful presentation and representation. But staging goes well beyond the merely illustrative dimension, coming to encompass a whole range of strategies. In the public space, the staging of a contemporary or commemorated event takes place before an audience—hence the importance given in his studies to the spatial concept of ‘central places’ and to memory—being devised by political or ecclesiastical scriptwriters and put into practice by a ‘director’ or by an organizing committee. In a series of articles

grouped under a title of current relevance, *Von der Moschee zur Kathedralekirche* (From the mosque to the cathedral church) (2004–2005), he discusses the staging of the consecration of the Roman Catholic dome in Timișoara in 1754. Beginning with the later 19th century, politics and the media became increasingly interdependent, and the political stakeholders realized that one cannot play politics while disregarding the “laws” of the media.

The manner in which the Banat Swabians “staged” themselves in the media changed throughout their process of ethno-political development, which accelerated after 1918. The representations of the 20th century discussed by Josef Wolf, especially Stefan Jäger’s triptych *Einwanderung der Deutschen in das Banat* (The immigration of the Germans in Banat) (1910), which remains the icon of the collective historical memory of the Banat Swabians, and the festive celebration of two centuries since the Swabian colonization in 1923, go well beyond the mere political dimension. He analyzes the concrete situation, the political context, the dynamics of the movement—the choreography of the festivities, the recourse to folkloric elements, and the language of the participating politicians and clergymen. The leaders of the Banat Swabian Community (*Deutschschwäbische Volksgemeinschaft*) wanted to look good not only before their own supporters, but also in the eyes of the Romanian authorities, which needed to be swayed in one direction or another if the assumed political goals were to be achieved: visibility for the group, solidarity among its members, loyalty to the Romanian state and, increasingly manifest in the 1930s, loyalty to the imagined ancestral “fatherland,” the German Reich. The artificial staging, however, rendered everything devoid of content and opened the floodgates to ideology.

Also worth mentioning are Josef Wolf’s many press articles devoted to the history of Banat, sometimes on commemorative topics, greatly valued by the author: a historian must write not only for specialists, but also for the taxpaying public that makes his work possible.

Without diminishing the importance of his numerous articles and studies, alongside the edition of documents dealing with 18th century Banat and the exhibition called *Floating Spaces*, the ethnic map of Banat (*Entwicklung der ethnischen Struktur des Banats 1890–1992/Development of Ethnic Structure in the Banat*, 2005) is one of the most convincing achievements of Josef Wolf.

Between the Early Middle Ages and the 19th century, this ancestral Romanian land saw numerous migrations and waves of colonization. Beginning with the 18th century, Habsburg public officials and Western travelers wrote about the linguistic and cultural diversity of this region, seen as such in the West even nowadays, despite the increasing ethnic homogeneity of the population in its two sub-regions, Romanian and Serbian. For both the general public and researchers in Germany and Western Europe, Banat is a stable entity, chiefly iden-

tified with the Romanian Banat. It is only seldom that this region is seen as a cross-border historical entity.

A joint project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of History and Regional Studies of the Danube Swabians, which began in 1998 and was completed in 2004, sought to piece together from a historical and cartographical point of view the demographic developments experienced by Banat between 1890 and 1990/92, a period during which the ethnic structure of the region underwent considerable changes. The four maps are accompanied by a comprehensive explanatory text, nearly 500 pages-long, written by Josef Wolf. The author demonstrates that the ethnic and religious diversity in the region is a consequence of the migrations that affected it starting with the 15th century and intensified in the 18th century. These migrations, among the most complicated continental ones of the Modern Era, involved movements of population from both the West and the southern and eastern parts of the region, and led to significant changes in the structure of the population and of the settlements. Apart from the four ethnic groups which had essentially shaped the society of the region after the late 18th century—Romanians, Serbs, Germans, and Hungarians—the region was inhabited by Crassovans, Jews, Croats, Slovaks, Czechs, Ruthenians, Gypsies, and other smaller ethnic groups. Most of these groups were the outcome of migrations at continental or sub-continental level, spanning more than one historical period. The areas inhabited by them, from the compact ones to the provisional settlements, emerged in the space of decades or centuries.

