

THE ADHESION OF THE CO-NATIONAL POPULATIONS TO THE GREAT UNION IN 1918

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Abstract. *The study examines the adhesion of the co-national populations in Romania to the Great Union of 1918 through the speeches held in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. The co-national populations present themselves and their wishes through their representatives as brothers living for centuries in an ancestral common homeland. The Decisions, Motions and Resolutions adopted in this respect by the Central Saxon Council and the National Saxon Council of Transylvania (8 January 1919), by the Assembly of the Swabian Representatives in Banat (10 August 1919), by the Association of the Transylvanian Jews domiciled in Bucharest (18 March 1919) etc. are well-known and show this common aspiration for a harmonious national life. The legitimacy of the Romanian national cause was, as well, recognized and accepted as such in the series of international diplomatic and juridical documents which marked the end of the world conflagration.*

Keywords: *The Great Union of 1918, the first Parliament of the universal vote in Romania, co-national populations.*

The Great Union accomplished by the Romanians in the year of grace 1918, represented in fact the fulfilment of their vital, secular, forceful action, a legal and determined democratic desiderate of the entire Romanian people. To their unquantifiable national joy joined in the co-national populations of other tongues, brothers living for centuries in the ancestral common homeland; the Decisions, Motions and Resolutions adopted in this respect by the Central Saxon Council and the National Saxon Council of Transylvania (8 January 1919), by the Assembly of the Swabian Representatives in Banat (10 August 1919), by the Association of the Transylvanian Jews domiciled in Bucharest (18 March 1919) etc. are well-known. The legitimacy of the Romanian national cause was, as well, recognized and accepted as such in the series of international diplomatic and juridical documents which marked the end of the world conflagration.

Among the first notable results enacted by the Romanian national unitary State during the post-War period is, naturally, the constitution of the first Parliament based on the universal vote of Romania.

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Truth and justice have prevailed. Romanians were now proving their higher aptitudes of civilization, culture and social progress. The Parliamentary elections taking place under the thrust of universal suffrage have sent to the Legislative Bodies almost 800 deputies and senators (in the Chamber of Representatives – 546, and in the Senate – 236) – representatives of all social classes and categories, either registered or unregistered in the diverse political organisations, from the “historical” parties and from the newly created parties, to the Socialist Party (with 9 deputies in the Chamber) and the independent democratic groups; Romanians and also, in proportional to their respective populations, representatives of the co-national populations.

Traditionally, the Assembly of Deputies – which before War was set at 178 members – held its sessions in the Hall situated at Dealul Mitropoliei [a small hill in Bucharest, with a historic, cultural, religious, architectural and touristic significance, in the capital of Romania]. Now, though, this hall was too small, in relation to the number of representatives of the universal vote.

The blessed founder of the Romanian Athenaeum, Constantin Esarcu, was, in the light of these events, an inspired prophet in 1865, when – inaugurating the famous series of the public conferences of the Great Union had to change on a temporary basis the headquarters of the meetings. The Chamber of Deputies was reuniting in the Hall of the Romanian Athenaeum and the Senate in the Hall at Dealul Mitropoliei. Discussing the idea of this cultural site said concisely: “We are going to build a sacred hall, where, at some point, the apostles of this nation are going to assembly.”

Under such auspices of ample patriotic enthusiasm, the first Parliament of the universal vote in reunited Romania has begun its national works, at the 20th November 1919, in a solemn common meeting – reuniting the deputies and the senators – in the Hall of the Romanian Athenaeum, where the Head of State delivered the Opening Speech of the session of the Legislative Bodies.

We are now going to state the place and the role of the representatives of the co-national populations in the Parliament of the Great Union.

After the ceremony of the inaugural meeting, the Assembly of Deputies continued to meet at the Romanian Athenaeum. The first meetings were devoted to the validation of the deputies. In many of the counties of the reunited Romania were elected tenths and tenths of deputies of the co-national populations. In Crişana, Maramureş and Banat, Transylvanian regions, in Bihor County, among the 16 deputies were also Aurel Lazăr, George Moroianu, Juliu Kiş, Gr. Ergy, count Clar Neselrode; Bistriţa-Năsăud County had 4 deputies – Victor Onişor, Arthur Connerth, Victor Moldovan, Laurenţiu Onea; Brashov County had a total of 4 deputies – Vasile Saftu, Mihai Popovici, Volcu Niţescu, Fritz Connerth; Cenad County had among the 4 deputies Pavel Veselski; among the deputies of Ciuc County were Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, Bela Maurer Urmosi; Maramureş County was represented in the Chamber of Representatives, among others, by the deputies Vasile Lucaciu, Orest Ilniczchi, Gh. Bilaşcu; Odorhei County had among the deputies Iosif of Fáy, Petö Mozeş, Szabo Gabor; Sălaj County had the deputies Victor Deleu, Vasile Caba, Corilonan Steer, Vasile Gyрко; Sătmar County had among

the 12 deputies Augustin Mircea, Eugen Barbul, Bela Lengyel, Andrei Dobossy, Ionel Comşa; Sibiu County was represented by Octavian Goga, Ioan Lupaş, Ion I. Lapedatu, Rudolf Brandsch, Iulius Orendi; Timiş-Torontal County had among the 18 deputies Avram Imbroane, Sever Bocu, Augustin Ghilezan, Const. Morariu, Iosif Kremer, Ioan Tegler, Peter Kausch, Lucian Georgevici, Const. Misici; among the 6 deputies of Târnava Mare County were Ion Agârbiceanu, Alexandru Vasu, Hans Otto Roth, Wilhelm Binder, Arthur Polony; Trei Scaune County had sent 4 deputies in the Chamber of Representatives Aurel Nistor, David Caudin, Endre Morvay, András Fekete. In the Counties of Bukovina had been elected in the Chamber also deputies of the conational populations among which were Gheorghe Hrabovschi, Vasile Sniatniciuc, Norbert Kipper, Iosif Vihovici, Nicola Prelici, Eud. Gribovschi. Among the deputies from Dobruja were Mustafa Fehim Mehmed, Sădca Mehmed, Mustafa Riza, Hagi Mehmed, Keivit Ali Mehmed. The Counties from Bessarabia reunited with homeland had sent also in the Chamber of Deputies representatives of the conational populations: Iohanes Gherstenberger, Iancu Meilicshon, Vasile Miscinschi, Nicolae Stoianoglu, Henrich Anvender, Simon Nemeş, Evzei Boicenco, Iacob Alganzen, Arseni Carasevici, Daniil Erdman, Vladimir Trofimov, Iosif Karl, Ion Tomov, Teodor Dimof, Petre Papp, Daniil Bittan, Pavel Kitai Godorski, Leon Psepelschi etc.

In the meeting of 9th December 1919, the Assembly of the Deputies elected as President of the high forum the scholar Nicolae Iorga as a firm guarantee for the conduct of the works in the Chamber of Deputies in a spirit of authority and fruitful performance. The energetic president proceeded to the division, the following day, through drawing lots, of the Assembly into seven sections. Finally, the seven lucrative Commissions of the Chamber of Deputies were constituted the very next day, at the 11th of December 1919: a) for the response to the Message from the Throne, b) for petitions, c) for indigenous matters, d) communal, e) financial, f) budgetary, g) commercial, h) for the inspection of the titles of the new elected deputies.

President N. Iorga informed the deputies that upon the modification of the old Statute of the Assembly they would proceed to the constitution of the respective commissions after the previous consultations with the heads of the parliamentary groups. The Deputy for Odorhei – Iosif de Fay was also part of the Commission for Petitions. The Financial Commission benefitted from the contribution of the representative of the circumscription of Cisnădie, Iulius Orendi. Also in the Budgetary Commission were the Deputies Rudolf Brandsch, Gheorghe Hrabovschi and count Clar Nesselrode. And in the Commercial Commission among other members were the Deputies Bela Maurer Urmosi and Arthur Polony. It is worth mentioning that, in all these commissions, the representatives of the co-national populations were assigned from the general list of the “Transylvanian parliamentary group” found under the leadership of the National Party.

