"ARDEALUL" – "ROMÂNIA", CHISINAU, 1917-1918 THE INVOLVEMENT OF THIS PUBLICATION IN THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION AND UNION. THE ROLE OF ONISIFOR GHIBU

(II – Continued from ISSUE 7)

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"România Nouă" continues the activity of the newspaper "Ardealul (Transilvania)".

In the context shown, the refugees in Russia from Austria and Hungary organized themselves politically for the national liberation struggle. A Committee of Nationalities from Austria-Hungary had been established which collaborated with the grouping of Transylvanians and Bucovinians from Odesa around Octavian Goga. On January 2, 1918, Onisifor Ghibu, present in Odesa, convened, together with Goga, a group of Transylvanian, Bukovinian, refugees from the region and laid the foundations, then, of the National Committee of Romanians subjugated from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; president was elected G. Baiculescu, former mayor of Brașov, and elected members, dr. G. Mețianu, dr. Ion Nistor, O. Goga, Dr. O Ghibu, O.C. Tăzlăoanu, Sever Bocu, M Popovici.

The adopted program provided, among other things: "live and intense propaganda for and until the complete solution of the Romanian national question"; the organization in Stockholm and Lausanne of some "Special Offices" that will collaborate with the already existing ones of the oppressed nationalities in Austria-Hungary for "the creation of a common battle front of all Romanians in order to destroy the dualist state"; the formation of a "new army of Transylvanian and Bucovina volunteers from the ranks of our prisoners in Italy" (Mihai Popovici, a member of the Committee, was delegated to go to Italy for this purpose); the members in France and the USA of the Committee "will act through the Romanian press there to

maintain in the bodies of Romanian volunteers full faith in the justice and victory of the cause for which they are fighting"[1].

In those days when the Bolshevik gangs were looting and terrorizing autonomous Bessarabia, the well-known tragic episode took place in the Chisinau train station where, on January 6, the 1000 Transylvanian volunteers arrived. Greeted by the Bolsheviks with bullets, they were disarmed and imprisoned; on January 13 they were released by the Romanian army.

In these circumstances, when in Bessarabia there were harsh confrontations between the national forces and the Russian and Ukrainian Bolsheviks, "Ardealul (Transylvania)" became a daily newspaper under the name "România Nouă", a propaganda organ for the Political Union of all Romanians. It comes out every working day." Director, Dr. Onisifor Ghibu. The management of the new Romanian newspaper was ensured by an Editorial Committee made up of Transylvanians, Bessarabians, Bukovinians, citizens of the Old Kingdom, Macedonians, and Timocians. It is significant that the first issue of the newspaper publishes a document of major importance for the history of that year of grace, 1918: the Chisinau Declaration of Romanian intellectuals from all territories inhabited by Romanians, considered to be the First Declaration of Union of all Romanians. The ideas - strength of this document elaborated by personalities of the Romanian culture a century ago have a strong current resonance.

"...Our people, deprived of a political union, have been condemned to eternal humiliation and oppression, and if they do not unite at least now, their future will be even more painful than the past full of tears and sobs - it was shown at the very beginning of this Declaration. Only the lost and sold out do not want to understand this and insist that our ancient lands remain in the hands of foreigners from now on. ... Led by these views, the Romanian refugees gathered around the "Ardealul" newspaper, joining hands with the youth of Bessarabia, considered that the time had come to enter into open struggle for the political union of all Romanians in one state... Starting with today, when all Romanians must celebrate the memory of the first union, accomplished in 1859 between two Romanian countries, new , the lowest ranked, we no longer count: Transylvanians, Bessarabians, Bucovinians, etc. d., and we no longer consider ourselves only as sons of the same people, but as citizens of the same Romanian unitary state, as citizens of the New Romania of all Romanians..." A

[1] For further details see Onisifor Ghibu, *Pe Baricadele vieții…,* p. 496-498.

significant appeal to the Bessarabians was included in the document : "...if until now it could mean a danger for someone to fight in Bessarabia for the unification of the nation, from here on, having the shield of the Romanian army, it would be a betrayal (sale) if the Bessarabians did not understand their highest national duty. The fear of strangers must disappear once and for all!" At the end of the Declaration, a solemn commitment was made: "For the realization of this Romania we will work, for its realization we will live, for its realization we will die if necessary".

This Declaration coincided with the historic Decision of the Council of the Country proclaiming the independence of the Republic of Moldova[2].

The progress of the works, the speeches given, the debates that took place, reported in "New Romania", highlighted the fact that "Proclaiming non-attachment is a political requirement of the time, because the Republic of Moldova can no longer expect anyone to arrange its life." Announcing the program of economic and social reforms, the Declaration of January 24 also referred to the importance of the presence of the Romanian army on the land of Bessarabia: "their presence on our land helps to establish order in the country...all the rumors, such as that the Romanians have come to take over our country and rule us, do not match the truth...the Romanian troops do not threaten our independence, freedom and the rights won through the revolution". It is worth noting that in the speeches given by the deputies in the meeting of the Council of the Country, the idea of uniting all Romanians in one state was emphasized. Recounting the celebration of the Proclamation of Independence, the "România Nouă" newspaper included the following comment: "...From now on, our nation has concretely begun its work of integration. We all have the hope that we will reach the days when our country will truly stretch from the Dniester to the Tisa". It is symptomatic that all the speeches given on this occasion "...talked about the unification of the nation and the idea of Latinity". On January 25, the newspaper published the telegram addressed by the Council of the Land to King Ferdinand "of all Romanians", accompanied by the following text: "New Romania Newspaper, published in Chisinau on January 25, under the leadership of a committee made up of Romanians from all countries, pays

[2] *„România Nouă ”* , no. 9 from January 27, 1918; *„Cuvînt Moldovenesc”,* no. 10 from January 29, 1918. Cf. *Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania …,* doc. no. 61, p. 201-203.

you respectful tributes on the occasion of this day, showing its firm belief that soon we will be allowed to celebrate the day of the union of all Romanians in a new Romania, under the wise guidance of Your Majesty. On behalf of the committee. Dr. Onisifor Ghibu[3].

The evolution of the events in Bessarabia in the days of December 1917 - January 1918, which attested to the perspective of their orientation towards the definitive break with the Russian federal conglomerate and the union with Romania, provoked harsh reactions from the Ukrainian Bolshevik authorities who were betting on the profit that could be obtained from the situation of an unprecedented severity in Romania, on the one hand, from the weakness of the Republic of Moldova - autonomous or independent - but which could not face the terrorism of the gangs alone armed Bolsheviks, the influence of anti-Romanian propaganda on an important part of Bessarabian society. Consequently, on January 23/February 5, the Central Executive Committee of the Rumcerod in Odesa, complaining to the diplomatic representatives of the Allied and Associated Powers accredited in Romania about the situation in Bessarabia following the "occupation" of the province by the Romanian army, requested the creation of a mixed commission made up of their representatives, the Rumcerod, the Military Mission and the Romanian Consulate in Odessa; this "will travel to the site to study all the events that took place in Bessarabia and on the territory of the Russian front, after which the representatives of Rumcerod and the neutral consulates will go to the Headquarters of the Romanian Government to communicate to it the minutes of the above-mentioned commission and to conduct official negotiations on the occupation of Bessarabia by Romanian troops as well as on the circumstances in which this occupation took place"[4]. Three days later, the Italian minister in

[3] „România Nouă", from January 25, 1918. Cf. Onisifor Ghibu, *Pe Baricadele vieții…p. 521.*

The newspaper also reported the concert given "in honor of the anniversary of the union of the Principalities" by the Cultural Society of Romanians from Bessarabia, when, Ghibu wrote, patriotic songs were sung, poems written by Mihai Eminescu, Octavian Goga were recited. In Iași, Mihail Sadoveanu, in the substantive article of the "România" newspaper of January 31, wrote about the celebrations organized in Chisinau on the occasion of January 24 by the "România Nouă" newspaper (Idem, p. 521-522).

[4] ABAR, Fund XIV, file 1010, vol. 2, f. 5-7 (original in French). Telegram f.n. Odessa, sent by the consul general of Italy, Dévisart, to the Italian legation in Iasi to be communicated to the ministers of the Allied Powers accredited in Romania.: contains the Note of the Executive Committee of the Rumcerod, signed by

Iasi, Fasciotti, communicated to Consul Dévisart in Odessa, the acceptance, in principle, by the Allied Powers of Rumcerod's proposals; The Romanian government agreed that three of its representatives, along with three representatives of Rumcerod and three representatives of the Allied Powers, would constitute a "commission of inquiry to investigate the complaints regarding the events that took place on Romanian territory"[5] .

As it turns out, the object of the commission of "investigation" would have been according to the Romanian point of view, completely different from the one supported by Rumcerod. But the Russian and Ukrainian anti-Romanian Bolshevik abuses continued in even more aggressive forms. The documents of those days contain data and facts of extreme gravity. For example, of special interest is the confidential and personal Report of January 21, 1918 sent to the Prime Minister I.I.C. Brătianu of the Munitions Directorate, regarding the events that took place in Odesa - where there were many Romanian refugees, including members of the Parliament, personnel serving the Romanian ships sheltered in the port of Odesa, employees of Romanian enterprises evacuated to the area, soldiers, consular employees. The food and armament warehouses were confiscated, the means of private transport and of the Romanian state were requisitioned, etc.[6] On January 9, the maximalist gangs "that became aggressive" were

Judovski, the president of the Rumcerod, Terțiske, the president of the International Section, Hristov, secretary, addressed to Dévisart, the consul of Italy and dean of the consuls of the Allied Powers in Odessa. The note was sent to Iași accompanied by the following text: "Considering the seriousness of the situation in Odessa and especially the dangers that threaten the Romanian Consulate, the undersigned consuls, through their dean, ask the Italian Legation to have the kindness to transmit this telegram to the ministers of the Allied Forces in Iași and help them so that, in the shortest possible time, they can give an answer to the Note received from Rumcerod." Signed: Dévisart, Consul General of Italy, Grecianu, Consul General of Romania, Rapsonbel, Consul General of Greece, Rey, Consul General of the United States, Iserovitch, Consul General of Serbia, Vantier, Consul General of France, Landon Gerart, Consul General of Great Britain. Cf. Bessarabia, Bucovina, Transylvania..., doc. no. 59, p. 197-199.

[5] Idem, locc. cit., f. 9 (original in French), Telegram f. n. Iasi, January 26/February 8, 1918 signed Fasciotti, to the Italian Consul in Odessa, Dévisart, reply to the latter's telegram of January 23/February 5, 1918.

[6] A. BAR, Fund XIV, vol. II, file no. 656, f. 28-31. Confidential, personal report, no. 25 of 29. I. 1918 of the Central Directorate of Munitions to I.I. C. Brătianu, signed Director General, ss. I live Vintilă Brătianu notes on the first page of this document: "Report received by Mr. Iunian deputy. It will be communicated in copy to the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the

arrested, Commander Pantazi, Captain Rosetti, Senators Cantili and Stavri Brătianu, confiscating two cars on that occasion; in the Razdelnaia station, the Transylvanian courier officers coming from Kiev, with all the mail they were carrying, were arrested"; following the protest of the consular corps, Commander Pantazi and Captain Rosetti were released. On January 10, the Romanian-Ukrainian joint commission that had been set up to investigate the action of the Romanian army in Bessarabia, was brought from Chisinau to Odesa, and the Romanian officers Colonel Ghenădescu and Captain Lukasievici were arrested and kept on the ship "Sinope". On this occasion "the fund of almost two million lei was confiscated." Against a bail of 50,000 rubles, a group of arrestees was released, including Captain Rosetti - accused of espionage - and Major Protopopescu, the commander of the Aviation School "who had been arrested the day before while going to work". On January 13, street fighting began in Odessa, between "the maximalist and Ukrainian troops, who wanted to take control of the city" (Odesa).

The context was favorable for these abuses, because in Petrograd, the Supreme Soviet had decided to sever diplomatic relations with Romania, arrested the Romanian diplomatic corps and confiscated all the country's Treasury entrusted to the Russian "ally". Actions were carried out in Odesa, the purpose of which was not only simple robbery, but the annihilation of any possibilities of the former Romanian ally to survive in the conditions in which it was, using the goods that were still stored on Russian territory. Under the Bolshevik terror, "our posts everywhere were disarmed, their weapons were confiscated, the ammunition, weapons, sanitary depots, warehouses and wagons in the port were attacked... the Romanian Consulate was searched... The loaded barges in the port, the aviation park, the ship «Curator» which had arrived from Kherson with the parliamentarians, and our warehouses in Zastava and Odessa. In all of this, their sentinels were placed, while ours moved away". Also then, 30 Ford cars were confiscated. And the robberies continued. 18 wagons were loaded with ammunition and weapons from the Romanian warehouses in Karlovka "which they sent to Moscow, saying that the entire contents of the warehouses in Karlovka and Selestina will be shipped to Moscow and Petrograd". The robberies and abuses of the Bolshevik authorities in Odessa continued. On January 20, director general Vivescu together with generals Crăiniceanu, Cociaș and Cernescu addressed a Note to Rumcerod requesting the release of the arrested

Interior, for aknowledge". Signed: ss. V. Brătianu. (cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transilvania..., doc. no. 63, p. 207).

