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# **L**imitation Attempts on the National Consciousness of Romanians in the Austian- Hungarian Empire Recorded in some Romanian Gazettes in the Ardeal Region

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## **Abstract**

The Transylvanian scholars educated in the exquisite, intellectual background of the western enlightenment, did their best to speak up their ideas and searched new ways for the Romanian people to make itself respected. Journalism was a good way to do it since the journals approached a great deal of subjects: political, economical and cultural and at the same time, the publishers put down the interest, and aspirations of our people. The national consciousness had to be maintained alive and the priests and the teachers were the ones who had to do it.

## **Keywords**

Ecclesiastical history, Romanian Orthodox Church, Ecclesiastical press, Foia  
Interesantă

The national consciousness of the Romanians from Transylvania within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, put into words in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the works of the humanist scholar Nicolaus Olahus, was expressing itself. At the same time, other peoples in the Eastern Europe

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became aware of their own national, spiritual life. This was due to the influences of the western enlightenment which by the Transylvanian scholars educated in such an exquisite, intellectual background, did their best to speak up their ideas and searched new ways for the Romanian people to make itself respected. As a result of their efforts many important journals were published “Gazeta Transilvaniei” (1838), “Telegraful Român” (1853), “Biserica și școala” (1877), “Tribuna” - in Sibiu (1884) or “Foaia Diecezană” (1886), which formed and guided the public opinion and later on the periodicals published in the old cultural centre of Orăștie “Revista Orăștiei” (1895-1899), “Activitatea” (1901-1905), “Libertatea” (1902 - February 1915; September 1915-august 1916, in Bucharest; 1917 - in Cleveland; 1918), which in 1905 was accompanied by the supplements: “Foaia Interesantă” (1905 - February 1915; September 1915 - august 1916, in Bucharest; 1917 - in Cleveland.); “Tovărășia” (1906-1911) and “Bobâr-naci” (1910-1914).

The journals approached a great deal of subject: political, economical and cultural and at the same time, the publishers put down the interest, and aspirations of our people.

Being aware that the only way to keep the bond between common people and its leaders was the national consciousness, the Romanian Scholars, were going to fight for “the social approach of all those who felt the Romanian way”<sup>1</sup>. The priest and the teacher whose life was closely linked to that of the common people were due to work in its benefit.

But the authorities knew that they had to break this bond and the new laws they would pass tried to arise conflicts between these social classes “Revista Orăștiei” tried to fight against the attempts of the authorities to turn Romanian schools into Hungarian ones. The officials had been trying hard to impose Hungarian language as compulsory in the education of the Romanian pupils as Minister Treford did in 1879 and 1883. The Hungarian Government passed a law in 1893 which gave the possibility to the State to intervene in schools affairs, forcing them to raise the teacher’s wages with 50 Florins if they worked for 5 years in the same school. But the 300 Florins which represented a teacher’s wages was too much for the local community so new conflicts between the parts started to arise. Showing off their benevolence, the authorities offered themselves to pay their dues

<sup>1</sup> “Revista Orăștiei”, nr. 25 from 17/29 of June 1895.

turning consequently the Romanian School into a State School. In such a school pupils were taught in Hungarian and the subjects were chosen by the Government which was to lead to losing our national identity. Being aware of all these dangers “Revista Orăștiei” and “Libertatea” did their duty. In 1898 when the 5 years of the Education law came so their term, the publishers made desperate public appeals to support at any price the Church and the School. This was a living proof of a never ending fight to keep alive the national consciousness.

The magazine also revealed the attempts the Hungarian Government had been making to turn the Romanian priests into its tools serving its merchantile interests. The article *Against the priests*<sup>2</sup> showed how it was intended to pass a law which punished the priest who would dare talk to people about the elections. He was supposed to be arrested and fined. Another article with a suggestive title *The whip in one hand, the bowl of oat in the other*<sup>3</sup>, revealed that the Government in exchange for its 800 Florins given to the confessions, wanted to indebt the priests who were supposed to drift apart from the people they represented. And the examples may go on: *Which is the price?, State Support, Look out!, Romanian Archbishops Fight*<sup>4</sup>. The publishers considered the State Support as the “Trojan Horse used by the enemies to get into the city to destroy the Church by its own servants”

The author of the article *The National Church* pointed out the important role of this old precious institution, and quoted Alexandru Mocsony’s speech at Rășinari on the occasion of the commemoration of Andrei Țaguna “The church has been for ages the last and the unique shelter for the Romanian people, the Church is was, it still is and will be the condition for the survival”<sup>5</sup> of our people.

