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PhD THESIS ABSTRACT

**TRANSYLVANIAN
MEMORIALISTS ON THE
THEME OF THE
TRANSYLVANIAN
REVOLUTION OF 1848-1849**

PhD Coordinator:

Univ. Prof. Dr. Cornel Alexandru Tatay

PhD Student:

Nicolae Dumbrăvescu

Alba Iulia

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Key words

Memoirs, revolution, legion, prefect, deputy prefect, Câmpia Libertății, Munții Apuseni, Câmpia Transilvaniei, tribunes, Blood Court, martyrs of the revolution, young theologians, the abolishment of serfdom, The Diet of Cluj.

Abstract

The history of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849, as part of the European Revolution of 1848, caught the attention of many Romanian, Hungarian and German historians in the period following the event, in the interwar period and during the communist regime and post-communist period.

All these historians analysed from several point of views the most important events from the spring (the assemblies of the jurists from Târgu Mureș and Blaj), the summer and the fall (the Diet from Cluj, the abolishment of the serfdom, the recruiting for the Hungarian army and the organisation of the Romanian legions) of the revolutionary year.

The Civil War from Transylvania was also analysed by many historians and researchers from several points of view, highlighting the causes, the course of the events and the main battles, together with their consequences.

In the same time, a series of events leading to this blood event from the middle of the 19th century were analysed. The present thesis is based on the analysis, the interpretation and the reinterpretations of several narrative historical sources (memoirs) present in the Transylvanian Romanian magazines from the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. In order to identify these sources, we analysed Transylvanian periodicals as: *Transilvania*, *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, *Observatorul*, *Telegraful Român*, *Familia*, *Arhiva Someșană* and *Țara Bârsei*.

The first chapter, titled **The Transylvanian memoirs of 1848 in the Romanian historiography**, analyses the manner in which these narrative sources (memoirs) were treated in the Romanian writings starting from the Great Union from 1918 until the present times. We identified three periods in the evolution of the Romanian historic writings and in the analysis and interpretation of the memorialist sources related to the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849.

Following the Union from the 1st of December 1918, a new school of history from Cluj, led by historians as Alexandru Lapedatu and Ioan Lupaș, launched a new program of historical research of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849, where the study of the memoirs and of the documentary sources was of high priority. Thus, after a historiographic analysis, we observed that the historian Silviu Dragomir, in the monographies dedicated to Avram Iancu, and also Ioan Buteanu and Constantin Romanu Vivu used often the memorialist sources.

The research of the Transylvanian periodicals is also in harmony with the new directions of historical research, due to the fact that they reserved an ample space in their pages to the publishing and the recovery of the narrative sources related to the revolution. Therefore, we identified ten narrative sources in the pages of “*Transilvania*” magazine, three memorialist writings in “*Țara Bârsei*”, five sources in “*Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională din Cluj*” and two memorialist writings in “*Cosânzeana*”, which we analysed in the following chapters.

During the communist regime, the research, the valorisation and the publishing of the narrative sources related to the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849 was very intense. A series of studies and articles, as well as collection of memoirs, were published, among which we mention: *Avram Iancu în Memorialistică* (*Avram Iancu in Memoirs*) and *Memorialistica*

Revoluției de la 1848-1849 din Transilvania (*The Memoirs of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849*). Together with the description and the publishing of the memoirs, perhaps with the exception of the historian Pompiliu Teodor from Cluj and the historians Nicolae Boșan and Valeriu Leu from Banat, we do not meet detailed analyses of the Transylvanian memoirs from 1848 transmitting the feelings and emotions of the leaders of the revolution and of the simple people who put the national ideal higher than their life. Therefore, after a detailed analysis, we believe that a cultural history of the revolution can be reconstructed, helping us to understand the intentions and feelings of the young Transylvanians, who desired to make their nation bloom using all possible means.

