

**"ARDEALUL" - "ROMÂNIA", CHISINAU, 1917-1918
THE INVOLVEMENT OF THIS PUBLICATION IN THE
STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION AND UNION.
THE ROLE OF ONISIFOR Ghibu (I)**

Viorica MOISUC, PhD

A few words before

I didn't have the chance to meet Onisifor Ghibu personally. However, I met them and collaborated for many years with Mr. Octavian O. Ghibu, then with Mr. Mihai O. Ghibu, his sons, whose chief concern in those years was the capitalization of their father's huge written legacy.

I collaborated in the editing of several volumes of Onisifor Ghibu's writings, I participated in almost all the events within the "Ghibu Days" organized annually in Chisinau. But, certainly, my biggest gain from these collaborations were the long discussions with Mr. Octavian Ghibu, about everything and everything; there were then, in the lives of each of us, difficult moments, obstacles appeared that, not only apparently, could block your path. Octavian Ghibu, who, like all of his family, went through situations hard to imagine, when life and death faced day by day their courage, their courage, the rejection of compromise, the unreserved and tenacious affirmation of their truths, always had the patience to listen, to weigh the facts, to discern the most suitable solution, always said with care not to deepen your bitterness but to encourage you in reaching the goal you are aiming for. "Just as a drop of water can break the hardest rock, any obstacle will fall through your perseverance!" - said Octavian Ghibu with all conviction and he was right.

His house was the meeting point and refuge of Bessarabian Romanians who managed to reach Romania, in search of moral and material support for the fight they were waging against the oppressive Soviet occupation regime. The door of the Ghibu family was always open. I met then and there top leaders of the movement for national liberation and union with the Country of Bessarabia, at that time the Moldavian Soviet

Socialist Republic. They left encouraged, enlightened, with new perspectives in their daring actions. I had never been to Bessarabia before, and all these direct contacts with the Bessarabians opened up new avenues of knowledge and, above all, understanding of extremely complicated and difficult situations that had to be solved.

The end of Octavian Ghibu's life was unexpected; the disease that appeared after the last scientific event organized by him in Chisinau, was a common pain in the throat with that cough. But no treatment helped him. In the end it turned out to be cancer, which was not told to the person concerned until all was lost. One late afternoon he called me and asked me to stop by his place. I went. He was in bed, speaking with difficulty, with an altered voice. He was very upset that the truth about his suffering was not revealed to him. "I had many things to put in order, many issues to solve" - he told me. The most important problem that bothered him was the demonstration in Chisinau, scheduled for the next period. He asked me if I wanted to take over this mission "because I won't be there anymore"! These words fell like a thunderbolt. I didn't immediately find the words to answer him. He continued to speak, almost in a whisper. He had a lot to say. When I sobered up I assured him that I would do the right thing. He briefed me on some organizational matters, gave me a draft program that he had prepared on his bedside table. When he finished, he barely had a voice. I left overwhelmed by the completely unexpected situation and the responsibility I had assumed.

That night Octavian Ghibu went to his parents.

In Chisinau I managed within honorable limits..

I didn't continue. The "Chisinau" problem took a different turn. I had nothing to do with what happened afterwards.

Apart from the soulful memories I have kept forever from my long relationships with Mr. Octavian Ghibu, the dedications written to me by the brothers Octavian and Mihai Ghibu and their brother-in-law, Dr. Crisan Mircioiu, on the front page of numerous books by Onisifor Ghibu edited or re-edited under their care, are a precious memory of some years when our ideas and hopes dared to take shape in a more or less near future.

I would like to add to the above the fact that I managed to understand and know Onisifor Ghibu from the way his son, Octavian, thought, acted, discerned with a rare accuracy the most complicated situations of the present ours since then, he predicted the directions in which they could have evolved in the immediate or more distant context: as was his father.

Pro-memoria

After a hundred and more years since the historic day of March 27, 1918, evoking the situation of Bessarabian Romanians under the rule of the Russian Empire for 106 years, is the starting point in approaching the subject announced by the title above. The words that were written in "New Romania" on January 24, 1918 - the day of the proclamation by the Council of the Country in Chisinau of the independence of the Republic of Moldova, of its separation forever from imperial Russia -, about the ordeal endured by the Bessarabians under the tsarist occupation, have a particular resonance today; Romanian students from Bessarabia wrote about all this at the time. That's why I'm including them here, not only to recall some long-ago histories, but because those words capture the soul of a people whose oppression, injuries, deportations, terror suffered for more than a century, did not bring them to their knees. Mihai the Brave's dream was beginning to take shape:

"The word of youth from Bessarabia", signed: "The Central Committee of Romanian students from Bessarabia, January 24, 1918, *New Romania*, no. 8 / 21 .I. 1918"

"Our Bessarabia is a Romanian country, just like the other countries across the Prut, inhabited by our brothers. For 106 years she was torn from the bosom of our mother Moldova and handed over to foreigners who oppressed and mocked us as they wanted, taking away our every right to national and human life. We, under Russian rule, didn't have a school, we didn't have a church, we didn't have a language, we didn't have anything that a people needs to be able to advance. The lands were taken from us by the colonized masters here, the rights we had in the old Moldova were taken away from us one by one by the Venetians settled among us. From the native people that I was, I ended up as a "bull's head", laughed at by everyone, even in our home and country. The foreigners knew so well how to disgust us with ourselves and our brothers, that many Moldovans renounced their nationality and ended up considering our Romanian brothers as enemies... we ended up not knowing our brothers anymore and we put our hope in foreigners! (emphasis added V.M.)

We, the Romanian students from Bessarabia, realizing the painful state of affairs in our country and wanting to work for its removal, have decided to start a fight against everything that is bad in our national life. We consider that the salvation of our nation is in the Union of our

sons in one country (emphasis in the text). We no longer expect anything from foreigners; we put all our hope in life together with all our Romanian brothers. We do not need federative Russia (emphasis in the text), because Russia has given us, during 106 years, nothing but darkness and poverty, and in the current times of freedom, it has only given us anarchy; we want a Romania of all Romanians! (emphasis in text) Let all the enemies of our nation, be they foreigners or from among us, know that we, the Romanian youth of Bessarabia, will not back down from any obstacle that will stand in the way of fulfilling the holy cause of the Union of all Romanians...!" (emphasis added V.M.).

The same ideas and feelings were expressed a hundred years before, by Nicolae Bălcescu in the speech given to Romanian students in Paris on New Year's Eve 1845-1846 at the Romanian Library in Paris in Place de la Sorbonne. At all times, the student body has always been in the vanguard of movements for progress. During the years when the absolutist monarchical regimes had proved their bankruptcy on all levels, the liberation of the long-subjugated nations and the annulment of the borders artificially drawn by the agreements between the great powers, separating the sons of the same people, had become the major objective of all these movements¹. The territory always inhabited by Romanians was, for the most part, under foreign occupation, divided, by such borders, between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires; The Kingdom of Romania included only part of the historical Principality of Moldavia (without the eastern part between Prut and Dniester and without the northern part) and part of the Principality of Wallachia (Muntenia with Dobrogea but without Banat). Therefore, the Eastern and Northern parts of Moldavia, Transylvania, Banat, the historical Maramureş which included the largest part of the

¹ At the Assembly of Romanian students in Paris, on December 31, 1945, Nicolae Bălcescu gave a memorable speech, in which he said: "Gentlemen, I believe that our target can be none other than the National Unity of Romanians." Unity first in ideas and feelings, which will then lead to political unity over time, which will make the mountains, the Moldavians, the Transylvanians, the Banatians, a political body, a Romanian nation of seven million Romanians. At the creation of this nationality, at a social reformation of the Romanians based on the holy principles of justice and equality, all our efforts must be aimed. Romanianism, but, it is our flag, under it we must call all Romanians!" (Cornelia Bodea, *The Struggle of the Romanians for National Unity 1834-1849*, Ed. Academy, Bucharest, 1967, p. 95-105. Cf. Viorica Moisuc, *The Ordeal of the Romanians in the Struggle for Liberation and National Integration*, vol. I, Ed. Fundației România de Măine, Bucharest, 2020, p.15.

Romanian nation - were subject to foreign domination. But the Kingdom of Romania, independent and sovereign, represented for all Romanians subjugated by foreign Powers "Mother Country", the nucleus around which the future unitary Romanian national state coagulated.

Onisifor Ghibu and Bessarabia

According to Ghibu's daily notes:

Sibiu, August 21, 1967. And again and again – Bessarabia. There is no power in the world that can divert me from this problem that has been lingering in my soul almost moment by moment for over half a century. It doesn't scare me even now, as it didn't scare me in the past, the total lack of understanding of the country's leaders towards it. But perhaps this incites me more and makes me more stubborn in pursuing it... There is, in reality, **only artificially and tendentially and damaging to the very peace of the world a «problem of Bessarabia»**. It is all a self-interested invention of the tsarist and communist empires alike. There is only a national-Romanian and international problem, at the same time, of Romanianism overwhelmed, **by force and terror, by today's communists - more damned than the tsars - in Bessarabia, Bucovina, Transnistria and Northern Moldova (County of Herța). Russia has no right over the territories inhabited by Romanians** today under the Russian imperialist heel.² (subl. ns. V.M.)

As refugee in Iași during the war, together with many Transylvanian intellectuals, he understood like no one else that his purpose then was to join with all his forces the fight for the radical change of the situation in Bessarabia, as well as its political status - which was still under the Russian government. About all this note a little later:

I realized that this province, which at that time was still under the tsarist regime, must constitute from now on for Romanianism, an organic national problem /.../. Two million compatriots can no longer remain a negligible amount./.../ This abandoned and backward branch of Romanianism must be raised to self-awareness and to the awareness of a higher mission in the

² Onisifor Ghibu, *Diary pages*, (1965-1967), vol. II. Edited by Mihai O. Ghibu, Romeo Dascălescu. Introductory study by Romeo Dascălescu. Foreword, notes and comments by Mihai O. Ghibu, Albatros Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 223.

world. This postulate must be realized through the organic inclusion of Bessarabia in Romanian spirituality³.

The repeated and persistent efforts made by Onisifor Ghibu in the 1950s and 1960s in Bucharest and Moscow are known, in which he demonstrated, with undeniable facts and data, the Romanian character of Bessarabia and Bucovina, entered into the possession of the USSR through the annexations of June 1940, annexations confirmed by the Peace Treaty with Romania from 1947; the author of these actions demanded the restitution of the confiscated territories to the Romanian people. Ghibu knowingly ignored the reprisals that awaited him as a consequence of his reckless acts.