Romanians and the restitution of confiscated goods. Rumcerod conditioned everything on the withdrawal of the Romanian army from Bessarabia; in the following days the biggest campaign of reprisals was unleashed:

> *arresting from their homes a large part of the parliamentarians and almost 40 officers from the various services in Odesa ... they occupied the offices of the Supply and Transport Commission, closing all the service personnel together with the officers, leaving only the offices of the French officers open ... Today, January 21, addressing us again to Rumcerod, he justified the arrests by the mistrust and fear they had following the news that the Romanian army, crossing the Dniester, was looking to advance towards Odesa.* [7]

The situation continued to deteriorate at the official level as a result of the strengthening of the unionist trend in Bessarabia, but also of the ever closer ties between the officials in Bessarabia and the government in Iași. When "România Nouă" published the Declaration of the teaching staff in primary education in Chisinau County, which expressed the desire for "unification of the entire Romanian nation"[8] , The Kiev Soviet addressed a five-point ultimatum to the Romanian Government with the request that it "give a categorical order to the Romanian troops that occupied the territory of the Russian Federal Republic [9]

> *to withdraw to Romania's borders", specifying in point 5: "I allow 48 hours from the moment of your receipt of this request for the response of the Government from Iași regarding the withdrawal of Romanian troops to your garrisons. Failure to receive an affirmative response from your Government will attract the immediate opening of vigorous military action from the "Russian Revolutionary Army".* [10]

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[7] Ibid. After repeated protests and interventions by French diplomats, Rumcerod released the parliamentarians and the officers of the Commission, detaining the aviation officers and the artillerymen in the port of Odesa, at the same time asking for "assurances from the Romanian government that their demands will be satisfied" - that is, the withdrawal of the Romanian army from Bessarabia.

[8] "New Romania", year II, no. 12 of February 2/15, 1918, Declaration of the primary education teaching staff in the Chisinau Region, signed: President of the Chisinau Region Teachers' Union, Podlesnâi, Secretary, Popescu. See also "Cuvînt Moldovenesc," no. 14 of February 7, 1918.

[9] It was the territory of Bessarabia, considered by the Bolsheviks as "Russian territory".

[10] Arch. MAE, Fund 71 / USSR, vol 133, f. 288-289, Kiev, February 2/15, 1918, Ultimatum addressed to the Romanian Government, Iasi, signed Supreme

According to some old traditions, the Russian expansionist plans did not even take into account the conditions expressed in the documents that belonged to them. On February 3 (old style), the Russian General Weber arrived in Chisinau with "the task of forming Russian armies on the territory of our Republic - wrote the President of the Council of General Directors, Ciuhureanu, to General Averescu, the head of the Romanian Government, in Iași - and to requisition the warehouses of all categories that the Russian armies left on our territory during their retreat"[11]. Consequently, Averescu was requested "to order the Command of the Romanian troops in Chisinau to give us the competition in case of need to safeguard our great interests." This request was also made to General Prezan, the head of the Romanian General Staff. The situation being serious, an answer was expected from Iasi the very next day, February 4 [12]. Averescu's answer is dated February 8/21 and has 4 points. Averescu's idea was that Muraview's attitude was due to some "misunderstandings", because, the Romanian Prime Minister explained, "Romanian troops entered Bessarabia, following the formal request of the Government of the Republic of Moldova" (art. 1), Their purpose *it is exclusively to guarantee the security of the military warehouses we have in Bessarabia and to ensure normal traffic on the railways in Bessarabia!" (art. 2). In conclusion, stated Averescu's answer, "the aggressive attitude shown by the higher authorities in Kiev towards Romania is not justified"* [13].

On the same day - February 8/21, 1918 - Fasciotti, the Italian minister (dean of the diplomatic corps accredited in Romania), sent Dévisart, in Odessa, nine telegrams with identical text to be communicated to all the consuls of the Allied and Associated Powers who were there. It was the

Commander ss. Muraview, Chief of Staff, ss. Smirnov. Transmitted to the Romanian government by General Coandă.

[11] Through a previous Decision, the Council of General Directors decided that all Russian deposits remaining on the territory of Bessarabia should become the property of the state. It also banned the formation of Russian troops on its territory.

[12] A. BAR, Fond XIV, , vol II, file 1010, f. 7, Deciphered Telegram, Cipher Directorate of the MAE, Division 11, to Mr. General Averescu, February 16, 1918. The President of the Council of General Directors of the Moldavian Republic to the President of the Romanian Government, Iași.

[13] Idem, f.18 (the original in French), Telegram f.n., Iași, February 8/21, Averescu to General Coandă in Kiev. To be communicated to Muraview. Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania, doc. no. 69, p. 217.

firm support of the Romanian Government by all Allies regarding its position towards the Russian "ultimatum" signed by Muraview on February 2/15.

> *We must protest vigorously against the attitude adopted by Rumcerod which takes no account at all of the state of the talks which we have undertaken at the request of Rumcerod himself, nor of the concerted proposals between their own delegates and the allied delegates. We particularly protest against the arrests of Romanians and the inhumane treatment they were subjected to. Communicating the above to Rumcerod, please insist with the greatest firmness for the release of the Romanians and for the resumption of talks.....as regards Bessarabia, you will be reminded that the intervention of the Romanian troops is a military operation without any political character, undertaken in full agreement with the Allies and the Bessarabian authorities, for the obvious humanitarian purpose and to ensure the supply of the Russian and Romanian troops, as well as the civilian population.*[14]

At that time, the revolutionary effervescence was growing in Bessarabia. By definitively breaking away from the conglomerate of federative Russia on January 24, 1918, Bessarabia had two options:

- Survival as an independent and sovereign state in the immediate vicinity of federative Russia (in a state of war with Romania since January 13, 1918) and Ukraine (troubled by pro- and anti-Bolshevism movements but vehemently asserting territorial claims to the new independent state of Moldova and, implicitly to Romania, in connivance with the new allies - the Central Powers, making similar claims on Northern Moldova - Bucovina - simultaneously with Habsburg Austria); The Republic of Moldova needed, in addition to declarations of good intentions, enthusiasm, determination, means by which to resist external pressures, possible armed interventions, to ensure internal and external security, border guarding, the supply of everything necessary for the population, the army, the internal services. Or, all these priorities could not be satisfied under the given conditions. This aspect was also emphasized by General E. Broșteanu in the speech held in the Parliament of Moldova on the occasion of the festivity of January 15/28, 1918.

[14] Arch. MAE, Fond 71/URSS, vol 133, p.204-205 (the original in French), Telegram, Iasi, February 8/21, 1918, Fasciotti to the Italian consul in Odessa, Dévisart.

- In this complicated and confusing context, the option for union with Romania quickly included more and more numerous categories of the population. The word of the youth of Bessarabia - mentioned at the beginning of this study, the Calling of the Romanians across the Dniester published by "Ardealul (Transylvania)" on December 30, 1917, the speeches given by the deputies in the meeting of the Council of the Country on January 24, 1918 when the independence of the Moldavian Republic was decided, the telegram sent to King Ferdinand expressing the same idea, Documents published, along with many others, by "Romania Nine", remains, over time, conclusive evidence of Bessarabia's march towards the Union.

On another level, the Government of Romania responded promptly to the urgent call of Chisinau attacked by armed Bolshevik gangs. The saving presence of the Romanian Army in Bessarabia brought the restoration of order and security. The solidarity of the Romanian government with the Council of the Country and the Government of the Republic - despite the threats and the almost imminent danger of a Russian armed intervention after January 13 - was supported by numerous actions of the Romanians from the other historical provinces in favor of the Union; The first Declaration of the union of all Romanians from January 24 of the leading intellectuals from all the Romanian provinces, published by "România Nouă" in its first appearance, triggered a wave of sympathy among the broad layers of the intelligentsia in Bessarabia. Mihail Sadoveanu, enthusiastic about the declaration of Bessarabia's independence, was then present in Chisinau with the troupe of the National Theater from Iași. In the evening of that historic day, the play Fântâna Blanduziei by Vasile Alexandri was presented, followed the next day by Răzvan and Vidra written by the Bessarabian B.P. Hasdeu. The actors came from Iasi, Bucharest and Craiova[15]. Relating the above, "România Nouă" wrote:

> *Our Moldovan brothers will be able to convince themselves better on this occasion, that the Romanians are not a laughing stock, as the Russians mocked them, but a cultured people. Ten days ago this proof was given by the disciplined Romanian army, which brought tranquility and peace to Bessarabia.*

[15] *„România Nouă”,* no. 9 from January 24, 1918.

Also then, M. Sadoveanu and the actors were offered a Parchment in which the belief was expressed that "Bessarabia will be an integral part of the New Romania of tomorrow, declaring: for us today there is no longer a border and there is no bridge over the Dniester except to pass to the half a million brothers there, who also woke up to national life"[16].

In his capacity as President of the Writers' Society of Romania, Sadoveanu addressed an Appeal to Bessarabian Romanians in which he said: "...A century ago and better, hostile circumstances came upon us and between us, good brothers of the same blood, a wall of fog was erected. Oppressed by tsarist terror and darkness, without freedom and without light, you lived God knows how. Nothing could pass from our soul to yours. ....But the day of freedom came. A bridge was built over the cursed water of the Prut... The hour of fraternity has rung, in which brother and brother seek each other... The time has come, brothers, for the Moldavian nation to know no bounds for its love, for our sweet language. Culture, language and school, from now on must unite us forever, and inseparable we will remain until the end of the end!" The appeal was signed by a large number of leading Romanian writers, including Mihail Sadoveanu, Ion Agârbiceanu, George Ranetti, Ion Minulescu, Radu D. Rosetti, Mihail Codreanu, Claudia Milian, Isabela Sadoveanu, Ion Pilat, , D. Marmeliuc, Mihail Sorbul, Nichifor Crainic and many others.[17]

A special place in the cultural movement in Bessarabia had, in these times of hope and great dangers, the presence of George Enescu[18] and his concerts in Chisinau and other localities. On the eve of the declaration of the Union with the Country, "România Nouă" announced the concerts to be given by Enescu in Chisinau "with the competition of the Royal Orchestra from Iasi", on March 24 and 25, 1918, specifying that the amount

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[16] „România Nouă", no. 10 from January 30, 1918.

[17] *„România Nouă",* from February 1, 1918. Cf., Onisifor Ghibu*, Pe Baricadele vieții, …*p. 523-525*.*

[18] Ever since he was a student in Paris, George Enescu was part of the broad movement of Romanian students for the affirmation of the pan-Romanian creed. "During the years of the integration war, says O. Ghibu, he wanted to be present in the country of his birth, working all the time with extraordinary devotion to instill in the soul of contemporaries superior human feelings, to give a personal example of how a real man and a real Romanian should be, even in the most festive moments." Onisifor Ghibu, *Oameni între oameni. Memorii (People among people. Memories)*. Set text, chronological table and name index by Octavian O. Ghibu. Selection and Introduction by Ion Bulei, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 360.

of money collected will be donated to "the orphans of the dead soldiers of the war". *"România Nouă" of March 23 wrote:*

> *Here is a name so well-known and loved beyond the Prut, but completely unknown in Bessarabia... The Moldavians in Bessarabia knew nothing of everything that happened to the Romanians in other countries; they did not know the great people of the nation, not even those who came out of their midst, for example, Al. Donici, Al. Russo, B.P. Hasdeu et al. The Russians had taught them to believe that they had nothing of importance, neither language, nor literature, nor culture, nor science..."*[19]

On March 25, in the Diocesan Hall in Chisinau, O. Ghibu presented the conference entitled "Transylvania", after which the Bucovina professor George Tofan spoke about Bucovina. Present at this event, George Enescu supported a musical program together with Veturia Ghibu and Nicu Caravia. After the third concert, on March 29, "România Nouă" published an article signed by I. Mateiu with the title, Un conqueror - George Enescu, and in the March 31 issue of the newspaper, George Tofan wrote: "We are witnessing a great revival of national consciousness, unique in its kind...Enescu's arrival in Bessarabia has an epochal cultural importance, increased by the circumstances in which it happened...he did, for awakening and strengthening national consciousness, for raising the national prestige of our nation, more than could have been done in years of persistent propaganda"[20].

A conversation with Master Enescu is the title under which "Romania Nouă" publishes on April 5 the interview given to Enescu by I. Mateiu:

> *The revival of Bessarabia, which we followed with interest in the columns of this newspaper - declared Enescu - is a beneficial comfort for our nation, especially after the sufferings and trials of the past... Bessarabia is a jewel for us in all respects and our duty is to help by all means , awakening the people to cultural and artistic life, seeking the sympathy of our Moldovan brothers and doing them all the good they have been deprived of for so long.*

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[19] *„România Nouă",* no. 53 , March 23, 1918. Cf. Onisifor Ghibu, *Oameni între oameni…, p. 365.*

[20] *„România Nouă"* no. 59, March 30, 1918 , the article Un conqueror - George Enescu, signed I. Mateiu; no. 60 of March 31, 1918, the article Culmi ale Romanian culture - On the occasion of the Enescu concerts, signed by George Tofan.

In context, Enescu emphasized the urgent importance of the development of cultural and spiritual life. mentioning the need to establish a National Conservatory of Music, a Symphony Orchestra, a National Art Museum, a Romanian University.[21] In the following period, Enescu got to know the situation in Bessarabia more closely, traveling with his violin through its cities and villages. On April 14, he was in Bălți where he gave a great violin concert, the amount of 20,000 lei collected being donated to war orphans from Bălţi and Soroca[22].

Enescu's relationship with Bessarabia continued. On September 8, the same newspaper announced the Maestro's return to Chisinau for a few concerts. On October 9, he was received with ovations by an audience "in delirium" - reports "România Nouă". "This concert", said the chronicle published in the issue of October 11 - "is not only a great artistic event, but also a great patriotic act on the part of the master for all our Bessarabian brothers..."[23].