Returning to the necessity for the modification of the Statute of the Assembly of Deputies – “so old and faulty,” as N. Iorga characterized it –, another previous consultation in the bureau of the Chamber of Deputies with the heads of the parliamentary groups led to the constitution of the Commission entrusted with

the writing of a new Statute. Following the reading of the list with the representatives of the various political organisations, members in the respective Commission, President N. Iorga added two more Deputies: “Rudolf Brandsch, Gheorghe Hrabovschi – among our colleagues of other tongue, who with their particular experience could be useful to us.”

According to the consuetude, an inter-parliamentary Commission was constituted, also according to the procedure of the necessary consultation with the heads of the parliamentary groups. We also find in this representative Commission – next to I. G. Duca, Octavian Goga, Al. Vaida Voievod, Daniel Ciugureanu, Ermil Pangrati etc. and the Deputies Rudolf Brandsch and count Clar Nesselrode.¹

After the validations and the constitution of the different commissions of the Chamber of Deputies, a whole series of deputies from all the parliamentary groups was determined to come up to the tribune – in conformity with tradition – to make declarations concerning the unfolding of the first elections of universal vote that generated the Parliament of Greater Romania. Amongst the speakers were also representatives of co-national populations.

At some point, President N. Iorga addressed the deputies: “Amongst us there are distinguished representatives of nationalities, and among these is also Mr Brandsch, the leader of the German people from Transylvania; his Excellency asked for permission to address the public and prepared a declaration in German, as he does not speak Romanian well and I am going to translate it. Gentlemen, here is the declaration:

‘I declare in the name of my nationality that the elections in Transylvania were orderly and free and that we are fully content with the manner in which these elections were completed. We are hoping that the Decisions from Alba Iulia are going to be fulfilled and that they ensure all the rights claimed by German nationality in Transylvania’.²

Up to the tribune followed two deputies delivering communications to the Government. Then, again, the President of the Assembly intervened, having to invert the agenda of the meeting: “There are here people from the nationalities of the Greater Romania who would like to present the feelings of these nationalities... I am giving the floor to Mr Vasile Sniatinciuc; who, not speaking Romanian language, his Excellency being a Ruthean from Bukovina, is going to address me in the language that he speaks and I am going to translate his speech for the Chamber of Deputies.”

Mr. Vasile Sniatinciuc: “I declare in the name of the Ruthean nationality from Bukovina and, to the extent that this is appropriate, in the name of the other nationalities that the elections in Bukovina were conducted in an extremely correct manner and that the population which he represents was fully content with the attitude noticed towards the Ruthean national component, toward the Bukovinan Government and that in what it concerns the Union of Bukovina with Greater Romania, they are not merely content, they are grateful”³.

¹ The Hearings of the Assembly of Deputies. The Meetings of 24-28 November, 9-11 band, 16 December 1919, 8 March 1920, pp. 1-94, 152, 949.

² *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 12 December 1919, p. 103.

³ *Ibidem*.

President Nicolae Iorga, continued: “Gentlemen, Mr Gheorghe Hrabovschi, the representative of the Slovaks from the lands of the former Austro-Hungary, united with Romania, makes this declaration, that I am conveying to you: ‘We would like to acknowledge that in the territories united with Greater Romania, once belonging to Austro-Hungary, the rights of the nationalities were guaranteed in all respects and they are guaranteed. Especially for this reason we, the Slovaks, have sought the Union with Greater Romania accordingly to the right of the self-determination of nations, being profoundly convinced that the Peace Conference is going to fully recognize this request on our part. The elections to the Parliament were made with the greatest spirit of justice. The will of the Slovaks is that Greater Romania becomes a truly democratic State, through its efforts. The system of government introduced by the Stirring Council and the Romanian Government are offering us, in this respect, complete guarantees. We, the Slovaks, are going to be faithful citizens of Greater Romania’.”

“Mr Gheorghe Hrabovschi: Long live Greater Romania⁴ (uttered in Romanian).”

President Nicolae Iorga gave then the floor to another representative of the nationalities in Romania, Iancu Meilic Meilicshon, who wanted to declare: “Gentlemen Deputies, Mr President, ‘... I only know that: all the elections were conducted appropriately, with freedom, and whoever wanted to come and vote, went and cast their vote... I, as a representative of the Jewish minority, was elected not only by the Jewish people, but also by the peasantry of Romanian people. I was asked, before heading toward this assembly, to say this: Master Iancu, – for this is the manner of addressing with us... –, they do not say Mister, You leaving for Bucharest, You should attend the place they call the democratic tribune, from where justice comes and all those good things for our peasants and for all the honest people; please, stay there to gain justice and goodness for all people not only for the people belonging to the majority, but also for the people belonging to the minority. I, as a Jew, can promise – for if there is no difference in so far as justice is concerned, honest people can stay together, regardless of whether they are Jews or any otherwise –, I can vow that I am going to be citizen of Romania, always just toward you”⁵.

These eloquent scenes took place in the meeting of 12 December 1919 of the Chamber of Deputies. However, as soon as the formalities of procedure began at the next meeting, held on the 13th of December 1919, President N. Iorga called the attention of the auditorium with a new communication: Mr Orestie Ilniczchi asked to speak. But as His Excellency could not speak freely in Romanian entrusted myself with reading the declaration approved by His Excellency by His presence here.

Here it is what Mr Ilniczchi, representative of the Ruthenians from Maramureș, has to convey to the honourable assembly: “We, Ruthenian deputies, elected in four electoral districts by the Ruthenian population from the Maramureș County, present our promise before this honourable Chamber of Deputies, to make the following

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 103-104.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

Declaration

We are entrusted by our Ruthean electors to express feelings of boundless thankfulness and loyalty to His Majesty King Ferdinand and all the gratitude of the Stirring Council for respecting so correctly the right of nationalities at times of elections.

The Ruthean population from Maramureş, since it participates for the first time now at these elections was able to manifest its will freely and to elect its representatives.

We are placing all our trust in the Romanian Parliament to always respect the democratic principles and to bring about good and useful laws for all the citizens living within the borders of Greater Romania.

The Ruthean population from Maramureş areas wants and demands all the necessary measures be taken so that its unity with Greater Romania is definitively recognised, in conformity with the current demarcation line”⁶.

The series of declarations by the deputies of the co-nationalities in Romania was closed in the same meeting of the 13th of December 1919 by a representative of Dobruja, Mustafa Mehmed Fehim, a professor of Turkish language and history, who did not need an interpreter:

“Gentlemen deputies, Mr President, Gentlemen Ministers, I have considered it necessary to say a few words to this higher tribune of the Assembly of Deputies of Greater Romania, having the right to do so as a son of the same Homeland. Gentlemen Deputies, during yesterday’s meeting some of my colleagues from each nationality declared that they are devoted to this country of Romania with all their hearts, now, as well as in the future.

God grant that these words reach the ears that do not hear and the eyes that do not see!...

Gentlemen Deputies, we are happy that we came amongst you.

We are happy that for the first time we have sat in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and that there are now four Muslim deputies for the first time since the existence of the Romanian State, an act proving that the elections here were made with great freedom and this is an act that is and remains important for us, the Muslims from the whole of Dobruja.

Gentlemen Deputies, we, the Muslims from all of Dobruja were and are faithful subjects of the Romanian State. We have proved that already.

Finally, I declare in front of you in the name of the Muslim population in Dobruja that we are going to be faithful servants of Greater Romania, our beloved Homeland, which expects this unity of thoughts, feelings and deeds from us, for only then will we be able to make Romania strong”⁷.

In the elections for the Chamber of Deputies and Senate at the beginning of November 1919, none of the parties have obtained the necessary parliamentary majority to form a Government. Nicolae Iorga took the initiative and succeeded in establishing a “Parliamentary Block,” comprising, The National Transylvanian

⁶ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 13 December 1919, p. 109.

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 115-116.

Party, The Peasants Party, The National-Democrat Party (N. Iorga), as well as other parties and political groups from the other provinces united to the homeland.