In the midst of the 1914-1918 war, it occurred in the Romanian world divided into four states - Russia, Austria, Hungary and the Kingdom of Romania -, states that were part of two opposing military camps, the Entente and the Central Powers, a phenomenon that must be seen in all its complexity: enlisted in armies that fought against each other, the Romanians understood that that war did not serve their national cause. In this complicated political-military context, a large number of Transylvanian and Bucovina Romanians, intellectuals engaged in the national movement, evaded mobilization and took refuge over the mountains in Romania; imperial courts-martial sentenced them to death or years of hard prison in absentia; another significant part of the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian army either deserted or fell prisoners on the Russian or Italian front; they were in various camps all over Russia.

Regarding the Bessarabian Romanians enlisted in the Russian imperial army, Gheorghe Brătianu wrote in 1940, when the drama of the capture was being consumed - how many times? - of the Romanian territories in the East and North:

The Moldavian soldier had already done his duty in enough campaigns for the tsar: in the Crimea, in the Balkans, in Manchuria. This time, the danger of military operations put him face to face with other Romanians, either from the Austro-Hungarian army, which was his rival, or from the Romanian army he was fighting alongside. He learned that Romanians from the Kingdom were participating in the war to free their brothers from Austrian and

³ Onisifor Ghibu, *În Basarabia revoluționară 1917-1918. Amintiri*. Editura Universitas, 1992 p. 92.

Hungarian domination; he saw the volunteer battalions being formed behind the Russian front, with prisoners of Romanian origin captured in Galicia or Bucovina. Suddenly he had the consciousness of the same language that exceeded the borders of the Russian Empire and the Allied Kingdom (Romania), the consciousness of a wider, richer nationality, of which he was also a part...⁴

Onisifor Ghibu, refusing to enlist in the imperial army, crossed the border clandestinely into Romania. Here he immediately got involved in the national movement that demanded entry into the war alongside the Entente for the liberation of Transylvania and Union with the Country. In Bessarabia, he engaged in the activity that he had started for the national awakening. The situation of Romania, whose territory - after the defection of the Romanian army and the annexation of Dobrogea, Transylvania, Oltenia, Muntenia, the Capital - was only represented by a part of Moldavia between the Prut and the Carpathians, - was of unprecedented gravity: full of refugees from areas occupied by the enemy, with over a million Russian soldiers quartered and well fed, with the Parliament, the Government, the central institutions, the diplomatic offices, the Royal House sheltered in Iasi, had to face a new test: the separate exit from the war and "peace" imposed by the Central Powers in connivance with Russia. All this required a new refuge. In mid-July 1917, the third and last shipment of the Romanian state's wealth was leaving for Moscow for "keeping". At the same time, preparations were being made for the refuge in Russia of the Parliament, the central institutions, the National Bank, and the Royal House. Moreover, the Russian authorities insisted on the Romanian Government and King Ferdinand to bring the entire Romanian army to Russia for quartering and "restoration", an offer refused, as is known, by the king, the military commanders, the Government but also by the French military mission led by General Henri – Mathias Berthelot. In these critical circumstances, the issue of the evacuation of Onisifor Ghibu and his family from Bessarabia to Moscow was raised.

In his Memories, there are impressive accounts of these happenings and events, pages full of bitterness and hope, of great soul turmoil. Onisifor Ghibu's decision not to leave then, together with his family, from Bessarabia was determined by the primary importance he attached to the

⁴ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Basarabia. Drepturi naționale și istorice (Bessarabia. Its National and Historical Rights)*, Preface by Ioan -Aurel Pop, Meteor Press, Bucharest, 2024, p. 141.

continuation of the activity he was carrying out in many fields - school, political, cultural, religious, publishing, all this for the purpose the national awakening of Bessarabian Romanians and the fulfillment of the supreme ideal - the Union of historical Bessarabia with the Country.

An emotional episode recorded in these Memories is related to the history of the departure from Chisinau of the train carrying the Treasure and traveling to Moscow and a large group of Transylvanian and Bessarabian refugees.

Here is the full text:

I was left alone on duty in my Bessarabia. An immense faith made me regard this soul separation as a fact of no great importance. This state of mind also had its explanation in the fact that while the train stopped at the Chisinau station, I met a friend from Bucharest, who was carrying with him, in the neighboring compartment, from Iași to Kherson, the mysterious suitcase, which I had brought - me, in the fall of 1916, from Bucharest to Iași, together with father C. Dolinescu and in which was the head of **Michael the Brave**, also buried in the third refuge, in the city on **the left bank of the Dnieper**. So, my family travels again in this symbolic companionship — which cannot be without a higher meaning...⁵ (emph. in text)

Thus, Onisifor Ghibu remained in Bessarabia "on duty".

And he gives a definition of this "debt" in the first issue of the newspaper "Ardealul" / October 1, 1917, in the article *Our Duty*, which he signs:

Each of us owes, in addition to our debts to ourselves, great debts to our nation. The greatest of all is to fight for the victory of the nation and to place it on a firmer foundation than before.

It was his creed from which he never abdicated.

⁵ Onisifor Ghibu, *Pe baricadele vieții. În Basarabia revoluționară (1917-1918) – Amintiri (On Life's Barricads. În Revolutionary Bessarabia)*. Foreword, Iurie Colesnic. Edited, preface, chronological table, notes and index Octavian O. Ghibu. Ed. Universitas, Chișinău, 1992, p. 256

A valuable manuscript

The collection of the newspaper "Ardealul (Transilvania)" (October 1, 1917-January 23, 1918), newspaper named, starting from January 24, 1918, "România Nouă" (last issue - November 20, 1918), in the possession of the Library of the Romanian Academy, opens with the inscription: "Donation to the Romanian Academy by Onisifor Ghibu, professor at the University of Cluj, 12 -XII - 1922." A notebook page attached to the first page of the first issue of the newspaper "Ardealul" contains the following text written by Onisifor Ghibu's hand, perfectly preserved for more than a hundred years:

I gave the Romanian Academy a complete copy from the newspaper collection Transylvania and New Romania in the last days of December 1918, when I returned from Chisinau to Sibiu, after a wandering of 4 years and three months. That copy was lent in the summer of 1919 by the late Ion I.C. Brătianu, then prime minister and delegate of Romania to the Paris Peace Conference. When Brătianu asked the Academy for the collection of this newspaper, the late I. Bianu⁶ he refused to give it to her, fearing that it would be lost. Brătianu sent a special courier from Paris, who managed to get it. But Bianu's fear turned out to be well-founded, because in truth, the collection was lost without a trace. In 1922, telling me about what happened, he asked me to give another collection to the Academy if I still had one. Thus I gave the present collection to the Academy.

Written on March 1, 1940

⁶ Ion Bianu, member of the Romanian Academy, director of the Library.

From the history of the appearance of „Ardealul (Transilvania)”

In March 1917 Onisifor Ghibu was in Odessa from where he wrote to his friend Pompiliu Teodor, who was in the Darnița prison camp near Kiev⁷:

I've been in Odessa for a few days, from where I'm leaving tomorrow for Chisinau, where I've been living with my family for about two weeks. Here begins a great Moldavian action in whose success I have a lot of hope. I linked myself to this action with all my powers and I thought that you should also do everything possible to break away from there and come to Chisinau to work together on <<The

⁷ At Darnița, near Kiev, there was one of the camps in Russia where there were Romanian prisoners from the Austro-Hungarian army; they wanted to form volunteer units in the Romanian army. Until the spring of 1917, however, there was no agreement between the Romanian and Russian governments on this issue. In January 1917, following the report drawn up by colonel G. G. Pietraru - sent to Darnița to discuss with the Romanian prisoners - the Minister of War of Romania decided, on February 23, 1917, to establish the Romanian Volunteer Corps. The Russian General Staff approved the formation of a Corps of 5000 volunteers, but conditioned their recruitment only from the camps in the Moscow area (where the number of Romanian prisoners was small). The headquarters of the Volunteer Corps was fixed at Darnița. In a short time, more than 5000 volunteers were enrolled. On 22 August, the Russian government gave its consent to the recruitment of 30,000 volunteers from camps across Russia.

When the formation was formed, the Romanian volunteers made the following commitment, dated March 6, 1917 (old style): "The undersigned officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers of Romanian nationality declare on honor and conscience that we want to fight alongside the Romanian Army for the liberation of our countries from Austro-Hungarian domination and their annexation to Romania /...../ From the moment of signing this commitment, we consider ourselves to be part of the Romanian Army and therefore, those of us who will not respond to the Call, will be considered deserters and punished according to Romanian laws/...../ May God help us so that through our blood we can break our countries and make Great Romania united in one body and forever". (Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania Unirea 1918. Annotated documents and introductory study by university professor Dr. Viorica Moisuc, Department of Public Information, Publications Office for Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 1996, p. 55). The document entitled the Declaration of Darnița and launched by the Transylvanian Volunteers Corps established in this camp, dated April 16/29, 1917, strongly affirms some fundamental truths of the historical development of the Romanians: "Today, when we Romanians...have definitively convinced ourselves that we, as Romanians, it is no longer possible for us to exist within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian state; we, who in language, in culture, in social structure and in our entire ethnic being form a single and inseparable body with all the other constitutive parts of the Romanian Nation, demand with unwavering will our incorporation into Free Romania to form together with it a single State Romanian National that we will build on the foundations of the most advanced democracy/...../"(Ibidem, doc. no. 5, p. 54-55)

Moldavian Word>> and outside he. These are great times for all the branches of our nation, and each one of us has a duty to serve Him where there is greatest need and where his work can give the greatest results. Through a lucky fate of things, today we can serve this branch here, a Romanian branch completely neglected until now⁸.

In the revolutionary effervescence that had engulfed the whole of Russia, the Moldavian National Party was born in Chisinau on April 3, 1917; he mobilized in his ranks leaders of the Bessarabian national movement led by Vasile Stroescu, Ion Pelivan, Archimandrite Gurie, Pantelimon Halippa and others. A day earlier, "Cuvînt Moldovenesc" published the editorial The goals pursued by the National-Moldovan Party (document elaborated by O. Ghibu) in which, based on the idea that in Russia "the fate of all peoples living in her", it was shown:

If until now we have led a life of innocent slaves of the Russian empire, from now on we are free and we are allowed to be what God left us - Moldavians or rather Romanians, sons of Trajan and descendants of Stephen the Great. Our only duty is to make ourselves worthy of our ancestors and the freedom we have acquired. **Until we get to be masters of our country, until others guide us in public life, until then we are not worthy of our great past. We must become masters of these parts, inhabited by us, and of our fate** (emphasis in text)⁹

It is worth mentioning a permanent concern in Bessarabian publishing from 1917-1918, namely the recourse to history to sensitize national consciousness and self-respect.

