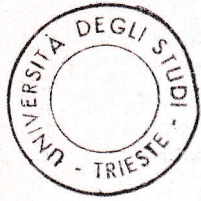


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BIBLIOTHECA HISTORICA ROMANIAE
MONOGRAPHS
XVIII



THE INDEPENDENCE OF ROMANIA

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EDITURA ACADEMIEI REPUBLICII SOCIALISTE ROMÂNIA
București - 1977

Foreword

The present book is intended for foreign readers eager to get acquainted with the struggle for freedom and independence of the Romanian people. It is a synthesis of a more comprehensive monograph with the same title published in Romanian, the outcome of cooperation between Romanian historians and politologists.

The English book, the same as the Romanian work, follows up the main permanencies in the history of the Romanian people — of human history in general — from its formation to date: struggle for social and national justice, for freedom, independence and political unity. Like many other peoples, the sons of the Romanian land have ceaselessly fought for justice and freedom, against the threat of foreign domination. This is true for Geto-Dacians, then for Daco-Romans, then, after its formation in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area, for the Romanian people.

The authors endeavoured to grasp the essence and complexity of historical processes in their logical sequence, in order to provide the reader with an accurate and accessible picture of reality, based on scientific objectiveness, reliable sources and references.

The book is a homage to the centennial commemoration of the conquest of Romania's independence. It will naturally focus on political circumstances and actions, sanctioning by heroism and sacrifices on the battlefield, efforts and impressive solidarity of the whole people with the war, the world-wide echo of events and the international recognition of Romania's independence by the San Stefano preliminary congress and by the Peace Congress of Berlin.

The independence of Romania did not occur spontaneously, nor was it a gift from the generosity of European Powers. It was the conclusion of a law-like objective process. The book starts therefore with the premises of independence, the struggle for defending the independence of the Romanian Countries, the regaining of their independence and the making of the modern Romanian state, a prologue to independence. The gaining of independence was important not only in se and for the respective period, it also had significant consequences for the further development of Romanian society. The present book records positive effects in socio-economic, socio-political and cultural institutional life up to 1918, when national unity was completed by the union of Romania and Romanian provinces under foreign domination. The beneficial effects of that historic process in the inter-war period are also recorded, as well as the efforts for defending independence against the offensive of European fascism and their crowning by the victorious armed national anti-fascist and anti-imperialist insurrection of August 1944.

The history of the Romanian people since its emergence has been a permanent struggle for freedom, liberty, independence and unity. This people has trustingly chosen the path of the most equitable system, socialism, and with unswerving confidence it is still fighting for the victory of these ideas in international life. Led by the Romanian Communist Party it struggles for a new world economic and political order, based on the same high principles, that safeguard rights and sovereignty. This policy is the object of the last chapters of the book.

We hope that readers will find here new information on the historical past of the Romanian people and will get a more thorough understanding of ideas and ideals always dear to peoples. Confident that these pages will be understood and appreciated according to their scientific and educational value, we offer this book to all those interested in further knowledge on Romania's history.

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Prolegomena to Romania's Independence

The history of the different peoples and nations has unfolded and continues to unfold around a number of essential coordinates which have been and still are genuine columns supporting the national edifice. The fundamental co-ordinates of the history of the Romanian people, the columns supporting modern and contemporary Romania, may be clearly defined as they are obvious for an objective connoisseur and observer.

To begin with, emphasis should be laid on the indestructible link between ancestral land and the people living here. The strong, lasting links between places and people account for the vigour of the Daco-Getians in defending their freedom since the 6th c. B.C., first against the mighty king of the Persians, Darius I, then against the unconquerable Alexander of Macedon (4th c. B.C.) and against his successor, Lysimachus, king of Thrace. The increase of the economic, political and military power, of the Geto-Dacians worried the Roman Empire. For a century, apart from economic and cultural links, between the Geto-Dacians north of the Danube and the Romans there were rivalries, clashes and even armed conflicts: the Romans being moved by their drive towards expansion, the Geto-Dacians defending their freedom. The rule of the great king Burebista — when the Dacian state spread over large territories, from the Northern Carpathians and the Pannonic Plain in the north-west to the Dniester and the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea) to the east and north-east — was the acme of the political power of this people, who interfered in the struggle for power between Caesar and Pompey, siding with the latter. When during the reign of Augustus the Roman Empire established its northern frontier on the right bank of the Danube, it was plain that the Romans intended to conquer Dacia, which spread north of the Danube. For two decades the Dacians measured their strength with the Romans, this being the main feature on the Danube arena. After a number of Dacian victories under their valiant king, Decebalus, Roman power got the upper hand and extended its rule over Dacia, Moesia Inferior and Scythia Minor — territories which had been under the rule of Burebista and Decebalus. These territories were turned into Roman provinces and their inhabitants, the Dacians, were intensely Romanized.