Out of this “Parliamentary Block” the new Government was constituted in December 1919: Alexandru Vaida Voievod – President of the Council of Ministers and minister secretary of State at the Department of the Foreign Affairs; general Alexandru Averescu – minister secretary of State at the Department of internal affairs; brigade general Ioan Rășcanu – minister secretary of State at the Department of war; Aurel Vlad – minister secretary of State at the Department of finance and ad-interim at the Department of industry and commerce; Victor Bontescu – minister secretary of State in the Department of agriculture; Octavian Goga – minister secretary of State in the Department of education and denominations; Mihai Popovici – minister secretary of State in the Department of public works; Ion Pelivan – minister secretary of State in Department of Justice; Ion Inculeț, Pantelimon Halippa, Ion Nistor, Ștefan Cicio Pop and Dr. Ion Cantacuzino – ministers of State.

From the full Program of Government, presented by the prime minister Al. Vaida Voievod to the meeting of the Chamber of Deputies from the 16th of December 1919 we can identify the statement which relates directly to our topic of the co-nationals: the Government will not overlook the fact that an orderly State cannot be guaranteed except through a wide guarantee of the public liberties and equal rights for all the citizens.

Greater Romania should be a loved and loving Homeland for all, regardless of social class, mother tongue, or denomination. For all co-nationals, the State aims to ensure the freedom to develop their language and culture and the right to use to the widest extent their language...

For the State there cannot be different categories of citizens.

The most remarkable trait of the Romanian people is its distinct spirit of great tolerance. In this respect we can remark without any exaggeration that it is not surpassed by any other people.”⁸

Parliamentary practice required that, after the presentation of the program of the new Government, the leaders of the political parties come up to the tribune to discuss the basis of that ministerial program and to end by declaring their agreement or disagreement with the program.

And perhaps it is not a fact deprived of significance to reveal that after the speeches of the historical parties’ leaders – which were long and contradictory – I. I. C. Brătianu and Al. Marghiloman, Deputy Rudolf Brandsch followed them onto the floor. Only after the Deputy of Sibiu ended his discourse did Octavian Goga, Iuliu Maniu, Virgil Madgearu, Dr. N. Lupu and others deliver their speeches.

As a consequence, during the Chamber of Deputies meeting of the 18th of December 1919, President N. Iorga gave the floor to Deputy Rudolf Brandsch: “Mr President, honourable Deputies, in the name of the German nationality of Greater Romania and in the name of the German Popular Party, we welcome the

⁸ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 16 December 1919, pp. 154-155.

first Parliament of our country! We wish it a fruitful and blessed session. Gentlemen, we came here with brotherly feelings and with the determined will to take part in this work for the good of our country, Greater Romania! We express our warmest wishes for our common work lying ahead in front of us... Honourable Chamber of Deputies, I have the honour, in the name of my nationality, to make the following declaration, which expresses our feelings and our views: 'Honourable Chamber of Deputies, us, the freely elected representatives of the German nationality in Greater Romania, at our entrance in the Constitutive Assembly we found ourselves compelled to renew our solemn declaration that we have united with the Romanian State through free will and that we are going to belong to this State as faithful and loyal citizens, under the sceptre of the Dynasty; with the brotherly feeling for all the nationalities of the country, animated by the same convictions and above all for the Romanian people, to which we have been bound by our common fate for centuries; we salute our new country and we wish it and all its nationalities, from the bottom of our heart, a blessed future. Only the common and serious work of all the citizens will be such that it is going to establish secure foundations for this future. This is the reason why we are going to participate with all our power in this effort, in order to make out of our country a citadel of culture and democratic freedom, as well as one of equal rights for all her sons. Our hope in accomplishing this aim is based on the deep conviction that we entertain regarding the Decisions from Alba Iulia, to be loyally executed and completely realised by the legislation of the country, decisions animated by the spirit of the genuine democracy, transposing the idea of real protection of the nationalities, recognized nowadays worldwide... We are standing today in the land of true democracy, hence we are going to strive to collaborate honestly all, all the true democrats, in every direction which underlies cultural, social and economic progress, having the special satisfaction that we share in this way the feelings of our Romanian brothers from Transylvania, the authors of the results from Alba Iulia. We wish for our homeland a lasting peace corresponding to its dignity and to its interests and to express our wish for God to bless our work and to give our country and all her sons a happy future. On the basis of the programme developed by the Government, we give our vote of confidence in this Government, presided over and composed of people fighting during harsh times for our people, trusting that this government is going to be able to create the basis of a contented life for us, too, in our common country, for which our soldiers have also spilt their blood at Tisa. Long live Greater Romania!'"⁹.

In the reply to the Message from the Throne, presented and adopted in the meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, of the 29th December 1919, there is a suggestion included, concerning co-national populations: "In this united Romania any nationality is going to be able to find a just country, which they could and should love... No measure from abroad could ever overcome the spirit of larger tolerance, breathing in the Decisions from Alba Iulia."¹⁰

⁹ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 18 December 1919, pp. 181-182.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 307.

Proceeding by drawing lots for the election of the 50 deputies to form the delegation entrusted with presenting the Answer to the Message from the hands of the Sovereign, we can also identify, among other representatives, two deputies of Turkish nationality, from Dobruja: Mustafa Mehmed Fehim and Kiurt Ali Mehmed¹¹.

With the great enthusiasm of the Chamber of Deputies, two proposals of parliamentary initiative were adopted: in memory of the Decision of Union voted in the historic meeting of the 29th of December 1919, “to display in the meeting room of the Assembly of Deputies a commemorative plaque” and to make a vellum document signed by all the representatives of the nation regarding the vote of the Union and “from the bronze captured from the enemy to create a commemorative medal celebrating the great act of the Union of all Romanians”¹². Eventually, a proposal was also adopted that from then on 24th of January would “be a national holiday for all Romanians”¹³.

The series of the pledges of allegiance, expressed by the representatives of the co-national populations in the Parliament of the Great Union continued. Here is, for example, a short fragment from intervention by Deputy Iancu Meilic Meilicshon: “Gentlemen, first of all, please excuse me for my unplanned speech... It happened and I am happy to stand in the Assembly Room of Greater Romania... I could tell you that among the Jewish there is an important principle: ‘Whoever believes in God, believes in justice, too’ and in this principle I also believe. Jewish people as well as Christianity existed, exist and they are going to continue to exist”¹⁴.

We quote from a longer discourse by Deputy Hans Otto Roth: “Gentlemen, I am taking the liberty to make known my stand, as well as I can, in Romanian, adding that I am not speaking only in my name, but I represent the views of my party colleagues. Gentlemen, we ought to thank the morale and the power of the Romanian army, for the territories which were once Austro-Hungarian now are united with Romania, out of the storm. Unconditionally devoted to the civic order and representative of the healthy idea of evolutionary development, we recognize this fact, not only for the benefits brought to us, but also for its importance, far above the politics of the day and above the small territory that we inhabit... I am not afraid of declaing the legitimacy of the socialist requirement to lead capitalism on the road of natural evolution toward the socialist ideal... however, nowadays capitalism is no longer that archetypal for of capitalism of the times of Marx, but is for the most part permeated by socialist ideas... We have recognized this since the days after the collapse that, on the occasion of the union of the Saxon nationality with Greater Romania, we have called the attention to the fact that we see in this Romanian State a powerful ally in maintaining safety and civil order... We have made these representations to prove that we are able to value at its true measure the importance of maintaining peace and order in our Romanian State for the entire political development of Central Europe... Trust not granted

¹¹ *Ibidem*

¹² *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 30 December 1919, pp. 310-311.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 311.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 12 February 1920, p. 511.

in due time has dire consequences, while trust granted at the right time works miracles: I have full confidence in the good will and in the wisdom of the current Romanian Government”¹⁵.

Immediately afterwards the Deputy of the Transylvanian Saxons, Iuliu Maniu took the floor: “...It is certain that we, the Romanian people, were pleased to take into account this declaration of the Saxon nationality and we believe completely in the sincerity and loyalty of this declaration ... And as we have warmly received the Saxon nationality when it made this declaration, the other nationalities can be certain that we are going to receive them warmly, too”¹⁶.

