

PROMINENT ROMANIAN FIGURES ON THE AROMANIAN ISSUE (LATE NINETEENTH – EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES)

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The question of the Balkan Romanians concerned almost all the prominent cultural and political figures in the Old Kingdom. Politicians (including King Carol I), scholars, journalists and publishers underlined the common origin of the Balkan Romanians (Aromanians and Megleno-Romanians) and North-Danubian Romanians. They stressed the necessity for sustained and efficient action on behalf of the Romanian State to dimension – through exclusively cultural means, first of all by opening Romanian schools in the Balkan parts of the Ottoman Empire – Balkan Romanianism as such. They expressed, through numerous articles and public assemblies, their solidarity with the effort of the Aromanians and Megleno-Romanians to maintain their own Romanian ethnic and linguistic identity.

Keywords: Balkan Romanians; Aromanian issue; King Carol I; Dumitru Brătianu; Petre P. Carp; Take Ionescu; Constantin Mille; Romania; Macedonia

The question of the Balkan Romanians was a preoccupation of almost all the important cultural and political figures of the Old Kingdom. “There is no state in Eastern Europe, no country from the Adriatic to the Black Sea that doesn’t include some fraction of our nationality. From the shepherds of Istria to those of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we find step by step fragments of this large ethnical unity in the Albanian mountains, in Macedonia and Thessaly, in the Pindus, and also in the Balkans, in Serbia, in Bulgaria, from Greece to the Dniester, near Odessa and Kiev,” wrote Mihai Eminescu in *Timpul* on 26 October 1878.¹ The national poet would often return to the Balkan Romanians’ question,² his interest “in the historical past, its contemporary state and the future perspectives of the Romanian spirit in the Balkans being constant and passionate.”³

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¹ Apud M. Eminescu, *Opere*, vol. 10, *Publicistică, 1 noiembrie 1877 – 15 februarie 1888*. “*Timpul*,” ed. D. Vatamaniuc (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1989), 123; see also Idem, “Românii din afara granițelor țării și unitatea spirituală națională,” in *Antologie*, ed. D. Vatamaniuc (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum I.O., 1998), *passim*.

² Gh. Carageani, “Eminescu și aromânii,” *Luceafărul*, n.s., 1 April 1990, 8–9, 14.

³ N.-Ș. Tanașoca, “Mihai Eminescu și romanitatea balcanică,” in M. Eminescu, *Istorie și destin. Contribuții la cunoașterea românimii sud-dunărene*, ed. Aurelia Dumitrașcu (Galați-Bucharest: Editura Porto-franco, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 1993), 5.

In the autumn of 1879, the press of Bucharest published an important document, with definite historical value, which expressed the national feeling of the Romanian political leaders – an appeal signed by the well-known statesman Dumitru Brătianu, with obvious sympathies for the Balkan Romanians' question (he was also a member of the Macedo-Romanian Committee, since the early 60s), in which he pleaded for organized assistance to our brothers in the Balkan Peninsula:

The Romanians living south of the Danube know they are Romanians, they wish to remain Romanians and count on our moral support for their national preservation. *It is a duty of the heart and an honor; it is a national necessity for us to support our brothers in the Balkan Peninsula in order to sustain their national life, to provide them with books, with priests and with teachers* (underlined by S. L.).

The state, the counties, the villages and each of us must contribute to the best of our means with money for the publication of religious and school books, and for the founding and functioning of a seminar and of a normal school in Romania, each with one hundred students, who are to become priests and teachers in the Romanian churches and schools south of the Danube.

We must allocate from the state budget one hundred thousand lei, from the county budgets three thousand, from the town budgets one thousand, and from the villages one hundred thousand; subscriptions must be opened in all advertising agencies; spectacles, concerts, parties, lotteries and *quêtes* for charitable and national work must be organized in all cities.

There is nothing that a nation aware of its mission cannot do! A single donation from our women at a party in each small village of Romania can produce hundreds of thousands lei. As Romanians and Christians we are obliged to submit our donation, no matter how small, on the altar of our homeland.

The most worthy and pleasant deed in the eyes of God, and the most commendable for the Romanian nation, *is to support our brothers deprived of the bread of soul, and to enable them to express their thoughts in their native language* (underlined by S. L.).

Romanians, you have a great past and a great future blessed by God. You should open the sky of the Romanian spirit by the virtues of your hearts. The newspaper taking the initiative of making subscriptions in favor of the Romanian churches and schools is also requested to mention me, with a contribution of one thousand lei.⁴

Responding to this appeal, an anonymous reader remarked that by his approach, D. Brătianu “has given the Romanians a new occasion to demonstrate that they understand their great mission and are ready to make sacrifices to achieve

⁴ D. Brătianu, “Românii din Peninsula Balcanică,” *Binele public*, year 1, no. 205, 11 November 1879, 2; *Românul*, year 23, 9–10 November 1879, 1035–1036 /1–2/.

the goal that all Romanians should pursue: the Romanian nation's consolidation through the unity of language and aspirations."⁵

Among the political men, King Carol I of Romania was considered by the Aromanians "the good genius, a spirit that thinks and wishes from his heart the progress of the Romanian spirit in the Balkan Peninsula," the one who had the clairvoyance of a balanced solution to the Aromanian question:

On all occasions, in all the official and unofficial audiences in which our question is presented, King Carol utters words and shows feelings that scatter the thoughts and plans of the evil-minded⁶ like waves that crash against a granite shore.