In his Memories, Onisifor Ghibu dwells at length on his relations with Enescu over the years, and his conclusion is impressive: *"I remained indebted to the beloved master, whose soul vibrated in unison with mine in those historical times for the completely selfless and selfless help he gave to those who had made the union of our entire race their supreme goal in life."*[24]

All this showed that the process of state unification of the Romanians had entered a higher stage. "România Nouă" published in its columns, issue after issue, articles that expressed one and the same imperative: the union of Bessarabia with the Motherland. Elena Alistar, one of the leaders of the national movement, signed the article with the title Now or never in which she discussed a very current issue in Bessarabia: the mirage of the new Bolshevik regime in Russia with its false slogans and its influence on a good part of the population, so that there was a tendency to balance the supposed "advantages of the Bolshevik republican democracy" and the union with royal Romania. E. Alistar briefly showed the gloomy prospects of remaining in the Russian-Bolshevik conglomerate:

[21] *„România Nouă”*no. 64, April 5, 1918.

[22] *„România Nouă”* no. 81 April 29, 1918.Paper: *Maestrul Enescu la Bălți.*

[23] *„România Nouă”,* no. 187 October 11, 1918.

[24] Onisifor Ghibu, *op. cit.,p. 379. Enescu had donated a large sum of money for the purchase of the printing house in Galati.*

> *Russia is not dead - the author said with reference to the perpetuation of the imperial anti-national policy - in this new Russia, we will never be able to have a national culture, the only one that any people is able to understand.....; we see that even now that we have declared ourselves independent, they want to give us Russian schools. Imagine what will happen when we join Russia, be it even a republic". At the end of the article, Elena Alistar expressed an undoubted truth: "If we do not unite with our brothers now, then it is not known if such an appropriate time will come in the future and forever we will be cursed by our descendants, who, reading history, will see that we could have accomplished the act of union and we did not." I'm afraid of this blast and cry out loud: LET'S UNITE!*[25]

In the same line of thought, the substantive article of February 17 signed by O. Harea, a contributor to the "România Nouă" newspaper, is noteworthy, which is primarily addressed to Bessarabian intellectuals. Entitled The Duty of the Romanian Intellectuals from Bessarabia, the article emphasizes the fact that "a group of intellectuals, the Romanian student body from Bessarabia has said its creed - the integration of the Romanian nation from all sides-!" It recalls the declarations of union of teachers from Chisinau, Soroca and other parts and states:

> *For us, the Union of Bessarabia with the other Romanian parts is, first of all, a matter of our people's existence. Then secondly comes the matter of justice. It must be erased without the law made in 1812 by the Russian Tsar Alexander I. The people raised in historical circumstances completely alien to Russia, were glued to it and forced by the Russian whip to lead the same life as Russia... Now Bessarabia must return to the forms of life appropriate to its history...*

O. Harea draws attention to the danger of propagating the ideas of "internationalism that wants nothing but a Russia from the frozen sea to the Adriatic with Constantinople and the Dardanelles. A Russia where everyone is Russian"; on the danger of falsifying the history of the Romanians - a means of distancing the people from the idea of the Union; the mission of the Bessarabian Romanian intellectuals emphasized by the

[25] *Idem, Editorial:* Dr. Elena Alistar, *Acum ori niciodată (Now or Never).*

signatory of the article was: "We must preach our idea for the union of all Romanian countries in one country"[26].

The process of the total separation of Bessarabia from Russia, politically, institutionally, psychologically and the explicit adoption, official and unofficial, of the option to establish, together with the other Romanian provinces, a unitary national state, encountered, in its final stage, the crisis triggered by the separate peace ultimately imposed on Romania by the Central Powers – a direct consequence of the separate exit from the war of Soviet Russia, of its collaboration with the former "enemies". The events that took place then, bringing Romania to the brink of collapse, are known and are not the subject of this study.

The negative effect on the situation in the independent Republic of Moldova, of what was happening beyond the Prut, was counteracted by the increasingly active unionist forces, but also by the position of the Romanian government which, although subjected to unprecedented pressures and interferences, did not give in to Russian and Ukrainian annexationist claims. "România Nouă" from February 17 (old style) 1918, analysis, in the substantive article entitled What will Romania do?[27] signed by Onisifor Ghibu, the situation of Romania in relation to the Russian imperial policy, with the participation in the war, with the policy of the Centrals in the context of the separate peace with Russia. The article began by stating an indisputable truth: "Sold three times by Russians in a year and a half[28] *and today completely separated from the other companions*[29] *from West , Romania was forced to start peace negotiations with those enemy*

[26] *Ibidem,* February 17, 1918, Editorial: O Harea*, Datoria intelectualilor români din Basarabia (The Mission of the Romanian Intellectuals in Bessarabia).*

[27] *„România Nouă”,* year II, no. 24, February 17 / March 1, 1918. Cf. Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania..., doc. nr. 72, p. 221-223.

[28] Ghibu refers to: 1- the non-participation of the Russian army in the battles for the defense of Muntenia, of Bucharest, the defection in Dobrogea, Russia thus violating its commitments made through the political and military Conventions of August 1916; 2 - the confiscation of the Treasury deposited for safekeeping in Moscow, Russia violating the Protocols signed in July 1916 in Iasi regarding the evacuation, safekeeping and return of the Romanian Treasury; 3 - the separate exit of Russia from the war, by violating the provision of the alliance with France and England not to separate.

[29] Term by which the Allies were called.

powers[30]*, against which he rose on August 14, 1916".* The author then explains, for the understanding of the general public, the general context in which these events took place:

> *He wanted to gather together all the sons of our nation scattered under foreign dominions; he wanted to free Transylvania and Bucovina, which for hundreds of years have been under Hungarian and German pressure. She didn't want to take other people's land, but to rob her brothers. This holy right of hers over the countries beyond the Carpathians was recognized by all the peoples of the world except, of course, the Hungarians and their comrades who, like the Russians, wanted to live even further from the Romanian union.*[31]

After an account of the abusive way in which the Centrals seized the territories and resources of the Romanian land, Ghibu expresses a value judgment based on history and truth, cultivating the spirit of resistance and fighting for the justice of the Romanian national cause:

> *Shall we be removed from these places when we have a holy right to all our land? Will Romania be forced to conclude an unjust peace? .... Romania's current war may end, but the Romanians' war is not over. There can be true peace only when the cradle of Romanianism is given back to us. ...If we could not redeem Bessarabia with Transylvania, we will be able to redeem Transylvania with Bessarabia! And the Romanian nation will still have to be whole, in one place, or perish (Underlined in the original text).*

The coercion of Romania by the Centrals in order to exit the war and accept an enslaving peace, in the known circumstances, was "completed" with the express claim of Bessarabia by the Soviet Ukraine. On February 11/24, 1918, the Rumcerod from Odesa addressed so-called "peace

[30] He had in mind the situation of total isolation of Romania from the Allies, together with Russia's separate exit from the war, the breakup of the Romanian-Russian front, the separate peace treaties of Bolshevik Russia with Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. All these powers, now allies, ultimately imposed on Romania the separate exit from the war and the acceptance of an onerous "peace", with the character of dictation, signed in Bucharest in May 1918

[31] Allusion to the Political Convention between Romania and the Entente Powers (France, England, Russia, Italy) of August 4/17, 1916 from Bucharest, which recognized Romania's right over its territories under the occupation of Austria-Hungary.

proposals" to the Romanian Government as a result of the offer to mediate the Russian-Romanian conflict made by the French and English military missions in Odesa. This issue, entered the informational circuit under the title "Averescu-Rakovski agreement" of March 5, 1918, has remained, from then until today, controversial, despite the clarity of the documents.

Point 1 of the Note addressed to the Romanian government by Rumcerod specifies:

> *The Romanian government undertakes to make a formal declaration regarding the progressive evacuation of Bessarabia by the Romanian occupying armies. First of all, the evacuation of Bender and Sebriani. The Romanian army of occupation must be reduced, within two months, to a detachment of ten thousand (10,000) men, whose service will consist of guarding Romanian warehouses and railway lines ..... Russian military forces will occupy the evacuated points. The Romanian command renounces any interference in the internal and political life of Bessarabia...*
> *It undertakes not to undertake military hostilities against the Russian Federation of Soviets... (Underlined in the original text)*[32]

The other points in this document related to the mutual release of prisoners and other matters of common interest. The note was signed by V. Iudovski, Brașevan, A. Voronski.

General Averescu, the President of the Council of Ministers, put the following resolution on this document: "All conditions are accepted except the first one. It will be demanded, even before the start of the negotiations, the release of the Romanian subjects from Odesa". The Romanian Government's response to Rumcerod's Note, dated February 23/March 8, 1918, stated in point I: "All the articles (clauses) of the aforementioned proposal are accepted...except for the condition included in clause I..." In point II, it is requested, among other things: to restore "without delay the freedom of General Coandă and his deputies detained in Kiev, as well as of all the Romanians interned in Odessa, giving them the opportunity to return to Romania..." Signed: "The President of the Council, General Averescu".

The so-called Averescu-Racovski "agreement", as well as the "Russian-Romanian Convention regarding the liberation of Bessarabia by

[32] Arch. MAE, Fund 71/USSR, vol. 131. Exchange of letters Averescu-Racovski 20-23 February / 5-8 March 1918; Vol. 133, Debates in the Chamber of Deputies on August 18, 1918.

Romania" of March 5-9, 1918, published in Moscow in 1935, do not exist[33]. Documente rusești și românești neîndoielnice , atestă acest lucru . Astfel:

- The radiogram sent by Cicerin (foreign minister of Soviet Russia) to the Romanian government, on March 12, states: "... The Soviet power, immutable partisan of peaceful solutions... has always taken advantage of every opportunity to amicably resolve all disputes with Romania. The proof is provided by the negotiations ... between the Soviet authorities in Ukraine and the Romanian government, in February 1918, negotiations that were thwarted only by the German and Austrian invasion".

- On February 27 / March 12, the German intervention troops arrived in front of Odessa; the Soviet revolutionary authorities – the Rumcerod, the Supreme Autonomous College, etc. – ceased to exist from that moment.

- On March 2/15, the aviator captain C. Andreescu, returned from Odesa from the mission he had had to obtain confirmation of Rumcerod's receipt of the Romanian Government's response to the Note containing the peace "offer" of February 11/24, submitted to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a report in which he recounted the situation in Odesa in the circumstances when the German troops were 10 km from the city: "The next day, at February 28, going to Rumcerod together with the Spanish consul to have a confirmation of the receipt of the Note of the Romanian government ... I found nothing there, any Bolshevik authority had disappeared during the night..."[34].

- However, there are also legal arguments that nullify the applicability of both the so-called "Russian-Romanian Convention - even if it had existed - and the alleged Averescu-Racovski "agreement" - even if it had existed -, namely: on February 9, 1918, the Peace Treaty signed in Brest-Litovsk by Ukraine and the Central Powers, specifying **the**

[33] Collection of Agreements and Conventions with Neighboring Countries, Moscow, 1935, p. 156-157. The convention would have been signed by Averescu, in Iasi, on March 5. and by Racovski, Brașevan, Iudovski and Voronski in Odesa, on March 9, 1918. It provided at point. 1: "Romania undertakes to liberate Bessarabia within two months". Such a document does not exist in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. The sequence of events proves otherwise. the impossibility of its existence.

[34] *Arh. MAE,* Fond 71/URSS, vol. 131, f. 128.

territory that belonged to Ukraine, Bessarabia is not included in that territory; in the treaty signed at Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918 with the Central Powers, Soviet Russia undertook to immediately make peace with the Ukrainian Republic, recognizing its territorial extent as determined in the Treaty of March 3 (ie without Bessarabia); also, in the January 12 Universal of the Rada of Kiev, through which the independence of the Republic of Ukraine was proclaimed, the borders of this state were specified, in the West, the border being delimited by the Dniester;

- These issues are also discussed in the Radiogram sent by the government of the Republic of Moldova to the government of the Ukrainian Republic at the beginning of March 1918: "In the draft of the organization of Ukraine of September 16, 1917, it is said that the territory of Ukraine includes the Governorates of Kiev, Podolia, Volânia, Holm, Chernihiv, Poltava, Yekaterinoslav and Taurida, without the regions inhabited by non-Ukrainians. The Universal of November 7, 1917 declares that the territory of Ukraine includes the governorates of: Kiev, Podolia, Volânia, Chernigov, Poltava, Kharkiv, Kherson, Yekaterinoslav and Taurida, without Crimea. The universal of January 12, 1918 declares the independence of Ukraine within the above borders. Considering all of the above, the Government of the Republic of Moldova considers that only it alone, without any outside interference, has the right to represent and defend the state interests of the independent Republic of Moldova."[35]

- On March 7, the Government of the Republic of Moldova addressed a protest "by wireless telegraphy to the Rada in Kiev against the claims on Bessarabia" - General Zamfirescu communicated from Chisinau to the President of the Council of Ministers in Iași. "The Ukrainian Republic - he adds - had formally recognized the existence of the Moldavian Republic as an independent state and invited it on several occasions to the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. The last telegram of the Ukrainian Republic addressed to the government of the Republic of Moldova says: «Not receiving a response from the

[35] MAE Archive, Fond 71/ USSR, , vol. 133, , f. 193-195. Radiogram, Chisinau, March 1918, Government of the Moldavian Democratic Republic to the Government of the Ukrainian Republic, Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania ..., doc. no. 80, p. 253-255.