At the same meeting of the Chamber of Deputies on the 14th of February 1920, the German nationality Deputy Fritz Connerth, offered an interesting argument concerning the necessity of currency regulation in reunited Romania. At the beginning of his speech, the Brasov Deputy stated: “I am going to use now Romanian language though – as much as possible... I am also adding that my remarks do not represent my personal opinions, but those of my party colleagues. Esteemed Chamber of Deputies, Greater Romania is accomplished. On the outside, the building of the State is finished, but inside it is not. But on this interior of the building, the solidity of the entire State edifice rests. It is though necessary to take and rapidly execute all the measures required for the strengthening the material and moral powers forming the basis of existence of the new State. History seems to prove to us that it is often easier to establish a State than to maintain it. Realising the spirit of our epoch, nothing seems more important than brotherly understanding, and the contribution of the work of the true statesmen and of the politicians appears as twice as necessary”¹⁷.

After that the speaker presented his deep convictions concerning the question of currency. It should be noted that contributions by other deputies, such as Ioan Răducanu, I. I. Lapedatu, Vintilă I. C. Brătianu, Virgil Madgearu etc. concluded the discussion on currency.

In the meeting of 19th of February 1920, President N. Iorga announced that “Deputy Dr. Fáy of the Szecklers from Transylvania has the floor for a declaration.”

At the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies, Dr. Iosif de Fáy, deputy of Odorhei said, “Gentlemen, first of all please excuse the mistakes of my speech for I have been speaking Romanian for just a few months. I would like to tell you some things about the nationality of the Szecklers. I want to call your attention to this population which is humane and industrious. The Szecklers accepted the Union with Romania peacefully and trustingly, in the hope that their vital interests are going to be protected within the borders of the new State. That things remain this way is shown by the fact that the parliamentarians – Magyars from the first Parliament of Greater Romania came out, almost without exception from the bosom of this nationality. I am not denying that maybe there were also those who, lacking awareness and agitating with slogans, wanted to disturb the wise peacefulness of the Szecklers. Yet, gentlemen deputies, they represent nothing

¹⁵ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 14 February 1920, pp. 534-535.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 536.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 538-540.

serious. These claims, rightly speaking, cannot even be called unrest; for there is no [social] unrest. There is solely an annoying use of language, by which rulers who have lost their armies, still attempt to hold onto their former power and simply cut desperate figures in politics. These gentlemen can fidget. Maybe they can even drive each other crazy, but they do not madden our wise and industrious Szeckler nationality. This nationality knows how to weigh the great significance of historical change and of evolution, as seen in the fact that our small nationality, surrounded by foreign populations, could not have been maintained, except through real politics. Gentlemen deputies, for many centuries – 1,500 years – the Szecklers have lived confined to a corner of the mountains of Transylvania. During this enormous time frame, for the most part of their existence, the Szecklers have lived as stepchildren of the Hungarian State. The traditional separate life of this nationality fell as a sacrifice to the Magyar tendencies of chauvinistic unification, almost in the same way in which the existence of other old peoples, dwelling on the territory of the Hungarian State. How well developed was this consciousness of the separate existence of the Szecklers from their Hungarian brothers, is shown by the fact that the Szeckler troops fought next to those of Michael the Brave in 1600. Gentlemen, if this was the situation during the Middle Ages, when *de facto* we can speak of a national Szeckler life and when the differences of interests were so stark, they continued to develop further after the Middle Ages, and yet the traces of Szeckler life are being attempted to be erased! Even in more recent times, Hungarian Governments did not recognize the importance of the Hungarian Szecklers to the extent that in a Hungary powerfully developed since 1867, only this [Szeckler] region remained undeveloped, neglected, without a necessary network of railways and without cultural modern institutions, so that the Hungarian functionaries sent to Szeckler territory considered their appointment here to be a disgrace, I may say, even a deportation.”

Continuing his discourse, Deputy Iosif of Fáy identified the evidence of the Szecklers desire “to contribute both to the good state of the Szecklers and to their prosperity and to the elevation of the culture and respect for the common country” to be taken into consideration by the national unitary Romanian State.

Arguing, for instance, for the construction of the railway network from the Szecklers area to the Black Sea, the speaker emphasized: “This connection would be all the more important as it is certain that the vital interests of the Szecklers extend up to here, in the south, and as they are par excellence a trading people, passing mountain roads, difficult to travel, passing the Carpathian Mountains in their carts to satisfy their needs.”

Important desiderata of cultural and administrative order were presented in the speech of the Deputy of Odorhei, Iosif Fáy, and at the end of the speech he declared: “As a faithful citizen of the Romanian State, as a Szeckler, I love my people and I came here ignoring that unleashed terror by which the former rulers wanted to force the Szecklers to tilt at windmills. We brought new confidence and, in return, we require confidence. Gentlemen deputies, your opinions should not be based on appearance, but you should see the Szeckler nationality as it is, hardworking and with an honest soul and this is the reason why I say: help us to

take away the weapons of the agitators, by the fact that you do not look on us as does the winner on the loser, but you turn to us as friends towards friends, towards this people of Szecklers which has suffered and is worthy of a better faith. Through such an approach, I am convinced the Szeckler population is going to be one of the stronger components in the edifice of Greater Romania”¹⁸.

The substantial discourse held by the representative of the Szecklers in Transylvania was answered by the President of the Assembly Deputies, the historian Nicolae Iorga, through a brief address: “Gentlemen, thank you in your name to Deputy Baron Fáy, for the words said in the name of the Szecklers who also have fought next to Stephan the Great at Podul Înalt in 1475, for the protection of Moldavia and Romanianism and who are for the most part old Romanian brothers of ours, who have lost their tongue. I thank him for the trust placed in the Romanian State, which is going to cherish and sustain this trust.”

Deputy C. Racoviță: “We ask for the display of this speech...”

N. Iorga, President: “It will be displayed”¹⁹.

Similarly, in the meeting of 1st of March 1920 of the Chamber of Deputies, the President, professor Nicolae Iorga, gave “firstly the floor for a declaration by Mr Bela Maurer, Szeckler Deputy from Transylvania.”

As the discourse of the Deputy of Ciuc is especially interesting for the clearer understanding of the time immediately after Union, we are going to reproduce it here almost in its entirety, as an undeniable proof of the traditions of common aspirations and struggle expressed from the tribune of the first Parliament based on the universal suffrage in Romania.

In front of over four hundred deputies present under the cupola of the Romanian Athenaeum, the speaker began his speech as follows: “Esteemed Chamber of Deputies, from the bottom of my heart I regret that I do not speak your beautiful language well enough, but after I had the opportunity to convince myself that you hear with pleasure all those gentlemen deputies, who speak Romanian only imperfectly, I dare abuse your goodwill and your patience, too. My speech has two purposes. On the one hand, I would like to interpret the ‘Advice’ of the citizens from my electoral circle and on the other hand, to make public, in the name of the Szeckler United Democrat Magyar Party, as objectively as possible, the situation and the position of the Magyar nationality situated on the territory united with Greater Romania. Allow me, gentlemen, before entering the core of my talk, to present a few personal reflections: I am the member of an old member of an old Magyar family from Transylvania, who played a significant role in the political life of Transylvania. Other members of this family occupied functions of prefect, or higher roles. In their functions, first of all, they proved themselves to be humane, following which the Romanian people also showed the most sincere respect and attachment for this family. Even my beloved father, now deceased, frequently protested against the unreasonable and impossible impositions of the Hungarian Government toward the Romanian people in Transylvania. He claimed

