

A HISTORY OF
Transylvania

BY ȘTEFAN PASCU
UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA



TRANSLATED BY
D. Robert Ladd

DORSET PRESS
NEW YORK

Fragment of a tombstone	103
Title page of Ioan Sylvester's <i>Grammatica Hungarolatina</i>	106
Michael the Brave's entrance into Alba Iulia	109
Prince Gabriel Bethlen's belt	128
Fortified wall, Cluj	128
Fortress gate, Alba Iulia	152
Romanian peasants	159
Saxon town-dwellers	163
Title page of Petru Maior's <i>Istoria pentru începutul românilor în Dacia</i>	167
Horea, Crișan, and Cloșca	171
Horea and Cloșca leading the peasants	171
Nineteenth-century Transylvanian village	186
Avram Iancu	190
The Great Assembly in Blaj	195
Timotei Cipariu	198
Simion Bărnuțiu	198
August Treboniu Laurian	198
George Barițiu	198
Alexandru Papiu-Ilarian	205
General Iosif Bem	205
Bronze medal commemorating the independence of Romania	205
Map of Twentieth-century Romania	290
Central Committee of the Romanian National Party in Transylvania	294
Commemorative plaque	294
Central Romanian National Council	297
Notice of the convening of the National Assembly in Alba Iulia	297

Foreword

HERE, FOR THE FIRST TIME in English, the complete Romanian position on Transylvania is presented in all its complexity.¹ Both that position and the way in which it is presented by the Romanian side have many nuances, as the reader of this volume will soon discover, for Romanian-Magyar polemics on the Transylvanian question are no mere scholarly exercise. The stakes are high for both countries, and the issue has long aroused explosive sentiment at home and strong reaction abroad. Because today both countries are under the influence of the Soviet Union, actual armed conflict over Transylvania is improbable. Should Soviet control of its empire weaken further, the issue may well become explosive, however; for now, the war is being conducted "esoterically."

Professor Ștefan Pascu's research attainments and standing in Romanian academic circles make his book a telling shot from the Romanian side, one that will not long remain unanswered upon its publication. The writing of such a history by a single person is in itself an impressive feat: Transylvania's diverse systems of government, languages, and cultures make it even more remarkable. Though the product of a collective scholarly effort is homogenized and usually dull, one of the principal arguments for collective works is the fact that one person rarely possesses the interdisciplinary resources to do his subject justice. Pascu, the dean of Romanian historians, is one of only a handful of scholars who could even attempt such a survey single-handedly, and he has marshaled his resources, experience, passionate commitment, and historical vision to breathe life into the treatment of this topic. He is a master of the relevant languages and materials; he has produced major monographs on the most complex aspects of the medieval and modern history of the region. Along with the political-geographical narrative, his interests encom-

pass demography and statistics and social history,² and he has given us the case for Transylvania in the context of an analytic and synthetic history of the region.

In 1944, at the beginning of his career, Pascu published *Istoria Transilvaniei*. That book and this one are vast in scope, beginning with Antiquity and terminating the narrative with the interwar România Mare. The pre-Romanian phase of Transylvanian history is given much greater attention in the current treatment, reflecting present Romanian historiographical emphasis on origins, while the medieval voivodate era looms larger in the earlier work. Both narratives more or less end after World War I: the movement Pascu is tracing is toward the Union of 1918—once this is achieved, the story is over; then too, from the Romanian point of view, after 1918 Transylvania as such no longer has a separate history. In 1944 Pascu was writing in a pre-socialist Transylvania rent asunder by the 1940 Vienna partition. In 1982, in a reunified Transylvania within the Romanian Socialist Republic, he applies a Marxist-Leninist paradigm. In 1944, Romanian cultural policy reflected individual bent more than official design. In 1982, cultural policy is subject to the minute scrutiny of official watchdogs. In both histories, however, we are given the history of Romania and Transylvania from the vantage point of a committed Romanian nationalist. Both works stress the unity and ethnic awareness (linguistic, cultural, and so forth) of all Romanians; the artificiality of the political boundaries which separate them; the millennial continuity and primacy of the Romanians in the region; and the gradual (perhaps inevitable) evolution of Transylvania toward the establishment of a Greater Romania in 1918 despite Great-Power opposition and interference and repeated attempts to defuse nationalist aspirations.³ Finally, in this book we find again certain events emphasized, e.g., the reign of Michael the Brave and the revolution of Horia, which become elements of the Romanian nationalist catechism.