During the post-communist period, the research of the memoirs of the Transylvanian revolution of 1848-1849 is continues and there are published a series of studies and articles and several collections of memoirs, following a direction of research similar to the one before December 1989. Analysing this historiographic exposition, we observed that the majority of the studies approaching the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849 intended to bring the narrative sources in the attention of the historians, but without a detailed analysis for the reconstruction of the cultural history of the revolution, in order to highlight the suffering, shortcomings and torment endured by the Transylvanian Romanians during the blood years from the middle of the 19th century. The final part of this chapter identifies new directions of research on the memoirs related to the Revolution of 1848-1849, which are applied in the following chapters.

The second chapter, **The events of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849 reflected in the memoirs**, analyses the manner in which is reflected a series of events during the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849, among which: the Assembly of the jurists in March 1848 in Târgu Mureș, the assembly from the Sunday of St. Thomas (30th of April 1848), the Great National Assembly from Blaj (3rd/15th of May 1848), the day of 18th of June 1848 –the official day of the abolishment of the serfdom, the recruiting for the Hungarian army in the fall of 1848, the battles from Vaida Sântioana and Reghin, the disaster from Zlatna, the battles from Sibiu and the retiring of the members of the Romanian National Committee in Wallachia, all described in a series of memoirs less known in the Romanian historiography.

The assembly of the jurists in Târgu Mureș in March 1848 is described in three writings signed by Alexandru Papiu Ilarian, Ioan Oros alias Rusu and Lukás Béla. They highlight the Transylvanian Romanians' first political actions in the Revolution of 1848-1849 and draw the portrait of some young people who were going to fight in all the possible ways

for the Romanians' rights. They also highlight the young Hungarians' volcanic temper and fanaticism, as well as the reserved tone of the nobility, which, in the context of a starting revolution, saw its harmed economic interests and was even expecting their houses and goods to be destroyed.

The assembly from the Sunday of St. Thomas (30th of April 1848) from Blaj was described by the memorialists Isaia Moldovan, Vasile Moldovan and Timotei Cipariu, who describe very well the joyous manifestations of the Romanians present to the Assembly from the Sunday of St. Thomas and also the obstacles and the unsuccessful attempts of the Hungarian authorities to cancel or dissolve this assembly. In other words, the three memoirs transmit the Transylvanian peasants' suffering and the young intellectuals' desire to bring their nation on the same place with the other Transylvanian nations (Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers).

The three memoirs analysed in this part of our thesis also highlight the greatness of this national manifestation and transmit a message for the future generation, that of overcoming any obstacle in order to achieve the national ideal for which they were willing to sacrifice their life. Therefore, these writings describe in detail the feelings of the participants to the event from the spring of 1848 and help us reconstructing with accuracy all the joyous manifestations from Blaj on that holy day for the Transylvanian Romanian nation.

The Great National Assembly from Blaj (3rd/15th of May 1848) is beautifully described by the Romanian memorialists Alexandru Papiu Ilarian, Timotei Cipariu, G. Sion, Vasile Moldovan, Isaia Moldovan, Alecu Russo, Andrei Șaguna, and Ioan Cavaler de Pușcariu, by the Hungarian memorialists Jakab Elek, an anonymous memorialist and the Saxon memorialist Stefan Ludwic Roth, depicting the greatness of the event, the good organisation of the Romanians, the exceptional cooperation between the two churches of the Transylvanian Romanians, the activity of the two bishops, the priests of both confessions, the jurists and the young students from Blaj. Also, they describe the emotions and feelings of the simple peasants, who, driven by the fire of liberty, filled Câmpia Libertății (The Field of Liberty) without even thinking to the dangers they were exposing to. All the memorialists, disregarding their ethical origin, depicted the fact that many Saxons and Hungarians participated to the assembly of the Romanians, in order to spy or by pure curiosity. During the two assemblies from Blaj, the Romanians behave very civilised and listened to their leaders, contrary to the expectations of the Hungarian authorities.