¹⁸ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 19 February 1920, p. 594.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

both orally and in writing that the Romanians should have delegates [named] and Romanian prefects in proportion to their numbers. Educated in this spirit and raised amidst Romanian people naturally I have followed the politics of my father, for which reason my brother and I were exposed to insults and abuse from the chauvinistic Hungarian press, which could not understand our stand. Namely, I was insulted because, at a gathering of the communal representatives where the Romanian members were in majority, I required that the minutes be written not only in Hungarian but, on the basis of parity, also in Romanian. At another occasion, during the war, wrongly accused of 'lèse-majesté' an old man, an honest Romanian, asked me to appear as a witness at trial, before the Martial Court, I asked for the acquittal of the old wrongly accused man. All these I have done only out of a humane sense of duty and I, maybe unknowingly or involuntarily, have always been close to the Romanian nation, which the Hungarian element found incomprehensible, which may be attributed to the fact that I was born and raised in the castle of 'Buia', the property of my family, a 'Castle' which the National Assembly in Alba Iulia gave to Michael the Brave on the 28th of March 1598. By this I had and I have a reason and an opportunity to engross myself more intensely in the literature and the history of the Romanian nation. If during the time of the Hungarian rule, led only by humanity, I had the courage to lift my supporting and defending voice in the interest of simple Romanians, allow me, Gentlemen, as deputy, in a greater measure to do the same in front of you, in the interests of my Magyar brothers, every time I shall be given the occasion. For I was born a Magyar and with a bleeding heart I have seen my Hungarian country collapsing and the main aim of my life is that in the interest of my fellows remaining in Greater Romania, to work and, if need be, to fight for our rights. I, in due time –, even since the Károly Government forced the Hungarian army to throw down their weapons and asked for peace on the basis of the Wilsonian conditions – I have fully convinced myself that [given] that consequences from Hungary, Transylvania is lost and convinced by that, I founded for the Hungarian nationality remaining in Transylvania, that is, in Romania, corresponding to the new situation, a political organ, the newspaper entitled *Uj Vilag – The New World*. In this newspaper I decided to make the Magyar people understand that with the ending of the World War an epoch had ended and the epoch had begun which should bring essential changes to the international order, in particular with regard to the map of Europe. I relied upon making them understand that the Peace Conference, on the basis of the ethnographic principle which was triumphant due to the victory of the Entente, will recognize Transylvania's union with Romania. These circumstances I have intensified as a way of the increasing the possibility of producing mutual understanding, or reconciliation, or an honest localization. I regret though that in such a long while, not even in a year, could I meet my desired result, because as a result of the articles that I have published a true 'revolution' sprang up within the core of the Magyar element, for their leaders – the old ones and the newer seducers – had too much influence over the Magyar people and there was a stronger unity of blood in action, a powerful adhesion to the integrity of the Hungarian State, and from one day to another

they could not to decide to make peace with the current situation. Following the revolution, in the autumn of 1918, the Magyar element in Transylvania was misled by their rulers, the people were used to being led, and when the governance was undertaken by Romania, in what concerns the tendencies produced by the new constellation, they remained totally ill advised by their kinsmen. Contradictory dispositions from the Károly government arrived. Lacking orientation towards the developments of the world, this Magyar element in Transylvania is shown by the fate of the Hungarian clerks who remained in Transylvania. These unfortunate people, refusing to pledge allegiance to the Romanian State and left without jobs, sold their furniture and whatever else they had and, with sticks in their hands left for Hungary. Although at the Stirring Council, the Romanian newspapers, the newspaper that I founded, along with Senator Truppel, and colleagues Deputies Lengyel, Count Neselrode and publisher Maton Andor, took every opportunity to make them return to the truth, to convince them and to redeem their existence, they were led by misguided patriotic feelings and they have sacrificed their homes. Slowly, among these clerks a wrong conviction became dominant, namely that in the event of pledging allegiance they would infringe a principle of law and this would be enough to ensure that Transylvania united with Romania, or by their passive resistance they thought that they could save Transylvania [for Hungary]. Esteemed Chamber of Deputies, the old rulers of the Hungarian element in Transylvania, as well as the Magyar newspapers made a cardinal mistake by the fact that they did not use their influence on their kinsmen, for not explaining to them the state of affairs, for not inspiring them with enough moral strength to take the oath, because these clerks did not have the opportunity to read the newspapers abroad, where even a year before it had been acknowledged that Romania was to unite with the territories of the former Hungary lived in by Romanians. As well as the newspaper *Uj Vilag* and the Szeckler newspapers from Transylvania there were the French, English, Swiss, Italian and Austrian newspapers, and these could in turn get to the old Magyar politicians and to the Magyar newspapers and could have influenced the Magyar element in Transylvania. Thus, out of my firm conviction declare that the group of Magyar clerks, the middle class from the territories united to Romania, only for the afore mentioned cause and not led by an impulse of class hatred, manifested an agitated and hostile attitude towards the Romanian authorities and the Romanian nation. There is nothing more than this in the Magyar element in the territories reunited with Romania.”

In the second part of the speech, Deputy Bela Maurer declared: “One thing is certain; we are the representatives of the Szeckler nationality. The fact is that our elections have been criticized; however, there between us and our kindred nationality, there is a strong enough relation for it to be sufficient for us to call ourselves the legitimate and constitutional representatives of the Szeckler population. Between the Szecklers and the Szeckler representatives today identity of kind forms the relation. The possible representatives of this identity of kind and of future Szeckler politics in this Parliament are, first of all, Mr Mozeş Pető, houseman, Szeckler from Odorhei county, then, Andrei Morvay, Gabriel

Szabo, András Fekete, sons of this Szeckler nationality and whose families in repeated instances and generation after generation were part of the administration and of the public life of the Szeckler population. In the organization of the state in Greater Romania, the purpose of my party, the United Szeckler and Democrat Magyar Party, cannot be other than the gradual organization of the Magyar element in the territories united to Romania. We have to make it so that all the strata of this nationality accept our political principles and by that create a healthy and unitary harmony. The main aim of our politics is, on the one hand, that aside from maintaining our national interests, to look for harmony with the Romanian nation, and, on the other hand, to free the Szeckler and Magyar population in Transylvania from the influence of the chauvinistic Magyar co-national populations, from their old leaders and from their present seducers, to transform and educate them into being honest citizens of Greater Romania. In fulfilling this great purpose, however, we need the intensive concurrence of your excellency.”

After that the speaker enumerated “the most urgent matters” to be resolved by the Romanian Government, issues that were in general suitable to be addressed by the entire post-war Greater Romania – the lack of food, the need to ensure seeds for the new agricultural campaign, the protection of war orphans and widows, the guarantee of the “raw materials necessary for craftsmen and craft enterprises” – the Deputy of Ciuc made a special point, emphasising: “I insist on the realization of the rights ensured by the Decisions from Alba Iulia and I require, in the higher interest of the State that in the regions with a Magyar population to be allocated only mature and understanding state functionaries that by their well-meaning intentions will gain the sympathies of the Magyar nationality, and these clerks that are hostile toward the Magyars to be removed from their service.”

Another interesting point of view of the Deputy Bela Maurer Urosi: “in the interest of the State and of the citizens I take a stance against the destructive class struggle. I recognize though one thing, namely that within the social and economic framework today there is also a lot of injustice, also from the point of view of the working class, concerning moral and economic health, there are so many just requirements so that the State and the social public opinion are obliged to tackle with a good will, for the sake of the material and spiritual interest of mankind. The cause of evil is that the working class makes its demands in a too abrupt tone and even intends to accomplish their reforms through violence. Again, the capitalists are too nervous and too intolerant in manipulating contemporary problems.”

Here is the concluding part of the declaration of the representative of the Szecklers in the Parliament of the Great Union: “Finally, I can now address the wish of a certain part of the Szecklers, the population of the Gheorghieni electoral circle trusted me to declare in front of you that Szecklers insist on this mother which is the Earth and they respect the laws of this country to which their land belongs, too. With a painful heart they part ways with their former country, for which for a thousand years they fulfilled their patriotic responsibilities. They are wiping away tears and with firm determination bring character, work, order and devotion to the new State. To understand this new situation, to be reconciled to it, they cast away the agents of agitation and their ideas, but hold on to their

language, religion and culture. Esteemed Chamber of Deputies! With pride, and full of joy and emotion, I transmit the sincere and honest greetings of a town and a few villages of Szecklers and if you receive joyfully our hands roughened by hard work, please never forget that the Gheorghieni electoral circle was that island of Szecklers from where you have received the first congratulations, full of confidence in the democratic Parliament of greater Romania, and for the work of this Parliament I am asking the Creator for His blessings”²⁰.

