

## DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> 1918 IN THE PRESS OF THE EXILE

MIHAELA TOADER\*

**Abstract.** *The figures of the Romanian postwar exile belong to the groups of exiles from the old democratic formations, as well as to active groups of nationalist orientation. But what is distinguishable from the perspective of postwar exile in general, is a common direction, that of communism fighting and liberation of the countries found under Soviet influence. It can be said that most of the exiles from Eastern Europe have pursued, regardless of their political orientation, the same objective they have embraced by trying through different means to “awaken” Western Europe to reason in front of the Soviet expansion. Beyond these themes, the historical act of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, representing the Great Union of the Romanians, without forgetting the Unification of Bessarabia and Bukovina with Romania, was celebrated annually by the Romanians in exile.*

**Keywords:** *December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, Union Day, Union of Bessarabia with Romania, Union of Bukovina with Romania.*

During and at the end of the Second World War, a significant number of people from most of the countries of Eastern Europe, subjected to a pronounced wave of communization, chose the path of exile. For this period one can safely speak of a category of exiles or political refugees who carry with them not only their personal problem, but a nation-wide problem, “because the extent of this phenomenon that was, often, seen as a real exodus of the Eastern peoples”<sup>1</sup>.

The figures of the Romanian postwar exile belong to the groups of exiles from the old democratic formations, as well as to active groups of nationalist orientation. But what is distinguishable from the perspective of postwar exile in general, is a common direction, that of communism-fighting and liberation of the countries found under Soviet influence. It can be said that most of the exiles from Eastern Europe have pursued, regardless of their political orientation, the same objective they have embraced by trying through different means to “awaken” Western Europe to reason in front of the Soviet expansion.

\* PhD in Political Sciences; Researcher at The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile; michaelatoader@yahoo.com; mihaela.toader@iicmer.ro.

<sup>1</sup> George Uscătescu, *The Absent Europe*, Institutul European, Iași, 2005, pp. 109-110.

Away from their country, important figures of the exile have dedicated, over time, various pages of history to significant subjects in the history of Romania, such as “December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918.” December 1<sup>st</sup> was considered the celebration of not just the unification of Transylvania with Romania, but *the final moment of achieving the great national ideal of all Romanians that celebrated both the return to the historical boundaries* of the Romanians from Bessarabia and Bukovina, together with the remembrance of the first step Wallachia and Moldova made towards the birth of the Romanian State on January 24, 1859. Certainly, Romanians in exile have not forgotten historical moments as important for Romania, the Union of Bessarabia with Romania (27 March 1918) and 28 November 1918, the Union of Bukovina with Romania.

Among remarkable personalities in exile, militating for the historical truth regarding the Union of Bessarabia and Bukovina was Nicolae Lupan. After being denied by BBC and Deutsche Welle radio stations (Köln), Nicolae Lupan has been collaborating for 10 years with Radio Free Europe in a ten-minute weekly program dedicated to Bessarabia and Bukovina. In addition to radio collaborations, he writes in the “*Romanian Word*” newspaper at “*Between Prut and Nistru*” where he tried to emphasize and maintain the national feeling as an antipode of Russian colonization and assimilation in Chişinău. Nicolae Lupan published dozens of articles on the Soviet Union and the Republic of Moldova in the *Documentation sur l’Europe Centrale in Louvain* (Belgium), collaborated in the Parisian weekly magazine *Le Figaro Magazine*<sup>2</sup>.

In 1975, Nicolae Lupan relaunched the Cultural Association “Pro Basarabia and Bukovina”<sup>3</sup>, based in Brussels. The first organization committee of the association comprised Nicolae Lupan, Tudor Bompa (Canada), Radu Câmpeanu (France), Dinu Zamfirescu (France), Ion Raţiu (England), George Gregor (Australia)<sup>4</sup>.

Also, in numerous studies and conferences, Romanian intellectual George Ciorănescu stressed the absurdity of the thesis on the Moldovan language in the Republic of Moldova. Bessarabia meant for Ciorănescu in exile a constant preoccupation to prove his historical right, international recognition, Romanian culture and language and his European vocation<sup>5</sup>.