The book is an excellent illustration of southeast European historical scholarship and interests. The national historiography of each people—the questions raised by a nation's historians—naturally reflect its national experiences. Positivist historians used to imagine that history would somehow emerge from the accumulation of documents; it is now apparent that history emerges from the historians' inquiries.⁴ In the best of all possible worlds, the historian might pursue his course along the lines dictated by his own curiosity, skill, and ability, eventually arriving at what

ever approximation of the truth that these provide him. In the real world, a wide variety of factors influence the choice of questions he pursues, the shaping of those questions, the means by which they are investigated, and the argumentation that results. These factors are often further complicated by the geopolitical situation of his country (its size, the dispositions of its neighbors, etc.) and especially by the presence and intensity of national sentiment in the intellectual culture that has developed.

For the people of eastern Europe, history has an importance and significance that is astonishing to Americans. The amount of public attention devoted to historical events, research, publications, and education is extraordinary. Even more striking is the allocation of scarce resources to historical pursuits through academies, institutes, libraries, and printing houses. "Few areas are as history-minded as Central and Eastern Europe," Robert R. King notes, and explains why: "There history is perhaps the most important foundation stone of national consciousness; the past is not a subject for harmless small talk."⁵ The linguistic element is probably an equally crucial factor in the raising of national consciousness, at least initially, but King's general point is perfectly correct. Thus Henry L. Roberts can write, concerning the "historical mode" of thinking about oneself in eastern Europe: "Its self-perception is, in part at least, provided by its historical awareness and a tradition of historiography, that is, the past as organized and interpreted by the historian."⁶

This observation is strikingly illustrated by Professor Pascu's work here. While the Transylvanian debate takes place on ethnic, economic, and other levels, it is on the historical front that the most ammunition is expended, the most imposing defensive bastions constructed, and the most frequent sorties made. For the eastern European, history can be something of an obsession, a "reality" based on the nation's "shared belief in a common history . . . real or imagined."⁷ The dilemma arises in trying to think historically without allowing that thinking to dominate one's search for the facts and the shape of the past. Quite often this perception of a national past is expanded into a vision of present and future as well. That this occurs is indicated from time to time by an explosive response to any innocent remarks or questions that to the slightest degree intrude upon the basic themes and theses of national history as written in eastern Europe. As Roberts notes, the historian is the organizer and interpreter of the past, not merely its recorder.

The logic of this position becomes clearer if we accept the nationalist premise that the very survival or advancement of one's particular nation or national group is intimately related to maintenance of such themes and theses. The historian is therefore seen not as a purveyor of objects of antiquarian interest but rather as the guardian of the national hearth. And when such concerns are reinforced by and linked to the political interests of a totalitarian state mechanism, the combination can be particularly potent.

For the people of large and reasonably secure political entities, such as the United States, the nationalist fervor of Eastern Europeans is either mysterious or deplorable. However, when we consider what the nation means to these peoples, another perspective must be developed. Walter Sulzbach defined a nation as "a group of people which wishes to be sovereign among other peoples and therefore desires a state of its own."⁸ The link between state establishment and survival and ethnic survival thereby becomes a crucial factor in shaping the ideas and concepts which dominate a national culture.⁹

This emphasis is further augmented in eastern Europe by the relatively late emergence of national consciousness and state sovereignty in the region. In western Europe, the modern centralized territorial state and the national consciousness emerged over a long period of time and more or less concurrently. This was not the case in eastern, particularly southeastern, Europe.¹⁰ Such circumstances made for a significantly different dynamic in East and West, as Alexandru Dușu's recent comparative study of Romania and Europe¹¹ convincingly demonstrates.

The development of Romanian scholarship, like that of southeastern Europe in general, was heavily influenced by the significant role played by the "philosopher-patriot"¹² in the late medieval and early modern period. Scholarly writing was the vehicle for the expression of national awareness (if not for the emergence of that sentiment itself); it is noteworthy that it continues to be so into the twentieth century. Romanian historiography in the academic sense began to emerge about a century ago with the work of A. D. Xenopol (1847-1920) at the University of Iași and the new generation at the University of Bucharest in 1891, led by Ioan Bogdan (1864-1919). These were soon joined by other remarkable figures: Dimitrie Onciul (1856-1923), N. Iorga (1871-1940), Constantin Giurescu (1875-1918), and Vasile Pârvan (1882-1927).¹³