Moldovan government, we do not believe we are authorized to deal on its behalf».[36]

- Finally, from January 24, 1918, Bessarabia was no longer either a "province" of Russia, nor an autonomous state within the Russian Federation, it was an independent and sovereign state over which neither Ukraine, nor Russia - revolutionary or not -, nor any other state had any right;

- The annexation claims, formulated by different means by the Ukrainian or Russian authorities, amounted to acts of force and threat of force against an independent and sovereign state. The Romanian Army, present at that time in Bessarabia, had been expressly called by the Government of the newly formed Republic, to help it restore order and security threatened by the Bolshevik, Russian and Ukrainian military incursions; it had no role as an "occupation" army. On March 1 (new style), the Council of the Country reverted to the previous requests and asked "the royal government to give orders to its army in Bessarabia not to allow the creation of Russian army corps on the territory of the Republic because the disorder and disobedience started again only as far as it was known ... of the formation of Russian military units.[37] *Romania itself was in danger of being occupied by German-Austrian and Bolshevik Russian military forces.*

The repercussions in the independent Moldavian Republic of the serious events in Romania in the spring of 1918 were reflected in the Bessarabian press through legitimate concerns and at the same time

[36] Idem, f. 210. telegram no. 71, Chisinau, March 8/21, 1918, signed General Commissioner Zamfirescu, to the President of the Council, Iași. In relation to Ukrainian claims on Bessarabia; it should be noted that during the preliminary peace talks at Brest-Litovsk, the question of Bessarabia was not discussed.

[37] A. BAR, Fund XIV, vol. 3, file 1010, f. 88, Deciphered telegram, Directorate of the Cipher Cabinet, Division 11, Iasi, March 1, 1918, sent by the Council of State, Chisinau, to the Romanian Government. Signed by the Minister President dr. Ciuhureanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, I. Pelivan. The Russian general Scerbacev, commander of the Russian-Romanian Front until he was dismissed by Lenin, tried to gather and organize detachments of Russian soldiers who remained loyal to Imperial Russia on the territory of Bessarabia. What followed was the outbreak of armed conflicts with Russian military groups that no longer recognized the authority of the general. The consequences of these confrontations were the deepening of the conflict situation in Bessarabia.

through the expression of faith in the temporary character of the exercise of the dominance of the Centrals and the victory of the Romanian ideal. On the very day of the signing, in Buftea, of the preliminary "peace" treaty between Romania and the Central Powers, in Chisinau "Nou România" publishes the substantive article entitled *Nu vom muri*[38] *(We will not Die),* under the signature of Onisifor Ghibu. In a few words, Ghibu presents the up-to-date picture of Romania's situation:

> *Entered into a holy war for the emancipation of millions of subjugated Romanians, overwhelmed by the brutal power of the Germans and sold three times by the Russians, our nation finds itself today at the decisive moment for its life in the future. Russia fell apart into dozens of pieces. Ukraine made peace with the Germans...so that Romania sees itself gathered from all sides in an iron circle by the most relentless enemy who wants to humiliate her...*

Referring to the territorial annexations on Romania's account provided by the treaty, the author concludes:

> *But Germany is bitterly mistaken if it thinks that through any kind of measures of its own it will be able to tear us apart. No, we will not die! We love our language and land too much, we have shed too much blood for centuries for our ideal, the national consciousness is too strong in all Romanians, from the Tisa to the Dniester, so that today we are afraid that Germany will destroy us... therefore, any injustice will be done on our backs by those who think they are the victors today, we will fulfill our holy ideal...*[39]

Two days later, Onisifor Ghibu resumes the discussion on the treaty, in the editorial *"România Nouă" and peace*. The idea emphasized is that this peace is a "conjuncture" act, Romania "should not be considered a defeated country"; pleads for the moral mobilization of Romanians; the belief he strongly affirms is that "the Romania of tomorrow, which the Germans are creating in Bucharest, will remain only as a painful memory,

[38] *„România Nouă",* year II, no. 27, March 5, 1918., paper *Nu vom muri! (We will not die!)* by Onisifor Ghibu.

[39] *Idem.*

because the general peace will, without a doubt, give us Romania to all Romanians"[40].

The interview that the newspaper "Sfatul Țării" takes with the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Moldova, Gh. Ciuhureanu, upon his return from his visit to Romania[41] contains important statements regarding the official relations between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Thus, when asked "what is the opinion of the political circles in Romania regarding the independence of Bessarabia and how do they see our Republic there?", Ciuhureanu answered: "... General Averescu and thus the entire Romanian Empire are for the non-dependence of our Republic. Romania is happy that a nation of the same blood has finally acquired its freedom and will be able to step unhindered by anyone on the path of its development. For their part, the Romanian brothers are ready to give us all their fraternal support, both morally and materially." Received in a long audience with the king, Ciuhureanu told the reporter of the "Sfatul Țării" newspaper:

> *I want to emphasize one fact, namely the reception given to us by King Ferdinand and Prince Charles....in a long conversation I told them about all the needs and wishes of our people. His Majesty, resolutely, said that he recognizes our right to govern ourselves and make the social reforms we need... drawing the Sovereign's attention to our difficult situation, from which need all of Romania will have to take us out,... The King replied that, although Romania itself is in a rather difficult situation at the moment, the fraternal help we need will always be given to us.*[42]

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[40] „*România Nouă ”* no. 29, March 7, 1918, editorial : „ *România Nouă” și pacea* de Onisifor Ghibu. Cf *Pe Baricadele vieții…, p. 532.*

[41] A delegation led by President Gh. Ciuhureanu was in Iași in order to participate in the discussions taking place regarding the "peace" treaty with the Centrals. For objective reasons, the official participation of the Bessarabian delegation did not take place. Questioned by the reporter about this, Ciuhureanu motivated by triggering the ministerial crisis that would have caused the interruption of the debates.

[42] "*Sfatul Țării*" from March 8 (old style), 1918, Interview given to Mr. Gh. Ciuhureanu, President of the Council of General Directors of the Republic of Moldova by reporter M. Minciună. Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania..., doc. 84, p. 258-260.

Therefore, the unaltered unity of views of Bessarabian Romanians with those of the Motherland - from the bishopric to the opinca -, in these days of difficult balance for all, explains to a good extent the intensification of the unionist movements in independent Bessarabia. The newspapers "România Nouă", "Cuvînt Moldovenesc" - which had switched to the Latin script - "Sfatul Țării" and others publish during this period information about the decisions of various organizations, local institutions expressing the will of the citizens for the union of Bessarabia with Romania. On March 13, "the small and big owners of the Soroca district, with the members of the Soroca commune, with the members of the clergy, with the members of the education and with all the citizens voted unanimously" The motion in which, after a short foray into the history of Moldova with direct reference to the period after 1812, states:

> *We solemnly proclaim today and before God and all mankind, that we declare the Union of Bessarabia with the Kingdom of Romania, under whose regime and under the protection of whose laws of democratic monarchy*[43] *we see the security of our national existence and economic and cultural prosperity.*

In conclusion, the signatories of the Motion appeal to the assemblies throughout Bessarabia:

> *From Hotin to Ismail to unite by their vote to our Motion and send their delegations with representatives from all regional assemblies to lay at the feet of the Throne of Romania our tributes of devotion and faith to King Ferdinand I, King of all Romanians!*[44]

The motion is signed by a very large number of people, led by the mayor of Soroca, Șoltuz Vasile Bârcă and the president of the Duma of Soroca, Safonov.

Bălți County made the same decision on March 16. The motion was signed by 106 citizens, led by the mayor and the President of the local Duma[45]. Such motions were adopted in many Bessarabian localities.

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[43] According to the original.

[44] *"Cuvînt Moldovenesc"* no. 28 of March 28, 1918. Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania..., doc. 85, p. 260-263. Full text of the Motion and all signatures.

[45] *„România Nouă",* an. II, , no. 48, March 17, 1918 ; *„Cuvânt Moldovenesc",* no.27, March 22, 1918.

Union of Bessarabia with the Country.
"What does Ukraine want?"

It was the eve of the proclamation of the Union: the Ukrainian annexationist plans were threatened. Kiev's reaction was prompt. On 16 March (old style), the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry sent a Note to the German, Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, Bulgarian and Romanian governments expressing the Ukrainian government's "deep interest" in the "fate of Bessarabia".

The motivation: "Bessarabia, from an ethnographic, economic and political point of view, forms an indivisible unit with the territory of Ukraine" (subs. n.s. V.M.) supporting this statement on historical and statistical falsifications[46]. The following argumentation is also interesting: "Possessing a good part of the Black Sea coast /where/ an important economic center is located, Odesa, with which the whole of Southern Bessarabia is connected, the Ukrainian government believes that any changes to the former Romanian-Russian border, especially in its northern and southern parts, deeply affect the political and economic interests of the Ukrainian Republic". Concerned by the fact that "a good part of the territory of Bessarabia is occupied by the Romanian armies" and the possibility that at the "peace" conference in Bucharest "the question of who Bessarabia will belong to in the future will be the subject of discussion", the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic "finds that the discussion on this issue and its solution can only take place with the participation and consent of the representatives of the Ukrainian government"[47].

It should be noted that Ukraine's claim - democratic or not - was placed outside the legal and civilized norms of interstate relations, because it claimed to decide in a conclave of foreign powers the political status of an independent and sovereign state - the independent Republic of Moldova between the Prut and Dniester - former governorate of the Russian Empire,

[46] "In the northern part of the territory of Bessarabia mostly Ukrainians live, and in the southern part (between the mouths of the Danube and the Dniester and the coast of the Black Sea) they have a relative majority".

[47] MAE Archive, Fond 71/ USSR, vol. 133, Telegram f. n., Kiev, March 16/29, 1918, signed V. Golubovici, President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the German, Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, Bulgarian and Romanian governments.

whose territory had been annexed by onerous means and possessed by force 106 years ago empire.

The reaction of the Bessarabian authorities was immediate and very categorical.

On the same day of March 16/29, the Council of the Country and the Council of General Directors of the Republic of Moldova, by virtue of the previously taken decision to establish official relations with the Republic of Ukraine, had formulated the following instructions for the Moldovan delegation that was going to go to Kiev for this purpose:

> *1. The delegation must demand the recognition of the complete independence of the Moldavian Republic within the borders of the former government of Bessarabia between the Prut, Dniester and Black Seas and the old Austro-Hungarian border.*
>
> *2. The territory of the Republic of Moldova within the borders of the former Government of Bessarabia is indivisible and no part of the Republic of Moldova can be broken for the benefit of another state...*[48]*. Semnat: Secretar al Sfatului Țării, B. Epuri.*

The note, cited above, of Ukraine, addressed to the Central Powers that were discussing the terms of the so-called "peace" with Romania in Bucharest, required Chisinau, promptly informed about it, to reanalyze the situation and formulate an appropriate response addressed to the government of Ukraine on the same day. The text, drafted in very categorical, unambiguous, clear and precise terms, legally and historically argued, leaves no room for any other interpretation:

> *The Council of the country....learning about the tendencies of Ukraine on parts of the Republic of Moldova, especially on Hotin and the White Citadel, expresses its energetic protest to the Government of the Republic of Ukraine, the Central Rada and the entire Ukrainian people....The Council of the Country declares that the People's Republic of Moldova proclaimed itself independent and independent on January 24, in the borders of the former government of Bessarabia...*

[48] *Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania...,, doc. 87, p. 265. Apud Ștefan Ciobanu, Union of Bessarabia. Study and documents regarding the national movement in Bessarabia in the years 1917-1918, Iasi; "Romanian Life", f.a., p. 157 (original in Russian).*

Next, the Protest Note mentions indirect recognitions by Ukraine of Moldova's independence status[49]. Emphasizing that:

> *Moldova's interests can only be represented by the Council of the Country, based on the historical past of Bessarabia which was formed in an indivisible unitary region, and on the other hand, considering the country's economic interests, it shows the Ukrainian people the injustice of Ukraine's interference in Moldova's affairs.*

In conclusion, the document emphasizes again:

> *The Council of the Country strongly declares that the will of the peoples living in Bessarabia is to see the Republic of Moldova independent, unattached and indivisible, and any attempts from wherever they come against the independence and indivisibility of the Republic of Moldova, located between the Dniester, Prut, Black Sea, in the borders of the former government of Bessarabia, they consider as an unheard of violation against the right to self-determination of a people who won their rights with so many sacrifices" (emphasis in the text).* Signed by the Secretary of the Council of the Country, B.Epuri.[50]

The events described above had a wide echo in Bessarabia, amplifying the fear of the danger of new Russian-Ukrainian Bolshevik invasions that would have jeopardized the hard-won democratic conquests. "România Nouă" - continues to be the tribune of the fight for freedom and rights, for the realization of the national ideal - Union: What does Ukraine want? - editorial signed by Onisifor Ghibu in the issue of March 6 (new style) - "He wants to take the Land of Hotin and the Land of Akerman"[51]. The gazette release, in the same issue, under the title: *The lands of Hotin and Akerman do not want to be annexed to Ukraine*, the news after which "Official delegations from Hotin and Akerman have arrived in Chisinau and

[49] On December 17, 1917, Ukraine invited the Moldavian government (on December 2 the autonomy of Bessarabia within the Russian Federation had been declared) to form a "joint Russian government" in order to start the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk; on that occasion Ukraine declared that it "supports and recognizes the independence of the Republic of Moldova."