When the Roman armies and administration withdrew from Dacia, a Daco-Roman unity and synthesis were forged north of the Danube. The Romanization was so deep-rooted north of the Danube that the waves of migration that swept over these territories, halting over short periods of time, were unable to obliterate the seal of Rome, especially

as Roman rule continued to be exerted with full authority in the Dobruja until the 6th—7th centuries and also over a wide area north of the Danube during the 4th—6th centuries. The Romanization process and the political, cultural and economic influence exerted over the Daco-Roman population north of the Danube continued uninterrupted during the migrations, which could not check the natural progress of historical processes. The Germanic migratory populations left these territories to settle in Western Europe, the Ural-Altaiic populations (Huns and Avars) dispersed under the pressure of other migratory populations, while the Slavs, who settled amidst the north Danubian Romanized population, were assimilated by the Daco-Romans who in the 8th c. constituted a new ethnical group speaking a language of their own, born of popular Latin. The Daco-Romans became Romanians, inhabitants of a territory which they defended with the sacrifice of their blood and caused it to bear fruit by the sweat of their brow. The links between the land and the people account for the Romanian people's staunchness in defending their national entity from the many invaders. It was this staunchness which saved and regained the country's independence and autonomy after they had been lost for a time.

The ideas of justice, social and national freedom, independence and state unity are a red thread running through the history of the Romanian people; they are the permanent features of this history, one of them generating the other, one deriving from the other, and all together forming the backbone of the national body — a synthesis of the past, present and future. Justice cannot be conceived of without freedom. Nor can independence be conceived of without justice and freedom, and unity cannot be achieved without freedom, justice and independence. The whole history of the Romanian people has been a great desire for freedom, justice, independence and unity, with many endeavours to obtain them, and a staunch struggle for them, which was ultimately crowned with success.

The ideas mentioned above were being defended by the popular communities — socio-political and socio-economic organizations of the Romanian people, named "popular Romanias" in the 4th—8th centuries; they were similar to those scattered over the Roman-based communities in the Balkans and were subsequently to be named — in the 10th—11th centuries — Cnezdoms and Voivodeships of which there were many, over the territory north of the Danube, where the Romanian people was formed. The Romanian political formations north of the Danube could not be displaced by the populations which settled later over that territory — Magyars, Pechenegs, Udi and Cumans. These formations developed and struggled without cease to safeguard their autonomy and the freedom of the people. Nor could the great Tartar-Mongolian invasion of 1241 do away with them; they were active in those hard times and emerged stronger than they had been, after the Tartars' withdrawal.

The Romanian people's struggle for justice, freedom, independence and unity was founded on a powerful reality: the consciousness of their ethnical, linguistic, cultural and economic unity, their unitary spiritual profile. The common origin of the Romanian people, the unity of the language, of culture and of the customs, the uninterrupted economic ties throughout the Middle Ages and the modern epoch, generated the consciousness of people kinship and later an active national consciousness,

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Another salient feature of the struggle for justice and freedom, for independence and unity has been the participation of the Romanian people of all Romanian provinces in a spirit of impressive solidarity in the efforts and strivings to achieve these ideals, beyond the political frontiers that divided the Romanian countries, and subsequently Romania, from the Romanian territories still under foreign domination.

In every case it was the masses that lent strength to that solidarity, whether in the struggle for freedom and social justice, or for independence and political unity. The great army, made up of peasants taken from their tillage, of free peasants — *moşneni* and *răzeşi*, as they were termed — and of enserfed peasants — *şerbi* and *iobagi* — won the victories in the struggle in defence of independence.