The real flourishing of the profession occurred, however, after World War I and the unification of all Romanians into a single state. Many of the first generation continued their work; they were joined by the great university schools of the inter-war era grouped around prominent journals: at Bucharest, N. Iorga's *Revista Istorică* (1915-1946) and his Institute of Universal History and C. C. Giurescu's *Revista Istorică Română* (1931-1947) and his Institute of National History;¹⁴ at Cluj, the Institute of National History under the leadership of Ioan Lupăș and Al. Lăpedatu, with their *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională din Cluj* (1921-1945); at Iași, Ilie Minea's *Cercetări Istorice* (1925-1947); and at Cernăuți, Ioan Nistor's *Codrul Cosminului* (1924-1935).

The Cluj school was conspicuous in the forefront of this development.¹⁵ Founded concurrently with the Romanian University of Cluj after World War I, the institute at Cluj generated much first-class scholarship, especially on the Transylvanian matter. Ștefan Pascu was a product of that school and then a key member of its research and didactic cadre.¹⁶

The establishment of the Communist regime in Romania between 1945 and 1948 caused not only major social and political but also cultural and intellectual disruption. However, in contrast to Hungary, for example, a surprisingly large part of the Romanian cultural elite survived the changeover.¹⁷ Romanian historical scholarship underwent a drastic "conversion" to the Marxist-Leninist model, first under Stalinist-Zhdanov conceptions, then (after 1956) under an increasingly Romanized version of Marxist orthodoxy.¹⁸ Ștefan Pascu was both a spokesman for the Cluj tradition and a leading member of the new Cluj school. This eventually brought him to a prominent position in Romanian historical circles as a whole (he became president of the national historical committee and a fellow of the Romanian Academy).

By happy chance, Professor Pascu's two treatments of the history of Transylvania not only provide a picture of this complex region's long and troubled history but also may be viewed as, in effect, works of summation. The 1944 study came at the end of two decades or more of pioneering work by the Cluj school. As Pompiliu Teodor perceptively points out,¹⁹ this work really provides the student of historiography with a synthesis of the efforts (methodological and thematic) of Cluj historians between the wars. In the same way, the current work, though it does not

end an era of scholarship, provides us with a synthesis of the methods, ideas, and emphases of contemporary Romanian Marxist historical scholarship.

An outstanding facet of Romanian Marxist historiography is the role it plays in the policies of the Romanian state and the Romanian Communist Party. One of the consequences of a totally integrated political system such as that of the Socialist Republic of Romania is that the closely controlled public media, which category includes the dissemination of historical analysis, often convey a variety of messages on a variety of levels. Historical studies produced in such societies not only present current scholarly understanding concerning the past but also consciously reflect the present official conceptions of that society. Though analysis of such "esoteric communications" gives rise to the much-maligned, and often absurd, findings of the Kremlinologists, it would be a serious mistake to deny that such communication exists and can be interpreted.²⁰ Professor Pascu's book is primarily a work of historical interpretation and synthesis and must be approached as such. However, it is also a product of a society in which public expression must be consonant with public policy, so that here we may detect trends in contemporary Romanian foreign policy, policy toward national minorities, and the political and social mobilization that the Romanian Communist Party is trying to carry out under increasingly difficult circumstances.

In Romania today, history serves both legitimating and mobilizing functions crucial to regime maintenance. The government's efforts to carry out a program of developing and utilizing the national heritage are not unique in eastern Europe, but they are unusual because of the degree to which they have been carried and because of the success with which traditional national themes have been co-opted into the service of those in power.²¹ Thus it is possible for a recent article in a party journal to set forth the official line as follows: "In the conception of the Romanian Communist Party, reflected in a conspicuous manner in the thought of Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, the study of history occupies a major place in ideological activity, being considered not only an act of knowing the past of mankind but—beyond that, and especially—as a powerful means of political education, of the formation and development of self-consciousness, in a patriotic and revolutionary spirit, of the masses, especially the youth."²²

Because the Romanian population subscribes to the national desiderata virtually as a matter of national defense, such pleas are not taken lightly. Patriotism, education, and Communist regime politics are combined into a whole that will brook no variation. As the president of Romania stressed not long ago, "Patriotism was, is, and will always remain a good of the nation of our people—and any deviation from revolutionary patriotism . . . conscious or unconscious, serves the interests of the enemies of the people."²³

In the light of these nationalist sentiments, the extraordinarily high level of historical consciousness in southeastern Europe, and official policy considerations, the publication of this book in the United States is an event of no little importance, not only for what it tells us about the past of one of Europe's most interesting and historically complex areas but for what it shows us of Romanian historiography. Finally, as a work by a leading member of the Romanian cultural establishment, the book provides a useful, if indirect, view of contemporary Romanian political and cultural policy.