The law according to which only the civil marriage was compulsory was a blow for the mission of the church and it was just another example of the interferences<sup>6</sup>. That’s why “Revista Orăștiei” in its article *No jewels, no procession* urged the people to follow the example of a Hungarian commander to go to the civil ceremony of the marriage dressed very

<sup>2</sup> “Revista Orăștiei”, nr. 25 from 15/27 of June 1896.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 27 from 29 iun./11 of July 1896.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 28 from 6/18 of July 1896; nr. 43 from 18/30 of October 1897; nr. 1 from 1/13 of January 1898; nr. 23 from 6/18 of June 1898.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 27 from 4/16 of July 1898.

<sup>6</sup> V. Orga, *Moța. Pages of Life...*, p. 55.

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simply, without jewels or procession and then piously attend the religious ceremony to get the God's blessing<sup>7</sup>.

The authorities made a try to found a Hungarian Diocese for the Romanians who belonged to the Greek – Catholic Church and in the article *To the Romanian People from Hunedoara County*<sup>8</sup> the author asked all the Romanians to protest in a civilized, organized way, starting with nr. 15/5-17 of April 1897 against this state of facts.

The fight fought against the policy of the Hungarian authorities which was meant to alter our nationality began in "Revista Orăștiei" with violent articles against the law which imposed that Romanian places should be called by Hungarian names. *A new attempt to choke the Romanian Language*<sup>9</sup>. In the author's opinion it was a brutal, provocative act that demanded an urgent reply and protests.<sup>10</sup>

Several years later "Libertatea" focused on all these problems. *New names for our places*<sup>11</sup> was the title of an article. The publisher urged the population to use the old, Romanian names. The articles pointed out the abuses of the authorities.

We can see what happened on the occasion of the celebration of five decades of the Great Meeting from Blaj. The Romanians prepared themselves to celebrate the event and the preparations were made public in "Revista Orăștiei" in articles such as *Romanians, wake up!* and *That's the way we celebrate*<sup>12</sup> the Hungarian authorities for bade them. The events and the interdictions were presented in the article "All Forbidden".

The persecutions against those who dared display the national flag during the holidays were presented in articles such as *New Persecution or For our Flag*<sup>13</sup>. Both pointed out the courage of the Romanians and the persecutions of the soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Revista Orăștiei", nr.43 from 19/31 of October 1896.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 14 from 29 mart./10 of April 1897.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 45 from 1/13 of November 1897.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 46 from 8/20 of November 1897.

<sup>11</sup> "Libertatea", nr. 2 from 1/14 of January 1909.

<sup>12</sup> The cycle of Articles „How we celebrate – published in "Revista Orăștiei" nr. 13 from 24 March/9 of April nr. 14 from 4/16 of April nr.15 from 11/23 of April 1898; *Wake up, Romanian*, in nr. 18 from 1/14 of May 1898.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 7 from 10/22 of February 1896, nr. 36 from 31 of August/12 of September. 1896.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 2 from 4/16 of January 1897.

There was no legal grounds for the soldiers to confiscate the national symbols and to forbid the Romanian patriotic songs as the article *Unworthy persecutions*<sup>15</sup> showed all the Romanian journals understood that the abuses coming from the Hungarian authorities were meant to destroy our nation. Consequently they were exposed and criticized. Another abuses occurred on the occasion of the electoral campaigns. When The Government was to pass a new law “Libertatea” attacked. The intentions which were obviously malevolent. The article *The new law on the election*<sup>16</sup> revealed that only the males of 24 years old had the right to vote. They also should have the Hungarian citizenship, they should be a graduate of the Elementary School being able to read and write. The merchants, the trades and the State employees had also the right to vote. Therefore as the article pointed out 62 % of votes went to Hungarians, 15% to the Germans, 11 % to Slovaks and only 7 % to Romanians. So the law was considered a wicked attack against the rights of the Romanian people.

Fighting for the preservation of the Romanian rights, the journal took attitude against the laws which were supposed to destroy our culture and our development<sup>17</sup>. The law on the orphanages, on the foundation of the Hungarian Greek – Catholic Diocese of Hajdudorog, the law on priests’ wages or Apponyi’s law on education were severely criticized by the journalists.

The press had an important role in the whole process of the enlightenment of the nation: the journals made public the sacrifices and the accomplishments of the Romanians all over the country and all over the world and warn against the abuses of all kinds of the authorities such is the case of “Libertatea”, “Foaia Interesantă”, “Calendarul Național” .<sup>18</sup>

They understood that their mission was to work for the people and to fight against the attempts of destruction of the solidarity between the people and its spiritual leaders. The publishers spared no effort to criticize and reveal the abuses.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, nr. 36 from 30 of August/11 of September 1897.

<sup>16</sup> “Libertatea”, nr. 34 from 9/22 of August 1908.

<sup>17</sup> *From the Handcuff Factory*, in “Libertatea”, nr. 26 from 6/19 of June 1913.

<sup>18</sup> “Foaia Interesantă”, nr. 1 Christmas 1908; nr. 18 from 7/21 of April 1910; “Calendarul Național al Foii Interesante”, 1911, p. 2, 34.