The history of the Romanian people was a true epos, under the leadership of valiant princes such as Mircea the Old and Alexander the Good, Iancu of Hunedoara and Stephen the Great. A crowning moment was the first union of the Romanian countries achieved by Michael the Brave in 1600. The memory of this glorious event pervaded all future centuries.

When the formation process of the Romanian nation was concluded during the first half of the 19th century and the consciousness of people kinship became a national consciousness, the solidarity and unity of the entire Romanian nation in the struggle for national and social liberty assumed the character of a law.

The great peasant uprising of 1784—1785 in Transylvania under the leadership of Horea, Cloşca and Crişan called forth a wide response in Moldavia and Wallachia, as proved by contemporary records. Horea's ideas to unite Transylvania to "the country" were well known at the time.

The revolution led by Tudor Vladimirescu in Wallachia called forth a still wider response in Moldavia and Transylvania. The stern measures taken by the authorities prevented an outbreak in Transylvania but were unable to prevent the solidarity of the people's masses in the Romanian provinces; they were unable to suppress the idea of justice as expressed by Tudor Vladimirescu in his proclamation to the people of Wallachia in March 1821.

No obstacle could now check the development of the idea of unity for, as the *Règlement Organique* pointed out, "the same origin, religion, customs and language of the inhabitants of the two Principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) as well as their similar requirements, are elements enough pleading for a closer union between them, which has so far been prevented and checked only by fortuitous circumstances".

It was these vicissitudes of history that the progressive-minded people, who were one with the wishes and the will of the people, endeavoured to sweep away whenever the occasion arose. This is what happened half way through the 1830's when the leaders of the Romanian-Polish secret society whose centre was at Sibiu — the pick of the intelligentsia of Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia and Poland —

united around the flags of the revolution, making it their aim, in the social field, to free the peasants from serfdom, and in the political field, to unite the three Romanian countries in an independent democratic republic.

The idea is still more clearly expressed, no less than the idea of the union to which it is closely connected, in the Declaration of the National Party of Wallachia of November 1/13, 1838, which is entitled: *Act of Union and Independence*. The second point of the Act clearly points to the necessity of having new political, public and civil laws (a Constitution) enacted "for a free and independent Romanian people"; and the elected ruling prince was to take an oath "to work for the happiness of the Romanians, to obtain independence, to make allies and friends".

Wishes turned into tendencies and conquered the minds and hearts, whether young or old, of the intelligentsia, of the masses of peasants, workers and craftsmen, and of the advanced bourgeoisie. They were all aware that freedom and justice, independence and unity were the conditions *sine qua non* of socio-economic and socio-political, cultural and institutional progress.

The tendencies of making those great ideals come true assumed various forms, according to actual conditions, to place and time, according to the circumstances within and without. When the latter coincided or dovetailed, tendencies went up one step. And the new step upwards meant various moves according to circumstances. The moves under such conditions amounted to struggle in its more comprehensive or more restricted meaning — struggle of words or deeds, by means of pen or sword.

This is what happened during the revolution of 1848 when on either side of the Carpathians identical plans were made for "the union of the entire Romanian nation" into "Daco-Romania" or "Romania", and for the independence of the new state. Thenceforth every decision, every programme was imbued with such ideas. The Blaj *Protocol* of the Romanian revolutionaries in Transylvania was inspired by them. Such plans were not restricted to a small circle of revolutionaries and thinkers; they rallied the broad masses of the people who, assembled on the Field of Liberty at Blaj on May 3/15, shouted as one man: "We want to unite with the *country*", into "the Romanian Republic of Dacia", as a contemporary Hungarian interpreted that yearning — a correct interpretation, too, confirmed by activities and events alternately on either side of the Carpathians. The "Union of all Romanians" was the historical decision that "the General Congress of all Romanians" was to take on assembling in Bucharest in the summer of 1848.

It was not imitation or the influence of outside factors but a necessity arising from the requirements of society that caused the problems of union, autonomy and independence to hold a place of honour in the *Programme* of the Moldavian and Wallachian revolutionaries.

In this respect, Nicolae Bălcescu, the most advanced of the Romanian thinkers and revolutionaries of 1848, drew logical, fully justified conclusions from a scientific analysis of relations with the Ottoman Porte, on the "sovereign right" of the Romanian people, proclaiming the duty "to defend our nationality and our rights, if need be, even by shedding our blood".