That is why the threats to close down the schools did not scare us and will never intimidate us. We are fully convinced of and confident in the justice of the cause we are defending and our voice will reach *The one who has been and who is the Great friend of the Macedo-Romanian people* (underlined by S. L.).⁷

The head of the Romanian State had defined in real terms the content and objectives of the national movement of the Balkan Romanians, declaring about them that "they are a very peaceful element, they – unlike the other nationalities of Macedonia – do not have political aspirations, they do not disturb the peace and are faithful to the Sultan, and *they do not want anything else than to hold their religious service and learn in their own language* (underlined by S. L.)."⁸

On a different occasion, when speaking of the relations between Romania and Albania, the King noted that "there are close relationships and *entire villages*

⁵ X., "Uă ultimă voință neexecută," *Românul*, year 23, unnumbered, 11 December 1879, 1129 /3/.

⁶ The author of the article referred, especially, to the clerks from the Romanian diplomatic department; see, in this respect, "Agenția română din Constantinopol," *Peninsula Balcanică*, year 3, no. 4, 13 February 1900, 1; "Consulul Pădeanu," *Macedonia*, year 1, no. 4, 22 October 1901, 1–2; "Noul ministru român [I. Papiniu] la Constantinopol," *Cuvântul armânilor*, year 1, no. 2, 9 June 1906, 4; "Mișei sui generis," *Românul de la Pind*, year 9, no. 4 (376), 4 June 1911, 2; V. Ard., "Reorganizarea domnilor Ionescu, Coșescu, Dan & C^{ie}," *Românul de la Pind*, year 9, no. 10 (382), 17 July 1911, 3; Vardarul, "Un consul îngâmfat," *Românul de la Pind*, year 9, no. 18 (390), 11 September 1911, 1; "În plină debandadă," *Peninsula Balcanică*, year 4, no. 32, 2nd ser., no. 23, 2 September 1912, 1.

⁷ "Majestatea Sa Regele și cauza noastră," *Românul de la Pind*, year 9, no. 16 (388), 28 August 1911, 1; see also C. S. C. [Constante], "Regele, chestia bisericească a românilor și șefia partidului liberal," *Adevărul*, year 17, no. 5473, 29 October 1904, 1; "Regele Carol și cestiunea macedo-română," *Gazeta Macedoniei*, year 1, no. 27, 28 September 1897, 1; "Regele Carol amenințat de muscali," *Apărarea națională*, year 2, no. 265 (514), 4 October 1901, 1; "Regele și aromânii," *Adevărul*, year 20, no. 6784, 20 July 1908, 1.

⁸ "Declarațiile M. S. Regelui Carol I în chestiunea macedoneană," *Românul de la Pind*, year 5, no. 38 (231), 14 October 1907, 1.

from Albania are inhabited by Romanians (underlined by S. L.).”⁹ In 1906, a delegation (C. Belemace, S. Saru, D. Cosmulei) of Aromanians – present in Bucharest, together with 71 compatriots visiting the Jubilee Exhibition – was granted an audience during which the King inquired into the situation of the Romanian schools and churches of Bitola. Then, at his request, all the 250 Aromanians who were in Sinaia were invited to visit Peleş Castle; the pupils of *the Romanian High School of Bitola* sang *The Parental Advice* before the royal couple, and Queen Elisabeth commended the author of the lyrics: “Mr. Belemace, please receive my regards for this beautiful poem, incomparable with all I have heard until now. And let me say for a second and third time that it is a gem of your language,”¹⁰ wrote the author in his memoirs.

The politicians were perceived by the Aromanian intellectual society in Bucharest according to political sympathies or affiliation to one party or another. Few were considered worthy of appreciation in the memory of their (Aromanian) contemporaries, among whom M. Kogălniceanu, V. A. Urechia, Alexandru Lahovari. On 24 June 1893, the unveiling of the bust of Prince Cuza’s former prime minister took place in Galaţi; on the occasion, student George Murnu – future member of the Romanian Academy – outlined his merit in supporting the Romanian spirit everywhere: “We, the young Romanians of the Balkans, have been sent over to bring our thanks and show our admiration for a man who, throughout his half a century existence, bore on his shoulders the entire fate of the Romanian spirit. His patriotic foresight, his parental solicitude also sheltered under their wings the young Romanians living beyond the Danube, at the foot of the beautiful Pindus Mountain.”¹¹ The activity of V. A. Urechia was considered a continuation of M. Kogălniceanu’s, the two equally “animating the Romanian spirit in the Balkan Peninsula.”¹²

From 1860 onwards, the political implications of the issue of the Balkan Romanians were perceived and publicly blamed; an unsigned article, probably belonging to C. Bolliac or D. Bolintineanu, gave a warning and exaggerated the

⁹ “Un interview al Regelui. Declaraţiunile făcute primului redactor al ziarului *Le Matin*,” *Epoca*, year 20, no. 90, 2 April 1914, 1–2.

¹⁰ C. Belemace, *Dimândarea părintească*, ed. Dina Cuvata (Syracuse, NY: Editura Cartea Aromână, 1990), 59.