[50] MAE Archive, Fond 71/ USSR, vol. 133, f. 298. *Note of protest sent by the government of the Moldavian People's Republic to the Republic of Ukraine (original in Russian).*

[51] *„România Nouă”,* no. 33, March 6, 1918.

declare that these lands want to remain as constituent parts of the Republic of Moldova and do not want to be annexed to Ukraine".[52]

Under the title *Danger from over the Dniester – Ukraine wants to extend to the Prut*, Onisifor Ghibu analyzes the grounds by virtue of which Ukraine raises claims over Bessarabia:

> *...let's see what rights Ukraine has over Bessarabia? Historical right? Absolutely nothing! Ethnographic law? But 70% of the population of Bessarabia are Moldovans and barely 7% are Ukrainians....Political and national rights? But the land of Ukraine was saved by the foreign Austrian army... Cultural rights? But their culture begins and ends with Shevchenko! Then, with what rights does Ukraine demand Bessarabia on its account? With the same rights, - reminds Ghibu - with which Austria and Russia have kidnapped everything they could from their neighboring countries for many hundreds of years! And Ghibu's value judgment, with resonance over the years: "What Ukraine wants today is not only a desire for its own - we should say a Russian desire for usurpation [53], known in Eastern Europe for a thousand years; but it is also a characteristic proof for Austria's policy. Ukraine alone, unaided by Austria,. she would not have had the courage to think about extending her borders to the Prut...Austria wants the defeat of Romania, Ukraine wants the destruction of Bessarabia..!*

At the end of the article, Ghibu formulates a truth that spans the ages: **"However, Bessarabia also benefits from Ukraine's current behavior: it learns to know its neighbors better in whose hypocritical word it had trusted until now."[54]**

> *In the days leading up to March 27, "New Romania" also turns its attention to Transylvania and Bucovina, where social unrest heralded major political and social changes.*
> *Soarta Ardealului [55]: Tulburările naționale ale românilor din Transilvania au fost potolite cu multă cruzime. ...conducătorii au fost arestați și dați în judecată pentru atâțare. În rândul întâi au fost arestați mulți preoți și învățători...Jandarmii au primit ordin să împiedice în sate adunările...Autorităților li s-a dat dreptul ca la nevoie să oprească și slujba dumnezeiască din bisericile românești. Fierberea în sânul poporului românesc este mare.*

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[52] Idem.
[53] According to original.
[54] *„România Nouă”,* Chișinău, anul II, nr. 52 din 22 martie 1918
[55] *„România Nouă”,* no. 30, February 24, 1918.

Songs from Transylvania: published alongside the description of some old historical monuments in Transylvania that attest to the antiquity and civilization of the Romanians in these places[56].

Ce se petrece în Ardeal[57]*:* "The Hungarians persecute the Romanians with a unique savagery. Dozens of priests and teachers were thrown into prisons and many of them hanged. The gallows are in full swing in Transylvania".

Looting works of art and books in Bessarabia[58]*:* "The Russian Bolsheviks plundered and destroyed with unprecedented savagery everything they encountered in their path. With the precious books from Mr. Vasile Stroescu's library, for example, these modern vandals made fire in the stoves for three days".

March 27, 1918 in the newspaper „România Nouă" debate

Editorial: Towards the day of justice. Bessarabia will unite with the Motherland, author, Onisifor Ghibu: an objective analysis of this crucial event in the history of the Great Union, an event characterized as "an act of political wisdom": "A small country, inhabited by a people whom painful circumstances kept away from a political and cultural life. without an army, without finance, without credit, without trade, without industry, it was natural for the «Republic of Moldova» to quickly end its history and merge with another country where the life of its inhabitants could be protected and guided along normal paths. But Bessarabia could not remain unscathed even because of Ukraine, whose appetites could be seen in recent weeks"[59] *.*

This March 27, far from being a spontaneous act, a decision taken overnight or an act imposed from outside and based on the force of the Romanian army present, as is known, in Bessarabia to guard warehouses and communication routes, but expressly called by the Council of the Country and the Council of General Directors to annihilate the terrorist actions of the armed Bolshevik gangs, this decision - requested, as we exemplified in previous pages, by Bessarabian Romanians, was discussed,

[56] *Idem.*

[57] *„România Nouă "* no. 44, March 13, (stil vechi).

[58] *„România Nouă ",* no 30, February 24, 1918*.*

[59] *„România Nouă", March 27, 1918.* Editorial*: Towards the day of justice. Bessarabia will unite with the Motherland,* by Onisifor Ghibu*.*

analyzed, prepared by Chisinau and Iasi. Reports from the Official Monitor[60] consider them entitled to provide the correct image of the official events that preceded and prepared the act of March 27. We read in the official publication of the Romanian government:

> *Following the consultations that took place in Iași between the members of the Romanian government and Mr. Inculeț, the president of the Council of State..., Dr. Daniel Ciuhureanu, the president of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Halippa, vice-president of the Council, d. prime minister A. Marghiloman and d. Minister of War, General Hârjeu, accompanied by d. Mitilineu, the Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior, Garoflid, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Domains, A. Corteanu, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance, General Mircescu and numerous senior administrative staff, went to Chisinau to make official contact with the Government and the Council of the Republic.*

In the following two days ("Monday and Tuesday"), consultations took place between the two parties ("with the delegations of the factions in the Council, with the heads of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the heads of communities, the owners' union"); Marghiloman had talks with the marshals of the nobility from Bessarabia. In parallel, the Council of the Country carried out its work[61], "in which all options were voiced with absolute respect for freedom of speech...". On Tuesday, March 27/April 9, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Marghiloman and General Hârjeu were received in the meeting room of the Council of the Country.. The unfolding of events in that memorable meeting is known. On the same day, King Ferdinand promulgated the law of Union of Bessarabia with Romania[62].

The next day, March 28, 1918 (old style) "New Romania" was printed in a Special Edition devoted to the union of Bessarabia with Romania: ".....On this day History repaired the great injustice committed on May 12, 1812 when the body of Moldavia was broken in two and the part between

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[60] *Official Gazette, no. 309, March 30-April 12, 1918. The official part, Iasi, March 29, 1918, p. 3769-3770.*

[61] *A. BAR, Fund XIV, file 1010, vol. 7, March 27/April 9, 1918, Minutes of the Meeting of the Country Council.*

[62] *Official Gazette, no. 8 of April 10, 1918, Royal Decree no. 842 Iasi, April 9, 1918, promulgation of the act of the union of Bessarabia with Romania. Signed Ferdinand, A. Marghiloman.*

the Prut and Dniester was given to foreign hands who sought to strangle it..." In the end of this short evocations, Onisifor Ghibu wrote: "May God take care of the New Romania and help them so that they can extend their borders from the Dniester river – now Romanian – to the Tisa river!" Next, the Declaration of Union was published.

On the sheet of newspaper on which the above article was printed, from the collection donated by Onisifor Ghibu to the Romanian Academy, he made a handwritten note stating: "This number appeared in two editions. The first is this, the second was changed by Mr. Marghiloman's censorship (censor Mr. Petre V. Haneș), replacing the words «from the Dniester – now Romanian – to the Tisza» with those «to where her right extends». The first edition spread in Bessarabia, the second in Moldova. Onisifor Ghibu: "The issue of censorship of the national newspaper appearing in Chisinau is part of the long series of obstacles encountered by the promoters of Romanian national interests, including the liberation of Bessarabia and its return to the original Romanian territory. The "Peace" from Bucharest in May 1918, which had placed Romania under the German-Austro-Hungarian dictatorship, was also reflected in the direct and indirect interference in the events in Bessarabia. The union of March 27 was against, from all points of view, the interests of the new allies - the Central Powers + Bolshevik Russia - Ukraine:

- Bessarabia had "escaped" from the clutches of the Russian-Ukrainian aggression, Romania's intervention had been salutary and had won the case against the offensive of the Bolshevik forces

-Romania, for its part, had annihilated both the action of the terrorist gangs of the former tsarist army that plundered and destroyed the country, as well as the coup d'état attempted in Iași by the agents of the Soviet Power;

-The anti-Romanian communist propaganda in Bessarabia had been curbed (but not annihilated) by the rising national movement;

-The official successive and finally definitive separation of Bessarabia from the Russian colossus - December 2, 1917 - autonomy within the Russian Federation -, January 24, 1918 - independence -, March 27 - Union with the Motherland - had made an enormous breach in the plans of the new allies to destroy Romania. The step towards the liberation of all the still subjugated Romanian provinces and the reconstitution of the unitary

Romanian state was visible. Then, in those hot days, when the confrontation between the progress of the Romanian national idea and the retrograde pro-Russian Bolshevik forces was at the last barricade, there was an attempt to minimize the importance of the act of the Union of Bessarabia and to suppress the means - the media and all the actions that propagated and supported what was then called "nationalization" (de - Russification in all areas of public life) - on the one hand, the promotion of an aggressive policy on external plan for the conquest of Bessarabia - on the other hand.

The events in Romania related to the imposition of a dictate called "peace" caused serious concerns in Chisinau. Thus, referring to this situation, "Romania Nouă" publishes an article signed by Ghibu in which he explains - within the limits of existing information - the meaning of the seizure of power by a government approved by the occupiers. "This government formed by Mr. Marghiloman, whose political views are known, seems to be - the author wrote - more of a guarantee requested by Germany that Romania will receive and support peace as its enemies demand.

We, who from here will continue on the path we have started, for the unification of all Romanians, in which we unwaveringly believe - we will however avoid things that would further embarrass Romania in its temporary misfortune."[63]

It was clear that in Chisinau, not even at the level of the leaders of the unionist movement, they were not fully aware of the big problems that had imposed on the King and his close collaborators, the Marghiloman formula, in the idea of acceptance "without negotiations" - as suggested by Ion I.C. Brătianu in the Crown Councils - of the conditions of that "peace" imposed, thus giving it the character of "dictation".

But, in the extremely complicated situation in Bessarabia after the proclamation of Independence, keeping alive the orientation towards the union with Romania had become, all the more, an imperative of the moment. The specter of rejoining the eastern part of historical Moldova to Soviet Russia would have meant canceling all the democratic conquests made until then and returning to an oppressive regime. The realization of the union would have remained, perhaps for an indefinite time, in the realm of illusions.

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[63] *„ România Nouă”, no. 41,* March 9, 1918. Cf. Onisifor Ghibu, *Pe Baricadele vieții*…, p.543.

An edifying example is the article entitled Protector of our ideal, *Bessarabia*[64] signed by I. Mateiu, censored article but kept in Onisifor Ghibu's personal archive: *In the new political circumstances created by the German "peace", the propaganda of our national ideal is no longer possible," the article stated. But the idea that Bessarabia then remained the only free Romanian territory where the struggle for unification continued, permeated the entire article.*

The same fate had the article of O. Ghibu, Pacea de la Bucharest published in the same issue, in a version accepted more or less by censorship (the original text was kept in the author's archive and is published later [65]). "Almost everything was taken from us - we read in the original text -. Only one thing could not be taken from us: the consciousness that we did our duty and that in the fight we fought for a year and a half, justice and truth were on our side, although victory left us for a moment". With emotion and respect, we, those of today, read what was written a century ago at the end of the article: "Whatever the coming days may bring us, **we have to carry the burden with a strengthened soul that the truth never dies and will soon rise again, illuminating the vast Romanian land from the Dniester to the Tisa**."[66] (emphasized by the author, V.M.).

Under the imposed "peace" regime, the government disbanded the Transylvanian and Bucovina volunteer regiments made up of prisoners in Russian camps, their situation becoming very critical. The "România" newspaper that appeared in Iași ceased publication, Nicolae Iorga's "Neamul Românesc" was subject to severe restrictions; Onisifor Ghibu was threatened for the orientation and content of his articles, and the order of the German occupier was that "New Romania" should never appear again", and Ghibu should disappear from Bessarabia. The coup d'état was intended to be the confiscation of the Romanian printing house that printed this newspaper and many other works. The last number printed in Latin letters was no. 82 of May 2, 1918, number dedicated to Barbu Delavrancea and George Coșbuc. The deer of Onisifor Ghibu could not be defeated, however. "România Nouă" continued to appear but printed in a printing

[64] *„România Nouă" no. 43, March 11, 1918, Ocrotitoarea idealului nostru : Basarabia*, by I. Mateiu.

[65] Onisifor Ghibu, *Pe Baricadele vieții*,…, p. 544-545.

[66] Idem.

house with Russian letters. At this time, O. Ghibu was in Iași looking for the possibility of acquiring an old printing house that was in a warehouse in Galati. In the discussion with Alecu Constantinescu, former minister of the interior in Brătianu's government, an agreement was reached on the financial solution: "List for helping the newspaper "România Nouă" - proposed by the former minister who subscribed with 5,000 lei. In a record time, through private donations (Nicolae Titulescu, for example, donated 20,000 lei, making a loan to the Bank of Moldova), the amount of 100,000 lei needed to buy the printing house in Galati was collected. In his memoirs, O. Ghibu recounts the enormous difficulties he encountered when bringing the printing press to Chisinau. In the last issue (85) of the newspaper printed with Russian letters, an appeal was made to the readers to wait a few more days until, in the new printing house, the printing with Latin letters will be resumed. Actually, on June 5, 1918, i.e. after a month, the publication of the "România Nouă" newspaper resumed with Latin letters. The article Going forward signed by O. Ghibu was a retrospective look at what the newspaper "Ardealul (Transilvania)" - "New Romania" had meant in the life of Bessarabia: "through the program and even through its name": it had - the author emphasized - the meaning of a "battle flag". *"România Nouă"* continued to appear, facing the hostility of the events that took place throughout the territory of Romania occupied by the Centrals, "until December 2, the day after the unification of Transylvania, with which the entire program displayed on the frontispiece of the newspaper, for the union of all Romanians, was fulfilled"[67]

The day after the proclamation of the Union and the promulgation of the Royal Decree recognizing the Decision of the Union of Bessarabia with the Motherland, Ukraine's campaign to reclaim Bessarabia, which was now part of Romania, became extremely aggressive. Here are some examples:

[67] Onisifor Ghibu, *People among people, Memories*. Selection and introduction by Ion Bulei. Established text, chronological table and index of names by Octavian O. Ghibu, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 320.

"The Government of Ukraine to the Government of Romania, Kyiv, April 12, 1918[68]

The Government of the Republic of Ukraine... transmits to you the decision taken on April 13, 1918 by the Parliament of Ukraine, the Central Rada, regarding the annexation of Bessarabia by Romania.