The date of 18th of June - the official day of the abolishment of the serfdom, the happy moment for the Transylvanian Romanians during the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849,

could not pass unnoticed by the Transylvanian memorialists. The most conclusive descriptions are given by the memorialist from Mureș, Vasile Moldovan, Isaia Moldovan and Ioan Oros alias Rusu, who wrote about the greatness of the event and the religious-national manifestations in the entire Transylvania. In the same time, the Transylvanian memoirs of 1848 complete the documented studies that highlight the fact that the abolishment of the serfdom was not achieved through the mercy of the rulers, but because it was not possible to maintain it during the modern times opened by the revolution, or, as the simple people used to say, "the time had come".

The recruiting for the Hungarian army in the fall of 1848 was described by several memorialists, presenting the context of the recruiting and the conscription for the Hungarian army of the young Romanians, and, also, the Romanians' opposition to the recruiting. The memoirs show a clear image of the conflicts from Valea Mureșului between the recruiting commissions and the inhabitants of the villages, presenting the feelings and emotions of people coerced to participate to these events and who lived the repressive measures taken by the Hungarian authorities after all these events. As resulting from these memorialist sources and from other documents, the Transylvanian Romanians' resistance in the fall of 1848 was not prepared or instigated, but appeared unannounced in almost all the villages, as a normal defence reaction in the face of the Hungarian danger.

The disaster from Zlatna during the fall of 1848 is described by several Transylvanian memorialists who witnessed the tragic events. They describe in detailed the course of the events, the causes and the guilt of the two revolutionary troops in the destruction of the town, a destruction that was hard to recover after the revolution.

The battles from Vaida Sântioana and Reghin are also described both by the Hungarian and Romanian memorialists, who depict a complete image of the battles, highlighting the numerical superiority of the Hungarian revolutionary troops, the tactical mistakes of Colonel Urban, the lack of military experience of the Romanian lancers who fought together with the imperial army, and the lack of weapons and ammunition. These narrations, together with other documentary sources, offer a clear image of the battles and also the emotions of some simple (Ioan Oros alias Rusu and Vasile Moldovan) and commanders from the imperial army, as were the Sargent Simion Domide and the Lieutenant Ioan Tomuță.

The battles from Sibiu and the retiring of the members of the Romanian National Committee in Wallachia are described by the memorialists Teodor Borza (Glumețu), St. I. and Timotei Cipariu. Their memoirs bring an important contribution to the historic study of the battles from Sibiu from the fall and the winter of 1848-1849, the retiring of the members of

the Romanian National Committee in Wallachia, the nutrition of the Romanians during the revolution and the manner in which the Romanians from the south of the Carpathians thought about the Transylvanian Romanians. They also present the life of the refugees during the revolution, the uncertainty, the always present dangers and the fear of death that was always present in their minds and souls.

All these memoirs bring a series of precious information for a clear and nuanced view on the mentioned events. They present, in the same time, the emotions and feelings of the people witnessing the events, reconstructing a cultural history of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849.

The third chapter is titled **The Transylvanian Romanians' human and material loss during the Revolution of 1848-1849 reflected in the "minor memoirs"**. Following the research method implemented by the historians Gelu Neamțu, Dumitru Suci, Ana Hancu and Elena Mișu, we analysed the way in which the Transylvanian Romanians' human and materials loss is reflected in a series of memorial writings signed by authors as Seleușianu, Ștefan Moldovan, Ioan Moga and Petru Moldovan. All these writings highlight the Hungarian soldiers' crimes behind the front line through executions and the decisions of the blood courts in Cluj, Târgu Mureș, Brad or Hălmăgiu. We also highlighted and analysed the material loss suffered by the Transylvanian Romanians through the theft of their animals and the robbery and the arson of the villages by the Hungarian soldiers.