¹¹ “Bustul lui M. Kogălniceanu,” *Peninsula Balcanică*, year 1, no. 4, 31 October 1893, 2; see also V. M. Kogălniceanu, “Macedonia,” *Sadayi-Millet*, year 1, no. 8, 12 April 1898, 1; “Cuza-Vodă şi macedo-românii,” *Calendarul românului macedonean*, 1943, 249–251 (it refers to a letter of Princess Elena Cuza, sent from Paris on 7 July 1880, to the president of *Societatea de Cultură Macedo-Română* [the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society], from which “it categorically results that the Prince of the United Principalities, Cuza, in his great love for the Macedo-Romanians, was the first to support, at his expense, the founding of the first Romanian schools in the Balkan Peninsula, Bulgaria and Turkish Greece.”).

¹² “Bustul,” 2.

conclusion: “You have discredited, gentlemen, this question as well, the Macedo-Romanian question. It was served by others, but despite all the progress, it died in your hands.”¹³ Over the years, seeing the deficiencies in the development of Romanian education in European Turkey, publicist C. Mille blamed politics and asked for responsibilities to be assumed:

*We have included in our political struggle the Macedonian question as well (underlined by S. L.), just as we have included the question of the Romanians across the Carpathians, and this struggle has done them more harm than the Hungarians or the Greeks did, if we had not helped them (...). Once again, it is better to know that we are our worst enemies (underlined by S. L.) and that our patriotism is trapped and blinded by political passion, so that in order to shake off the enemy, we put fire to the house to scorch the mice.*¹⁴

Prime Minister D. A. Sturdza was blamed by his Conservative enemies, at the end of the nineteenth century, for his inconsistency in the religious issue.¹⁵ The activity of the Minister of Cults and Public Education Spiru C. Haret¹⁶ was minimized as well in the context of sterile polemics with the former minister Take Ionescu.¹⁷ Almost 15 years later, another high-ranking official, Titu Maiorescu, was commended by an Aromanian newspaper in outstanding terms: “There were not many occasions in which we had the luck <to have> a minister (of Foreign Affairs) with such desire to do something about our problem as Mr. Titu Maiorescu.”¹⁸ Their first contacts with him dated from 1892, when he was the head of the Ministry of Cults and Public Education and when he had “solved successfully the difficult task of harmonizing relations between Ștefan Mihăileanu and Apostol Mărgărit.”¹⁹

¹³ *Trompeta Carpaților*, year 6, no. 603, 13/25 February 1868, 2303 /1/.

¹⁴ Const. Mille, “D. Haret și cauza macedoneană,” *Adevărul*, year 17, no. 5376, 22 July 1904, 1.

¹⁵ “Alianțele lui Sturdza,” *Epoca*, 2nd ser., no. 534, 14 August 1897, 1; “Trăiască Sultanul!,” *Prahova*, year 5, no. 95 (156), 29 July 1901, 1; “Ce am făcut noi în Macedonia?,” *Apărarea națională*, year 1, no. 231, 9 September 1901, 1; “D-l Sturdza și chestia macedoneană,” *Macedonia*, year 1, no. 14, 31 August 1908, 1.

¹⁶ “Delegațiunea românilor macedoneni în România. Audiența la d. Haret,” *Conservatorul*, year 1, no. 211, 7 September 1901, 3.

¹⁷ *Discursurile rostite în ședințele din 8 și 10 decembrie 1901 ale Camerei Deputaților în chestiunea macedoneană de D. Spiru C. Haret, ministrul Instrucției Publice și al Cultelor și de D. Dimitrie A. Sturdza, președinte al Consiliului de Miniștri, ministru de Interne și ad-interim de Resbel* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1902), 5–31. See also “Nepotul macedoneanului,” *Voința națională*, year 18, no. 4371, 29 August (10 September) 1899, 1; “În chestia macedoneană. Epigonul,” *Voința națională*, year 18, no. 4883, 7 (20) June 1901, 1; Bitolian, “Uneltirile D-lui Take Ionescu în Macedonia,” *Voința națională*, year 18, no. 4887, 12 (25) June 1901, 1.

¹⁸ “Sforțările d-lui Titu Maiorescu,” *Românul de la Pind*, year 9, no. 14 (386), 14 August 1911, 1.

¹⁹ Vardarul, “D-nu Titu Maiorescu și chestiunea macedo-română,” *Românul de la Pind*, year 9, no. 9 (381), 10 July 1911, 1.

The death of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs General Iacob Lahovari in February 1907 was deplored by Aromanians in Bucharest; during his office, on 9 May 1905, an Ottoman document recognizing the nationality of the Balkan Romanians had been issued:

By this decision the Macedo-Romanians became a specific nation, obtained the warranty of a long life and of a secured future, the possibility of speaking their language and the consideration of the entire world. *The Decision* –, said, overstating the realities, Dr. A. Leonte, President of the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society, at the funerals of general I. Lahovari – *was the act by which those Romanians were called to life and placed together with the other nations with rights and missions in the world* (underlined by S. L.).²⁰

Another representative of the Conservative Party, Al. Lahovari, also minister of Foreign Affairs, in 1895, was perceived by the Aromanian sympathizers of the Conservatives as one of the politicians who understood best the necessity to support the Romanian spirit in the Balkans; he was deemed “a great people-loving man who planted the Romanian flag in the valleys of the Pindus,”²¹ and “who founded the first consulate in Macedonia for our brothers.” For this reason – wrote a local Conservative newspaper in 1910 – “the Conservative Party has the most important role in their rebirth in Macedonia today.”²²

In the summer of 1908, in an interview to the Hungarian newspaper *Pester Lloyd*, the Conservatives’ leader Petre P. Carp considered, from the perspective of defending the fundamental interests of the Romanian nation in that particular geopolitical context, that for the Romanians, “there is no Macedonian question, like there is no such question for the Greeks, Serbians or Bulgarians,” and that the Aromanian question was the “question of Hecuba.”²³

His opinion, taken out of context by political enemies, was highly publicized – the public being unprepared to accept a pragmatic, utilitarian and unemotional approach to the national question – and distorted,²⁴ and it determined a public counter-offensive, in the provincial press as well:

²⁰ “Discursul rostit de d. dr. Leonte la înmormântarea generalului Iacob Lahovari,” *Românul de la Pind*, year 5, no. 7 (200), 21 February 1907, 2.