Paul E. Michelson
Huntington College

Notes

1. An extended essay by C. C. Giurescu, *Transylvania in the History of the Romanian People*, was published in Bucharest by Meridiane in 1968. Robert R. King (*Minorities under Communism: Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States* [Cambridge, Mass., 1973], pp. 174–76) presents a review of earlier scholarly salvos on this question.
2. Typical are works on the peasant revolts (1947, 1957), the medieval voivodate (1971, 1979), Avram Iancu (1972), the Union of 1918 (1968), and even a history of the handicraft industry in medieval Transylvania (1954).
3. See Paul E. Michelson, "Unity and Continuity in Romanian History," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 8 (1981):29–69, for further discussion.
4. See David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies* (New York, 1970), *passim*, and J. H. Hexter, *Doing History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1971), pp. 139ff.
5. *Minorities under Communism*, p. 171.
6. *Eastern Europe: Politics, Revolution, and Diplomacy* (New York, 1970), p. 4.
7. Boyd C. Shafer, *The Faces of Nationalism* (New York, 1972), p. 18. This belief is one of ten traits which Shafer identifies as characteristic of nationalism.
8. *National Consciousness* (Washington, D.C., 1943), p. 66.
9. Whether state sovereignty is actually critical to the ethnos or ethnic consciousness decisive in achievement of sovereignty is not significant: it is the perceived link that matters.

the expense of the vanquished, some treaties did deal with the righting of historic wrongs, acknowledged the liberation of territories and populations from foreign domination, and recognized national states that had been unified or constituted by the will of their own people. To attack them would be to attack the very principle of self-determination of peoples and to deny the right of peoples and nations to decide their own destiny.

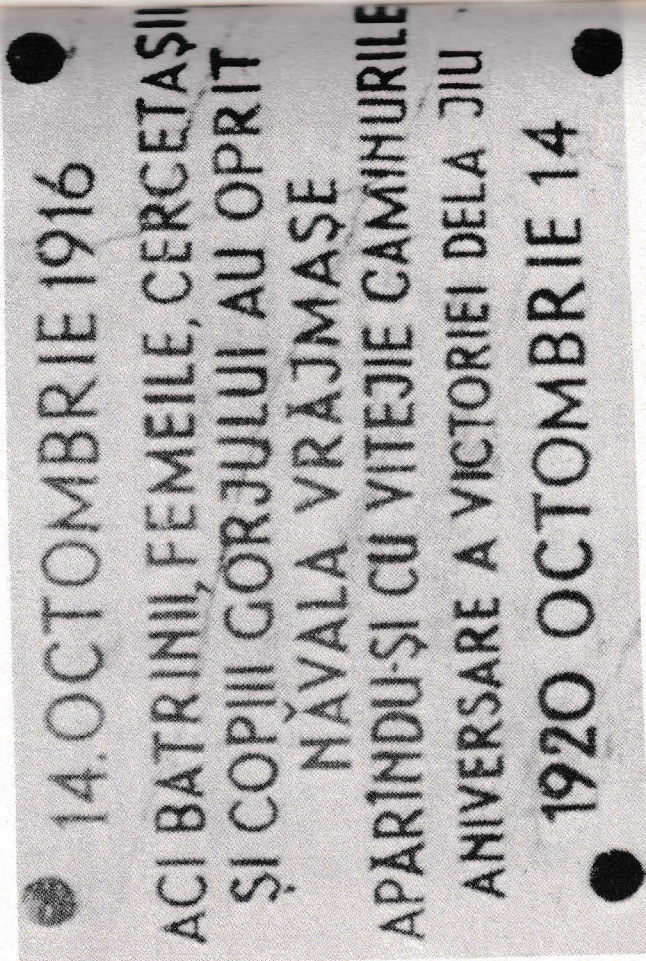
Epilogue

The establishment and recognition of the unified Romanian national state had consequences of incontestable significance for the country's internal development and external relationships. Unification meant, first of all, a noticeable increase in the country's production capabilities and its economic potential, since increased agricultural and mineral wealth opened the way for better organization of its factories and workshops. The removal of political and administrative barriers between the Romanian provinces gave a powerful boost to the economy; national markets developed, and trade between all parts of the country intensified.