To this beautiful sincere and honest gesture of the deputy of the Szecklers the President of the Assembly, the patriot scholar Nicolae Iorga, answered: “Allow me to thank Deputy Bela Maurer, in the name of the entire Parliament, for the straight forwardness and honesty of his declaration, and I assure him that we are going to have for all the co-national entities dwelling in the land of Romania, all consideration for their current value and all respect for their glorious behaviour and their historical past. United Romania does not require from any co-national, first of all, anything other than what it requires from the Romanian nation, that is, loyal adhesion to the Romanian State, established on the basis of national law, not by conquest and with the concurrence of the entire truly civilized world and, secondly, understanding of the needs of the life of the people dominant by numbers, work and historical tradition in the common homeland”²¹.

In another meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, of 9th of March 1920, while the project of the law of the agricultural reform was discussed, Deputy Dr. Iulius Orendi took the floor, as a representative of the Saxons in Transylvania and of the German Popular Party in Romania, in order to make some observations and in his introduction said the following: “Gentlemen deputies, please be patient for I do not speak Romanian very well”²².

At the same discussion of the proposals for a law for the agricultural reform the Saxon Deputy Dr. Arthur Connerth spoke-proposing an amendment adopted by the Assembly²³.

To the postal address of the Assembly of Deputies telegrams of congratulation daily came to the Parliament of the Great Union. In this way, for instance, the Union of Armenians in Romania and the Romanian Jewish Association congratulated the mature [legislative] body – “pledging the grant of their work”²⁴.

On the 13th of March 1920 a new Government was formed, led by the General Alexandru Averescu. Twelve days later, the President of the Council of Ministers presented the Program of Government in the front of the Assembly of Deputies. Among the deputies who have taken the floor regarding the presentation of the Program of Government was also Dr. Rudolf Brandsch: “I believe that it is my duty – declared the deputy from Sibiu – and not only for my nationality, but also for the State to whose future our fate is indissolubly connected and this is the way it should remain, connected, through our own free will – to express in this

²⁰ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 1 March 1920, pp. 833-835.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 835.

²² *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 9 March 1920, p. 982.

²³ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 10 March 1920, p. 1008.

²⁴ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 8 March 1920, p. 936.

meeting of the Legislative Body our point of view, briefly, but clearly, before the country and in the name of all the representatives of our nationality. I would like to emphasize here that it is not about a matter relevant only to us; a small proportion of the citizens of this country, but it is about a matter of interest for the entire State, a matter of prime interest for the consolidation of our country. Gentlemen deputies, we, the Saxons from Transylvania, the Swabians from Banat and all the other Germans in Greater Romania, adhered out of our free decision to Greater Romania, under well-defined premises, premises to which we have always purposively referred to in our declarations of reunion and which we have brought to the knowledge of the constitutional elements: the Government and His Majesty the King. We are taking into consideration here first of all the principles known under the name of the Decisions from Alba Iulia. These Decisions were taken under the weight of the moral prestige of a whole nation and they were adopted by the decision of the Government at that date and of the Head of State, as a state act of law of the first order... Esteemed Chamber of Deputies, we considered of our duty to raise our voice in these serious times and even if we do not have the power to influence the development, we are able to fulfil our duty to our Romanian country, to which in our own interest we wish a blessed and peaceful future. We can uphold though, naturally, only a Government that leaves untouched the foundations and fulfils the promises on the basis of which our entry into the life of the Romanian State was produced. I like to hope that the current Government has decided to follow these principles²⁵.

With this intervention the activity of the co-national representatives in the first Assembly of Deputies in the Great Union Romania ended. As it was a new Government in place, namely the one led by General Al. Averescu, it was well understood that it was going to proceed to the closing of the current parliamentary session and to the establishing of new elections (which happened on the days of 25-27 May 1920 for the Chamber of Deputies and 30-31 May 1920 for the Senate). And it also goes without saying that into this new Parliament – as well as in all the inter-War Parliaments – have entered, in the similar corresponding numbers the representatives of the co-national populations, as a natural result of Romanian national politics, a politics of wider brotherly cooperation in the common homeland, Romania.

II

After the solemn opening meeting of the first Parliament established by the universal suffrage in Romania, on the same day (the 20th of November 1919), at 15.00 p. m., the Senate has begun its work in the Hall situated in Dealul Mitropoliei, in Bucharest. In order to be able to proceed at confirming the titles of those elected in the mature body, a provisory bureau of the Senate was first set up. Then, by drawing lots, the counties were divided in eight sections; the latter choosing a President, two secretaries and one or more reporters, and then beginning the exercise of validation.

²⁵ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 26 March 1920, pp. 1097-1098.

On Monday, the 24th of November 1919, the Senate met in plenary session, to debate and adopt the conclusions of the reports from the sections, referring to the validations. Among the approximately 236 senators elected in the counties of reunited Romania were also a few tenths of representatives of the co-national populations. For instance, among the senators of Bihor county were Partenie Cosma, Roman Ciorogariu, but also Andrei Horvath; Brashov county had two senators: Iosif Blaga and Lutz Corodi; among the representatives of Cenad county – evangelical priest Ludic Boor; Odorhei county was represented in the Senate of Romania by Baron Ludic of Daniel and by priest Victor Truppel; Sătmar county had sent four senators to the Parliament, among which Dr. Ludic Kerezstszeghy; two of the senators of Solnoc Dobâca county were Teodor Mihali and Teo Gherasim Sârbu, Baader Henrich, Wilhelm Kopony, Karl von Möller, Fabricius Manuilă and Silviu Bichiceanu; Târnava Mică county had two senators: Emil Pop and Adolf Schullerus; also, Târnava Mare county had two senators, too: Patriciu Pinteia and Iohann Wolff; finally, among the senators of Trei Scaune county we mention Vasile Mosora and Ivan Herepei. As well, for the counties from Dobruja, from Bessarabia and from Bukovina were elected senators for the Parliament of the Greater Romania other representatives of the co-national populations, such as: Vasile Holevici, Iacob Hecht, Vitmer Andreas, Vasile Covalenco, Teodor Covalschi, Victor Racoce, Ștefan Teodorof, Meer Landwigher, Maxim Grigore Volevski, Oreste Rusacov, Alexei Sibirski, Nic. Carabiaschi, Count George Wasilko, Stanislas Kwitowschi etc.²⁶

After validations, in the meeting of the 28th of November 1919 the definitive bureau of the Senate was elected. As President was proclaimed the professor of natural sciences from Jassy University, Paul Bujor, known and well regarded for his democratic views, for his militancy demonstrated in matters of Romanian social and political life. Then, four vice-presidents were elected; among these, Teodor Mihali and Count George Wasilko. The remarkable leader of the National Party in Transylvania, Teodor Mihali, delivered a short speech of gratitude for the trust granted, demonstrating among other aspects: “Gentlemen, I do not want to take up much of your time, as it is already late, but I really want to express the assurance that in bringing our laws and decisions we are going to take into consideration that in this Greater Romania inhabitants of other nationalities and religions also live. In this order of ideas, we would like to solemnly declare that the principles of freedom, brotherhood and equality expressed in the Great National Assembly at Alba Iulia, which will be kept and applied with holiness for all the inhabitants of this country, regardless of nationality and religion, for all to be prosperous and happy and all to be able to develop freely on the land of our dear country. For, gentlemen senators, a country can only be truly great and powerful, when all the inhabitants of that country are satisfied and happy”²⁷.

²⁶ The Hearings of the Constituency of Romania, Senate. The Hearings of 20, 24, 25, 26 November, 9, 10 December 1919, pp. 2-59.

²⁷ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 28 November 1919, p. 46.

Among the many congratulations and wishes of success addressed to the Romanian Parliament was also the following one (from December 1919). “Mr President, the Union of the Armenians in Romania, in the name of the Armenian colony, ask you to transmit to the Senate of Greater Romania the warm congratulations for the union of the Romanian lands with the Homeland. Signed: President of the Union of the Armenians in Romania, H. Khiritirian”²⁸.

Similarly to the Assembly of Deputies, the Prime Minister of the Cabinet, Alexandru Vaida Voievod, presented the Program²⁹ of Government from the tribune of Senate, which was received with great confidence by all the parliamentary groups.

In the meeting of the 29th of December 1919, the Senate voted the text of the Address of Reply to the Message from the Throne, from which we quote: “The co-national populations, adhering without reservation to the Union, are going to find within the limits of the rights granted to them by the Proclamation of Alba Iulia, all the support and protection of the Romanian State for their free cultural and economic flourishing”³⁰.