²¹ Correspondent, “Scrisoare din Macedonia [Bitolia, 30 Martie 1900],” *Timpul*, year 22, no. 77, 6/19 April 1900, 1.

²² “Chestia macedoneană,” *Conservatorul Constanței*, year 2, no. 44, 25 December 1910, 1.

²³ “Interviewul d-lui Carp,” *Universul*, year 26, no. 185, 8 July 1908, 1.

²⁴ See “Declarațiunile d-lui Carp. Șeful junimiștilor contra României și a aromânilor,” *Țara*, year 7, no. 1662, 9 July 1908, 3; “Lumea politică și d. Carp. Interview cu un liberal asupra declarațiunilor d-lui Carp,” *Țara*, year 7, no. 1664, 11 July 1908, 1; “D. Al. Bădărău despre declarațiunile d-lui Carp,” *Țara*, year 7, no. 1671, 19 July 1908, 1; A. M., “Boclucul d-lui Carp. Ce spune dr. Leonte. Convorbire cu președintele Societății Macedo-Române,” *Adevărul*, year 20, no.

Not to talk about the Romanian interests in Macedonia, does not mean to abandon or to contest these interests; it means I did not find it appropriate, as a matter of tact and prudence, to highlight them at a certain moment. *The Romanian interests in Macedonia, and worldwide, where our brothers are subjugated or scattered, are always alive and powerful. All the leaders of the free and independent Romanian State have protected and supported them* (underlined by S. L.). More than any others, the leaders of the Conservative Party distinguished themselves in this direction.²⁵

Over the years, “the question of Hecuba” would not be forgotten in political disputes: “Mr. Carp has returned to the Country and although *Pester Lloyd* arrives regularly in the capital, it still did not bring any ... Hecuba of Mr. Carp.”²⁶ It was recalled to memory by the generation of the 30s as well: “The interview offered by Carp in Vienna in 1908 to *Neue Freie Presse* [a Hungarian newspaper in German – n. by S. L.] had a great impact. There were times of great agitation in the Balkans and of revolts in Macedonia. Speaking of these events, Carp said that for Romania, Macedonia is a ‘Hecuba’ question, producing in our press fulminating critics and attacks against Carp.”²⁷

Three years later, Petre P. Carp, now prime minister, would inflame again the public opinion when talking to a delegation of Aromanians, who wished to pressure Greece on the occasion of the revival of diplomatic relations in order to influence the Patriarchate in conceding religious autonomy to the Aromanians: “I will not allow the Macedo-Romanians to interfere with Romania’s foreign policy. The Macedo-Romanian question will be solved by the government in an appropriate way.”²⁸ This attitude provoked the discontent of Aromanian leaders in Bucharest, who agreed “to take forward the fight on legal grounds,” and to publish

6773, 9 July 1908, 1; R. X., “Confirmarea oficială a interviului d-lui P. P. Carp,” *Adevărul*, year 20, no. 6777, 13 July 1908, 1; “D. Sturdza și declarațiile d-lui P. P. Carp,” *Adevărul*, year 20, no. 6779, 15 July 1908, 1; “Declarațiile d-lui Carp,” *Viitorul*, year 2, no. 239, 9 (21) July 1908, 1; “Apărătorii d-lui Carp,” *Viitorul*, year 2, no. 246, 16 (29) July 1908, 1; “La question macédonienne et M. P. P. Carp,” *La Roumanie*, year 11, no. 2803, 6/19 July 1908, 1; “Câteva notițe istorice, pentru limpezirea D-lui P. Carp,” “Presa română și chestia macedo-română,” “Românii macedoneni și declarațiile D-lui P. P. Carp” – all three in *Macedonia*, year 1, no. 7, 13 July 1908, 2; see also P. B. Cazzaiti, *Caveant consules!* (Bucharest: Tipografia “Universală” Iancu Ionescu, 1908), with the following lines on the cover: *Sunt sau nu sunt interese românești, este sau nu este o chestie românească, în Macedonia! – A fi sau a nu fi! – Care va fi, care trebuie să fie, atitudinea României într-un viitor război în Orient!* [Are there or not Romanian interests, is there or not a Romanian question in Macedonia! – To be or not to be! – Which will be, which should be Romania’s attitude in a future war in the East] (the entire booklet tackles “the question of Mr. P. P. Carp’s declarations”).

²⁵ “Tălmăcire neîntemeiată,” *Galații*, year 27, no. 152 (7679), 12 July 1908, 1.

²⁶ “D. Carp în țară,” *Ordinea*, year 4, no. 1060, 2 August 1911, 1; see also Archibald, “Hecuba,” *Ordinea*, year 4, no. 1091, 11 September 1911, 1.