The hundred years of forced Russification, national oppression, cancellation of the old rights and freedoms of the Romanians in the annexed province, had left deep traces in the behavior and even in the way of thinking of the Bessarabians. The struggle for survival had required renunciations, concessions, submission, unwilling acceptance of the will of imperial rule. The fear of reprisals, deportations, arrests and crimes had put its stamp on the entire life of Bessarabian Romanians. In addition, the permanent anti-Romanian propaganda of the tsarist authorities and the

⁸ The original of this letter can be found at the Scheii Braşovului Museum, Pompiliu Nistor Fund, quota 1878. Apud Octavian Ghibu. Preface to the work of Onisifor Ghibu, *On the life's barricades*.

⁹ *Cuvînt Moldovenesc*, n0. 27 /2 aprilie 1917.

total isolation of the Bessarabian Romanians from the Motherland and the other Romanian provinces had extremely serious consequences: the feeling of inferiority of the Moldavians in relation to the Russians or other ethnic groups in Russia had been cultivated, and the relations among the Romanians from the Kingdom of Romania, Transylvania, Bucovina and Bessarabian Romanians were almost non-existent. Considering these considerations, it is understandable that the change in mentalities and especially in decisions that the revolutionary transformations of those years imposed on Romanians in Bessarabia was extremely difficult.

A very interesting analysis made by Ghibu many years later (*On the barricades of life*) of this complicated problem of the transition of Bessarabian Romanians from a life deprived of basic liberties and rights to a free life, sheds light on the great difficulties of this process. When he arrived in Bessarabia, in March 1917, Ghibu said:

I had the clear idea of the need for the autonomy of Bessarabia, an idea that I gave voice to...in the first meeting of Moldovan intellectuals that I took part in; (in Ghibu's view, autonomy was only a first step) This logically and necessarily led to the idea of Bessarabia joining the Romanian trunk. I immediately realized what a difficult thing this is, but also what a great and necessary thing it is. I had enough elements to understand what a difficult burden is the spiritual baggage with which Russia has burdened, during 106 years, Romanianism there, making it immobile, mystical, distrustful, fatalistic and impractical..., a slave not only of a foreign mentality but and of a formidable economic pressure.

Ghibu's insistence on achieving a "complete national organization of the «Moldovans»" led, in the immediate period following, to the establishment of the Moldavian National Party, and then to the creation of the National Association of Bessarabian Teachers, with which the magazine *Țoala Moldoveneasca* contributed to the establishment practice of the new school program in Romanian; The society for the culture of the Romanians from Bessarabia, also established then, would carry out an intense cultural activity in the following period, which they will find reflected in the newspapers "Ardealul" - "România Nouă"¹⁰

On April 9, the Program of the Moldavian National Party is published; the central point of the Program was "the acquisition of the widest administrative, judicial, church, school and economic autonomy of

¹⁰ O. Ghibu, *On the life's barricades...*, p. 40-41.

Bessarabia" (art. 2); "the national language of the people" replaced the Russian language in absolutely all areas; "the Russian language should be only for the connections with the authority from above" (art. 4); in schools, the Russian language would only be an "object of education" (art.5); article 8 referred to a matter of major interest for the majority peasant population of Bessarabia: **"Colonization, i.e. the bringing and settlement of foreigners on the land of Bessarabia, should be stopped and land should be given to the farming villagers, who do not have land, or did not have enough"**; interesting is the wording of article 10, **which refers to the inhabitants on the right side of the Dniester**: "Let the Moldavians from beyond the Dniester **the same national rights in the cultural, ecclesiastical, political and economic realms that the residents of other nations will have in Bessarabia**" (emphasis in the text).

The autonomy proclaimed in this document elaborated by the Moldavian National Party was accompanied by the specification of Bessarabia's maintenance in the composition of Russia: "Remaining tied here and there to Russia through laws of public interest, Bessarabia will have to manage its own life from within taking into account the national rights of all its inhabitants"¹¹ (art. 2)

It was, in April 1917, the first step towards freedom - declared by the Moldavian National Party, the first official document that talked about the autonomy of Bessarabia and what was meant by it at that time. It should be noted that in Bessarabian society, especially in intellectual circles, autonomy became a widely debated but also controversial issue in the following months.

O. Ghibu, carefully following the evolution of the PNM in the context of the events that were taking place throughout the vast territory of the former Russian empire, but also on the Romanian front, considered that "little by little" the activity of this party leads to the victory of an "integral national program", which will achieve "one by one", autonomy, independence and, "as a natural consequence, the Union with Romania"¹².

The integral National Program that Ghibu talks about in all his written and spoken interventions during the years when he was on the barricades of the struggle for the national and political emancipation of Bessarabia, included two major aspects: the regaining of the self-awareness of the Bessarabian Romanians and the understanding of "slobozenia" - freedom -

¹¹ *Cuvînt Moldovenesc*, nr. 28 / 9 aprilie 1917 (Cf. *Basarabia....Documente*, doc. nr. 4, p. 52-54.)

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 41.

in the sense of deciding their fate together with their blood brothers from the other Romanian provinces.

It is known that at the time – one of rapid revolutionary transformations, one of the great dangers aimed at the implementation of the Principle of Nationalities, namely the establishment of unitary, independent and sovereign states, was the idea that the "autonomy" of nations and their territories should take place, but within the same state conglomerates, preserved in the form of "federations"; autonomy would have been, therefore, the final, supreme point of the struggle for national liberation and the assurance of civil rights and liberties. The much circulated, discussed, controversial formula of the "United States of Greater Austria" which did not even involve renouncing the status of monarchy but actually strengthened the prerogatives of the emperor by practically limiting the autonomy that would have been granted to the nations; or the federative formula of Russia brought about by the revolution of February 1917, in which the Russian autocratic empire would have been transformed, actually hid the eternal tsarist imperialism.¹³

Even President Wilson's famous "14 points" did not - in their first formulation - go beyond the stage of "autonomy" of nations within a large federal state formation. But, at that stage of the evolution of the socio-political crisis in the former multinational empires, the stage of "autonomy" had been overcome. In the case of Bessarabia, Ghibu saw "autonomy" only as a necessary but short-lived stage of the struggle for national liberation, the final goal being the Union of all Romanians and the territories inhabited by them in a single national state.

On the European political and diplomatic stage, these issues were fiercely debated topics, because the interests related to maintaining the old state of affairs, even in a disguised form of progress, brought to the fore the motivation of the security of the West. The illusion of the "shield" of a great central European power which had been the Habsburg Empire and which had to be perpetuated even under a new hat, still had many followers, especially in the context of the revolutionary movement in Russia. In the opposite camp stood the powerful movement of the nations oppressed by the dualist empire, a movement that had reached its peak during the war years. As early as 1895, the Congress of Non-Hungarian Nations in Budapest affirmed the strong solidarity between Romanians, Slovaks,

¹³ See Viorica Moisuc, *Calvarul ...*, vol II, cap. XXX, XXXI, XXXII, p. 261-348.

Czechs and other nationalities in the struggle for rights and freedoms. The *Tribune* from Sibiu wrote on April 18/May 1, 1896:

We resolutely declare that we Serbs, Slovaks and Romanians exist as living, individual nations, in deed and reality special, endowed with all the attributes that, not only during a thousand years but in a much longer time, preserved our being our national and we have the clear and determined will to exist in the future as well.¹⁴

Ed. Beneš, the leader of the Czech liberation movement, in his well-known work titled *Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie*, published in Paris in 1916, wrote, among other things:

We would like it to be understood that the only means of destroying the force of this band of aggressors in Central Europe is the complete destruction of the Austro-Hungarian core - the basis of their policy. Europe needs to finally understand the history of this empire and this dynasty. A state that played such a role in history must disappear from the map of Europe.... Let it be understood that Austria, in order to save herself, can do nothing but submit to Prussia. Pan-Germanism is the fatal consequence of the evolution of the situation in Central Europe. Therefore, there is no other means than the destruction of Austria-Hungary to stop the Drang Nach Osten of the Prussians and to shatter German hegemony in Europe forever.¹⁵

And in this writing of Beneš appears the fear of the position of many politicians of the time who supported the preservation of the renovated Habsburg monarchy in Central Europe as an obstacle to both Germany's Drang nach Osten policy and Russian imperialism.

Ardelian Onisifor Ghibu understood better than anyone all this complex international conjuncture, within which the situation in Bessarabia was also evolving. Autonomy within the same conglomerate of peoples

¹⁴ Iulius Mésáros, The internal causes of the decline of the dualist monarchy and the situation of the Slovaks in Hungary (Romanian translation). in "Historicky Casopis", "nr.1 /1969, p. 525. (Apud Milică Moldoveanu, Constantin Botoran, Czechoslovakia, in the volume. Affirmation of the independent national states in Central and South-Eastern Europe 1821-1923. Coordinators Viorica Moisuc, Ion Calafeteanu, Academiei Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 155.

¹⁵ Edvard Beneš, *Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie. Le martyre des tchécoslovaques à travers l'histoire*, Librairie Delagrave, Paris, 1916 . Apud Viorica Moisuc, *Calvarul*, vol. I, p . 151.

under the leadership of Russia (revolutionary or tsarist) does not solve the Romanian problem. In such circumstances, deeply involved in the confrontations that were taking place around the major issues of the future of Bessarabia, Ghibu started a sustained action for the realization of the newspaper that he had been planning for a long time. On the 2nd of June, "in the evening at 9 ½", he noted in his Diary the intention to take out "a sheet" for the Transylvanian prisoners in the Russian camps:

Today I read several hundred letters from them, at the Editorial Office¹⁶ and I repented that I had done nothing for them since I have been here. A weekly sheet would do good service here.

But, financial difficulties postponed the realization of this project. However, the idea of publishing the newspaper was at the forefront of his concerns:

In the given situation, I decided to initiate an action on my own account., with all the risks inherent in such an adventure....I decided to edit myself, namely in Latin letters, a weekly newspaper which, by its ideology to set new objectives for the Moldovans and, in the first line, for their spiritual leading elements: the teaching, the priesthood, the students and the military. I will baptize this newspaper with the name of my native country, "Transylvania", making this name a slogan intended to energize the souls of the readers, whether they are Transylvanian refugees or interned as prisoners in Russia, Moldovans, or anything else. I will do everything to channel the national life of Bessarabia into the mother of "Transylvania", seen as a symbol of all Romanianism with a much stronger resonance than any other name could have¹⁷.

Again, the plan to publish the much-desired newspaper ran into almost insurmountable financial difficulties. Counting the expenses for the publication of the newspaper, he optimistically assessed: "I wouldn't need a lot of money if I had the paper. With a thousand "carboave"¹⁸ I could begin; they would last me three months, I think, apart from living."¹⁹

¹⁶ Is about the editorial office of „ *Cuvînt Moldovenesc*” where he would carry out his activity.

¹⁷ Onisifor Ghibu, *In Revolutionary Bessarabia...*p. 230.