More or less intense contacts began to operate among most of these diverse groups. Beyond the structural evolutionary similarities, these groups exhibit a number of differences in terms of their identities and cultures. Their ethnic and political identities did not evolve in synchrony, accelerating after the national policies implemented by the Hungarian governments and after the advent of the ethnicity-driven political organization, which after 1918 affected all the groups that had been lagging behind from this point of view, including the German population. At a first glance the scope of maps is the traditional one, namely, the demographic and spatial premises of the coexistence of the ethnic groups and their areas of interpenetration. The author's analysis focuses on the genesis and evolution of each individual ethnic group, and on the transformations experienced by the model of spatial distribution, which could be inferred from the cartographic representation and the constitutive elements of the group identities.

The maps and the explanatory texts not only deal with the conventional historical-geographic issues, but also involve a trans-disciplinary approach. This working instrument plays a part in the description of the ethnic distribution of the population and in explaining the phenomena associated with cultural interaction. It also presents additional possibilities for the analysis of the com-

plex and changing regional, sub-regional, and local structures and contexts. The author's analysis demonstrates that the ethnic and religious diversity of this region requires one to transcend the mere chronological frame of the maps. The description of the historical evolution of the ethnic and religious structure of the population is closely related to territorial history and dynamics, at the level of the empire and then of the successor states. The ethno-national principle began to gain ground starting with the 18th century, when the Habsburg authorities devised a system for the management of diversity drawing on the experience accumulated while governing the newly-acquired provinces. However, the principle in question remained rooted in the structures of the Late Middle Ages. The author selectively highlights the manner in which this principle manifested itself in various historical contexts.

The cartographic representation of ethnic relations results from a threefold filtering of "reality." The first filter has to do with the willingness of an individual to declare their ethnicity to the census taker. The second filter is related to the methodology of the census and with its observance by the administration. The third filter consists of the cartographic presentation, which provides plenty of opportunities for a distortion of the documentary statistical data. The three filters are illustrated with examples, the author drawing attention to the obvious or possible errors, deliberate or not. Of the three basic methods underpinning the cartographic representation of ethnic and linguistic relations—surface presentation, point dispersion, and diagrammatic, in various combinations and versions—the maps in question favored the conventional diagrammatic one, which has the advantage of "objectivizing" the spatial distribution of the population. This is not an insular kind of map, as it also features the neighboring areas, involving additional documentation efforts.

The map shows the limits of communes and villages, and their changing territorial allocation. The geographic landscape is featured at five elevation levels and, alongside the hydrographic network, it provides the topographical references for the thematic content of the map, chiefly consisting of the ethnic structure and the system of settlements. The topographic elements and the official geographic names correspond to the moment when the data was generated.

The maps as bilingual, with the explanatory text published in two versions, German and English, with a circulation of 2,500 copies, acquired by nearly 600 national, regional, and university libraries. The ethnic map, accompanied by the explanatory text, is a reference publication for the researchers in regional history.

Fascinated by the authenticity of the realia, of the three-dimensional historical sources, items of great documentary value, historian Josef Wolf remained faithful to his early days at the National Museum of Transylvania. The exhibitions he devised or curated are an important and constant presence in his schol-

arly activity. They are not merely an alternative to scientific research, but rather the outcome thereof. As a rule, the initiative does not belong to the Tübingen research institute, but to other institutions, which acquire the necessary skills from the institute of the Danube Swabians. Examples in this regard are the exhibition *Willy Pragher: Romanian Visual Spaces*, also successfully presented in Cluj, and the recent exhibition called *Floating Spaces: Maps of the Danube Region 1650–1800*, both set up together with the State Archives of Baden-Württemberg (*Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg*), the custodian of a sizable part of the valuable exhibits. These itinerant exhibitions are shown all over Central and Southeast Europe, and also in the West. Their themes, pertaining to this area, respond to the interest manifest in the countries of Central and Southeast Europe, on the one hand, and also inform the Western public about a historical space that still remains relatively little known. Furthermore, they help increase the visibility of the institute beyond the borders of Germany.