²⁷ C. Săteanu, “În amintirea lui P. P. Carp,” *Adevărul*, year 49, no. 15811, 4 August 1935, 6.

²⁸ “Declarațiile d-lui P. Carp în chestia macedoneană,” *Dimineața*, year 8, no. 2543, 4 April 1911, 3.

a statement “which will be presented to the King and to all statesmen who are interested in the Macedo-Romanian question.”²⁹

In fact, the question of “interfering” with the national policy of the Romanian State was not even discussed, in the modern period, by the leaders of the national-cultural movement of the Balkan Romanians: “We, the Macedo-Romanians, are not asked to set the affairs of Romania on the right track. Our fight against the Greeks in the country is useful only for the national movement of Turkey. In conclusion, we fight against the Greeks because they contribute morally and materially to maintaining the bands in Macedonia, and because the blows received here are felt in Athens and can warn the giddy and reckless people there; this and nothing more.”³⁰

It is true that, in the context of the implications of the Balkan Wars, some Aromanian groups in Bucharest became more categorical in asking the authorities to have a more efficient involvement in defending and developing the Romanian spirit in the Balkans. Thus, in the editorial article of a newspaper of Bucharest, subtitled “Body of the Aromanian Youth of Macedonia, Epirus and Albania,” published in 1913, reproaches took an unprecedented form:

If Romania cannot fulfill its mandate of protecting the element of the same language and blood as the Romanians in the Kingdom, *it must abandon the chaotic policy practiced until now, a dark policy and with no positive results, and allow the Macedo-Romanians to take a free and independent path.* Romania had two contracts with the Macedo-Romanians: a national one and a moral one. The national one dates from centuries ago, *ab origine*. The moral one dates from the moment when Romania brought the flame of the Romanian light in the valleys of the Pindus. The Macedo-Romanians fulfilled their moral mandate with honor. Devoted to their country, they shed their own blood, saw hecatombs raised, witnessed their wealth scattered by enemies, their places destroyed, but uttered no complaint and remained steadfast in their struggle. It seems that Romania did not fulfill its moral contract, but allowed the Romanians to be slaughtered by enemies. And today, when the Balkan states play the last card for the emancipation of their compatriots, *Romania attends impassively the banquet of slaughter against the Macedo-Romanians.* No sign of protest, no weapon raised to defend those who, as they died, shouted like ancient fighters in the Roman circus: *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant!*³¹

On another occasion, the writer deplored that “Romania, a Balkan state with western politicians, in order not to be sanctioned by the Balkan nations, kept its

²⁹ “Întrunirea de la Soc. Românilor Macedoneni,” *Dimineața*, year 8, no. 2543, 4 April 1911, 3.

³⁰ E. M., “Ținta luptei noastre,” *Românul de la Pind*, year 4, no. 44 (186), 6 November 1906, 1; see also, among others, “Rolul macedonenilor în România,” *Românul de la Pind*, year 4, no. 10 (152), 5 March 1906, 1; N. C. F. [Furca], “Rostul chestiunei noastre,” *Românul de la Pind*, year 8, no. 13 (346), 11 April 1910, 1.

³¹ “Programul nostru,” *Glasul victimelor*, year 1, no. 1, 10 February 1913, 1.

reserves (during the First Balkan War – n. by S. L.), and watched, like Nero did, the destruction of its brothers. *Is there any greater betrayal?* (underlined by S. L.) Not a gesture, not a word, like nothing ever happened. The work which cost above all so much human sacrifice was destroyed.”³²

During the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), in the Romanian society “two issues have gradually focused the general attention in the context of the new political situation in the Balkans. According to an in-depth analysis of the entire issue that shows real historical awareness – *there has been a constant concern, in various forms, for the fate of the Romanian spirit in the Balkans* (underlined by S. L.), the concern for the future of this part of the Romanian nation being general in the Romanian Kingdom,”³³ (the second issue regarded Dobrudja).

On 11 November 1912, the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society organized in Bucharest a great rally, with the participation of prominent public figures such as V. Arion, Em. Antonescu, J. Th. Florescu, B. Șt. Delavrancea, and V. Pârvan – the last reading a *Motion* asking among others for the continuation “with full energy of the movement started today, in the meetings already announced and in other meetings to be later on announced.”³⁴ The main concern of the public opinion was that the Romanian spirit in the Balkans should not be abandoned for geo-strategic reasons, considering the international context; Professor N. Basilescu showed that it was “in the interest of free Romania to preserve the national feelings of all the Romanians, to gather them all around the Romanian national idea, around a common ideal, until the fate will gather them all under a common flag.”

That is why, from this point of view as well,

the fate of the Romanians of the Pindus is strongly connected with the fate of free Romania and of the entire Romanian nation (underlined by S. L.). To abandon them today prey to the Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians, means to destroy by our own doing the national idea in all the Romanian hearts, for why would our brothers ever trust us again when they see how easy we throw them to the enemies? We are killing ourselves in their souls any enthusiasm for a national ideal, for a united Romania.³⁵

Without showing bellicose intentions, the opinion leaders (including those from the province) were convinced that the end of the Balkan conflict would lead,

³² N., “Aromânii! ... Polonezii,” *Glasul victimelor*, year 1, no. 11, 21 April 1913, 3; see also “Idealul românesc în Balcani,” *Glasul victimelor*, year 1, no. 15, 19 May 1913, 1; C., “Războiul și autonomia Macedoniei,” *Glasul victimelor*, year 1, no. 19, 17 June 1913, 1.