In his vision, as the historian Matei Cazacu<sup>6</sup> said, the studies of George Ciorănescu testify to the constant passion with which he tried to explain the past and present Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in all its aspects: historical, political, diplomatic, linguistic and demographic.

Another personality known in exile was Efim Crimerman, who did not fight for the unification of Bessarabia with Romania but drew attention to the realities

<sup>2</sup> See Nicolae Lupan, *Thoughts outcast. 30 years of union activity of the World Association “Pro Basarabia and Bucovina,”* Pro Historia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The Cultural Association “Pro Basarabia and Bucovina” was founded by diplomat Nicolae Dianu on November 27, 1950, in Paris. In 1955, it was forbidden in France, the headquarters was moved to Brussels.

<sup>4</sup> Florin Manolescu, *Encyclopedia of Romanian literary exile. 1945-1989*, Compania Publishing House, 2010, Bucharest, p. 481.

<sup>5</sup> See George Ciorănescu, *United Europe. From idea to foundation*, Paideia Publishing House, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Matei Cazacu, *George Ciorănescu – Basarabia, Romanian land between East and West*, Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Foundation, 2001, p. 79.

of the Republic of Moldavia. After arriving in the West, a long-lasting collaboration begins with *Free Europe* and *Freedom*, bringing to the listeners the increasing discrepancies between the official propaganda and the everyday life of the inhabitants of Bessarabia. Efim Crimerman could be heard two or three times a week in both Radio Svoboda and Radio Free Europe.

The Romanian denationalization policy, the food shortages, abusive measures of the authorities, censorship and cultural dogmatism were analyzed with talent and verve in texts signed with the pseudonym “Grigore Singurel.” The themes presented at the radio by Grigore Singurel focused on information and debates about *Soviet Moldova, Romania and the situation of Jews in the region*<sup>7</sup>.

In the time press of exile were noted some articles like those from *Bulletin of the Romanians in Exile (B. I. R. E.)* about Bessarabia and Bukovina and some titles deserve our attention: “March 27”<sup>8</sup>, “Suppression of Romanian culture in Bessarabia”<sup>9</sup>, “Bessarabia and Patria. Epistle to the Romanians”<sup>10</sup>, “Bessarabia and Bukovina”<sup>11</sup> or “The anniversary of the union of Bessarabia with Romania”<sup>12</sup>.

For the exile representatives, Union Day constituted, every time, an opportunity to express their gratitude for the founding moment of Greater Romania. Some of the magazines of the Romanian postwar exile which published synopses, opinions of some exile members about the historic act of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 were *B. I. R. E., Dialog, Lupta. B. I. R. E.* magazine was among the first publications of the Romanian postwar exile that provided articles or opinions of some members of exile about the meaning of the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918.

According to *B. I. R. E.* magazine, in 1955 the celebration of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 was organized in Paris by the Royal Foundation. Gabriel Puaux, former Ambassador of France in Bucharest and Virgil Veniamin gave speeches. It was said on this occasion that the presence of the Royal Foundation in France was an undeniable sign that *that home of the freedom of spirit was the symbol of the Romanian will to preserve its culture and December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 the symbol that the peoples can decide for themselves*<sup>13</sup>. In the following year the meaning day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 was discussed at a meeting held at the Paris Catholic Mission. Professors O. Nandriș and Yves Auger<sup>14</sup> expressed some ideas and opinions about the historical moment of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918.

The Celebration of the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 in Paris was evoked by George Ciorănescu, N. A. Gheorghiu and Theodor Cazaban. George Ciorănescu addressed the matter of Transylvania’s political contribution and highlighted the role that the Romanian citizen from the newly annexed provinces had in Romania’s most important moments. He also emphasized the historical role of Iuliu Maniu,

<sup>7</sup> See Sergiu Musteață, *Bessarabian KGB. At the microphone of Free Europe – Grigore Singurel, 1981-1990*, Arc Publishing House, Chișinău, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin of the Romanians in Exile (B. I. R. E.)*, no 553, April, 1972, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 614, April, 1975, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no 810, March 1985, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no 791, Avril 1984, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Dialog*, April 1983, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 213, December 1955, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 234, December 1956, p. 1.

a name related to all contemporary Romanian history data<sup>15</sup>. N. A. Gheorghiu presented the cultural contribution of Transylvanian writers to Romanian literature, bringing up the names of Octavian Goga, Liviu Rebreanu, Lucian Blaga; and the magazines “Familia” issued in Oradea and “Gazeta Transilvania” issued in Brasov. Theodor Cazaban mentioned that contribution of the Transylvanian people was decisive to the affirmation and destiny of Romania.