¹⁸ Carboave: Old Russian silver coin or paper note, equal in value to one ruble (which also circulated in the Romanian Principalities)

¹⁹ Onisifor Ghibu, *In the maelstrom of the Russian revolution. Daily notes of a transylvanian - and more than that - of the Russian revolution in the years 1917-1918*, starting on March 12 and ending on August 6, 1917. Neat edition, 46

Given such a precarious financial situation, he was thinking of asking his nephew Dumitru from Ekaterinodar for a loan of "one thousand «carboave»" and at the same time proposing to him "to make a collection there".

Confident in his project, on June 3 he drafted an "announcement" that he planned to publish on June 7 in "Cuvînt Moldovenesc", regarding the weekly appearance of the new newspaper called "Ardealul".

In truth, in "Cuvînt Moldovenesc" no. 45/ June 6, the announcement was published: "From July 1, «Ardealul» a weekly newspaper for Transylvanian Romanians studying in Russia, will begin to be printed in Latin letters. Editor, Dr. Onisifor Ghibu, former inspector of Romanian schools in Transylvania. Editorial Office and Administration, Chisinau, Jukowskaia ul.15. Subscription 2 rubles for a quarter of a year and it is sent in advance" . The announcement about the appearance of the new newspaper on July 1 was repeated several times in the newspaper *Cuvânt Moldovenesc*. The news about the publication of "Transylvania" was well received by the Transylvanian refugees from Russia, but it also caused the displeasure of some of O. Ghibu's close collaborators. Octavian Goga, for example, considered the name of the newspaper inappropriate - says Ghibu - because it was also expected then to publish in Kiev the newspaper "România Mare" intended for Romanian prisoners in Russia "who are now gathering under the Romanian flag as volunteers"; Goga specified that he took upon himself the writing and publication of that newspaper on behalf of the Great Romanian Headquarters.²⁰

The announcement of the appearance of "Ardeal" in Romanian, spread in all areas of Russia where there were Romanians (civilian refugees, prisoners of the Austro-Hungarian army, etc.), resulted in a large number of letters and requests for subscriptions arriving at editorial office of the "Moldovene Word." Encouraged by the good prospects announced for the newspaper he was preparing, Ghibu went to Iași to buy the printing press with Latin letters "which the Great Quarter had promised me". In his Memories, he writes "The story of the printing press": located in a train car in Huși," the printing press, bought in the name of the newspaper "România" from Iași (with the support of Mihail Sadoveanu and Octavian Goga), lingered in the station "from the cause of the difficulties of transport

Introduction and notes by Octavian O. Ghibu, Publishing House Romanian of Cultural Foundation, Bucharest, 1991, p. 146-147.

²⁰ Goga will completely change his attitude towards "Ardealul" in a little while.

on the CFR in wartime" . In those days, in Iasi, Ghibu, helped by I.G. Duca, the Minister of Public Instruction, obtained all available duplicates from the University Library. "For two days, together with the director of the University Library, G. Pascu, I took tens of thousands of duplicates by hand, choosing from them about ten thousand volumes, which I packed and went to Chisinau establishing a large public library there, later called the Chisinau University Library"²¹. Also at that time, Ghibu bought with his own money, "several thousand Alphabets, reading books, Histories, Geographies and Arithmetic books for primary schools - emptying the bookstores in Iași and carrying over the Prut as rich a «prey» as possible, which then allowed the teachers' courses to take place in relatively satisfactory conditions"²²

Ghibu's efforts in the realm of removing Bessarabian education from the Russian system and introducing it into the Romanian one - and this at a time when the province still had the status of a "governance", was a real tour de force. Here is one of the perennial truths presented by the Transylvanian pedagogue at the courses for teachers organized by the Romanian Cultural Society in the summer of 1917, in preparation for the opening of Romanian schools scheduled for the autumn of that year: "The Romanian language, as the main tool for developing national consciousness, is meant to understand History of which Bessarabian Romanians are a part". Under the title Bessarabia from 1812 onwards, the history course given to teachers by O. Ghibu included the lessons: Birth of the Romanian people; Life during the barbarian raids; The establishment of Muntenia and Moldova; Connections and battles with the Turks, Les and Hungarians; The most important voivodes of Muntenia and Moldavia; The reign of the Phanariots; Abduction of Bucovina; The revolution of Horia, Cloșca and Crișan in Transylvania; The annexation of Bessarabia to Russia; Tudor Vladimirescu's revolution; The union of the two Romanian countries, Muntenia and Moldova; Today's history of the Romanian people.

One important thing can be noted: a hundred years ago, the approach to the national history of all Romanians responded to some major commandments: the unitary presentation of the history of Romanians from all historical provinces with the emphasis on events of major interest; "Today's history" had in view the present situation of Bessarabia and the commands of the future.

Ghibu's efforts to remove on July 1, 1917 "Ardealul" from under the presses of the printing press with Latin letters or hit, as he himself

²¹ Onisifor Ghibu, *On the life's barricades...*, p. 238-239.

²² *Ibidem*.

repeatedly mentions, many and unexpected obstacles. However, in the summer of 1917, the "editing in Russian Slovene" of the magazine "Moldoveneasca School" and, in September, of the newspaper "Soldatul Moldovan" in Chisinau was successful. At the same time, with the support of the Romanian Headquarters, Octavian Goga published in Kiev, in Latin letters, "Great Romania"²³, subtitled "Foaie a voluntarilor români din Austro-Ungaria (Journal of Romanian Volunteers from Austria-Hungary)"²⁴.

This newspaper campaigned in its columns for the unity of the Romanian people, always bringing forward indisputable arguments of the action of Transylvanian mountaineers and Moldovans in the service of the same ideal - the unity of language, history, culture of the entire Romanian nation; in this context, personalities such as Gheorghe Șincai, Samuel Micu, and Petru Maior, Gh. Asachi, Gh. Lazăr, Eliade Rădulescu, Nicolae Bălcescu and their work and activity devoted to Romanian national interests were evoked. The article The National Unity of Romania, written by Gh. Pop (under the pseudonym of Gh. Pădure) emphasized that the entire activity of these luminaries of Romanian culture, their work, "written and spoken" was put "at the service of the Romanian national unity, because" national unity is the fundamental law of nature itself, and nothing opposed to nature can prevail"²⁵.

The situation in Bessarabia — with the status of a Russian governorate in the summer of 1917 — presented a series of characteristics that must be taken into account in order to understand the complexity of the political-social conjuncture in which the two camps faced each other: on the one hand, the one campaigning for the recovery the freedom of this Romanian province and bringing it alongside the Motherland, on the other hand, the retrograde, internal and external forces that opposed by all means the emancipation of Bessarabia and its break from the Russian conglomerate. Being a border province of the Empire, moreover, bordering

²³ Editor-in-chief was Sever Bocu (former editor of *Tribuna din Sibiu*) editors: Iosif Schiopul și Gh. Pop.

²⁴ "Foaia" moved in 1919 to Paris, with the subtitle "Foaia soldaților români din Franța și Italia" (apud Onisifor Ghibu, *On the barricades of life...*, p. 248). We learn from the news published by "Romania Mare" that on July 2, 1917, on the occasion of the commemoration of the death of voivode Stefan the Great (July 2, 1504), Metropolitan Veniamin of Kiev allowed the ceremony, in the Metropolitan Cathedral of this city, in the language Romanian, of the commemoration service of the voivode of Moldova by the Greek-Catholic Archpriest Valeriu Florian from Sibiu (Ibidem)

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

Romania, Bessarabia experienced a very harsh Russification regime, a stagnation of development on all levels, becoming the most backward governorate of the empire. The struggle fought by the national forces in Bessarabia for its detachment not only politically from the old imperial structures but also for the abandonment of old mentalities, of submission to Russia, of acceptance of its policy, was an action of great responsibility, especially when Romania had itself a situation of an unprecedented gravity: with a territory reduced to a small part of Moldova, where all the state authorities had taken refuge, including the Royal House, with an army under rebuilding, with the one million Russian soldiers stationed there, it was subjected of ultimate pressure from the Centrals for a separate exit from the war and the conclusion of an onerous peace.

In addition, the Russian Bolshevik forces were acting on the front in this small Romania for the removal of King Ferdinand and the annihilation of the legal authorities, while the Russian imperial army from the Romanian territory was retreating, looting, burning, terrorizing the population; as a result, Romania's support for Bessarabia was disguised in small-scale actions, actually being reduced to private actions. After the signing of the "peace" in Bucharest, the Marghiloman government, through censorship and other restrictive measures imposed, restricted the free expression of the Romanian media in Bessarabia. In the context created by the revolutionary movement in Russia, Bessarabian Romanian soldiers on all fronts supported a far-reaching action for political freedom and national rights. "Moldovan Committees" were organized everywhere: in Odesa, Yekaterinoslav, Novo-Gheorghievsk, Sevastopol and other localities, Odesa being the center of Moldavian military organizations. Moreover, the Odesa Committee, led by Anton Crihan and Nicolae Ciornei, organized, on April 18, the great gathering of Romanian soldiers who had their say regarding the political status of Bessarabia: the Moldavians "will demand that the Land of Bessarabia not to be governed as a subject country but as a free country".²⁶ "Slobozenia"²⁷ practically translated into freedom of governance in all areas without any interference from Russia. In the period that followed, the action of the Bessarabian soldiers intensified in the direction of supporting the political rights of Bessarabia. The manifesto launched on July 13 (old style) by the "Committee of the Bessarabian Soldiers

²⁶ The work of this Assembly, presided over by Cateli, Halippa, Pelivan, Păscăluță, an assembly attended by "some 10,000 soldiers" was reported in detail by "Cuvînt Moldovenesc", no. April 33/26, 1917 (old style). Next to Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania ... doc. no. 6. pp. 56-57, notes 1 and 2.

²⁷ "Slobozenia": Liberation - word of Slavic origin used in archaic Romanian.

on the Romanian Front", entitled Ten Commandments of the Moldavian Nation, is a document that should not be missing from any Romanian history textbook. The words "Don't forget..." stand in front of each of the ten commandments: "...that you are and must remain Moldovan; "... that you have to speak Romanian..."; "..never by your country..."; "... that in union lies strength..."; "... that you must be a true master in your country..."²⁸.

This position of the Bessarabian Romanian soldiers was important in the context of the events taking place at the time: the Ukrainian Rada from Kiev raised territorial claims over Bessarabia. On July 26 (old style) the Moldovan soldiers and officers from the Odesa military constituency addressed a vehement "Protest" to the Ukrainian Rada, published by "Cuvînt Moldovenesc" on August 2 (old style), from which we highlight some value judgments appropriate to the situation:

- "I categorically reject any possibility of annexation of Bessarabia to Ukraine and I consider any claim of the Ukrainians a usurpation"
- "...any attempt by the Central Rada to annex Bessarabia is categorically refused ...as imperialist, against the right of self-determination of the Moldovan People"
- "...the Rada's tendencies to expand Ukraine's borders at the expense of other nationalities deeply offended the entire Moldovan people"
- "...by official act / Rada/ to recognize the rights of autonomy of the Moldovan nation in the ethnic borders, which are determined by the geographical borders of Bessarabia and parts of the lands near the Dniester in the governorates of Kherson and Podolia inhabited mostly by Moldovans" so-called V.M.)