³³ Gh. Zbucea, *România și războaiele balcanice 1912–1913. Pagini de istorie sud-est europeană* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1999), 95.

³⁴ *Apud* St. Brezeanu and Gh. Zbucea (eds.), *Românii de la sud de Dunăre. Documente* (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 1997), 228–229 (doc. 102).

³⁵ N. Basilescu, “Interesul etnic al României în Balcani,” *Universul*, year 31, no. 38, 9 February 1913, 1.

concerning Romania, to the ratification of the border in the south of Dobruđja, and “to the protection of our compatriots in Macedonia – these are our compensations and they will be demanded on the grounds of 400,000 bayonets ready to accomplish their duty for the Country!”³⁶

In the vision of politicians, ever since the first conflict in the Balkans, the Romanians had their fate already established – they could continue their life with an ethnical individuality, within the future national-territorial frameworks of the belligerent states. “The Macedo-Romanians, about whom Romania has been concerned for years, and for whom, you know very well – said in an interview in January 1913 Take Ionescu, then minister of Foreign Affairs – that in the Ministry of Education we have done all that was possible, would prefer an independent and autonomous Macedonia to arise from this war,³⁷ so that they should not be

³⁶ I. Bentoiu, “Războiul din Balcani și compensațiile noastre,” *Conservatorul Constanței*, year 4, no. 30, 28 October 1912, 3; see also I. Lahovari, “România și statele balcanice,” *Idealul armatei*, year 7, no. 1, 15 January 1912, 1 – it is, in fact, a letter published by the former minister of Domains in the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*, in reply to the letter of a Bulgarian major “on the question regarding a demand of a territorial rectification, made by Romania”; the Romanian official (he was a deputy at the time), pleading for the collaboration of states in the region, warns, at the same time, about the balanced attitude of our country: “Is it surprising for Romania to demand – once the treaty of Berlin has ceased to exist – that the border fixed by this treaty to its detriment should be rectified? Are these demands exaggerated, irrational? Is demanding a rectification, necessary for the safety of Dobruđja, from a nation (*Bulgaria* – n. by S. L.) that will receive tens of thousands of square kilometers, an unfair claim? The rural population around Silistra is of Romanian nationality: there are many Romanians, clients of Romania, living in the territories gained by the allies; why would all these considerations pleading in favor of our cause not be taken into account? Romania did not want to raise exaggerated claims and foster hatred between Bulgaria and Romania, as this would be an evil thing for both countries.”

See also M. D. Berlescu, “Românii din Turcia europeană și interesele românești în Balcani. Conferință desvoltată la Cercul de studii al Partidului Național-Liberal în ziua de 22 Decembre 1912,” in *Pentru conștiința națională. Studii și conferințe* (Bucharest, 1913), 3–69.

³⁷ “Chestia macedoneană,” *România jună*, year 2, no. 179, 10 June 1900, 1; “Autonomia Macedoniei,” *Dimineața*, year 1, no. 65, 9 April 1904, 1.

For the leaders of the Balkan Romanians established in the country, the autonomy of Macedonia was considered the optimal form of government, as a means of national survival: “The vital interest of Romanians necessarily required that the territory of Bulgaria should be as bordered as possible and that its dream of hegemony should be directly crushed. For this, according to us, there was a single way: Macedonia’s autonomy ..., but the interests in preserving a balance in the region determine Romania not to support the founding of an autonomous Macedonia ... Regarding the Macedo-Romanian element, the Romanian State believed it was sufficient to ensure their educational and ecclesiastical autonomy through officially recognized guarantees from the Balkan states. We must admit – concluded an important leader of the Aromanians, who illustrated with honor the national culture and science –, that what Romania did was well done.” – G. Murnu, “Evenimentele din Balcani și aromânii,” *Luceafărul*, year 12, no. 21, 1 November 1913, 651.

In his turn, Dr. A. Leonte, President of the *Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society*, was clear, when he concluded – at the end of an analytical digression regarding the outbreak of the Second Balkan War – that the most suitable solution which would guarantee the existence and the development of the

separated. This solution will be favorable also to Romania. But Turkey ceded Macedonia to the belligerent parties, so the founding of an autonomous Macedonia and its partition among the belligerents is a question regarding the belligerents and the great powers.”³⁸ (Ion I. C. Brătianu would show in a secret meeting of the Senate on 15 May 1913 similar skepticism about the national future of the Balkan Romanians, due to the partition of European Turkey between the Christian states “defending the situation of a population under the rule of another State from which Romania had the obligation to obtain the provision of an amnesty. The Protocol of London formally acknowledged to the Macedo-Romanians rights they had enjoyed under the Ottoman domination; the efficacy of these rights will exclusively depend on the future authority of our State.”³⁹)

The same premonition regarding the future fate – which would be tragic – of the Romanians in the Balkans at the end of the conflict was also expressed in the press of Bucharest, the Conservative-Democrat newspaper noting in October 1912:

It is easy to imagine what the Macedo-Romanians should expect if the Balkan states won. They will lose their schools and churches, and they will be slaughtered when they oppose the robbery and the seizure.⁴⁰ It is obvious that Turkey, being defeated, will be unable to give due assistance to the Macedo-Romanians. If the Coalition wins, the entire ethnical problem of the Romanians in the Peninsula will be put on the agenda. *The denationalization process will take place with extreme violence* (underlined by S. L.).