The exhibition entitled *Heimatsachen* (Things from back home, 2012) is interesting for both its theme and for the fact that it involves students, being the outcome of a four-semester seminar. The contributors are former postgraduate students and even graduates of other universities in the country who sought a specialization in museology. The exhibition curators were an ethnologist (Prof. Reinhard Johler), a museum curator (Christian Glass, the director of the Central Museum of the Danube Swabians, of Ulm), and the historian Josef Wolf. The more than six hundred exhibits were practically generated by the exhibition itself, as they were donated by the local organizations of the various Saxon rural and urban communities, past or present, in regions like Banat, Sătmar, Bačka, Srem, Slavonia and the trans-Danube Swabian areas in Hungary. These communities were called upon to send a gift to the lander they lived in, which was celebrating its 50th anniversary.

His latest exhibition (2017) is *Floating Spaces: Maps of the Danube Region 1650–1800* which, in cooperation with Babeş-Bolyai University and the National Archives, will visit several Romanian cities. It features an integrating cartographic perspective on a vast region, which includes the area of the Danube and of the Balkans. In chronological terms, the exhibition begins with the mid-17th century and ends in the early 19th century. The centerpieces are relevant both in historical terms and when it comes to the developments experienced by cartography. The “Great Turkish War” (1683–1699) turned the Habsburg Empire into a continental power, and the siege of Ochakov—without forgetting that we are currently witnessing a Russian-Ukrainian conflict—raised the persistent “Eastern question,” so important for the modern history of Romania, in the context of the last major anti-Ottoman war fought by Austria. In its turn, cartography has been experiencing slow but steady changes. The scientific meth-

ods employed by military cartographers—among others, the first measurements of the surface topographic elevations of Banat and Transylvania—also had an impact on the work of civilian cartographers. The early 18th century brought significant advances in the knowledge of the European and extra-European territories, in the field of projection networks, and in the methodology of military and colonial topography. Modern cartography began around the year 1800, and in the German space the historical geography of states (*Staatenkunde*) gradually developed into a comprehensive multidisciplinary description of countries (*Länderkunde*).

The so-called spatial turn increased the interest in the research devoted to cartography, and both Europe and the United States hosted grand exhibitions that highlighted the specific methodology of the history of science or of the new history of culture. The research focuses mainly on the historical spatial constructs. Their main topics are the persistence and the transformation of cartographic images, the reading or the interpretation of maps as identity-related texts, and their function as an instrument of power.

Alongside other audience categories, the exhibition is also meant for students and schoolchildren. In the era of globalization and digitalization, the development of the spatial representation skills—learning how to read a map—is more important than ever. The approach to the southeastern Danube area and to the regions lying south of it also takes into account the expected EU enlargement in the Balkan Peninsula. The exhibits reveal the existence of cultural and historical bridges between Western and Eastern Europe, built during a shared European history. Accompanied by a comprehensive catalog and a volume of studies, the exhibition has embarked upon a European tour that would take it, until 2022, to nine European countries, without forgetting the two European cultural capitals of 2021, Timișoara and Novi Sad.

A TRAVELLER BETWEEN worlds and historical spaces, historian Josef Wolf has remained devoted to the specific aspects pertaining to the history of his native country, region, and community. He is the author of pertinent studies, well documented and often with a solid theoretical and methodological foundation. He is never in a hurry, quantity is not a priority—non multa sed multum—and yet he has published an impressive number of texts. Open and engaging, seeking and very often offering friendship, being therefore the preferred mentor and tutor for our students who go to Tübingen, he is nevertheless reluctant when it comes to the social networks of the postmodern era, preferring to remain silent and to write.



Abstract**Laudatio**

On 18 May 2018, researcher Josef Wolf of the Institute of History and Regional Studies of the Danube Swabians, Tübingen, was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of Babeş-Bolyai University. The Laudatio delivered by Professor Rudolf Gräf, vice-rector of the university, highlights the main aspects pertaining to the biography and the scholarly activity of the recipient of the honorary degree, from his formative years in Cluj to his later activities in Germany. Particular attention is given to the publication of maps and to the exhibitions curated by Josef Wolf, chief among the latter being the one entitled *Floating Spaces: Maps of the Danube Region 1650–1800*, organized in cooperation with Babeş-Bolyai University and the National Archives.

Keywords

Josef Wolf, historical regions, Banat Swabians, cartography, exhibitions, Babeş-Bolyai University