The above protest was presented to Rumcerod by Captain Catelli.

However, it should be noted that Bessarabia's free governance (in all areas) (autonomy) was seen only in the context of membership in the Russian Federation. In difficult political conditions, the printing press with Latin letters arrived in Chisinau and was installed in the City Hall Palace "in the main street of the city, on Bul. Alexander...". On this occasion, a "Festive Act" was signed in which it was stated:

²⁸ *Cuvînt Moldovenesc*, nr. 56/ 13 iulie 1917 (stil vechi). Apud op. cit., doc nr. 10, p. 63).

Today, on September 8, the year of the Lord 1917, it was inaugurated in the city of Chisinau and in the presence of those named below, TYPOGRAPHY OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE CULTURE OF THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE IN BASSARABIA. May this first Romanian printing house in this country become an inexhaustible source of national light for the Moldovans who have been in the dark for 105 years. May everything that will come out from under her presses, enlighten the minds, warm the hearts and strengthen the lives of the more than two million Romanians from beyond the Prut river and beyond the Dniester, making them the conscious sons of our nation so hard tried from the earliest times to the present moment... This document is the first product issued by the Printing Press of the Society for the Culture of the Romanian People in Bessarabia.

Chisinau, the Day of the Birth of the Holy Virgin Mary, September 8, 1917

This act of inauguration of the Typography, which will bring to light the much troubled history of Bessarabia in its period of national rebirth, bears the signatures of numerous personalities from all the Romanian provinces, such as: Pantelimon Halippa, Const. Partenie (editor of the newspaper "Cuvînt Moldovenesc"), Dr. Onisifor Ghibu, , Ovidiu Țopa, Ilie Ban (Cernăuți), etc.

On the same day of September 8, "Cuvînt Moldovenesc" published Ghibu's article, entitled *O zi mare pentru Moldoveni (A Great day for the Moldovans)*, in which the already established printing program was announced, focused on publishing school books in Romanian. "The Romanian letter is the letter of our nation - it was stated in the article. The most beautiful things in our language are written with this letter. From now on, with the help of the Romanian printing press, we will also be able to share in them and we will also be able to step forward like our brothers across the Prut and across the Carpathians"²⁹.

„Ardealul” and its mission

Only on October 1, 1917 did the first issue of "Ardeal" see the light of day. It was prepared and carried out by Onisifor Ghibu which, at the beginning, led to a lack of collaborators. In a short time, however, he was

²⁹Onisifor Ghibu wrote and published the history of this highly resonant action in Bessarabia in 1917, in "Romania Nouă" (*The New Romania*), no. 162-166 of September 9-15, 1918. See also *On Life's Barricades...*, p. 353.

joined by other Transylvanian refugees: Axente Baci, a teacher from Braşov, Ioan Mateiu from Sibiu. However, the material problem was unresolved. Vasile Stroescu supported the newspaper with 200 rubles a month but for a short period of time. The announcement of the publication of a newspaper in Romanian and with the Latin alphabet, however, had a great echo among Transylvanian refugees in Russia. Ghibu speaks with great emotion about the letters received from all over Russia announcing donations from Transylvanian refugees, many of them from parts of Sibiu. "The gesture of my "borders" from Crimea and the Caucasus had a double meaning: apart from their solidarity in a risky action, with a man of their own and a "country" - as they used to say in Transylvania - there was still in the middle and their national conscience awake, which culminated with the pan-Romanian idea expressed by Mihai Eminescu with the formula: From the Dniester to the Tisa"³⁰.

What strikes you from the very beginning when you browse "Ardealul" — the first Romanian-language newspaper with Latin letters published in Bessarabia one hundred and seventeen years ago, is the appeal to history. In each issue, on the first page, there is an illustration depicting an emblematic character from the national history with explanations that everyone can understand, maps of the Romanian countries in different periods. "Following the broad line of the entire nation — writes Ghibu in his Memories — «Transylvania» gave in each issue on its first page, an illustration with a subject from our history and national life and with explanations intended to educate to the Moldovans who did not yet know their national history".³¹

The first issue of the newspaper depicted Mihai the Brave accompanied by the explanation: "Mihai the Brave, Lord of Muntenia, Moldavia and Transylvania. Killed by the Hungarians, in 1601, on the Turzii plain." In number 2 of October 8, Ghibu's editorial titled Our Mother: Romania, is accompanied by the map of Greater Romania including all the Romanian provinces, including Bessarabia. The number 4 of "Ardealul" has a special meaning. It publishes the works of the first "Moldovan Congress of soldiers, sailors and officers from all over Russia" which took place in Chisinau on October 20-28 / November 3-11, 1917. The central point of the Congress was the autonomy of Bessarabia. The internal organization imposed by this statute provided for the creation "in the shortest possible time" of the Council of the Country of 120 deputies, 84 seats for Moldovans;

³⁰ Onisifor Ghibu, *On Life's Barricades ...*, p. 378.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 382.

"to give 10 seats (in addition to the 120) in the Council of the Country to the Moldavians from across the Dniester"³².

The decisions resulting from the Congress debates were entrusted to a Commission whose members were elected by the Congress; the mission of this commission was "the translation into life of all the decisions taken". On October 25/November 8, the Resolutions of the first Moldovan Military Congress were published³³.

For the then stage of the political evolution of the society in Bessarabia, the resolutions adopted by the Congress represent indisputable progress, even if the Bessarabian Romanian military did not understand "autonomy" then only within the democratic federal republic of Russia. This is clearly stated in Resolution I itself: Congress "recognizes that the most suitable form of government for Russia is the democratic Federative Republic. ...the central government in Petrograd no longer hinders the cultural progress of nations and the improvement of their economic condition" (the participants in the Congress were unaware of Prime Minister Kerensky's decision to ban the Congress!). The idea is repeated in Resolution II (on the autonomy of Bessarabia): The Congress "decided to declare the territorial and political autonomy of Bessarabia." For the defense of the rights and interests of the autonomy of Bessarabia, in addition to the temporal rule / of the Russian Federation, n.n. V.M./, to be

³² The convocation, on October 7 (old style), of this congress, by means of a telegram sent to the commanders of units on all fronts, also reached the knowledge of the government in Petrograd. On October 19, an order signed by Kerensky categorically forbade the holding of the congress and ordered the arrest of the telegram's signatories. Ion Inculeț, at that time assistant to the government commissioner, reports in his memoirs how things unfolded: "...about seven hundred Moldovan soldiers, officers, soldiers and sailors from all fronts arrived at the Congress. The Congress opened with great solemnity in the Diocesan Hall in Chisinau... On the eve, a telegram was received at the Governor's Commissariat, from Prime Minister Kerenski, with the most severe order, that no Moldavian Military Congress is authorized... This order of the first minister, I did not execute him and I did not show the telegram to anyone at the time in order not to discourage the congressmen" ("Generația Unirii" no. 12 of February 23, 1930. Apud Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania, ..p. 86 note no. 3).

³³ *Ardealul (Transylvania)*, Chisinau, year 1, no. 6 of November 5 and no. 7 of November 12, 1817; Moldovan word, no. 96 of November 1, 1917. (Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania Documents, doc. no. 19, p. 87-90. The debates of the Congress and the decisions adopted were reported extensively in the newspaper "Soldatul Moldovan", no. 8 of November 4 (new style), under the title Pay attention to the works of the Congress of Moldavian Soldiers, held in Chisinau, October 20-28, 1917 (old style).

a representative of the Moldovan nation". Resolutions III and IV refer to the organization of the army on the territory of Bessarabia. Resolution V contains two important issues: the establishment of the Country Council "as soon as possible", but it will be "temporary" until the establishment of the "Bessarabian founding assembly" (which was to be elected by vote). It is clearly emphasized in this Resolution: "Union with the capitalists is not desired". Resolution VI spoke of "land and colonization" in the terms we have already referred to. . Resolution VIII concerned the important issue of the "Nationalization in the shortest time" of schools, settlements and administrations in Bessarabia". It was spoken for the first time, namely in Decisions taken by a Congress, about the "establishment of Moldovan schools" in all Moldovan villages, about "national schools", about "teaching in the Moldavian language". The confusions and subjective meanings of the events of the present existing in the mentality of the Bessarabian society blocking the way to progress, to the complete liberation of the province from all the forces of the past, urged Onisifor Ghibu to use the columns of "Transylvania" to analyze and shed light on truths still unaccepted at the level of society, including among a large part of the intelligentsia. For example, in an article entitled Ardeleni and Bessarabians³⁴ from November 5, 1917, Ghibu shows that the war brought "...the Transylvanians and the Bessarabians as enemies on the battlefield, having to shoot each other with bullets; The Transylvanians for the sake of the Emperor in Vienna, the Bessarabians for the sake of the Tsar in Petrograd... here they felt that, although ``enemies", they were brothers and part of the same people. The article abounds in examples of this kind and the conclusion is: "Yes, from today on we are no longer fragments of a people, thrown by fate where she wanted, - from today on we are one people!" The article reproduces a letter received by the author from the teacher Grigore Bălan from Căprești commune, dated October 17 (old style), in which he said: "...In the present times, when Bessarabia, like a mother, gives birth to a new life, *Ardealul* you will be our teachers, very useful and helpful. At least *Ardealul* is printed specifically for Transylvanians, we Bessarabians hope that the life of Bessarabia and the national movement towards the light of the Moldovans will not be overlooked on the pages of your newspaper,,,"

The author of the article assures the teachers and teachers of all the support that will be given to them through the "Ardealul" newspaper: "With

³⁴*Ardealul (Transylvania)*, year I, no. 6 of November 5, 1917, Onisifor Ghibu, Ardeleni and Basarabeni (editorial) (article published in full in vol. Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania Documents..., doc. no. 21, p. 97-100).

the greatest joy we will give help especially to the Moldovan teachers who are now starting a new era in the life of our nation".³⁵

The idea of the unity of the Romanian nation through the knowledge of the historical past, through the understanding of the community of language, traditions, customs, was one of the essential concerns of Onisifor Ghibu, exposed in its multiple aspects in "Transylvania". Permanent columns such as News from Bucovina, News from Romania and others brought to the readers' attention events, actions, which concretely showed the unity of interests and aspirations of Romanians from all historical provinces. In the same issue of the newspaper of November 5, for example, in the column "News from Bucovina" a short foray into the recent history of Bucovina is made, with the emphasis on the refuge of a large number of Bucovina residents in Bessarabia and Russia; "Russia is full of Romanian bathers from Bucovina. There are also many intellectuals among them. Some of them lend a helping hand to the Moldovan brothers in the work of cultural awakening that started recently. At the teachers' courses in Chisinau, Balti and Soroca, several teachers and professors from Bucovina work hard. Also from Bucovina, a large number of Romanian books were recently brought to Chisinau", which were found at the bookstore that operated next to the newspaper "Ardealul"³⁶.