The Central Rada declares:

- he does not agree that the decision of the Council of the Country to incorporate Bessarabia into Romania...expresses the will of all the peoples who live on the territory of Bessarabia and demand that the regions where the population declared themselves Ukrainian.....be joined to the Republic of Ukraine..

- The Central Rada ...addresses to Romania and the Central Powers a Note of protest against this system ***of reprisals and violation of the rights of the nationalities living in Bessarabia"*** *(emphasized by the author, V.M.)*

- It does not recognize the act of April 9 (the union decided on March 27 - old style) and the Rada "instructs the Council of Ministers to take all measures ... ***to solve the problem of Bessarabia*** *(emphasized by the author, V.M.) by common agreement with the Democratic Republic of Ukraine…"* The representative of Ukraine, Galagan, a member of the Rada, had already left for Romania to solve the "Problem of Bessarabia". The protest note is signed by the President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Golubovici, by the Manager of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lubinsky.[69]

The answer given to Ukraine on April 9/22 by the Romanian Government[70], document signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, C.C. Arion, is an example of a diplomatic act which, in few but well-chosen words, clearly, firmly, clearly, documented and categorically expresses Romania's point of view:

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[68] A. BAR, Fund XIV, file 1010, vol. II, Note of Protest of the Government of the Republic of Ukraine, Kiev, April 13, 1918 addressed to the Romanian Government, Iasi.

[69] Idem*, Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania..., doc. no. 97, p. 303-304 (original in French)*

[70] *Ibidem*, Fund XIV, file 1010, vol I, f. 80-84, Iasi, April 9/22, 1918, Response Note of the Romanian Government to the April 12 Protest of the Ukrainian Government. Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania...., doc. no. 100, p. 306-308.

1) ... .attracts attention ... that Bessarabia was not annexed by Romania ... it united willingly with the Motherland, by virtue of an almost unanimous vote of the Council of the Country ... assembly which is the expression of the will of the Nation, therefore having the same origin as the Ukrainian Central Rada, representing, like the Rada, the sovereign power which gives it the right to final decisions..... The nationalities of Bessarabia being represented in the Council of the Country ....must obey the majority ...the Romanian Government considers ..that no one can dispute this principle...

2)...there is no meeting in Bessarabia in which the population...asked to join Ukraine.....The Romanian Government is confident that neither the Rada nor the Ukrainian Government set out to stir up minority agitations directed against the great Romanian majority....The Romanian Government draws attention to the fact that Ukraine itself is only a state made up of various nationalities that are in the minority compared to the Ukrainian majority - the same situation as in Bessarabia with a majority Romanian.

3)....Rada lost sight of the fact that at the peace of Brest-Litovsk, Ukraine did not claim any right over Bessarabia...it is regrettable that today politics tends towards conquests that neither the history of the past nor the principles of law legitimize"...

Recalling the territorial abduction committed by Russia in 1812, the Declaration of the Romanian Government specifies: "This abduction will not be repeated, neither in whole nor in part, **by the Democratic Republic of Ukraine in defiance of justice and legal norms**." (emphasized by the author, V.M.)

4) "...following the example of the Ukrainian Government, the Romanian Government will in turn take all the measures at its disposal so that the problem of Bessarabia is considered solved forever".

5) The Romanian government rejects the accusations regarding acts of violation of the rights of minorities in Bessarabia, accusations "that are not based on anything serious". Expresses "a very sincere desire to maintain the most friendly relations with the new neighboring state, feeling that the new democratic republic has renounced the system of the old Russian empire of not recognizing the rights of other nations if they do not conform to its own interests or views..."[71]

[71] *Ibidem.*

It can be said that even the Council of the Country and the Council of General Directors of Bessarabia gave a response to the claim policy of Ukraine by publishing the government program they had in mind: democratic reforms, the organization of ministries, public services, the army, schools, the operation of the Church based on the unrestricted use of Romanian languages, guaranteeing the rights to a free and equal life to all minority citizens[72]; on May 2 "România Nouă" published a clarifying document issued by the Council of General Directors and entitled Notice of the Bessarabian Devolution for the People in which the meaning of the act of March 27, the mission of the Council of the Country and the Council of General Directors, the advantages obtained by the Bessarabian Romanians through the union with the Motherland was clearly understood. The main idea of this document is expressed right from the beginning: "By rejoining Bessarabia to Wallachia, we all form one country. But the rights of the inhabitants of Bessarabia are not diminished in any way, so all the freedoms acquired through the revolution are untouched.... The union of Bessarabia with Romania is a good for all the inhabitants of Bessarabia, **not only for Moldovans who are of Romanian descent, but also for the foreign nationalities who live among us and who do not lose any of their rights**" (emphasized by the author, V.M.). The document ends with a Call addressed to all the inhabitants of Bessarabia:

> *Twinned peoples of Bessarabia! The Union of Bessarabia with Romania was a commandment of history and a correction of the injustices that oppressed this tsar over a century. We suffered together as brothers under the old rule; now together we will enjoy all the public rights, the peaceful ordered and enlightened life!.... (emphasized by the author, V.M.).*[73] *(emphasized by the author, V.M.).*

[72] *„România Nouă”,* year II, no. 72, April 14/27, 1918. Statement of the Board of General Directors. Cf..: Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania, ..., doc. No. 102, p. 310 -313.

[73] "România Nouă", year II, no. 76 of April 19 / May 2, 1918, Notice of the Bessarabian Constitution for the people, signed by P. Cazacu- the president of the Council and director of Finance, G. Grosu - director of Justice, Ș..Ciobanu - director of Education, N Codreanu - director of Public Works, V. Chiorescul - director of Commerce and Industry, E. Cateli - director Agriculture, I. Costin - the director of The Home Office, I. Gherman - the general controller. Cf., Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania..., doc. no. 104, p. 314-316.

But Ukraine was not receptive to any such explanations. The annexation of Bessarabia in the shortest possible time was one of the major objectives of his foreign policy.

Formulates so-called "arguments" in the Note sent to the Romanian government on May 5:

- does not recognize the "validity" of the arguments "that try to justify the actions of the Romanian Government in Bessarabia, which led to the annulment of political autonomy and the Romanian Government's declaration of the annexation of Bessarabia to the United Kingdom of Romania"

- Bessarabia's declaration of independence "from Romania was confirmed by the Romanian government"

- "The decision of the Council of the Country taken in Chisinau under the pressure of the state of war, rigorously imposed at that time by the Romanian authorities of the whole of Bessarabia and under the influence of a propaganda in favor of the public vote, cannot therefore be considered as an expression of the authentic will of the population of Bessarabia"

- Romania acted as an "enemy country", giving an "ultimatum: it was clearly proposed, between voluntary union with Romania and annexation. The guarantee of the autonomy of the Republic of Moldova was refused, but also the lifting of the state of war..." – *"...it is well known that* ***Moldovans do not constitute the majority of the population in Bessarabia****, that this majority is represented by non-Moldovan peoples****, among whom there are many Ukrainians****"*

- *Currently the government of Ukraine "****firmly refuses to recognize Romania's rights over Bessarabia and claims its own rights over this region****...the vital interests of Ukraine – strategic and economic – require the* ***Government of Ukraine to insist on the annexation of Bessarabia****..."*[74] (emphasized by the author, V.M.) The document emanating from the Ukrainian government is signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Demetrius Doroshenski.[75]

[74] *A. BAR,* Fond XIV, file 1010, vol II, p. 103-105. Note no. 2928, Kyiv, May 5, 1918, Government of Ukraine to the Romanian Government. Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania..., doc. no. 105, p. 317-320.

[75] This text was the subject of a communication presented, officially and publicly, in Bern by the representative of Ukraine.

So, "vital" strategic and economic interests "impose" the annexation of Bessarabia to Ukraine. The rest doesn't matter anymore! An endless string of untruths and twists.

Romania, subject to the rigors of the "peace" dictate of the new Central Powers-Soviet Russia coalition, faced this pawn of Russia, called Ukraine, interested in its turn in territorial expansion at the expense of Romania, already torn apart and surviving in extreme conditions. In the face of this real and not at all unpredictable danger, the Romanian government informed about the annexationist intentions of Kiev at the expense of Romania, the allied and neutral states. In the circular telegram to all Romanian embassies, the Minister of Foreign Affairs C.C. Arion said: "According to the latest information, the government of Ukraine seems to be resuming agitations in the Bessarabia issue. You will suggest the following explanations and considerations in your discussions”.[76] Here are some of them:

-"We consider this Union forever and indissoluble" - a brief history of the rapture of Bessarabia follows.

- Ukraine "follows the example of the imperialist policy of tsarist Russia, which denied small states any right that it did not consider in accordance with its interests...Ukraine claims to exercise domination over an entire people of two million Romanians and over territories that never belonged to it".

- Referring to the intervention made by Ukraine in Berne, Arion declared: "Regarding the communication made officially and publicly in Berne, a month or so ago, by the delegate of the Republic of Ukraine, and which demands nothing more than a new accession of Bessarabia to the Republic, you will draw the attention of those in law that Ukraine has no quality to claim a country which, historically and ethnically, has always been Romanian. Bessarabia actually belonged, within its natural borders, the Prut, the Dniester, the Black Sea and the borders that separated it from Austria-Hungary, to the Moldavian Crown, ever since the founding of this Principality in the 14th century”.[77]

[76] A. BAR, Fund XIV, file 1010, vol I, p. 85-89. Cf. Bessarabia Bucovina Transylvania..., doc. no. 107, p. 339-343, Circular telegram f.n., , Iasi, May 20/June 2, C.C. Arion, Minister of Foreign Affairs to all Romanian legations.

[77] *Ibidem.*

This was followed, on June 19, by the official response (16 pages) that the Romanian government formulated to Ukraine's incriminating note of May 5. It represents a masterful historical, geographical, ethnographic, political and legal demonstration of Romania's inalienable rights over the territories inhabited by Romanians; starting with prehistory, then the foundation of the first Romanian state formations in the Carpatho-Danubian - Pontic space, the history of Moldova, relations with neighboring states, focusing on the events that took place in the 18th and 19th centuries; the demonstration dwells at length on the situation of Bessarabia torn from the body of Moldova by Russia. The history of Bessarabia's national awakening and the stages of separation from Russia. They then insist on an issue that, unfortunately, is still controversial today – Romania's right over Bessarabia:

> *The Royal Government declares again, that it never had the intention to conquer, annex or incorporate Bessarabia, but also that it could not give up the historical rights of Romania over a Romanian land, rights that compelled it in an imperative manner to fulfill,* ***by virtue of the imprescriptible historical right, the desire of the immense majority of the population of Bessarabia and to accept the proposed union, which definitively guarantees the people of Bessarabia the fulfillment of the freedoms*** *of which it was deprived for so long and unfairly. (*emphasized by the author, V.M *)* [78].

It is remarkable that the "arguments" contained in the above-mentioned documents, especially those regarding the "vital interests" of Ukraine that would "impose" the annexation of Bessarabia, were the subject of interesting debates in the "România Nouă" newspaper. For example, the article Portul Odesa si Bessarabia, written by Eugeniu N. Giurgea, demonstrates how Bessarabia was corseted by Russia in terms of trade possibilities with Romania: "Through this great port of the Black Sea - pointed out Giurgea - flowed all the wealth of Bessarabia, worth tens and hundreds of millions/ of rubles/ every year bought at low prices by various missionaries, Jews, Russians, Armenians or Greeks and sold by them at high prices, which made them realize enormous profits in a short time. The

[78] A. BAR, Fund XIV, file 1010, vol II, p. 156-170. Iași, June 6/19, 1918, The Romanian Government's Response to the Ukrainian Government's Note of Protest of May 5, 1918.

Russian government, under the impetus of these so-called big merchants and in the desire to bring Bessarabia as close as possible to Russia on the economic ground, sought to make transport easier for all the agricultural material of the Bessarabian owners, so that all this material could not go to the Romanian ports, but only to Odessa." The author of this article emphasized the fact that for Russia, Bessarabia was of great importance "being the gateway that opened the way, through our country, to Constantinople / and/ would have been able to... destroy any beginning of economic twinning between Bessarabia and Romania and the products to go to the port of Odesa". He believes that the return of Bessarabia to the Motherland changes the situation "because the Romanian customs on the Dniester are a strong barrier to the entire transport of Bessarabian products to Odessa, remaining to be directed to Ackerman, Galați and Brăila...*"*[79]*.*

Ukraine's expansionist plans – be it "revolutionary" or not – aimed at Romanian territories, were not "limited" to Bessarabia. Equally, the northern part of the autonomous principality of Moldova, known as Bucovina - since its annexation by Austria in 1774-1775 - was traded again at this time, this time between Austria - Ukraine - Russia. As part of the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations, Austria had committed itself that, in exchange for a quantity of wheat that Ukraine would have provided, "to draw up, by July 15, 1918, a draft law by which to separate the territories of Eastern Galicia, whose population is mostly Ukrainian, from the present Galicia, and to unite them with Bucovina in a country of the Crown"[80]. Bucovina Romanians spoke out against such a plan to dismember Romanian Bucovina in the Austro-Ukrainian interest: the "Viata Nouă" newspaper from Suceava published their protest on October 20, 1918, in which it was said: "Bucovina is a historical and geographical unit; it is pure Romanian land, not only from Suceava to the Prut, but also from Vatra Dornei to the Dniester. In this land, the life of the Romanian state was organized; Bucovina has remained our heritage, as it is, in its entirety, and we owe it to keep it intact for future times"[81]*.*

In the last months of 1918, events were recorded that marked fundamental changes in the political, social and economic reorganization of the Romanian space. The unity of action of the Romanians from all the

[79] *„România Nouă",* Chișinău, year. II, no. 151, of August 24, 1918, the article The Port of Odesa and Bessarabia by Eugeniu N. Giurgea.