Given these bleak perspectives – expressed with, we should say again, tragic premonition even since October 1912 – threatening our Macedo-Romanian brothers, we, north of the Danube, are overwhelmed with great sadness. Our preoccupation is

Balkan Romanians “is the autonomy of Macedonia,” this in the context of a regional geopolitical security that would have resulted from this status: “An autonomous Macedonia is in accordance with the ethnographic situation of the population and its political, national, cultural, and economic aspirations. An autonomous Macedonia can alone reconcile the disputes between yesterday’s allies, today’s enemies on the basis of the renunciation principle and of the ethnic satisfaction for each of them. An autonomous Macedonia can satisfy the opposite interests of the two great powers, making sure that there will be not a too big Serbia in the way of Austria or a too big Bulgaria in the way of Russia. An autonomous Macedonia can alone prevent war.” – A. Leonte, “Autonomia Macedoniei,” *Românul*, year 3, no. 125, 9/22 June 1913, 67. See also “Pentru Macedonia autonomă. Întrunirea românilor vienezi. Dela corespondentul nostru special. 4 martie,” *Românul*, year 3, no. 43, 22 February / 2 March 1913, 2–3; Brezeanu and Zbucea, *Români*, 227–228 (doc. 101), 229–233 (doc. 103).

³⁸ I. Fermo, “Interviewul nostru cu d. Take Ionescu,” *Universul*, year 31, no. 14, 16 January 1913, 1.

³⁹ *Discursurile lui Ion I. C. Brătianu*, ed. G. Fotino, vol. 4, 25 februarie 1913 – 1 noiembrie 1918 (Bucharest: “Cartea Românească,” 1940), 39.

⁴⁰ See also C. I. Ciara, “Un episod din războiul balcanic. Incendierea bisericeii românești din orașul Giuamaia-de-Sus,” *Flambura Pindului*, year 1, no. 4, June 1929, 61–62.

twofold, because together with a political question regarding Romania's position at the Danube there is also a national question of race, with reverberations over the entire Romanian spirit.⁴¹

The Romanian newspapers – not only from Bucharest⁴² – covered at length the slaughtering of the Romanian leader of Albania in March 1914 and the slaughtering of Corița, where

priest /Haralambie/ Balamace, his brother Sotir and three⁴³ other Romanian public figures of Corița were murdered. *To us, Macedo-Romanians, this latter slaughtering committed by the Greeks is very serious* – declared in an interview professor N. Tacit, former general inspector of the Romanian Communities' Schools and Churches of Turkey –, *because of the involvement not only of irregular Greek bands, but also of troops, and – therefore – it is all about a direct order from the Greek government* (underlined by S. L.). But the Greek government is wrong to believe that it can destroy a Romanian element by assassination. The Balamace family contributed to the Romanian and Albanian culture in Albania. Thanks to the regretted priest Balamace, the Romanian group of Corița showed very strong enthusiasm. With all persecutions by the Greeks, our Romanians have always resisted. During the time of terror – he continues – (1903 until the Balkan War), the Romanians of Corița knew how to face the anger of gangs with great courage, saving the honor of the Romanian flag. When the Turkish Constitution was proclaimed, the Romanians of Corița, with national solidarity and the support of the Albanians, sent representatives to the Ottoman Parliament (Mr. Mișea). During the Balkan War, priest Balamace together with his nephew, Andrei Balamace, saved the life of the Greek Metropolitan Ghermanos – who used to work with the Greek gangs against the Turks. *The gesture was made with the intention to bring forth reconciliation with the Greeks* (underlined by S. L.). When the Greek troops entered Corița,⁴⁴ their commander Vardos, former gang chief, wished to illustrate his triumphant arrival by slaughtering the Balamace family. This criminal plan did not succeed. Minister Take Ionescu, who was in London, was immediately informed and he intervened with Prime Minister Venizelos, making him responsible for all the abuses committed against the Balamace family. Thanks to the dynamic intervention of Minister Take Ionescu, the Balamace family were spared all

⁴¹ “Războiul și situația aromânilor,” *Ordinea*, year 2, no. 232, 3 November 1912, 6–7.

⁴² See the important newspaper from Arad – “Masacrele din Corița. Un doliu național,” *Românul*, year 4, no. 73, 1/14 April 1914, 5–6; “Mișelia aliaților noștri greci,” *Românul*, year 4, no. 72, 30 March / 12 April 1914, 4.

⁴³ In fact, there were more victims: “1. The priest Balamace, the president of the Romanian Community; 2. Sotir A. Balamace, brother, merchant and painter; 3. Vasile Fațe, tailor; 4. The young daughter of Vasile Fațe, who died from fright three days later; 5. Vasile Talabacu, former cashier of the Community; 6. Vanghele Babaiana, worker; he came from America where he earned a fortune of 20,000 lei; 7. Elena Talabacu, born Cipi, housekeeper; 8. Nicolae A. Babu Cipi, primary school pupil; 9. Spiru Carabina, who died several days later from the brutal beating suffered from the Greeks.” – Mircea dela Mare [T. Câmpianu], *Un popor care se stinge. Acte și note* ([Bucharest], 1915), 51.