Based on the memoirs signed by Seleușianu, Ștefan Moldovan, Ioan Moga and Petru Moldovan, we managed to highlight the personalities of some young people sacrificing their life for the Romanian nation. We mention the tribunes Alexandru Bătrâneanu, Vasile Simionăș, Vasile Turcu, Petru Bonta and Vasile Pop. Also, a series of priests were arrested, imprisoned and even executed, while others suffered important material loss. We mention in the first category: Vasile Turcu, Michailu Popu, Ștefan Mora, Basiliu Popoviciu, Ioan Rus, Eftimie Popovici, Ioan Tude, Pavel Feir, Senesie Grozavu, Pavel Farcaș, Iosif Fei, and others. In the second category, we mention Nicolae Vladuțiu, Nicolae Simomfi, Isaia Moldovan, and others.

These memorial writings bring to light new pages of the Transylvanian Romanian's martyrdom and, together with the reports of the priests and deans, written after the revolution to the request of the Austrian Court, the real suffering and sacrifice of the Transylvanian Romanians come into the light.

The next chapter, titled **Personalities of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849 reflected in the memoirs** analyses a series of memoirs dedicated to some important leaders of

personalities of the bloody event from the middle of the 19th century, among which are Avram Iancu, Ioan Buteanu, Ioan Axente Sever, Nicolae Vlăduțiu and Ioan Dragoș.

Avram Iancu, the most important personality of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849 is present, as normal, in the most memoirs. Although many writings dedicated to Avram Iancu were identified, analysed and explored by historians as Pompiliu Teodor, Gelu Neamțu, Nicolae Bocșan, Valeriu Leu, Ion Ranca and Valeriu Nițu, still we were able to identify in the Transylvanian Romanian magazines a series of memorial stories that bring important information on Avram Iancu's intellectual formation and on his last years, which were difficult and dark.

Based on the memorial writings identified in the Transylvanian magazine from the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century referring to Avram Iancu's life and activity, we observed that the writings describe less known details from Iancu's childhood and education, and also from the revolution and the post-revolution period. These sources present the Romanian national atmosphere in which Avram Iancu was born and where he developed, with marks on his national manifestations during the time of his schooling and, later, during the revolution. We found out that Avram Iancu was not an insane man, but a man suffering due to the fact that the Romanian nation had not obtained any right after the revolution, and, more than this, the Romanian nation lost its importance from the time of the revolution. These aspects determined Avram Iancu to drown his sorrow in drink and sometimes to pretend to be crazy. When he was the subject of a special attention, his behaviour was normal, as in relation with Alexandru Papiu Ilarian, Ioan Axente Sever, Aron Densușianu, and the Hungarian memorialist Samoilă Borbély.

The prefect of Legion I of Blaj, Ioan Axente Sever, is present in a series of memoirs, a reason for which we have analysed several works related to the most significant moments in the life and activity of this well-known revolutionist. Therefore, based on the memoirs, we were able to find out information on his youth, family and education. We observed that he treasured the young people during his last years, inviting them to dine or being a host for the poor young people who intended to study. In the same time, the memoirs describe humorous moments from the same period, as the conflict of the prefect with an Austrian in Liesig or the theft of the wine from the prefect's barrels by some young men studying in Brașov.

Ioan Buteanu, the prefect of Zarand, is also present in two memorial writings that are analysed in our thesis, describing less known aspects from the prefect's childhood and intellectual development, when he was denied the right to learn in his native language, a fact

that was later reflected in his life and activity, by renouncing to the family in favour of the national cause, an ideal for which he sacrificed his life during the Revolution of 1848-1849.

The prefect of the Legion III Lowland, Nicolae Vlăduțiu, is presented in a single memorial writing, with significant information on the origins and the genealogy of his family, the sufferings during the revolution and the shortcomings and suffering during his last years of life.

Ioan Dragoș, considered a traitor by the Transylvanian Romanians and a martyr by the Hungarians, is also presented in important memorial writings, which tried to present the national ideas and ideals of the deputy from Bihor. Thus, analysing the memoirs, we reached the conclusion that Ioan Dragoș was not a traitor, but a naïve person, seduced by the promises of money and dignities and considering himself able to bring peace between the two revolutionary sides. In the same time, based on narrative sources and documents, we observed that Ioan Dragoș respected Ludovic Kossuth very much and trusted his words all the time, without thinking of an eventual duplicity of the Hungarian leader, who intended to end using any means the revolution of the Transylvanian Romanians.