The destruction wrought by the war was perhaps the heaviest in the history of the country. More than a million people died, and material damages amounted to over seventy-two thousand million lei. The economic losses, however, were recouped within the surprisingly short period of three years. A series of urgent measures were taken in order to eliminate the deficit in the balance of payments and balance the national budget, to bring inflation under control, to reconstruct the transportation system and other means of communication, and to develop foreign trade. The oil industry, severely damaged in the war, was reactivated and produced over 800 tons of oil in 1924. Coal production underwent a similar growth, from 2.3 million tons to 2,776 tons, and gold production increased from 706 kilograms to 1,311 kilograms. Output in the metallurgical, wood, chemical, and textile industries grew by 185 percent, 205 percent, 189 percent, and 241 percent respectively. Meanwhile, the number of factories was augmented 42 percent, the capital invested in industry 37 percent, and the number of workers 38 percent. Transylvania alone contributed about 48 percent of the country's total output in mining and metallurgy.



The Central Committee of the Romanian National Party in Transylvania, 1892.



Plaque commemorating battles fought by the Romanian army in World War I.

To satisfy the peasantry, which had borne such a heavy burden of sacrifice, agrarian reform gradually was effected. It was the most thoroughgoing reform in eastern and central Europe. Private estates and state lands—about 6 million hectares—were distributed among the peasants without regard to nationality, among the families of war dead and wounded, and among poor families who had fewer than five hectares. By improving the economic situation of a significant part of the peasantry, land reform also accelerated economic development. In 1924 the agricultural output had reached prewar levels, and livestock had actually increased, from 4.5 to 5.3 million cattle, from 1.48 to 1.84 million horses, from 2.5 to 3.1 million hogs, and from 8.7 to 13.6 million sheep.

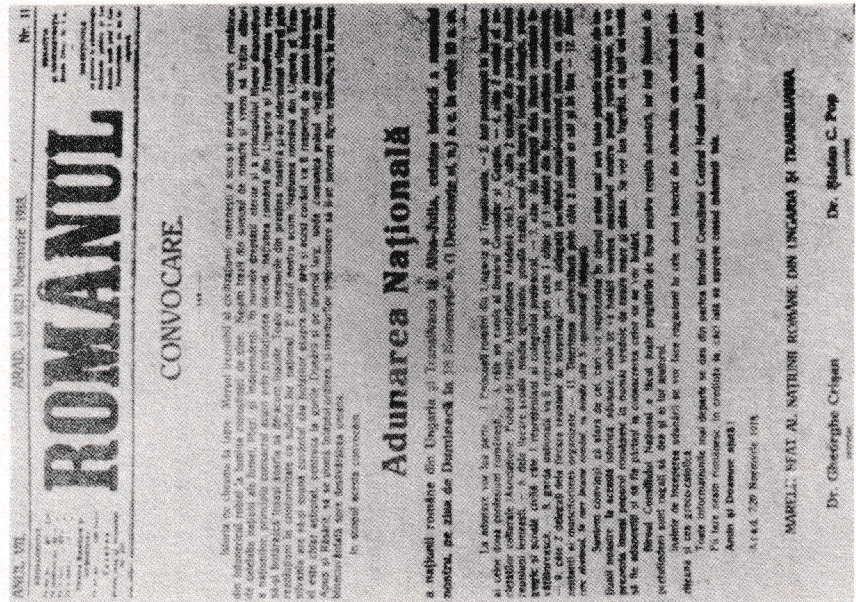
As a result of the important strides made in all branches of the economy after the formation of Greater Romania, the budget was rebalanced in 1922 to 1923. Foreign trade, aided most significantly by increased exports of oil, grain, and wood, shot from 1,714 million lei in 1922 to 5,078 million lei in 1923.

The unification of the Romanian national state also created better conditions for the development of its political life. Although dominated by the wealthy, bourgeois, and landowning classes, the 1923 constitution and electoral laws, for all their limitations, made true progress toward a more democratic society. Male citizens were granted full political rights at the age of twenty-five, including both such fundamental rights as freedom of the individual, of movement, of work, worship, and property, and such secondary rights as freedom of the press, of education, and of association.