⁴⁴ For a detailed description of the event of 20 December, see M. D. [Dona], “Spre Albania independentă. Căderea Coriței – Dela corespondentul nostru special,” *Românul*, year 2, no. 283, 23 December 1912 / 5 January 1913, 2–3.

trouble. After the peace signed in Bucharest, Corița – which lay in the contested area – was conceded to Albania, by decision of the great powers. The Greeks started to evacuate the troops under the command of Colonel Condulis. *Then the Greek metropolitan of the locality – whose life had been saved by priest Balamace – formed a diabolic plan. He checked into a nursing unit 100 soldiers in disguise, armed to the teeth, under the pretext of some illness. After a few days they came into contact with the Greek troops which had withdrawn, and last night – under the command of some officers – they fell upon the house of priest Balamace, the chief of the community, killing him and his brother Sotir in a horrible way. Three other local Romanian figures were also killed* (underlined in the original).⁴⁵

The influent journalist C. Mille deplored the assassination⁴⁶ and talked about the protests of the Aromanian intellectuals⁴⁷ and students “of the capital regarding the savageness of the Greek army, disguised in gangs of killers and robbers.”⁴⁸ Prominent politicians of the time made important clarifications and distinguished among the nuances. Take Ionescu for instance, diplomatically, expressed skepticism about the “possible” involvement of the Greek military authorities and political factors: “This will not prove the guilt of Mr. Venizelos, *which is to be absolutely excluded* (underlined by S. L.), or of the leading group in Greece.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, N. Iorga was more categorical when addressing the Government in the meeting of the Chamber on 27 March: “a query of the following nature: Which should be the attitude of Romania regarding the cases of Corița? Would it not be better to honor those who sacrificed their life for the Romanian culture in the East and help their followers? Is there no willingness to finally take, in these confused areas of the Balkans, the real organizational measures of consular protection over the Romanian element, which would make impossible such attacks that offend the pride of arbitrators in 1913?”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Rep., “Atrocitățile săvârșite asupra românilor din Corița. Marele naționalist român, preotul Haralambie Balamace a fost ucis împreună cu fratele său Sotir Balamace, precum și încă alți trei notabili români de către trupele grecești. – Ce ne spune d. N. Tacit cât și d. Epaminonda Balamace fratele victimei. – Ancheta noastră,” *Dimineața*, year 11, no. 3617, 29 March 1914, 1.

⁴⁶ C. Mille, “Măcelul dela Corița,” *Dimineața*, year 37, no. 8820, 3 April 1914, 1; see also “Guvernul grec și masacrele dela Corița,” *Adevărul*, year 37, no. 8818, 1 April 1914, 2.

⁴⁷ “Grecii au măcelărit pe preotul Balamaci, Sotir Balamaci și alți trei fruntași aromâni,” *Aromânul*, year 2, no. 27, 29 March 1914, 1.

⁴⁸ “Aromânii și asasinarea fraților lor din Corița,” *Adevărul*, year 37, no. 8818, 1 April 1914, 2.

⁴⁹ E. D. Fagure, “Măcelul din Corcea și politica externă. Un interview al *Adevărului* cu d-nul Take Ionescu,” *Adevărul*, year 33, no. 8819, 2 April 1914, 1; the interview is inserted without the final part, very suggestive for the illustration of the general course of our relationships with our Balkan neighbors – “In the same way [that I ‘deplored sometimes the anti-Bulgarian manifestations’ – n. by S. L.] I cannot allow our legitimate expressions of deep pain and inconsolable compassion to be transformed into anti-Greek manifestations.” – *apud* Brezeanu and Zbucnea, *Românii*, 246–249 (doc. 112).

⁵⁰ N. Iorga, “Casul din Macedonia,” *Neamul românesc*, year 9, no. 12, 30 March 1914, 5.

Among the Romanian prominent figures⁵¹ who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, publicly voiced an opinion on the question of the Romanian spirit in the Balkans, N. Iorga stood apart, by the extent and substance of his implication and by his rigorous argumentation.

⁵¹ See also the correct observations of C. R. Motru, "Politica româno-elină," *Epoca*, year 7, no. 1788/243, 6 September 1901, 1–2. The well-known professor, an opinion former, pleads for the adaptation of the means of action within the national-cultural movement to the realities of Macedonia, to an already specific pragmatism of the Bulgarians in the region; he shows that the advancement of the national-cultural movement must be given priority. "We, the Romanians from Danube, have nothing to lose or to share in Macedonia from the political point of view; what brings us here is the higher interest of the European culture, the intimate conviction that through the Macedo-Romanian element living in Macedonia a lasting civilization can be given to this country, which will indirectly enforce our national existence. We have never considered territorial annexations, but the expansion of the cultural influence sphere. *And the Greeks should only consider this* (underlined by S. L.)." See also T. Antonescu, *O problemă politică. Cestiunea macedoneană. Causele turburărilor și intervenția diplomației europene* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1903), *passim*; "O scrisoare a D-lui Danielopol. Ce trebuie să urmeze România și Europa în Macedonia," *Ecoul Macedoniei*, year 1, no. 6, 21 September 1903, 1; I. Ghiulamila, "G-ralul dr. Carol Davilla și macedo-românii. Fapte și amintiri, cu ocaziunea serbării centenarului nașterii lui," *Apărarea*, year 1, no. 7, 26 October 1930, 2.