The situation in Transylvania, which is under Hungarian occupation, is addressed in a parallel analysis with the issue of autonomy. Two autonomies is the title of the article signed by O. Ghibu in the issue of November 12, 1917. Basically, the article chronicles the struggle for autonomy led by Transylvanian people over time and the reasons why this status was not obtained from the leaders of Hungary. "Only then did I understand - it is emphasized in the article - that autonomy is not demanded, but taken". Here the reference is clear: the decisions for the autonomy of Bessarabia and its application in all fields had been taken by the Moldavian Military Congress, a new force of Bessarabia; In the circumstances of the time, the liberation of Transylvania returned as the mission of Romania "who sacrificed himself for us"³⁷.

³⁵ În vara lui 1917 s-au desfășurat la Chișinău și alte orașe din Basarabia cursuri pentru învățători și profesori în cadrul cărora s-a pus accentul pe învățarea limbii române, pe însușirea cunoștințelor generale de istorie a Românilor și de literatură. Autorul scrisorii luase parte la aceste cursuri.

³⁶ „Ardealul (Transilvania)” nr. 6 din 5 noiembrie 1917.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, nr. 7 din 12 noiembrie 1917, articolul *Două autonomii*, de Onisifor Ghibu. Se referă pe larg la Corpul de voluntari ardeleni constituit pe teritoriul Rusiei

The opening of the works of the Council of the Country gives Onisifor Ghibu a retrospective look at the situation in Transylvania, a comparison with the new settlements in autonomous Bessarabia. Underlining the fact that the existence of the Council of the Country was also decided by the Congress of Moldovan Soldiers, the author of the editorial with the above title refers extensively to the situation of Transylvanian Romanians. "We not only could not acquire the autonomy of our country, but our predecessors could not even enter the Council (diet) of Transylvania". He recalls the self-indulgences to which he was subjected "the great fighter Inochentie Micu - a member of the Diet for a short period - who, with deep pain, said in this Council full of enemies, that the Romanian people are only spoken about when the Hungarian boyars want to put burdens on us on the country. In their anger, the Hungarians shouted that this worthy apostle of the Romanian nation should be thrown out of the window. For his manly fight, the bishop³⁸ Inochentie had to leave his seat and die away from his wretched people." The history of Transylvanian Romanians subjected to the discriminatory policy, abuses, and crimes of the Hungarian rule is presented in this article. "Today, at our house, it's worse than ever. Weep our parents and brothers under the blows of the Hungarian whip. Our hope, emphasizes Ghibu, is in the shield of mother Romania, which through its valiant soldiers and with the help of our volunteers from Russia, will get us out of the Hungarian hell and give us freedom in Greater Romania"³⁹.

This article is a true history lesson of the present with its connections in the past of sufferings and hopes of the Transylvanian Romanians and with the emphasis on the idea of the unity of the Romanian nation, of the idea of the role of the Motherland in the struggle for the realization of the national ideal of the Union.

Nicolae Iorga, himself an apostle of Romanianism during the difficult years of the war, led the same fight in Iași, for keeping the Romanians' national consciousness awake when the country was invaded by the Central Powers. The history lessons held in Iași at that time destroyed the myth about the superiority of the German "race" and culture, demonstrated the predatory character of the Austrian state, the anachronism of the dualist Austro-Hungarian state formation⁴⁰.

, din care făceau parte militarii români din armata austro-ungară căzuți prizonieri , care se aflau în lagăre rusești.

³⁸ According to original.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, no. 8 from November 19, 1917. Onisifor Ghibu, *Sfatul Țării*, edit. paper.

⁴⁰ See N. Iorga, German thought and deed, ten lessons learned in Iasi. Foreword and notes by Prof. Univ. Dr. Viorica Moisuc, Edition edited by Alexandrina Ioniță, Demiurg Publishing House, Iasi, 2015.

Involved in the fight that was taking place in Bessarabia for national revival and liberation, Nicolae Iorga did not hesitate to harshly criticize the Romanian state for its disinterest in Bessarabia, in general. In "Neamul Românesc" which appeared in Iassi at the time, he said:

The Romanian state did not spread any propaganda there, if only out of a sense of duty towards human beings who also speak the same language as the language of its citizens. Our educational institutions have not made any effort to attract to better schools ... these children without food of the same house".

He then emphasizes the role of Transylvanian refugees, of the "meritorious professor Onisifor Ghibu" for "great things to happen in Bessarabia"⁴¹.

The turning point that it represented in the history of the liberation of Bessarabia "the settlement of governance ... which settlement is established in the form of the Council of the Country" gave the opportunity to express aspirations for a future of justice and national renaissance. "The time has come to erase the shame of our parents" - said on the opening day of the work of the Council of the Country (November 21, 1917, old style), bishop Gavril of Achermanu⁴², adding: to give "all our strength to immediately acquire our rights"⁴³.

Invited to this festivity as a representative of the "Ardealul" newspaper, Onisifor Ghibu held a real history lesson with reference to the events that were taking place then in Bessarabia, announcing radical structural changes in the life of the Romanian community and the status of this historical Romanian province:

You have suffered for a hundred years - and now you see your hopes fulfilled. We have suffered for a thousand years and even today we still do not hear the great clock of eternal justice striking⁴⁴. For one

⁴¹ *Neamul Românesc*, Iassi, November 10, 1917. Apud Onisifor Ghibu, *On Life's Barricades*, ..., p. 381-382.

⁴² A council of 20 priests, including priests from Romania, from Transylvania and Bucovina, officiated in Romanian the Te-deum that preceded the opening of the works of the Council of the Country. The choir that participated in the religious service included singers from Bessarabia, Transylvania, Bucovina, and Moldova.

⁴³ *Ardealul (Transylvania)*, year I, no. 9 of November 26 / December 9, 1917, Reports on the works of the Country Council. The full text published in Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania Documents, doc. no. 24, pp. 105-135.

⁴⁴ According to the original doc.

thousand and eight hundred years...we have been fighting with the barbarian peoples, who destroyed everything and left us with only our lives. Our history is written only with blood and tears.

At the end of his speech, the speaker took a leap into the future by stating:

And today, when I speak in Chisinau in the Council of Bessarabia, my thoughts fly far across the Prut and across the Carpathians, stopping in the capital of our country, in Alba-Iulia, where the tricolor flag of our entire nation will have to rise victoriously! The hour of justice for all our nation must come!⁴⁵.

The emotion of Onisifor Ghibu and the other Transylvanians present at the opening of the work of the Council of the Country was also determined by the serious events that were taking place in Cluj at the time: several dozen Romanian intellectuals had been hanged for the "guilt" of wearing cockades with the Romanian tricolor flag!⁴⁶

The renaissance of Bessarabia took place at a time when Romania's situation had worsened, being on the verge of an open war with its former ally: in Iași, the Brătianu government, subject to ultimate pressure from the Centrals, betrayed by Russia which had made a pact with Germany and its allies, and the separate exit of Romania from the war and the conclusion of an armistice was imperatively demanded. On November 23, Brătianu communicated to Minister C. Diamandi, in Petrograd: "The allied governments did not realize our desperate situation even though they had been warned in advance. Now they discuss the need for an armistice and believe in the possibility of retreating to Russia"⁴⁷ at the very moment when we are forced to concentrate several divisions in Iași, where the Russian troops from the Socola station, in the middle of which Racovsky seems to be, threaten the city, announce a revolution in Romania and have taken control of the Ungheni line, where new maximalist contingents could

⁴⁵ *Ardealul (Transylvania)*, year I, no. 9 of November 26 / December 9, 1917, Reports on the works of the Country Council.

⁴⁶ „*Ardealul (Transilvania)*”, no. 9, November/December 9, Onisifor Ghibu, „*Sărbătoarea sărbătorilor (Feast of feasts)*”.

⁴⁷ The situation of total isolation of Romania had been communicated by Prime Minister Brătianu to the allied governments, which responded by predicting the withdrawal to Russia.

come". Brătianu feared the "imminence" of an open conflict with the Russian troops who were retreating in disorder from the Romanian-Russian front, looting, burning, terrorizing the population. "In any case, Brătianu added, we are obliged to think about the withdrawal of the Romanian army on the Prut river"⁴⁸. In such a context, the Declaration of the Council of the Country establishing the Autonomous Moldavian Democratic Republic, adopted on December 2/15, 1917, decision communicated on December 3 to the government of Petrograd, the Rada of Odesa, the Ural Republic and the Muslim Republic⁴⁹ clearly state that Bessarabia, proclaimed "Moldovean People's Republic", is "a member with equal rights in the Russian Democratic Federative Republic"; it was also stated that "the higher authority in Bessarabia belongs to the Council of the Country", the only body "with full powers" in this state.

The explanation, or rather the motivation expressed in this Declaration of December 2, 1917, regarding the necessity of adopting the above-mentioned decision is interesting: "The Russian Republic is in great danger - it was shown in the very first line of the document. Lack of mastery at the center and mismanagement⁵⁰ throughout the country, which is exhausted by the struggle with the enemy from without, it brings the whole republic to ruin. In this terrible moment, the only way of salvation for the Russian democratic republic is for **its people to unite and take their fate into their own hands, forming their national dominions, within the borders of the countries where they live**"(emphasis in the text). "On the strength of this foundation", of "rights won through the revolution", "supporting its historical past", Bessarabia declares itself "Moldovan Democratic Republic which will enter the composition of the Russian federal republic, as a participant with the same rights".⁵¹ Article 10 of the Declaration expresses a provision that gives rise to confusion: "Measures should be taken to immediately conclude peace without seizure of foreign lands and without war reparations, giving the people the right to decide

⁴⁸ Archives of the Library of the Romanian Academy (A. BAR), Fund XIV, file no. 1010, vol. I, Telegram f.n., Iasi, November 23 / December 6, signed Brătianu, to Minister C. Diamandi, Petrograd.

⁴⁹ Apud Ștefan Ciobanu, *Union of Bessarabia. Study and Documents regarding the national movement in Bessarabia in the years 1917-1918*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1929, p. 515; fully reproduced in *Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania...*, doc. n. 36, p. 166.

⁵⁰ According to original doc.