The last part of this chapter analyses the manner in which the memoirs of that times reflected the life and the activity of Pelaghia Roșu. We sketched the physical and moral portrait of the fighter from Mărișel for the rights of the Transylvanian Romanians, especially those living in the Apuseni Mountains. The memoirs also highlight the contribution of this woman fighter to the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849, as well as her attachment and the attachment of other woman fighters from the “Stone Country” (“Țara de Piatră”) for the ideal of the Transylvanian Romanian nation. Next to the brave deeds of the Transylvanian women, the memoirs show a series of acts that are not too honourable, as the massacre from Cerbu or the killing of eight police men in a house from “După Piatră” village.

The last chapter, titled **Prefects, deputy prefects and tribunes in the memoirs of the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849**, we created, based on the narrative sources, a list with the names of the prefects, deputy prefects, tribunes, deputy tribunes, centurions, decurions and captains contributing to the organisation of the Transylvanian province as a real Romanian army during the fall of 1848. Also, using the memoirs, we presented the biographies of the most important deputy prefects, tribunes and deputy tribunes who were unjustly forgotten in time.

For the Legion of Blaj, we reconstructed fragments from the life and the revolutionary activity of the deputy prefects Ioan Maior and Ioan Procopie and of the tribunes Albani, Ioan

Antonelli, Amos Frâncu, Nicolae Barbu, George Damian, Ioan Deleanu, Ioan Dendiu, Petru Gherman, Iulian Munteanu, Ioan Niculiță, Nicolae Popa and Elisei Todoranu.

For the Legion Auraria Gemina, also using the memoirs, we sketched the biographies of the deputy prefects Ioan Boieriu, Simion Groza, Simion Prodan Probu and Bălășiu and of the tribunes, deputy tribunes and centurions Clemente Aiudeanu, Mihai Andreica, Nicolae Begnescu, Alexandru Bistran, Alexandru Cândea, Nicolae Corcheș Ioan Corteș, Ion Fodorianu, Vasile Fodor, Ioan Gomboș, Petre Ionette, Ion Lazăr, Samoil Morariu, Iosif Moga, Nicolae Mureșean, Indrei Rusu, Ioan V. Rusu, Aviron Telechi, Amos Tordășianu and Vințanu.

For the Legion III Lowland (Legiunea a III-a de Câmpie), led by the prefect Vasile Moldovan, we reconstructed with the help of the memoirs, the biographies of the deputy prefects Florian Lăscudean and Ioan Oros alias Rusu and of the tribunes Vasile Pop, Petru Bonta, Iosif Tamaș and Iacob Oltean.

For the Legion of Arieș, led by the prefect Simion Balint, we briefly presented, using the memoirs, the life and the revolutionary activity of the following tribunes, deputy tribunes, centurions and decurions: Ioan Balint, Vasile Balint, Ioan Bererelu, Ioan Cocoveanu, Grațian Crățianu, Aurelian Ioan Galați, Ioan Daniel, Grigore Muncaciu, Ioan Murășan Matei Nicola, Ioan Nemeș, Ioan Rațiu, Partenie Rațiu, Șerban and Dionisie Telechi. Therefore, the memoirs helped us to bring into the spotlight the life and the activity of certain deputy prefects, tribunes, deputy tribunes, centurions and decurions, who valued the national ideal more than anything, even more than their own life, and who courageously confronted the material and military shortcomings, many times being wonderfully brave and defeating the Hungarian army, which was more numerous and better equipped.

The thesis ends with conclusions proving the importance of the narrative sources for the study of the events during the Transylvanian Revolution of 1848-1849, as the Assemblies form Blaj during the spring of 1848, the abolition of serfdom, the recruiting for the Hungarian army, as well as for the study of the life and activity of certain prefects, deputy prefects, tribunes, deputy tribunes and decurions, unjustly forgotten in time.