[80] *„ Viața Nouă",* Suceava, year. V, no. 12 of August 18, 1918. Statement made by deputy C. Isopescu-Grecu in the Vienna Parliament.

[81] *Idem,* October 20,1918.

Romanian provinces still separated from the motherland, asserted itself with power. "New Romania" - it was not only a mirror of the national struggle of the Romanians from Transylvania and Bucovina, but it participated in the actions taking place in these last months of 1918. The Romanian prisoners from the Austro-Hungarian army in the camps in Russia organized themselves into a strong body of volunteers, in three centers: Samara - on the Volga -, Celiabinsk - Western Siberia and Vladivostok - the Far East. The Romanian National Committee established in Celiabinsk on August 30, 1918 was responsible for the organization and coordination of the volunteers' activity. On October 29, an Assembly of thousands of Romanian volunteers took place in this center that proclaimed the separation of the provinces inhabited by Romanians from Austria-Hungary and their union with Romania[82].

Also in those days, on October 6, in Iași, the National Committee of Romanians emigrating from Austria-Hungary "located on the territory of the Romanian Kingdom, Bucovinians and Transylvanians, in their name and of the subjugated brothers at home whose conscience is silenced and therefore unable to express themselves freely,...we demand to be freed from the yoke of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and we are determined to fight by all means and by all means for the entire Romanian Nation to be constituted in a single National and free State, under the rule of the Romanian dynasty.....all attempts at federalization by the House of Habsburg are desperate gestures of an empire doomed to disintegrate and perish...The fate of the Romanians in Austria-Hungary was decided by the war of the Romanian Kingdom and by the free will of the entire Romanian people and it will be confirmed by the General Peace Congress in which they will take part and the official representatives of the liberating Romania". The statement was signed by the President of the Committee, Al. Lapedatu and Octavian Tăzlăoanu- secretary [83]. A fost publicată de

[82] *Basarabia Bucovina Transilvania…,* doc. no. 111, p. 364. Apud Transilvania, Banat, Crișana, Maramureș 1918-1928, Bucharest, National Culture, 1929, vol. I, p.126, Treaty concluded in Celiabinsk between the National Committee of Romanians in Siberia and the National Council of Czechoslovaks in Siberia.

[83] *The Great Union from December 1, 1918,* Library of the Bucharest Separation of the "Astra" Association, Bucharest, December 1, 1943, p. 22-23, Declaration from Iași of Romanians emigrating from Austria-Hungary, October 6, 1918. Memorandum sent to King Ferdinand, Iași.

cele trei ziare care susțineau activitatea Comitetului : „***România Mare*”, *„România Nouă” și „Lupta Ardealului”.*** The declaration was also sent to King Ferdinand, with the title "Memorial", the basic text being completed as follows:

> *...The Transylvanian and Bucovina Romanians, who broke all ties with the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, swore allegiance to you; as citizens and soldiers are ready to make any sacrifice for the political union of all Romanians and for the Romanian dynasty, inextricably linked to the destinies of our entire nation.*

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The union of all Romanians in a single national unitary state, the final objective of the prodigious activity of the newspaper "Ardealul (Transilvania) - România Nouă" would be fulfilled in Alba-Iulia. On November 20, 1918, its last issue was printed, in which it was announced: "With today's issue, the newspaper "România Nouă" suspends its activity in Chisinau, remaining to appear in Alba-Iulia as soon as possible. Farewell!"

As a member of the Romanian Great National Council elected in the Alba Iulia Assembly on December 1, 1918, Onisifor Ghibu lived and saw the fulfillment of his dream. His name is inextricably linked to the first step of the Great Union, the reintegration of Bessarabia, after 106 years of occupation, into the Kingdom of Romania.

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A "remember" of interest:

Gheorghe Brătianu on the "Secular Unity" of Bessarabia - "populated mainly with Ukrainians” - with the Republic of Ukraine".

In 1917-1918, Onisifor Ghibu was totally involved in the struggle for the liberation of Bessarabia and its Union with the Country; in 1940, when Bessarabia and Bucovina were annexed by the USSR, the historian and politician Gheorghe I. Brătianu explained to his contemporaries the "problem of Bessarabia" - within its historical borders - with arguments and judgments of indisputable value. Like Onisifor Ghibu, or Nicolae Iorga, Gheorghe Brătianu resorted to history and its teachings in order to make sense of the course of events that, in 1918, inexorably led to the separation of Bessarabia, in its entirety, from Imperial Russia and the Union with the

Country, opening the way for the national-state unification of Romania, and in 1940 they opened the process of the territorial disintegration of Greater Romania[84].

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"The starting point of these researches - the author states right from the start - is the very text of the Soviet ultimatum from 1940, which eloquently summarizes the essential points of the opposing thesis; we will only try to oppose them with all objectivity, the testimony of the facts"[85].

Here is what is stated in the document sent by Molotov to the Romanian government on June 26, 1940:

> *In 1918, taking advantage of Russia's military weakness, the Romanian Government separated from the Soviet Union (Russia), a part of its territory, Bessarabia, thus breaking the secular unity of Bessarabia, populated mainly with Ukrainians, with the Soviet Republic of Ukraine (subl. ns. V.M.). The Soviet Union never came to terms with the fact of taking Bessarabia by force, which the Soviet Government declared more than once and openly in front of the whole world. Now, when the military weakness of the USSR is a thing of the past, and the international situation that has arisen demands a quick resolution of the issues inherited from the past in order to finally lay the foundations of a solid peace between all countries, the USSR considers it necessary and appropriate that, in the interest of restoring the truth, it steps together with Romania to immediately resolve the issue of the return of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union.*

It is known that it was not only Bessarabia; Soviet claims went beyond the provisions of the secret Annex of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact; the new claim - Bucovina - was "justified" by the aggressor in that it represented "to an insignificant extent, a means of compensation for that great loss that was caused to the USSR and the population of Bessarabia through the 22-year domination of Romania in Bessarabia". Molotov's thick pencil had drawn a new border line that

[84] Ghorghe I, Brătianu: *Basarabia. Drepturi naționale și istorice.* Preface by Ioan-Aurel Pop, Meteor Press, București, 2024.

[85] Idem, pp. 16-17.

covered "a considerable number of square kilometers from the territory of old Moldova, to the North-West of Dorohoi county".

So, the two main "arguments" formulated by the Soviet government in support of its claims were:

- "Secular unity" of Bessarabia with Ukraine

- Bessarabia "was populated mainly with Ukrainians"

In fact, the entire ultimatum "was populated" with historical falsehoods. Mr. Brătianu writes: "Regarding this thesis that invokes historical and national rights, we propose that «in the interest of restoring the truth» - but in the strict sense of this term - to demonstrate what the «secular unity of Bessarabia with Ukraine» consists of...and to what extent historical realities can confirm such a theory."

In 1656 - the author points out, the treaty between ruler Gh. Stephen of Moldavia and the Tsar of Russia specifying: "The localities, territories and fortresses that the Turks took from Moldova such as Cetatea-Albă, Chilia, Tighina and the province of Bugeac, the Tsar of Russia will regain them by force of arms and return them to the Principality of Moldavia jure hereditario. 1656 - specifies Brătianu - is also the time when the Muscovite state extended its power over Kiev, the capital of Ukraine! Here is a first confirmation - says the author - of the so-called «secular unity» of Bessarabia with Ukraine".

These historical borders - continued Brătianu - would be guaranteed again in an exhaustive and solemn way by the Russian-Moldovan treaty of April 13, 1711 between Dimitrie Cantemir and Petru I, namely: "The country of Moldavia with the Dniester shall be its border, and with Bugeac and all the fortresses shall also belong to Moldavia". The borders of Moldova are formulated even more precisely by Peter the Great in the Proclamation to the Moldavians.

Moreover, Brătianu specifies:

> *"The Russian text of the treaty provides, in Article XI, a strong and precise line of demarcation: «The borders of Moldova, in accordance with its old rights, are those formed by the Dniester (Cameniţa, Bender with the territory of Bugeac), the Danube, Wallachia, Transylvania and Poland, according to the determination that was made» (...) Anyway, the Russian-Moldovan Treaty of 1711, which followed the one of 1656, recognizes, without equivocal, the importance of the Dniester, the eastern border of Moldova and considers Bessarabia, otherwise*

known only under the Tatar name of Bugeac, as a province of Moldavia occupied by the Turks and which should be returned to the Principality of which it is an integral part". Another interesting idea: this treaty, "concluded with all legal norms, not with the Ottoman Empire, suzerain of the Moldavian Principality, but with Moldova itself, recognizes, through the signature of the founder of modern Russia, the «historical and national rights» of this Romanian state over its entire territory, which stretched without a doubt, up to the Dniester and the Danube. This first conclusion - writes Gh. Brătianu - he doesn't need any more comments."[86]

It should be noted that at the time of signing this treaty, the Dniester was not a border between Moldova and Russia; in 1792-1793 the Russian expansion towards the Black Sea and the mouths of the Danube reached the Dniester.

1774 – the peace of Kuciuk-Kainardji had heavy consequences for the Principality – "coveted by both Russia and Austria."[87] In the context of those events that took place, as is known, under the blessing of Russia, Austria and the Ottoman Gate traded the Upper Country of Moldavia, named, from then on, Bucovina, and Russia planned to constitute, from the Romanian Principalities, an entity, under the authority of Prince Potemkin. Commenting on this situation, Brătianu said: "However, it should be noted that the geographic and historical unity of the Romanian Principalities was once again recognized on this occasion."

The 19th century heralded a new stage of tsarist expansion towards the South, at the time of the Napoleonic wars. Napoleon - writes Brătianu - "was preparing to propose to his new ally and friend, the division of Europe; on February 2, 1808, Napoleon wrote to Coulaincourt, the French ambassador in Petersburg: «Tell the Emperor that I want what he also wants, that my political principles are irrevocably linked to his; that we won't be able to collide because the world is big enough for both of us; that they do not rush him to withdraw from Moldova and Wallachia; let him not hurry me to withdraw from Prussia either...». "

[86] Gh. Brătianu, op. cit., p. 28-29.
[87] *Ibidem,* p. 35.

Brătianu also note:

Great plans were taking shape; it was returning to the project once pursued by Paul I of a combined offensive of the Russian and French armies crossing Asia Minor on their way to Persia and India with the aim of striking at the sensitive point of the British forces. In this system - the author specifies - the Principalities became a simple bait thrown, like so many others, on the market of European transactions...Napoleon invaded the Iberian peninsula; Alexander, after having been satisfied for a while with «the land called Bessarabia and the fortresses of Bender, the White Fortress, Chilia, Ismail, and, in addition, the Fortress of Hotin» now wanted to extend his frontiers to the Danube and annex Moldavia and Wallachia in their entirety. The Russian consul in Bucharest, Kiriko, launched the rumor that «Transylvania was to be ceded to the House of Austria and united with Moldavia and Wallachia under the name of the Kingdom of Dacia and would belong to the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia»"[88]

It is known that in Erfurt it was agreed by the two emperors that France would recognize Wallachia, Moldavia up to the Danube as an integral part of the Russian empire - which would later be the border between the Ottoman and Russian empires.

In the context of strained Russian-Ottoman relations, the trading of Romanian lands continued: on May 28, 1812, the peace between the two empires was concluded in Bucharest and Bessarabia was assigned to the Russians. I continue to reproduce Gheorghe Brătianu's comment on these onerous transactions: "In reality, the territory ceded to the Russian empire meant much more than the name indicated: apart from Bugeac, the annexed province consisted of the counties of Moldavia in the East of the Prut and the fortress of Hotin, established in the Turkish «paradise» in 1774..... It was actually about the dismemberment of Moldavia by the Russian side on a much larger scale, after the annexation of Bucovina by Austria. And in one case and another, the procedure is equivalent to a fraud...". Brătianu deepens the analysis of Bessarabia's situation in relation to the interests of the great powers and discerns features that shed light on the importance the province had both for the Ottoman Gate and for the Russian Empire:

[88] *Ibid., p. 50.*

For the Russians, who wanted to annex the two Principalities and incorporate them into their empire, this solution of the Prut border was only a palliative, a last-minute concession taken in the face of the threat of hostility on another front.