⁵¹ Cuvînt Moldovenesc, no. 110, dated December 6, 1917 (old style). Fully reproduced in *Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania...*, doc. no. 35, pp. 162-164.

their own destiny; peace must be concluded in agreement with the Companions and all the peoples of the Russian Federal Republic"⁵². In conclusion, the Declaration of December 2 called for "the decisive struggle together with all the people of the Republic of Moldova to fully support the Russian founding assembly Only in this way will we save our country and save our motherland from destruction to all - the great Russian Democratic Republic!"⁵³

This was the state of affairs in Bessarabia at the time when "revolutionary" Russia was coming out of the war separately, disregarding the obligations to its allies ("Comrades"), without giving up the territories occupied by force for hundreds of years to the tsarist power - which he had abolished -, at the same time causing great damage to his "ally" Romania - which he had committed, by official signature, to support in the war declared by the latter only to Austria-Hungary. And the "historical past" of Moldova between the Dniester and the Prut was far from representing a "ground" for Bessarabia remaining autonomous in the Russian conglomerate.

I did not find the text of this December 2 Declaration in the newspaper *Ardealul* (Transilvania). Instead, the article published by Ghibu in no. 11 of December 10 (old style) , entitled *A înviat Moldova*, is full of edifying meanings. The author refers to the time of Stephen the Great when

Moldova used to be great and invincible, and the name "Moldovan" was a name of honor. Where is Moldova, where is your brilliance, where is your power? Enemies have spoiled you; your sons are crying in three damned countries....For more than a hundred years, Bessarabia was under the yoke of tsarism, in the most terrible darkness and in the most terrible suffering. Her brothers across the Prut thought she was on the verge of death... After a hundred years of Russian slavery, the country, which since the kidnapping was unfairly called Bessarabia, remembers that it is, in fact, nothing but the old Moldova... Nationalizing itself in this way, the Republic of Moldova will live, first of all, in the power of the national idea⁵⁴.

Not by chance, in the first issue of the "*Ardealul* (Transilvania)" newspaper, the face of Mihai Viteazul was accompanied by the article "*La Alba-Iulia*" which included such a call: "Do not doubt, brothers, about the

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ardealul (Transilvania)*, Chisinau, year I, no. 11, december 10, 1917, Onisifor Ghibu, *A înviat Moldova (Moldova has risen)*.

end of the war. However long the war lasts, it will end for our good. There is no power in the world that can overcome the Allied Powers, of which we are also a part, and which will give us all who have suffered: GREAT ROMANIA!"

In his Memories, Onisifor Ghibu reveals an extremely interesting episode regarding the complexity of Romania's situation in those late days of 1917: shortly after the appearance in Chisinau of the newspaper "Ardealul (Transilvania)", Ghibu was in Iași looking for approvals for the demobilization of some teachers who were much needed in Bessarabia in order to start the new school year 1917-1918 (in Romanian, according to Romanian textbooks and Romanian curriculum); in these circumstances, together with I.G. Duca, Minister of Public Instruction in the Romanian government, had a meeting with Prime Minister I.I.C. Brătianu. The appearance of the newspaper in Romanian (with Latin letters) in Chisinau caused him great concern. Ghibu reports:

Your newspaper can be equivalent to erasing Romania from the map of Europe. You don't know what situation we are in with Russia! I'll tell you: if we have a piece of bread on the table, it comes to us from Russia! If we have weaponry with which to keep the front as much as possible, it comes to us from Russia! If we still have a medicine or a package of cotton wool in the hospitals for the wounded - all these come to us from Russia! We live today, to our misfortune, at the mercy of Russia, for all we had remained in the territory occupied by the Germans. And in such circumstances you come to Russia to publish a Romanian newspaper with which to inflame the Russians?⁵⁵

Indeed, the situation of Romania, abandoned by its main "ally" Russia, which became a dangerous enemy, without any support from France and England, subjected to the increasing pressures of the Central Powers, survived in disastrous conditions on all levels. In addition to what Brătianu said, let's also add that the Romanian warehouses on the territory of Russia, including armaments and other goods, were inaccessible due to the events on that territory. The concerns of the Prime Minister of Romania were fully justified. But Ghibu considered that, at that moment, Bessarabia, a constituent part of the new Russian Federation, benefited from a series of advantages resulting from the revolutionary transformations in Russia. ; she does not set Bessarabian goals that might arouse suspicion in the

⁵⁵ *On Life's barricades...*, p. 390-301.

Russians. It is, properly speaking, a Transylvanian newspaper, it says, right in its subtitle, openly, that it is a «weekly newspaper for Romanians studying in Russia»".

In his argumentation, Ghibu showed that "this modest newspaper of two small pages a week, whose appearance I made known to the Russian authorities, who took the fact into account" did not prejudice "even a little bit, the great Romanian cause whose humble I am a soldier". He suggested to Prime Minister Brătianu to "disassociate himself completely" from the activity of that newspaper as well as from the activity carried out in Bessarabia by Ghibu and his collaborators. Obviously, the orientation and attitude of the "Ardealul (Transilvania)" newspaper, as well as "The New Romania" was not at all neutral, being, in fact, on the most advanced barricade of the fight for the emancipation of Bessarabia and its union with the country. By the way. Ghibu himself appreciated after several years: "...no one could ever believe that it would be possible for Transylvania, with its national specifics that are so original, to end up being the only newspaper that appeared in Chisinau at that time"⁵⁶

But, the troubled times in which the Romanian political leaders acted then, pursuing the national interest as a priority in the whirlwind of totally hostile events, required not only verticality and courage. but also adaptability to rapid and unpredictable changes in the situation. The years 1916-1918 constituted, for that incomparable "generation of the Union", the supreme test on its way to victory.

The end of 1917 in Bessarabia represented a higher stage of the evolution of the process of national and political emancipation. Of particular interest to me seems to be the Resolution of the Assembly of Moldovan sailors from the Black Sea fleet and artillerymen from the fortress of Sevastopol adopted on December 13/26, 1917. This document shows a clear detachment of the Bessarabian Romanian soldiers from the different political affiliations with their specific interests and the declared attachment to the national interest. The wording from art. 2 of the Resolution is as clear as possible: We are neither Bolsheviks nor Mensheviks, but we are, first of all, sons of Bessarabia, which we love fervently like a mother and which we have to defend with all our strength which we have at hand", and in art. 5 stated:

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 234. Ghibu refers to the situation at the time of the publication of the newspaper when all the Russian printers in Chisinau were on strike, the only printers who worked in the Latin letterpress brought by Ghibu from the country did not stop their work.

We will defend the Council of the Country from any attempts to reduce its power, regardless of which side these attempts come from - from the right or the left; this defense will be in good understanding with the Moldavian garrison in Chisinau and will be carried to the point of using armed force... Down with anarchy and war between citizens! We will not in any way support these evil startups!⁵⁷

"Ardealul (Transylvania)" of December 17 (old style) published, in that troubled context of Bessarabia when the confrontation between the nationalist and Bolshevik currents manifested itself more and more violently, a document whose content and appearance could be considered "the book of visit" of the unimaginable state of backwardness in which the hundred-year occupation of Russia had brought the Romanians from Moldavia into a trap; we read in the "Ardealul (Transylvania)" newspaper of December 17/30, 1917:

The call of the Romanian soldiers from Tiraspol. A handful of brave soldiers from across the Dniester, realizing the spirit of the new times and wanting to place the lives of our Moldovan brothers there, on the foundations of national justice, called a meeting in Tiraspol on December 17, to show the country and to the world the wishes of over half a million Moldovans thrown by fate over the Dniester.

Here is the Call (**we preferred to render the version in Romanian, for the archaism, originality and beauty of the speech structure**):

Lumenare ‘ a. Cine – trebui nou (What we need)⁵⁸

Cap.1-î. Ni trebui nou școla sâ fii în limba norodului moldovineasc ca fii-ște care Moldovan sâ știi cel învață pi dânsu.

Cap.2-I. Învățatura afarâ di școlâ, biblioteca sâ fii pi limba moldovineasc ca sâ putem noi. Moldoveni anelumena mai bini în lume de cum an fost păr amu.

⁵⁷ Idem. On December 8, 1917 (old style), the Council of General Directors (Government) was established, with Pantelimon Erhan as president. The Director General of War, T.P. Cojocaru, by Order of the Day no. 1 of December 15 (old style) 1917 to the "armies of the Republic of Moldova" outlined the first assignments of the newly established Army (See Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania:..., doc. no. 43, p. 175.)

⁵⁸ According to original doc.

Cap.3-i. Rugăciunea în Sfânta Biserică să fie pe limba Norodului-Modovineasc ca fii-ștecare Bătrân sau Tânăr sâ-n-țeleag Ci fel de rugăciunie Merge Preutul pentru dânșii în-naintea lui Dunnezeu.

Cap.4-a. Trebuie ca să fii judecătorii, curat moldovani, ca judecata să fii în-țeleasă pintru Moldovanu Nostr, ca să puată fii-ște care cu gura lui a spune tuată durerea sa în judecată.

Cap.5-a. Doftorii trebuie să fii cu-știrea limbii moldovineasc. Ca să puat el înțeleje ceea ci iaspune bolnavul Moldovan.

Cap.6-a. Noi moldovanii nam fost învățată pân amu pentru că niau fost oprită deșteptarea șâ lumenarea Neamului Nostr în limba noastră moldovineascî.

Cileni Comitetului de organizații: Praporgic Bulei, soldat Jaloba, Grajdandin Durbai, Praporgic Maloman, Belinoopred Dumean”.

(Chapter 1. We need a new school to be in the language of the Moldovan people, as a Moldovan should know who learns it himself.

Chapter 2. Learning outside of school, the library should be in the Moldovan language so that we can. Moldavians are better in the world than before.

Chapter 3. The prayer in the Holy Church to be in the language of the People - Modovineasc as a son-in-law Old or Young as a wise man What kind of prayer Goes the Price for them before Dunnezeu.

Chapter 4. You need to be the judges, pure Moldovans, so that the judgment is understood by our Moldovan, so that there is no one who can tell his pain in court with his mouth.

Chapter 5. Doctors must know the Moldovan language. So that he could understand what the sick Moldovan was saying.

Chapter 6. We Moldovans were not taught until we learned because the awakening and illumination of our Nation in our Moldavian language was not stopped.

To the Committee of Organizations: Ensign Bulei, soldier Jaloba, Grajdandin Durbai, Ensign Maloman, Belinoopred Dumean)⁵⁹.

And the Romanians from Bukovina formed in those days the National Society of Romanians from Ukraine - announced "Ardealul (Transylvania)" in the issue published on Christmas Eve: the article titled "Disappointment" included the Declaration of the president of the society, Ion Grecul, in which it was said:

In these times of great turmoil, when only the most harmonious cooperation of Romanians everywhere can save our nation from being

⁵⁹ Transcript from *Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania...*, doc. nr. 44, p. 177-179.

overwhelmed by foreignism and unite it in one body⁶⁰ strong, we, the Romanians living in Ukraine, also formed a society called "Despettarea", a national society of Romanians, based in Kiev.