Romanian culture flourished in all provinces: the nation's (and, indeed, the world's) heritage was enriched by new and significant works. Romanian culture and scholarship made important advances, narrowing or in some fields even closing the gap between Romania and more developed countries. Primary education was made compulsory, while the flourishing economy created a rich network of vocational schools. Several new institutions of higher education were founded on modern principles. The scholar Emmanuel de Martonne, who was thoroughly familiar with Romania and the Romanian people, proclaimed his admiration for the cultural and educational achievements in the first decade following unification. "You have developed research with a brilliance that does honor to Romanian science," he wrote. New academic departments and new laboratories had



The Central Romanian National Council, November 1918.



Notice of the convening of the National Assembly in Alba Iulia.

been created, and the renown of Romanian scholars too numerous to mention spread beyond the borders of the country.

Although internal factors played the decisive role in the achievement of unification of the national state, the process could nevertheless not have been fully completed without international support, especially on the part of the European peoples and the Americans, all of whom favored the final goal. The Romanian people's struggle for unification, in its final stage from 1859-1918, was vigorously supported by Romanian emigrants, and by expressions of progressive public opinion in several European countries and on other continents. Romania's unification movement worked closely with the general European movement of subjugated peoples, both giving and receiving strength as it did so.

Now, after centuries of exploitation and oppression, Romanian citizens of all nationalities strive year by year, day by day, to increase the cultural and material potential of their country. With equal rights assured for all, the inhabitants of Romania are linked by bonds of work and aspiration and have multiplied their efforts to consolidate their achievement and to assure that the Romanian nation will flourish—and that it will flourish in close cooperation with all the nations of the world, on the basis of general human principles of freedom and justice, independence and sovereignty. These are the essence of all the remarkable transformations in the life of the Romanian people, which today, free and independent, is forging its own history and a glorious future.

Bibliography

Introduction

- Conea, I. "Transilvania, inimă a pământului românesc" [Transylvania, heart of the Romanian land]. In *Geopolitica și Geistoria*, vol. 1. 1941.
- Lupaș, I. *La Transilvanie, cœur de la vie roumaine*. Bucharest, 1942.
- Mehedinți, S. *Ce este Transilvania?* [What is Transylvania?]. In *Opere complete*, vol. 2, p. 2. Bucharest, 1940.
- . *Der Zusammenhang der rumänischen Landschaft mit dem rumänischen Volke*. Jena and Leipzig, 1936.
- Morariu, T. "Locul Transilvaniei în cadrul unitar al teritoriului României" [The place of Transylvania within the unitary territory of Romania]. In *Unitate și continuitate în istoria poporului român*, edited by D. Berciu. Bucharest, 1968.
- Pascu, Șt. "Geographische und ethno-demographische Basis Siebenbürgens und der Bukovina." In *Habsburgische Monarchie, 1848-1918*, vol. 3. Vienna, 1977.
- Tufescu, V. *România. Natură. Om. Economie* [Romania: nature, men, economy]. Bucharest, 1974.
- Vălsan, G. "Transilvania în cadrul unitar al pământului și statului român" [Transylvania within the unitary frame of the Romanian land and state]. In *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, și Maramureșul*, vol. 1. Bucharest, 1929.

Chapter 1

- Alexandrescu, A. D. "Die Bronzeschwerter aus Rumänien." *Dacia* 10 (1966).
- Bader, T. *Epoca bronzului în Nord-Vestul Transilvaniei. Cultura pretracică și tracică* [The bronze age in northwest Transylvania: pre-Thracian and Thracian culture]. Bucharest, 1978.
- Berciu, D. *Arta traco-getică* [Thraco-Getic art]. Bucharest, 1969.
- . *Contribuții la problema neoliticului în România în lumina noilor cercetări* [Contributions to the questions of the neolithic period in Romania in the light of new research]. Bucharest, 1961.
- . *Zorile istoriei în Carpați și la Dunăre* [The dawn of history in the Carpatho-Danubian territory]. Bucharest, 1966.
- Bichir, Gh. *Cultura carpică* [Carpathian culture]. Bucharest, 1973.
- Bodor, A. "Contribuții la problema agriculturii în Dacia înainte de cucerirea romană. Problema obștilor la daci" [Contributions to the question of agriculture in Dacia before the Roman conquest: the problem of the peasant Dacian communities]. *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche* 7, nos. 3-4 (1955); 8, nos. 1-4 (1957).