The 1856 moment showed the intentions of the victorious coalition in the Crimean War to distance Russia from the Danube and the Black Sea. The three southern counties were returned to Moldova. Tsar Alexander II did not accept the rigors of this peace, humiliating for the empire, and he considered the imposed clauses "exorbitant". Foreign Minister Gorceakov put into work a diplomatic formula aimed at giving back to Russia the possibility of canceling the Paris peace clauses. In 1860, together with the French ambassador in Petersburg, he drew up the text of a Franco-Russian treaty in which "it was a question, no more and no less, of resuming, on a new basis, the problem of dividing the Ottoman empire". Russia's immediate claim was the reoccupation of the three Moldavian counties and the release of Russia from the restrictions resulting from the neutralization of the Black Sea and the naval clauses. In the circular sent to the European chancelleries, Gorceakov explained the reason for this Russian decision by the fact that "the revolutions in Moldova and Wallachia opened the way to unification and then the calling of a foreign prince[89]

Russian diplomacy won: the Reichstadt (Bavaria) agreement of July 1876 between Alexander II and Franz-Josef accompanied by the Foreign Ministers Gorceakov and Count Andrassy, respectively, included Russia's consent to the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary and this empire's consent to Russia's reoccupation of the three southern Moldavian counties. The specification in this treaty - initialed in Budapest on January 15, 1877 - was that Russia's territorial annexations in Europe should be limited to Bessarabia "which would restore the old borders of the empire before 1856". Thus, the author specifies, "for the third time in the course of a century, the issue of Bessarabia occupied the agenda of the negotiations between the European powers"[90]

The issue of Bessarabia has a tortuous history during the years of the 1877-1878 war of independence. The Plevna episode and the commitments made by Russia towards Romania on the eve of the war had

[89] *Ibid.,*p. 101.
[90] *Iid., p. 106.*

no importance for Russia's annexationist plans. Gorceakov himself warned the Romanian foreign minister, Mihail Kogălniceanu - concerned about the future of the three counties in the south of Moldova - "not to have any illusions because these days / treaties / are nothing more than simple papers" The exchange of letters between Kogălniceanu and the Romanian diplomatic envoy in Saint Petersburg at this time is edifying: the foreign minister insisted that he insist on maintaining the decisions from Paris from 1856 regarding the south of Moldova; the Romanian diplomat replies: "From your letters I see that you still trust the good intentions of the Imperial Cabinet. You are wrong. . They are not considering any of our requests. And no action. They care little for the country's suffering and its destruction. We cannot expect and hope anything from them. We have a relentless enemy in Russia.*"*[91] *The Berlin Peace Congress fully confirmed the realism of these judgments.*

The historical period following the Berlin Peace Congress, when the south of Eastern Moldova is re-annexed to the Russian Empire, is extensively analyzed by the historian Gh. Brătianu. The Russian statistics made in Bessarabia show a paradoxical situation: as the number of inhabitants increases, the number of Moldovans decreases dramatically. Thus, in 1856, out of 990,274 inhabitants, 74% were Moldavian; by 1897, the population had almost doubled. According to the figures provided by the historian Nikolai Durnovo, out of the 1,935,412 inhabitants, only 56% were Moldovans. In 1912, on the occasion of the centenary of the annexation, the total number of the population was 2,496,054 inhabitants, but the number of Moldavians is not mentioned at all.[92] Among the explanations of this phenomenon, mentioned by Brătianu are:

> *"the manipulation of censuses to establish nationality, the systematic displacement of the population, the emigration of the Moldavian element to other governorates - Cherson, Taurida, Caucasus, Siberia, etc.";* to all this, the author adds*: "The habit of registering as Russians or Ukrainians all those who understood Russian or Ukrainian even if they spoke Romanian at home had stopped. In addition, certain peculiarities of the Moldavian language were used, with the aim of raising it to the rank of a distinct language and opposing it to the Romanian language..."*

[91] *Ibid*.,p. 119.

[92] Vezi op.cit., p. 135-137.

Referring to the ethnic composition of the two annexed regions (Bucovina and Bessarabia) Gh. Brătianu demonstrates that "all the Ruthenian or Ukrainian population that we find settled today in large numbers in the north of Bucovina, in the county Hotin and in some neighboring areas is the product of a much more recent immigration, favored during the last century (XIX, note ns. V.M.) by the Austrian domination in Bucovina and the Russian one in Bessarabia. The same formula applies in southern Bessarabia. The region began to be colonized at the end of the 15th century by the Turks, who stole it from Moldova in order to establish here the Tatar horde of Bugeac". After 1812, a regime of massive colonization was applied. Of great interest to this day is the judgment of Gh. Brătianu on this phenomenon: "This artificial colonization does not give those who practiced it any historical or national rights"[93], *emphasizing: "The geographical unity of Bessarabia is indisputable and delimited by essentially natural borders".*

Considering all these aspects listed above, Brătianu believes that "Bessarabia, an agricultural region par excellence....had no history until the beginning of the 20th century....Among all the Romanian provinces subject to foreign domination, Bessarabia offered the fewest chances for the development of a national consciousness". In this context, he analyzes the extraordinary effect he had on the Moldavian soldier, the direct contact with the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian army, with the allied Romanian army. "Suddenly he had the consciousness of the same language that exceeded the borders of the Russian empire, the consciousness of a wider, richer nationality, of which he is also a part."

When Brătianu wrote this book, two events with a major impact on Romania's relations with the USSR were not known to him or perhaps they were only intuited; it is first about the text of the mutual assistance pact initialed by Titulescu and Litvinov in Montreux in July 1936 (in the eve of the "reshuffle" of the Gh. Tătărescu government); Gh. Brătianu mentions in a footnote that he has the information about this document "according to a recent memo from a Romanian diplomat aware of these negotiations"[94]. The political and public position of Gh. Brătianu of disapproval of Titulescu's political orientation regarding Romania's relations with the USSR. From the accounts of this episode, it appears that Brătianu was not aware of the

[93] *Ibid.,* p. 223.- 224.
[94] *Ibid., p.201.*

official powers given by the Tatarescu government to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the conclusion of such a pact with the USSR. Anyway, the judgments of Gh. Brătianu on the sidelines of such a pact would not have been different, even if they had known its content:

> *What would the application of this convention actually bring? It is enough to refer to the example of the Baltic states which, after concluding, in their turn, assistance pacts, whose qualification of «mutual» was only an ironic euphemism, were forced to accept, in 1939, Soviet garrisons, then to include communists in their governments, so that, in 1940, through «spontaneous» demonstrations, they were annexed to the Soviet Union.*

. As for Romanian-Soviet relations and the issue of Bessarabia, they - Brătianu considered - "remained at the same point where they were after the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1934". He inserts the information after which, at the 1937 Paris Universal Exhibition, at the entrance to the Soviet pavilion, there was a relief map of the Soviet Union, where "the broad line of the western frontier equally covered Bessarabia". Remaining in this political context, Gh. Brătianu formulated a value judgment that proved to be correct and valid, without any reservations.: "No matter how conciliatory the attitude of Romanian politics was towards the USSR..., the decision of the Soviet government was taken...in the summer of 1939 there was a real game of overloads in Moscow which was suddenly put to an end by the theater coup of August 23: a pact of non-aggression and consultation concluded between Germany and the USSR"[95]

If the provisions of the secret Annex of the Non-aggression Pact remained for many years not only "secret" but also unrecognized by Moscow, its actions after September 1, 1939 fully proved what had been planned. After attacking and occupying the part of Poland provided for in the Secret Annex, "Soviet troops - says Gh. Brătianu - they encircled the Romanian territory north of the Dniester and advanced to the heart of the mountains in Galicia". Besides, Molotov's well-known statement of March 30, 1940 dispelled any doubt but also hope regarding Moscow's intentions.

Brătianu considered that the German "lightning offensive" in the spring of 1940 against the West "pressured Moscow to make up its mind". The analysis of the Soviet act of force against Romania in June 1940 leads Brătianu to think of what happened in the 19th century when, among the arguments used by

[95] *Ibid., p. 205.*

tsarist diplomacy to justify its annexationist claims, there was also that of "Russia's security threatened by the redoubtable Romanian imperialism": "Odessa, it seems, is too close to the Dniester border". Even the formula of "compensations" through the annexation of Northern Bucovina "as interest" for the capital invested in Bessarabia during the period of "Romanian occupation", reminded Brătianu of article 3 of the agreement between the Emperor of the French and the Russians, namely: "M.S. The Emperor of the French consents that M.S. The Emperor of all the Russias to continue to occupy the province of Bessarabia and to retain it to be reunited with the Russian Empire...as a legitimate compensation for the expenses occasioned by the occupation of the Principalities"[96].

The formula of the so-called "compensations" used by the Russian and then Soviet imperialists has been perpetuated until today, when the question of the return of the Romanian Treasury confiscated without any justification in January 1918, is artificially and illogically mixed with the so-called "debts" of Romania towards the USSR from the time of the first world war, from the period 1918-1940 when the Romanians "exploited Soviet Bessarabia" and, of course, from the time of the Second World War, when the Romanian occupier exploited Russian lands. Not even the conditions formulated in the ultimatum of June 26, 1940 were respected, the Soviet military invasion preceding the official response of the Romanian Government in which it stated that it "sees itself forced" to accept those conditions that were already implemented. "The Red Army - said Brătianu - occupied strategic positions in Bucovina and Northern Moldavia that allowed it, if necessary, to return without difficulty to the line of the Prut and to penetrate, along the valleys, all at once, to the heart of the Romanian territory". In addition, states the author of the study, "the day after the annexation, the Soviet threat only grew even more":

- Concentration of troops along the Prut. Border incidents provoked by the Soviets
- Occupation of some areas in the Danube Delta
- Dissolution of the European Commission of the Danube (CED)
- Inciting Bulgaria to claim all of Dobrogea
- "Encouraging Hungary's claims over Transylvania, massing its troops along the Moldavian border"[97]

[96] *Ibid.*,p. 209.
[97] *Ibid.*,p. 217.

Let's also add the support given to Bela Kun's actions against Romania in 1919.

At the end of the documentation regarding the ordeal of Bessarabia during the Russian occupation for 106 years - from 1812 onwards - Brătianu formulates a strikingly topical value judgment. I reproduce it in full:

> *We get to the real bottom of the problem. In the conception of Tsar Alexander I, as in that of the leaders of the USSR, under Gorceakov, as in Molotov, Bessarabia was never anything but a means and not an end. Beginning in 1812, Russian policy aimed much further; she stopped on Prut but forced by circumstances. From this point of view, Soviet policy did not change its objectives: this was seen in the winter of 1940-1941, when the Russian armies threatened at every moment to cross the borders of Bessarabia and take possession of the entire lower course of the Danube, thus establishing a direct connection with the Slavic states of the Balkans. The /security/ argument invoked today/ 1940/ by Soviet diplomacy is, as far as Romania is concerned, as logical as the need to protect an elephant from a mouse.*[98]

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Concerned about the fate of his country after the end of the war he was living through, Gheorghe Brătianu expressed a truth with a long history: "Romania is not today, as it was not in the past, but a bridge to achieve other goals, which extend far beyond its territory and aim at the borders and access routes of Central Europe and the shores of the Mediterranean"; the hope of the author of these lines - who stood steadfastly, until the tragic end of his life, on the barricade defending the vital interests of his country - was linked to the possible "good intentions" of those who will dictate the future peace: "May all those who will decide, at the end of the Second World War, the fate of states and nations, be fully aware of this terrible reality! They should not forget, after so many experiences accumulated throughout history, that hatred and injustice carry their own condemnation and that the only solid basis of peace and sustainable creation is the objective investigation of reality."[99]

It is known that precisely this "objective research of reality" was not done by the representatives of the Powers that drafted the peace

[98] *Ibid, p. 228..*

[99] *Ibid.,*p. 231.

conditions of 1946-1947. The tangled tangle of territorial divisions, areas of interest and influence, the establishment of compensations on behalf of smaller nations - unconsulted - in the European and extra-European space, did not bring either general peace and security, or mutually beneficial interstate cooperation. Instability on all levels, insurmountable barriers between states and peoples, hierarchization of states according to sui-generis criteria, withdrawal of borders, artificial, which defied historical realities and broke the unity of nations, and many others, characterized that half century that passed after Versailles - 1947.

Because the subject of this study focused on the older and newer history of Eastern and Northern Moldova, let's not forget that Romania remained with the eastern and northern border as it was drawn in June 1940 by the Foreign Minister of the USSR, Molotov, with his thick pencil; the decision to this effect had already been taken long before the opening of the Paris Peace Conference. The peace treaty with Romania gave international legal status to this Decision, which became an article of the peace treaty. Let's say, invoking the spirit of Gheorghe Brătianu: "All those who will decide, at the end of this war, the fate of states and nations, should be aware of the interests of these peoples and their states, should research history and understand the realities of the time".

But the question remains: What role does the knowledge of history still have for the great politics of our days?

Curtea de Argeș, September 4, 2024

Summary

Moldova, an autonomous Principality under Ottoman suzerainty during the feudal period, lost, in 1812, its eastern part, between the Prut-Nistru-Danube, as a result of the Russian-Turkish transaction entered into in the terms of a treaty signed in Bucharest. The Ottoman Empire, as suzerain, did not have the right - according to the hatisherifs given by the sultan - to dispose of its vassal's territory in any way; thus, the treaty with Russia of 1812 was nullified from the spot. The part annexed by Russia was improperly called "Bessarabia" - a name given only to the southern part of Moldova which, in ancient times, belonged to the Basarab dynasty that ruled in Wallachia (Wallachia). Russian rule in the annexed territory, for 106 years (until 1918 - January 24), was characterized by the denationalization of Romanians, terror, forced Russification, deportations, lack of basic rights, isolation from the other Romanian provinces. This annexed territory became part of the Russian empire, as a "gubernia". Under the influence of the revolutionary movements in Russia, of the contacts established between Bessarabian Romanians and those from Romania, Ardeal, Bucovina, during the years of the first world war, the national movement was activated in Bessarabia as well. An important role in this process was played by Romanians from Austria-Hungary (civilians and soldiers) refugees in Romania and Russia, especially in Bessarabia. Prof. Dr. Onisifor Ghibu refugee from Sibiu, sentenced to death in absentia by the Habsburg authorities, along with many other Transylvanian Romanian refugees, was totally involved, through his entire activity, in the fight for the liberation of Bessarabia and its union with Romania. The newspapers he patronized, "Ardealul (Transilvania)" and "România Nouă" printed in the first printing press with Latin letters brought to Chisinau _ the capital of Bessarabia, from October 1917 to November 1918, became tribunes of the national movement for the liberation and union of Bessarabia with Romania. On December 2, 1917, Bessarabia proclaimed its autonomy within the Russian Federation; on January 24, 1918, it became an independent state, completely breaking away from Bolshevik Russia; on March 27, 1918, the Parliament of the Republic (Country Council) proclaimed the Union with the Kingdom of Romania. Bessarabia was re-annexed by the USSR following the ultimatum given on June 26, 1940, to the Romanian Government.

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