A pious moment took place in the Senate meeting from the 28th of February 1920, when President Paul Bujor opened the work of the mature body in an unexpected manner: “Gentlemen senators, before entering on the order of the day, I have the sad role of announcing to you the passing of one of our colleagues, Mr Iacob Hecht, from Bukovina. Senator Iacob Hecht is one of the great local Jewish entrepreneurs who have sympathized greatly with the Romanian cause, who took part in the important act of the Union of Bukovina with the homeland and in all the movements for the reunion of Greater Romania. He was a good entrepreneur, esteemed and loved, throughout his life and throughout his activity. I believe I am your spokesman, communicating to the family our condolences”³¹.

Further to the hearing, the Senatorial Commission was elected with the intention of forming and presenting to the plenum a modified project of Regulation for the Senate; among the twelve members, we find also Lutz Corodi and Count George Wasilko³².

But the Senate meeting from the 28th of February 1920 was to be especially important for another reason, too.

President Paul Bujor addressed the senators: “Allow me now, before moving on, to give the floor to senator Truppel, who has a declaration to make.”

Indeed, up to the tribune came senator of Praid-Odorhei, to present his substantial discourse, a confession of faith in the traditions of work and common hopes in the Romanian homeland: “Honorary Senate, I am convinced that we, Magyars, who represent the Greater the United Szeckler and Democrat Magyar Party in Parliament, appear in front of you as exotic, not because of our customs or because of our language, but because of the moment in which the Magyar representatives

²⁸ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 9 December 1919, p. 50.

²⁹ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 17 December 1919, pp. 67-71.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

³¹ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 28 February 1920, p. 393.

³² *Ibidem*.

show up in this Parliament. Indeed, what do you see in us? The people from Transylvania see living embodiments of their victories, of their national perseverance, while the ones from the Old Kingdom [Wallachia] see us as the symbol of the suffering and of the sacrifices associated to the war! I hurry though to declare and recognize that both the Transylvanians and the Wallachians all embraced each other with a noble loyalty. For this we feel obliged to explain, sincerely and totally objectively to you, who we are and what we want. Are we worthy of your friendship and your confidence? Could you obtain from us, the representatives of the Magyar nationality from Transylvania, cooperation in the evolution, flourishing and prosperity of the Greater Romania? To answer these questions, it is necessary to make a few historical reflections. It is in the nature of things that all the times, after a lost war, revolutionary symptoms appear, people asking which of the leaders who led them to disaster was responsible. Man, a thinking being, 'homo sapiens,' often forgets to look for the source of his luck, but never to search for that of his misery. And after a lost war, the cause is always found in the political leadership. From here comes a lack in confidence in leaders and a strong democratic tendency. If in Romania, which has accomplished all the purposes for which it waged the war, the first parliamentary fight in the Chamber of Deputies was over the responsibility for this war, you can imagine, what was taking place for us, Magyars, who have lost everything! When the war was about to end, when the black clouds gathered over our heads, when we have started to foresee and then we saw the dismantlement of the Austro-Hungarian dualism, the revolution had to start, one nothing could dismiss. We, a few of us, who have stayed distant from the political events, or who, allow me to express myself not exactly modestly, stayed on the top of these events and were not taken away by the current, watched with fear and great concern the darkened future. This future was to us, the people living in Transylvania even darker, for, besides the social freeing that revolution was accomplishing for the people and for the ruling class there was yet another enormous national difference. We feared that these combined differences were to bestow a combined misfortune upon us. We looked then for a redemptive idea to be the foundation of a stable political life, to accommodate any expected political change, to ensure the respect of the rights and the honour of nationalities that are going to live together and which will help make possible a sincere and stable collaboration. This redeeming idea, which constitutes the fundamental basis of politics, we have found, in regard to external politics, in a sincere and definitive friendship, between Greater Romania and Hungary, and, in what concerns internal politics, in a brotherly union between the Romanian people and the Magyar nationality. Is this idea a mistaken one, does it sin somehow against the aspirations of these two people? If it is so, future generations will judge us and history is going to condemn us. We were inspired with this idea by the catastrophic end of the war, for us, and by the bad ethnographical situation, for us, of Transylvania. And I swear to you that this is triggered out of a deep and present conviction. We did not want, we do not want and we will not want anything else but to be sincere with the Romanian people and honest toward our

Magyar nationality. We were not, we are not and we are not going to be traitors to the country in which we are living. The source of our judgement, as well as the source of the happiness of all people is the Christian Gospel. The brave work, the heroic fight led by our deputies in the Chamber of Deputies, gentlemen Bela Maurer and Dr. Bela Lengyel, and for the accomplishment of these ideas they deserve to be inscribed in the political history of Greater Romania and even in that of Hungary. I have founded a newspaper for the dissemination of this idea within the ranks of our population and I can affirm here that today out of this tiny creek a true river of political life has formed, flowing towards the most distant places where Magyars and Szecklers live. And now, after an intense struggle for an entire year, when many times our existence and honour were endangered, now when we find ourselves at this point, within the honourable Palace of the Legislative Body of Greater Romania, now when you know who we are, you have the right to ask us what is it that we want? Out of the political idea that we represent and that we propagate for our nationality and which guides us, it is easy to deduce what we want. We want everything there is that guarantees and helps to accomplish sincere and friendly relations between Greater Romania and Hungary, between the Romanian people and Magyar nationality. This program may have different practical postulates. Thus, the most difficult and the most important duty that the Romanian Government should have is the eradication of Transylvania [meaning the abolition of the Stirring Council in order to accomplish a general unification at the scale of the reunited Romanian – Stelian Neagoe's note]. In this respect, the peace treaties, the articles of laws have only a theoretical value; when they have to be realized *de facto*, it is absolutely necessary to have a national administrative factor.”

Continuing his speech, the deputy from Praid-Odorhei made concrete proposals for brotherly cooperation, as fruitful as possible, between the Romanian people and the Magyar nationality. All these in the idea of not leaving the Magyar nationality, which “belongs to the Romanian State, outside the life of the State. Quite the contrary – to enable this nationality to take part in the life of State under the leadership of trustworthy men from the bosom of the Magyar nationality, who are trustworthy in terms of probity and feelings towards the Romanian State and in this way this nationality is going to become a valuable addition to the prosperity of Greater Romania. Nowadays, everything should be reorganized in Transylvania: communities, schools, public institutions, the administration etc.

This reorganization is what I mean by the eradication of Transylvania and this constitutes a Gordian knot there. Do not forget, Gentlemen, that today to rule and lead the Magyar nationality in Transylvania, one needs a strong arm, which needs to be Magyar, too, honest towards the Romanian people, responsible to the Romanian State and representative of the interests of the Magyar nationality.”

Only in this way – argued Senator Victor Truppel – “the Magyar nationality is going to begin to look trustingly upon Romanian organization and institutions, and only in this way will it join its activity with the other nationalities and only in this way will it consider itself at home and not expect anything from abroad.

I am concluding, Gentlemen, wishing from all my heart prosperity, greatness and happiness for Greater Romania, having the deep conviction that this greatness and happiness will be shared in a brotherly way with the Magyar nationality, which we represent in this honourable Parliament”³³.