In 1958, an article from the *B. I. R. E.* magazine stated that the importance of the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 was celebrated each year by the exile representatives and that in Paris an event was organized every year, with support from the Royal Foundation. Thus, in 1959, the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 was honored in Paris by the presence of Neagu Djuvara, secretary of the Royal Foundation, who spoke about “The Contribution of I. C. Brătianu to the Unification”<sup>16</sup>.

In 1961, *B. I. R. E.* magazine informs that “the Union of Transylvania with Romania was commemorated under the patronage of the Romanian Royal Foundation”<sup>17</sup>. On the occasion, E. Napoli presented a movie about the state of play from Romania. In 1968 the representatives of the Romanian exile celebrated fifty years since the Union of Transylvania with Romania. On this occasion they expressed their disappointment that the regime from Bucharest falsified the moment of the Unification Day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, that it omitted to mention the name of Iuliu Maniu, and that “the armistice of 1918 was shrouded, in the shackled country, in complete silence; neither the great sacrifice of those who brought us the victory, nor the importance of General Berthlot’s mission in Romania were mentioned in Ceausescu’s paradise”<sup>18</sup>.

In 1973 Romanian exiles in France marked the Unification Day through a manifestation occasioned by a lecture of D. C. Amariuței on *Lucian Blaga, the poet of Romanian Transylvania*<sup>19</sup>. A few years later, in 1976, in Paris, the significance of the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 was celebrated by the Romanian Community in France, the Association of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Mission. Cornel Crișan emphasized the importance of the historical moment of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, urging the members of the exile to preserve the unity of Romanian values<sup>20</sup>.

Unification Day occasioned, in the coming years, as *B. I. R. E.*<sup>21</sup> informs, interesting manifestations organized chiefly in Paris, where both Romanian notable exiles and French personalities were present. Events were also organized in München, at the Deutsche Museum, on this occasion. Among those who presented their opinions on these events were Octavian Vuia, Fr. Octavian Bârlea etc.

In the 80’s, the celebration of Union Day by members of exile included, besides its historical significance, references to the situation of the country and to the

<sup>15</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 257, December 1957, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 299, December 1959, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 341, December, 1961, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 485, December, 1968, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 586, December, 1973, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 647, December, 1976, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 667, December 1977, p. 3.

political regime in Bucharest. Thus, in 1982, according to an article from *B. I. R. E.*, in München, the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 was celebrated at the Romanian Cultural Center. The United Romanian Mission Choir, present on this occasion, sang the anthem “Deșteaptă-te Române!” The Monsenior Octavian Bârlea stressed the importance of this anniversary, “the secular dream of Romania’s national wholeness came true, also mentioning the sad moment when, on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1948, the communists arbitrarily dissolved the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church”<sup>22</sup>. He was followed by Constantin Sporea’s exposition called “Transylvania in view of writers of yesterday and today.” The latter presented a collection of data and facts meant to “refresh or complete the knowledge of the listeners” about that part of Romania considered “the cradle of the Romanian people, the heart of the country without which one cannot conceive of a Romania belonging to the Romanians”<sup>23</sup>.

Also in the first part of the conference, Constantin Sporea referred to the many reasons (historical, geographical, ethnographic and demographic) which, in his opinion, certified the indissoluble belonging of Transylvania to the rest of the country. In this respect, he cited numerous opinions of German, French, Italian, American authors and even some Hungarian ones showing the fairness of the annexation of Transylvania to Romania”<sup>24</sup>.

In December 1983, *B. I. R. E.* dedicates an ample article called “Transylvania should not be a Target for Blackmail” to the Day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918. After mentioning the significance and importance of the events of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, the article states that “unfortunately, the consequences of the last world war, the political degradation of Western Europe and Soviet colonization of Eastern Europe, broke the thread of development and crystallization of primordial aspirations. Destitute Romania fell into the power of the irresponsible, who are alien to its fundamental interest, and this causes the Western world to question Romanian rule over Transylvania.