The revolution was defeated by the union of the foreign repressive forces — Tsarist and Ottoman — with the retrograde forces inside the

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country. But the great ideas and ideals proclaimed by the revolution — justice, freedom, unity and independence — could not be defeated. They continued to be alive and powerful not only in the minds and thoughts of the most advanced of the intellectuals of those days, but also in the minds and hearts of the millions of peasants, craftsmen and workers, and of the advanced boyars and bourgeois. "Romania made whole, free and undivided" was heralded by the Romanian revolutionaries in exile, based on the truth that a Romanian democratic and social republic was the fervent wish of the entire Romanian people.

Such yearnings and tendencies are crowned with success when there is justice in thought and deed, when the will of the nation joins the conscience of the nation, solidary in its efforts to make mankind's eternal ideals come true.

With the power to sense the unfolding of historical processes, Bălcescu presaged already in 1850 that the future revolutions would not confine themselves to demanding freedom in the country but would claim national unity and national freedom.

The forecasts of the great patriot were confirmed earlier than the most confident of the architects of the great national ideal thought. The union of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia prepared for long in the hearts and minds of the good patriots turned into reality in the late 1850's, in disregard of the desires of European diplomacy and of the opposition of some interested powers. Union and independence, the achievement of the entire Romanian people, were laid down in the official letters of the various constitutional organizations and bodies.

The Union achieved in 1859 was the fruit of the efforts and of the will, of the sacrifices and renunciations, of the entire Romanian people. It meant that the "overriding" idea of those days — as clear-sighted contemporaries who could judge coming events described it — had come true. Contemporary newspapers and the great men of letters inspired by grand ideals prepared and supported it: Mihail Kogălniceanu in his leaflets and from his chair at the Mihăileana Academy; Nicolae Bălcescu in his writings and his convincing speeches; Vasile Alecsandri in his immortal verse, asking "the brothers of the same nation" henceforth "to join hands for ever". And the anonymous masses prepared for it in eager expectation.

Faced with such a strong, unanimous will, the representatives of the Great European Powers assembled at congresses and peace conferences in Paris had to bow to reality, which was that the inhabitants of the Romanian countries had always been "one single people", that they had "the same origin, the same name, the same language, the same religion, the same history, the same civilization, the same institutions, the same laws and customs, the same fears and hopes, the same requirements that had to be met, the same frontiers to watch over, the same past sorrows, the same future to make secure, and finally the same mission to accomplish". Such were the assertions of the *ad-hoc* assemblies of the Romanian Principalities. The natural conclusion before such arguments, could only be "union, the unanimous wish of the Romanians", which they would have liked "to see turned into fact at the soonest, as it was already in their minds and hearts".

Union dwelt in the "minds and hearts" of good patriots — peasants, workers, craftsmen, intellectuals and advanced boyars and bourgeois — and those minds and hearts could not be diverted from the path of fulfilment. Once again a truth stood out, namely that when a rightful idea infuses the people's masses nothing can divert them from the path leading them to the purpose in view. Indeed, neither the equivocal stand taken by some of the Great Powers, nor the opposition of other powers, nor the outdated conservatism of some boyar groups, could divert them.

Colonel Alexandru Ioan Cuza, a revolutionary of 1848, was unanimously elected prince of the country by the Moldavian Elective Assembly on January 5/17, 1859. After centuries of humiliations and injustice, Moldavia now expressed her ancestral right to elect her ruling prince. The stand taken by the share-cropper (*clăcași*) deputies is impressive. On that occasion, they gave proof of sincere patriotism, supporting the interests of the nation, confident that national union and liberty would ensure the unity of mind and feelings of all people, and also social justice and freedom for the oppressed ones.

A most significant stand was taken by outstanding political and cultural personalities who understood and supported the higher interests of the nation and withdrew their candidature in favour of Cuza in order to avoid discord detrimental to the country and to the future of the Romanian people.

The Romanian people was fully aware of the significance of the event, as proved by the impressive, most enthusiastic popular demonstrations in towns and villages, which lasted for days and nights on end. On January 24/February 5, under the pressure of the masses assembled on the hill of the Parliament, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was also elected Prince of Wallachia.

The Union had not been achieved as a gift of the Great Powers or by the diligence of private people only. It was the achievement of the entire people inspired with generous and sincere patriotism and yearning for union into a single independent and sovereign country.