To the priest and Senator of Praid-Odorhei answered, first, the Primate Metropolitan Miron Cristea: “Gentlemen Senators, as one who spent the greater part of my life in the same Hungary from which we separated, together with the previous speaker, I, as Romanian and a part of the inhabitants of this country, which, since its founding by Trajan our ancestor, has never ceased to be a Romanian country, regardless of its name in the public law, and the Gentlemen who just spoke, as a part of that fraction of Magyars, who for centuries lived amidst the ethnographical mass of the Romanian people, I, as one who is familiar with the references from the other side, with satisfaction and soulful content, and as a member of this Senate, I acknowledge the beautiful speeches and declarations of the Gentlemen previously speaking. Noticing that His Excellency is part of that grouping animated by a healthy Magyar politics and which wants to forget the past and relate and cooperate in a spirit of brotherhood with the Romanian people, since our kind God wanted it so, that he leads his life among us. If we were to look at our past, then starting with Stephan I, the first King of Hungary and especially from the King Bela III of Hungary Bela, then we, the Romanians, would have reasons not to forget easily the persecutions endured by us, Romanians, in the former Hungarian country, which hardly have any equal anywhere in any of the world’s countries. We were persecuted for the faith of our parents and latterly for the keen respect for all the traditions and for the blood of our Romanian kind and often these persecutions matched the martyrdom from the first centuries of Christianity. I do not want to reiterate these sufferings, but solely to state that the Romanian people are of a noble kind and that all the sufferings from which we only recently were saved, seem to be forgotten even by myself who has grown grey hairs living them. And I wish to convey the feelings of Romanians everywhere and especially the feelings of the members of this Higher Legislative Forum, when I declare that the Magyar brothers who live within the borders of Greater Romania should be sure that we are never going to persecute them and we aren’t going to do them the harm that we suffered from them. We are going to respect their love for the Magyar kind and we are going to support their cultural aspirations, we are going to offer respect and the highest tolerance for their faith, we are going to respect their traditions and customs and all the just aspirations of progress, with only one condition: to identify with our interests and aspirations. In conclusion, a requirement for the previous speaker: that the honourable grouping that he is part of aim to become generalized in ever wider circles of the Hungarian kind dwelling in the lands of reunited Romania and to be sure that all the elements in the country are going to show them the highest good will, in order to find themselves at home here with us”³⁴.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 393-394.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 394.

As a reply to the sincere declarations of loyalty from the Senator representative of the Magyar nationality, the President of the Council of Ministers *ad-interim*, Ștefan Cicio Pop also took the floor (as the Prime Minister Al. Vaida Voievod was abroad, for the Peace Conference): “Gentlemen Senators, I wish to associate myself wholly with the things said by His Holiness, Primate Metropolitan Miron Cristea. We, Gentlemen, want to learn from the sins of others and not fall into the same fault in which our oppressors found themselves. In our Decisions at Alba Iulia we have guaranteed to minorities the widest national, religious, educational and economic rights. What we have promised in the Decisions at Alba Iulia are not going to remain on paper, but they are going to be transposed into reality. We are living the moment when the entire organisation of the State must be adapted to the new conditions. Because the State was enlarged, the narrow frame of the Constitution still has to be enlarged and in this framework we are going to take care that the co-national populations to be represented even in the Government. We want to be just and equitable; we want though, and I am addressing here not only those representing co-national populations and who are here in this room, but all the nationalities of other tongues found in this God blessed State, to show strong faith in the establishments of this State, toward its organisation and to have faith that the completion of the nation and that the borders of this State were made once and for all and they are never to be changed. Walking away from any separatist inclinations, from any vain hopes, in this country they are going to find happiness, maybe more so than in their former country. Gentlemen Senators, I am glad that these words spoken in the name of the Government have found such a sincere echo within your hearts; they are for the co-national populations the greatest guarantee that everything we have promised and everything that can be made for the maintaining of our national unity and with the guarantee of our State power is going to be done so that the co-national populations are able to feel better and happier in this country”³⁵.

As it were, new telegrams of congratulations for the Parliament of the Great Union arrived in waves at the postal address of the Senate, messages of adhesion to the Romanian national unitary State. For example, we cite one of the most significant ones: “The Association of the Romanian Jews, deeply moved, salutes joyfully the victory of the long-time ignored justice and worshipfully pay respect to the varied sacrifices paid for victory. As citizens faithful to the holy duty to the country we pledge the fruit of our work for the prosperity of Greater Romania, forever united through the love with which it will equally protect all its sons. Long live Greater Romania! In the name of the Association of the Romanian Jews, President – engineer Jacques Katz”³⁶.

Following on from the administration of the country’s affairs, the Government led by General Alexandru Averescu, the latter presented himself in front of the Senate – as well as in front of the Assembly of Deputies, on 25th March 1920, with the Program³⁷ of the Government. Then there were the hearings of the parliamentary groups, vis-à-vis the speech of Prime-Minister Averescu.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 394-395.

³⁶ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 8 March 1920, p. 519.

³⁷ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 25 March 1920, pp. 653-655.

Among the speakers, Dr. Adolf Schullerus: “Gentlemen Senators, in the name of the German Party and my German co-national fellows, allow me to declare: we believe that it is our patriotic duty and we are ready to support the Government in all its efforts meant to reorganize life in our country and we are ready to contribute, according to our powers, to ensure the due development of the Romanian State, accordingly to its higher cultural and historical mission and accordingly to its inexhaustible riches in human natural forces... All of us, regardless of the language that we speak have willingly united with the Romanian State because we consider the union of the entire Romanian people and implicitly that of the populations that live in its midst as a historical, immutable fact. But we have not united only with the mountains and the rivers, not only with the land that our ancestors have ploughed for eight centuries, not solely with the honest and determined will to serve our new country with all our powers for its prosperity, but we have united as well with the conditions of life and with the entirely particular necessities of the lands inhabited by us, with the special manner in which the conviviality with other co-national populations speaking other languages was formed with us, in what concerns law, circulation and administration. We have especially united with the mother tongue, in which anyone can express a thought in a perfect manner and can take decisions. It is our right, it is even our duty to claim from the Government of the country not only the toleration, but also the support for a self-determined life, for in a living organism, such is that of the State, the vigorous and deeply enrooted development of collective life can be possible only where this life prospers, again, vigorous and deeply enrooted, in each separate place. We were sent here by our electors to help, through our activity, the reconstruction of the Romanian State.”

Senator of Mediaș-Târnava Mare, Dr. Adolf Schullerus identified in this speech “the obstacles, similar throughout the country, which are disturbing national life,” namely – the difficulties, the precarious status of the currency and the steep prices generated by it etc.

At the end of his intervention, Senator Adolf Schullerus declared: “The role of development up to this point is that we are living in a democratic State, that is, in a State in which everyone to be able to cultivate his inborn traits... We expect now that the new Government, on the basis of the Decisions at Alba Iulia, to support our individual life; we are ready to cooperate with pleasure under its leadership for the consolidation of the Romanian homeland”³⁸.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Duiliu Zamfirescu, thanking in the name of the Government all the heads of parliamentary groups who have expressed the agreement with the Program of new Council of Ministers, had special reassuring words for the sincerity of the ideas expressed in the declaration made from the tribune of the Senate of reunited Romania by Dr. Adolf Schullerus³⁹.

The professions of trust in the Great Union, expressed by the representatives of the co-national populations in the Senate was received well by the official institutions (such as, the Government, the bureau of the Senate), and by the Senators

³⁸ *Ibidem*. The Hearing of 26 March 1920, p. 666.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 667.

themselves. Thus, for instance, a Senator of Gorj county, Father Ilie Roșoagă, felt that it was his duty to reveal the following aspects in his discourse from the 26th of March 1920: “Gentlemen Senators, I did not come up to this tribune to announce [outrageously] big things or to give you the occasion to admire my eloquence; this comes with a greater number of school years. I for one, if I tell you something, it is based on experience, because I am old and maybe much older than many of the elders here... We have lovingly fought for the making of Greater Romania, with all the affection and soul we have sacrificed ourselves and our children and our fortune to get to see what we can see today: full of pride in being Romanian for the first time at the heights of this tribune when before our eyes parade the representatives of the co-national populations, hurrying to declare that they are going to give full support to the first Parliament of Greater Romania. This means that the Romanian enjoys in his own right the prestige which he always had as an orderly people and more civilized than those who until recently held us in the shackles of slavery; this means that we are not capable of repaying in the same measure those who not long ago excluded us and sent us to jail; this means that we want to give an example to the entire world that we want to love the co-national populations as our own brothers”⁴⁰.

As at the Assembly of Deputies, here at the Senate, too, the parliamentary session ended on the 26th of March 1920, leaving the Government led by General Alexandru Averescu to organize the elections for the Legislative Bodies – the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, where, during the inter-war legislative terms, the representatives of the co-national populations have found their rightful place and their important role in the life of the national unitary Romanian State, a reflection of a wider manifested democratic politics shown towards all the citizens of their common homeland – Romania.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 669.