The purpose of our society is: The national awakening of the Romanian people in Ukraine in political, economic and cultural terms, as well as the propagation of national principles with all possible legal means in all social strata of the Romanian people...⁶¹.

In the given context, Onisifor Ghibu re-knots the thread of the history of Moldovan Romanians, recalling heroic and sacrificial moments of Moldova's past when the "Upper Country" had been conquered.

December 24 was also Christmas Eve of that year of great trials - 1917. The editorial signed by Ghibu, with the title Our Christmas has not arrived, expressed the whole tragedy of the Romanian people at that time: The birth of the Savior "is the celebration of peace... the author wrote. But the oppressed and the slaves weep in this holy night. Only national freedom can bring them peace. Our nation has been thirsting for her for hundreds of years, but she didn't have a share! The whole life of the Romanians took place under the sign of the fight for freedom...". Examples of the struggle for freedom from the older and newer history of the Romanians support these statements. Archimandrite Gurie's speech addressed to Bessarabian Romanians during the great celebration and Octavian Goga's patriotic poems complete the contents of this issue of the newspaper whose message was addressed to all Romanians.⁶²

The autonomy of the Moldavian Republic within the Russian Federation, declared and confirmed under the signature of the leaders of this state, was far from ensuring the leadership of Soviet Russia from maintaining its dominance over the former government of Bessarabia. The Bolshevik military intervention was prompt and violent, extending, as is known, to Romania as well - in the perspective of occupying and erasing this state from the map of Europe. The Romanian resistance to the terrorist actions in Iași and throughout the territory of what Romania represented at the time, the annihilation of coup attempts and the liberation of that territory from armed Bolshevik gangs, hardened Bolshevik terrorism in Bessarabia, where the army of the Republic was at the stage of beginning of the organization, and the troops of the former Russian army remaining under the command of

⁶⁰ Stem. According to the original doc.

⁶¹ *Ardealul (Transilvania)*, year I, no. 13, din December 24, 1917.

⁶² *Idem*.

General Scerbacev tried, without success, to stop the actions of the invading Red Army. At the same time, the Rumcerod from Odesa exerted increasing pressure, in different ways, to obtain the annexation of Bessarabia to Ukraine.

The newspapers that appeared in Chisinau published news about the abuses of Russian soldiers in the villages and cities of Bessarabia⁶³. Under these conditions, the Council of the Country empowered the Council of General Directors to proceed urgently "as it deems appropriate" to restore order. As is known, the Romanian government responded to the request. On January 1, 1918, the Council of Ministers decided the entry of the Romanian army into Bessarabia, the official announcement being published only on January 12. The special edition of January 13 of the newspaper "Ardealul (Transilvania)" was entirely devoted to the entry of the Romanian Army into Chisinau; the special edition, printed in 20,000 copies, was handed to General Broșteanu and his soldiers.

Losing ground in front of the Romanian army that had already arrived near Chisinau, the chief of staff of the Red Army here, Nastarum Kaabac, wrote on January 13 to the Odessa Soviet: "The situation is serious. The Romanians, seated in a semicircle, are 20-25 versts from the Bender-Chisinau and Ungheni-Chisinau lines... The Moldovan committee requested the evacuation of the Frontotdel fighting against the Romanians... The Council of the Country does not give in. We are thinking of liquidating today, tomorrow the Country Council and the Directorate. Caminski left the command today and without handing it over to anyone, he left. We will oppose it to the extreme and take decisive measures. We evacuate the warehouses with assets. In Bender we leave an order of miners. By leaving, we will destroy the iron road. For the defense of Bender, where armed forces are concentrated, a railroad battalion that can be counted on is coming from Odessa."⁶⁴

⁶³ "Soldatul Moldovan/Moldovan soldier" from January 1, 1918 (new style), the article "Great new orders in Bessarabia"; Onisifor Ghibu published in "Ardealul (Transilvania)", year II, no. 2 of January 4, 1918 (new style), the article A country of sacrific- Romania, in which he praised the Romanian soldier who defended his ancestral land at the cost of his life and referred extensively to the betrayal of the Russian "ally", to the terrorist actions of the Bolsheviks both on the territory of Romania and Bessarabia.

⁶⁴ *Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (Arh. MAE)*, Fond 71 /URSS, vol. 133, f. 67-68. (original in Russian). Telegram no. 10615. Signed by Naștarum Kaabac, Chisinau, January 13, 1918, to The Soviet of Odessa. Cf. *Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania...*, doc. nr.51, p.188-189; Dr. P. Cazacu, , *Moldova dintre Prut și Nistru 1812-1918*, Iași. f.a. p. 270.

The force policy of Soviet Russia in Bessarabia in order to annihilate the national liberation movement, a movement with a predictable end - the union with the motherland - simultaneously extended to the relations with Romania. On December 16/29, the Soviet Power in Petrograd handed Minister C. Diamandi an accusatory Note to the Romanian government accusing him of "criminal" action for the annihilation of the coup attempt in Iasi, for the annihilation of the destabilizing actions carried out by the Russian army in different localities (Roman, Pașcani, Fălticeni, Dorohoi, etc.), threatening that "Soviet power will not insist on taking the harshest measures against Romanian counter-revolutionary traitors". The threats immediately materialized in the ultimatum sent to the Romanian Government on December 31, 1917 - a declaration of war, signed by V. Ulianov, N. Krîlenko, N. Podvoiski, with the arrest - based on an order signed by Lenin, of the Romanian minister C. Diamandi and his imprisonment in Petropavlovsk. All this culminated, on the same day of January 13, 1918, with the unilateral breaking of diplomatic relations with Romania, the expulsion of the Romanian diplomatic corps from Russia and, as is known, with the confiscation, without no justification, of the Romanian Treasury deposited for "keeping" at the Kremlin in 1916-1917⁶⁵.

In Bessarabia, however, the Romanian army had restored order, the Council of the Country and the Council of General Directors had resumed their activity. On January 16, "Ardealul (Transilvania)" published the telegram sent by the Romanian Government's Country Council to Iași on January 15/28, in which it was said: "Our fraternal feelings towards Romania are all the more alive, as her troops are today in our country gave us a strong help to ensure our life as a new and independent state"⁶⁶ (the Declaration of Independence had not yet been adopted).

It is known that the entry of the Romanian army into Bessarabia, at the express request of the State Council under known conditions, caused negative reactions from the Russian and Ukrainian Bolshevik forces that had representatives in the State Council, confusion on the part of the population under the influence of Russian propaganda. On January 6 (new style), the Motion of the representatives of the Russian socialist parties in the Country Council expressed the protest against the request for military aid from

⁶⁵ *Archives MAE, Fond 71, URSS, , vol. 33, f. 71-72 . Decision of The People Commissioners , Petrograd. January. 13/26, 1918. Cf. Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania ..., doc. nr. 52, p. 189-190.*

⁶⁶ "Ardealul (Transilvania)", an. II, nr. 5 din 16/29 ianuarie 1918.

Romania and demanded imperatively that the Country Council and the Council of General Directors "categorically protest against the entry of Romanian troops into the territory of the Republic of Moldova and to address the Ukrainian Republic, which will give us its contest through military force and help at the same time..." Forces hostile to the democratic evolution of the Republic of Moldova feared that "the entry of Romanian armies into the territory of Bessarabia may be the first step for the occupation her and for her removal, in fact, from the bosom of the Russian Republic..."⁶⁷.

In the extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Country on January 15/28, 1918, during which the solemn reception of General Ernest Broșteanu took place, President Ion Inculeț gave clarifications regarding the purpose of the entry of the Romanian army into Bessarabia: "They had no political purpose . You must understand that as soon as the Bolsheviks seized the iron road, the Romanian troops were put in the greatest danger. The Romanians could no longer take their fodder, bread, and ammunition from here. ..this is why they had to take this step, to bind their front with their back, to prevent their telegrams from being intercepted even further, their bread to be scattered and looted... They guaranteed us together with France that they do not pursue any political goal"⁶⁸.

Responding to Ion Inculeț's message, General E. Broșteanu pointed out several issues of interest for that moment: "I must declare to you that Romania is in too difficult a situation and that conflicts and wars of conquest

⁶⁷ Apud P. Cazacu, *op. cit.*, p. 267. Cf. *Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania...*, doc. nr. 48. p. 183. The Moldovan Block, the Peasant Group, representatives of the minorities spoke against this Motion. As a result, the Russian socialists withdraw from the Council of the Country giving a Declaration by which they demanded 1/ Union with the Russian revolution, 2/ the reduction of the number of Moldovans in the Council of the Country, 3/ the withdrawal of the Romanian "tsarist" army, etc.

⁶⁸ On January 16/28, the French minister in Iași, Count de Saint-Aulaire sent a note to the French consul in Chișinău, Sarret, in which it is stated: The Council of General Directors requested "the receipt of a written guarantee, both from us and from our allies, in regarding specifying the objective of the arrival of the Romanian troops in Bessarabia. ...The Ministers of the Allied Powers and I myself are authorized to officially declare to you that the entry of Romanian troops into Bessarabia is a purely military measure, with the objective of ensuring the normal functioning of the rear of the Russian-Romanian front, according to the rules established for all belligerent states. In this way, the entry of Romanian troops into Bessarabia will have no influence either on the current political situation in Bessarabia, or on the fate of this country in the future." Signed, French Minister in Romania, Saint-Aulaire. This note was read in the meeting of the Council of States on January 22/February 3, 1918. (Apud P. Cazacu, *op.cit.*, p. 280). Cf. *Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania...* doc. no. 55, p. 193.

cannot be thought of."- a stated the general and continued: "You have decided to create a republic but you have no powers of your own. Every hour, looting and murders are taking place on the territory of the republic and you cannot prevent them. ...At the creation of the republic, force is needed to guarantee the economic and financial life for the formation of the young State; no government without organized force can accomplish the problems that fall upon it ... Create your life as you think and no one will interfere in it". As for the objectives of the Romanian army, the general specified that "the only purpose for which the army was sent here" was "the protection of warehouses, transports and iron roads" which were looted, devastated, endangering the food of the population and the army.

Issues related to the armed confrontations with the Bolsheviks, the coup attempts in Romania, the terrorist actions of the Bolshevik armed groups on the territory of Bessarabia, the bellicose declarations of the Soviet Power towards Romania made from Petrograd on January 13 with the breaking of diplomatic relations were carefully avoided. .

The times were extremely complicated, the danger of Russian military interventions not only in Bessarabia but also in Romania was very real. Added to all this were Ukraine's claims to annex Bessarabia and to keep Northern Moldova (Bucovina).

(To be continued)