The Union of January 1859, completed in January 1862 — when the first single parliament opened in Bucharest, Romania's new capital —, was a moment of historic significance not only for that time but equally for the periods that followed. The Union opened up a victorious path for reforms that changed the countenance of the country: secularization of the estates of the monasteries, an agrarian reform, an electoral law, a law on schooling, organization of the army, etc. The Union of 1859 may be considered as the foundation of the edifice which busy hands and keen minds, inspired with sincere love for their homeland, made richer and handsomer.

Once the Union of the Principalities had been achieved, it was independence that took hold of the hearts and minds of the Romanian people. Everybody yearned for it, everybody wanted it, everybody was prepared to make any sacrifices in order to obtain it. Some of those who supported it provided a convincing theoretical basis for it from the standpoint of natural right and international law, from the standpoint of historical necessity. The writer Dimitrie Bolintineanu did it with pathos and conviction, stating that "the most valuable right of a nation is the right to rule itself according to its will; the second right of a nation is the right to preserve itself: a nation is always entitled to repel by force

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Already at the beginning of 1876, under the pressure of the people — peasants, workers, intellectuals, craftsmen, and the lower middle class — Romania's rulers made it known to the European Powers that the country wished to be independent. The diplomatic note the Foreign Minister Mihail Kogălniceanu sent to the Ottoman Porte and to the Guaranteeing Powers in June 1876 was actually a declaration of independence. No answer being vouchsafed to Romania's official note, independence had to be obtained by different means. The Livadia talks between the representatives of Romania and Russia in the autumn of 1876 dealt with the problem. Once again the Ottoman Porte rejected the proposals made by the Great Powers in the London protocol of March 1877.

Those were heroic times and men were prepared to live up to the occasion. The opportunity was not to be missed. Unless its aspirations were fulfilled, the people was determined to conquer independence by force of arms. It was the will of the radical bourgeoisie who was preparing public opinion for it through the medium of the press. The workers' and the socialist circles propagated the idea, rallying the workers and peasants for the struggle for independence. Its necessity and possibility were demonstrated by the intelligentsia of Romania and of the Romanian provinces under foreign domination, through the medium of the press and of lectures, of manifestations and demonstrations. And the army was ready to conquer it by their sacrifices on the battlefield.

Everything was ready, and when the Ottoman Porte began the war in defiance of international usage, a rampart was raised behind which was the whole Romanian people — of Romania and of all Romanian provinces under foreign domination. Under the pressure of the people's masses, officialdom had to keep pace with developments. A Romanian-Russian convention was signed by the legislative bodies on 4/16 April. On Apr. 29/May 11, under the pressure of the masses again, they declared the state of war with the Ottoman Porte. The natural consequence was the motion of the Chamber of Deputies of 9/21 May 1877 proclaiming Romania's independence. The reason was stated briefly and clearly: “The Chamber, satisfied with the government's explanations over the vote of April 29 of the current year, notes that the war between Romania and Turkey, the severance of our relations with the Porte and the absolute independence of Romania have been given an official sanctioning.”

A new independent state had emerged on the political map of Europe. A state which had proved that it deserved to conquer its independence and which was to prove that it was able to defend it on the battlefield.

The baptism of fire began shortly after the proclamation of independence. Romanian soldiers did heroic deeds. The whole country was beside them, determined to make any sacrifices that were required. Once again there was an impressive solidarity with the heroism of the Romanian peasant, now a soldier marching on alongside Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers. The general enthusiasm on either side of the Carpathians was truly impressive. The peasants that were still at home gave their cattle, their goods, for those that had gone to war. The working people's

masses offered the fruits of their labour for those who were laying down their lives for a great ideal. The writers made the historic moment eternal in their perennial works. Numberless young men in Romania and in the provinces under the domination of great empires — in Transylvania and Bucovina — left their families and enlisted to defend the country's independence. Wherever Romanians lived, money, clothing and medicines were being collected for the cause.

As in former days, as always, the cause of the entire nation was supported on either side of the Carpathians. The artificial frontiers dividing those of the same kin could not and did not raise any barrier before the unshakable will to unite and enjoy full independence. Independence was a strong pillar supporting the national edifice, beside the other pillar, which was just as strong and beautiful: the Union of 1859. In order to make the edifice complete and long-lasting, other pillars, no less strong and beautiful, were needed.