In such cases Kremlin is no longer content with emphasizing Stalinism in the country, imposed by Ceaușescu in the detriment of the Romanian people, but raises the questionable issue of the persecution of Hungarians in Transylvania”<sup>25</sup>. The article further criticized Ceaușescu’s policy in relation to Transylvania. It noted, in this respect, that Ceaușescu, by “well-chosen emissaries wanted to urge the opponents in exile into waging a written and verbal war against the Hungarians. This way the exile’s attention from the disaster in the country was diverted and moreover, he was given national recognition through the appearance of solidarity. Such a policy is provocative and irresponsible because Transylvania should not become an object of discussion or comment in the West”<sup>26</sup>.

The magazine *Lupta* from 7 December 1983 publishes an appeal urging the commemoration of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, arguing that “the generation of our parents

<sup>22</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 769, January 1983, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *B. I. R. E.*, no. 784, December, 1983, pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

and grandparents achieved through their sacrifice and heroism a century-old aspiration, namely the unity of Romania”<sup>27</sup>. Through the voice of Mihai Korne, the message in *Lupta* magazine prompts the representatives of the exile “to be worthy of this achievement of the ancestors and to build on solid bedrock what others have ravaged with their hatred, deceit and violence: the freedom and unity of the Romanian people, amongst the united free peoples Europe”<sup>28</sup>.

The following year, the magazine devotes an ampler space to *the commemoration of the Union of Transylvania with Romania*, calling it a day of “great joy, one of the most important historical rejoicings the Romanian people experienced”<sup>29</sup>. Also, this issue of the magazine publishes the speech of Alexander Danielopol, held at Paris on the occasion of the historical event on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918. The event was organized by the Romanian Community from France, the Association of Former Combatants, the Association of Former Political Prisoners, the House of Romania, and the Romanian Orthodox and Catholic churches in Paris. In the event took part representatives of postwar Romanian exile from France and other countries: England, Switzerland, Germany etc.

At this meeting Danielopol Alexander said that Romania’s image has deteriorated greatly with the French audiences, up to that moment: “Romania was once seen as a younger sibling of France, but today it is known especially for its espionage operations, for its political regime’s brutality and the extravagance of its leadership.”<sup>30</sup> Having emphasized the important role the Romanian exile could assume in restoring the country’s image in the French public’s eyes and in the countries where Romanian refugees were settled, Alexander Danielopol showed his appreciation for the House of Romania’s significant engagement in the activities of the exile, despite its scarce material resources. In the festive atmosphere of the Unification Day, Alexander Danielopol also evoked the role of the exile in defending the permanent interests of the country and said that “political action alone cannot restore Romania to its rightful place, an important part is played by the cultural approach to the extent that it can shape a positive image for the Romanians in the country”<sup>31</sup>.

From a New York correspondence belonging to Eugenia Mureșeanu, former political prisoner and writer, published by Cicerone Ionițoiu in his volume of memoirs<sup>32</sup>, we learn that the U.S. Department of the Romanian National Council celebrated the anniversary of December 1<sup>st</sup> at St. Mary’s Church in Queens. Cicerone Ionițoiu, one of the speakers on the occasion, said “People are remembered by the way they honors their ancestors. Our ancestors achieved the Great Union one step at a time. This was the natural consequence of people’s aspirations [...] and the words Iuliu Maniu spoke at Alba Iulia described a reality: *history has taught us that we should not expect anything from foreign kings and*

<sup>27</sup> *Lupta*, no. 7, December 1983, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Lupta*, no. 28, December 1984, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Memories. The Drama of Romania seen from Exile*, vol. II, Polirom Publishing House, 2011.

*from the sons of other nations, but only from our own powers. Our only strength, that can keep us in the future, derives from the unity of all Romanians*"<sup>33</sup>.