Writers of prestige on all the territories inhabited by the Romanians contributed to newspapers and reviews whose very title was a programme of action: "Dacia viitoare" (The Future Dacia), "Emanciparea" (Emancipation), "Carpații" (the Carpathians), "Unitatea Națională" (National Unity), "Națiunea" (The Nation), etc. Furthermore, the advanced thinkers — socialists and sympathizers — spoke their minds straight out with regard to the desire to unite the territories inhabited by Romanians.

The Memorandum movement of the Romanians in Transylvania for political freedom and political rights (1882—1894) was yet another occasion to reveal the full solidarity between the sons of the same nation, whether living in Romania or in the Romanian provinces under foreign rule, thus doing away with geographic frontiers from the political and spiritual standpoints. The society called the "Cultural League", which began its activity under such circumstances and also on a most significant date — 24 January 1891 — was to become during World War I "the League for the Political Unity of all Romanians". It is undeniable that the League greatly contributed to build up the political unity of the Romanians. And it is also undeniable that the progressive intelligentsia played its part in demonstrating the necessity to unite and to have full independence. Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea said in 1911 that a country, as a social body, must develop as a complete organism. If divided into several parts, like Poland or, to a certain extent, Romania, its development becomes abnormal and unsound. Pointing out that national subjugation is effected for the benefit of the dominant classes and that the working people's share is only "heavier shackles", Dobrogeanu-Gherea further stated that "social-democracy the world over, which struggles against all injustice, all oppression and enslavement of man by man, is fighting all the evils of capitalist society, all national depredation; it is fighting to liberate the nations from the foreign yoke." Constantin Mille, another socialist, deemed on the eve of the First World War that "everything was ripe for Romanianism to settle within the same national channel." And so, for all Romanians in Austria-Hungary, including common people, "Romania is *the country* and it is but natural that all eyes and all hopes should be directed towards that *country*".

Thus it was the Romanian people, step by step, by dint of their own strength, by the will of the Romanian people, countenance which was given by the will of the intellectuals, and their sufferings and those of other nations, upward as well as of the peoples of the sovereign, carrying

During the war, the petty-fascist die-hard class were in the struggle for liberties, for independence, for the anti-Soviet, for the democratic front, for the anti-fascist and for the most important of the country's advancement, for the socialists and the people, they wrote in 1916. The abolition of the natural and historical "within that front" with traditions, nation — a valuable. In this respect only thus that nationality, all their

Thus it was that one of the most important acts in the history of the Romanian people — *completion of national unity* — was being achieved step by step, carefully, patiently, with courage and a sense of responsibility, by dint of mature consideration on the part of the entire people. The Romanian nation showed the world a determined and self-assured countenance when the union with the mother country came to be achieved by the will of the people's masses — peasants, workers, craftsmen and intellectuals, and the advanced bourgeoisie. It relegated to oblivion the sufferings and injustice endured, well aware that no nation that oppresses other nations can be free. Thus, at the end of a long process along an upward as well as a downward course, with many sacrifices, the justice of the peoples wishing to live in freedom and independence, united and sovereign, carried the day.

During the 1929—1933 interval, as well as during the royal and military-fascist dictatorship, the proletariat and the party of the working class were in the forefront of the struggle for social justice, for democratic liberties, for independence and territorial integrity and against the imperialist Vienna Dictate of August 30, 1940, against Nazi occupation, against the anti-Soviet war. The Romanian Communist Party heading all the democratic forces, prepared and organized the victorious armed national anti-fascist and anti-imperialist insurrection of August 1944. This was a most important historical event, and a decisive turning point in the country's advance towards progress and democracy, proving that "between socialists and the homeland, between the interests of the proletariat and of the people, there can be no antagonism," as the socialist Mihai G. Bujor wrote in 1916. For socialism does not favour and has never favoured the abolition of the homeland; socialism has considered the homeland as a natural and historical framework for the development of the people; "within that framework a life of its own has developed for each nation, with traditions, spiritual life and ideals of its own, with its own civilization — a valuable and indispensable element of the general civilization." In this respect the homeland was considered to be necessary for it is only thus that the peoples can "develop at will and fully all their originality, all their creative power."