The series of manifestations of the exile celebrating the day of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 continued in 1985. *Lupta* Magazine mentions the meetings of the Romanian expats from Frankfurt and Paris: "The Romanian Community from France, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the United Church from Paris, the Association of Former Political Prisoners, the House of Romania, the International Association for the Protection of Monuments of Romania, celebrated, together with the representatives of the Union of Free Romanians from the Romanian National Council, Romanian refugees and French guests, the Day of Transylvania's Union with Romania"<sup>34</sup>. In Paris, Adrian Chintescu, President of the Romanian Community in France, raised the issue of the severity of the situation in the country and stressed the importance of a general mobilization for making it known to all Western governments. He was followed by architect Ștefan Gane, President of the Association for the Protection of Historical Monuments of Romania who spoke of the current events, revealing that "in the country, the authorities act with cynicism and violence by fully distorting or simply effacing the historical memory of Romanian spiritual traditions"<sup>35</sup>.

The festivity of December 1<sup>st</sup> was organized in Frankfurt by the Romanian National Council, the Union of Free Romanians and the Orthodox Independent Church. Constantin Mareș spoke on the importance of the moment. He advanced the idea of unity in Romanian exile, adding that no matter how hard the conditions for such a unity were, still, *the organisation of Romanian actions under the sign of unity might prove paramount*<sup>36</sup>.

*Dialog* magazine<sup>37</sup> also states, in an 1987 article on the celebration of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918: "the manifestation was organized by *the Romanian Community from France, the Romanian National Council, the Worldwide Union of Free Romanians, the Association of Former Political Prisoners of Romania, the League for Human Rights in Romania, the House of Romania, the Club for Romanian Liberal Thought and Action, the Romanian Library*, as well as the two churches, orthodox and united"<sup>38</sup>. Amongst other spokespersons at this event, Horațiu Comănciu talked about the significance of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, Ioana Brătianu on the 1916-1918 war, Grigore Filitti on the Union of Transylvania with Romania and Doru Novacovici on Transylvania in the context of the 80`s.

### Conclusions

During the period of political exile until 1989, the representatives of the post-war Romanian exile granted historical moments from 1918, beyond their historical significance, a special importance in many debates on the situation of Romanians in

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> *Lupta*, no. 49, December 1985, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> Dinu Zamfirescu, *We too condemned the Communism from Parisian Exile*, Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, p. 211.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

the country, and often their solidarity with various events that took place in the country due to the profound crisis of social troubles with the Bucharest regime.

Even if the manifestations of Romanians in exile are only reflected in some publications of the time, it must be stressed that the extent and emotion that they experienced in these meetings were much greater. This emotional aspect can be found in the journals or biographies of many exiles. From today's point of view, the activity of Romanian exiles can be interpreted as a continuation of Romanian democratic values and liberties in the West.

#### SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Cazacu, Matei, *George Ciorănescu – Basarabia, Romanian land between East and West*, Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Foundation, 2001;  
 Ciorănescu, George, *United Europe. From idea to foundation*, Paideia Publishing House, 2004.  
 Ionițoiu, Cicerone, *Memories. The Drama of Romania seen from Exile*, Polirom Publishing House, 2011;  
 Lupan, Nicolae, *Thoughts outcast. 30 years of union activity of the World Association "Pro Basarabia and Bukovina"*, Pro Historia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006;  
 Manolescu, Florin, *Encyclopedia of Romanian literary exile. 1945-1989*, Compania Publishing House, 2010, Bucharest.  
 Musteață, Sergiu, *Bessarabian KGB. At the microphone of Free Europe – Grigore Singurel, 1981-1990*, Arc Publishing House, Chișinău, 2017.  
 Uscătescu, George, *The Absent Europe*, Institutul European, Iași, 2005;  
 Zamfirescu, Dinu, *We too condemned the Communism from Parisian Exile*, Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.

#### Magazines

- Bulletin of the Romanians in Exile (B. I. R. E.)*, no. 213, December 1955;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 234, December 1956;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 257, December 1957;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 299, December 1959;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 341, December, 1961;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 485, December, 1968;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 553, April, 1972;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 586, December, 1973;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 614, April, 1975;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 647, December, 1976;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 667, December 1977;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 769, January 1983;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 784, December, 1983;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 810, March 1985;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 791, Avril 1984;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 810, March 1985;  
*B. I. R. E.*, no. 791, Avril 1984;  
*Dialog*, April 1983;  
*Lupta*, no. 7, December 1983;  
*Lupta*, no. 28, December 1984;  
*Lupta*, no. 49, December 1985.