

The Role of the “Petru Maior” and “România Jună” Societies in the Formation of the Romanian Elite

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Abstract

In the second half of the 19th century, both in Vienna and Budapest there were numerous Romanian students, but also a Romanian elite consisting of several Romanian intellectuals who held important positions. Vienna and Budapest were the most important university centers for Romanians in Transylvania. Arriving in the two capitals, the young Romanians became aware of the problems faced by the Romanian society and some of them got involved in various activities aimed at solving them and emancipating the Romanians. Among them we might mention Nicolae Oncu, who will stand out as the director of an important Romanian bank from the Dual Monarchy, the future publicist Iosif Vulcan, the composer Ciprian Porumbescu, the politician Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, the writer Ioan Slavici, the politician Vasile Goldiș, or the Romanian national poet, Mihai Eminescu. The two societies of Romanian students in the Austro-Hungarian capitals are important, because it was here that these young people met and made friends. In less than a decade they asserted themselves as important personalities, active both in Romania and in the ranks of Romanians from the Dual Monarchy. Most of them became supporters of the idea of national unity of all Romanians. The beginnings of their activity are linked to the experiences they lived through in Vienna and Budapest.

Keywords: Romanians, students, associations, elite, culture

At the beginning of the 1860s, amid the changes in the Habsburg Empire, favorable conditions were created for the emergence of cultural associations. In the period 1862-1868 important associations appeared, such as Astra in Sibiu, established in 1861, the Arad National Association for the Culture of the Romanian People, in 1863, and others. Among these cultural associations were the Reading Society of Young Romanians from Pest, founded in 1862 and known in the following years as the Petru Maior Society, followed by the two societies founded in Vienna, the Literary-Scientific Society of the Romanians, in 1864, and the Literary-Social Society *Romania*, founded in 1868, which later merged under the name *Academic Society România Jună*. They had an important role and supported the modernization of Romanian society from the Dual Monarchy.

Analyzing their activity, it can be seen that in the second half of the 19th century, the Romanian elite coalesced around them, and this then contributed to the modernization of Romanian society and the formation of the Romanians' nation-



al consciousness. The cultural societies that were active in the two capitals were “the place of knowledge, crystallization and harmonization of relations between students, but also between them and the Romanian intelligentsia.”¹

During the dualist period, Romanians from Austria-Hungary fought to preserve their national identity. An important role in this process was played by the two student organizations from Vienna and Budapest, which “were caught up in the tendency of enlightenment of Romanians from everywhere, making them understand even better that only the united struggle will free them from the yoke of dark absolutism.”² The development of the two societies was also possible thanks to the support they enjoyed from some philanthropists. For example, the *România Jună* Society was supported by the Aromanian Nicolae Dumba, who was very influential, being an “intimate adviser of Emperor Francis Joseph.”³ In the case of the *Petru Maior* Society, it benefited from financial support from the Mocioni family, but also from the Romanian state authorities, starting from the first years of its activity. In this regard, in a report from 1877, Nicolae Ilieșiu wrote that significant sums of money were sent to the society by Carol I, the reigning prince of Romania.⁴

The existence of a growing number of Romanian students in Vienna and Budapest led to the need to organize student societies. In 1859, the Romanian students from Pest “organized under the leadership of Atanasie M. Marienescu, Ion Maniu and Partenie Cosma.”⁵ The idea materialized in the following years. On February 12, 1862, the Romanian students, at the urging of Iosif Vulcan, a student at the Faculty of Law, gathered to solve this problem. Iosif Vulcan was elected president of the assembly, having the obligation to appoint a commission in order to implement the statutes. Initially, it was called the *The Reading Society of Studious Romanian Youth* from Pest, emerging as one of the first Romanian cultural societies. The inauguration of the new society took place on February 20, 1862, with Partenie Cosma being elected president, and Iosif Vulcan becoming one of the two secretaries. The organization of the new society was difficult and “only after 12 years did the society become legal.”⁶ Even though it was not recognized by the Hungarian authorities, the society was still active. On January 24, 1864, a ball was organized by the management of the society, on which occasion Iosif Vulcan

¹ Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 269.

² Ioan Godea, *Ziarul Românul din Arad și aspecte ale problemei naționale din Transilvania* (Timișoara: Editura de Vest, 2001), 34.

³ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 238.

⁴ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 271.

⁵ Eugenia Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale ale tineretului studios român din monarhia habsburgică (1860-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis, 1998), 51.

⁶ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 53.

took the floor and spoke about "the significance of the day and the happiness of the brothers."⁷ In the first decade of activity, an important role was played by Iosif Vulcan, who took part in the establishment of the society, remaining as one of its most active members. For 12 years he was part of the management committee.⁸ In 1868 Iosif Vulcan was elected an "honorary" member, alongside Atanasie Marienescu, Iulian Grozescu and Nicolae Oncu. Gradually, the enthusiasm of the first years disappeared and misunderstandings arose that would culminate in the split of the society in the academic year 1870-1871. The unity of the society was restored as a result of the intervention of Vincențiu Babeș and a donation of 240 crowns made by the Mocioni family,⁹ a fact that saved the society, which in the following years pursued a fruitful activity. In the statutes approved on January 29, 1873, it was specified that any "Hungarian citizen of Romanian nationality born on the territory of the countries under the crown of Saint Stephen" could be a member of the society.¹⁰ The statutes later underwent some changes, and in their version approved in 1897 it was stated that the purpose of the society was the "development of culture, of the Romanian language, and broadening the spirit of collegiality."¹¹

Interesting facts about the atmosphere in the capital of Hungary were reported by Ioan Slavici, who hailed from Arad. In the summer of 1868, Slavici graduated from secondary school, obtaining the "diploma of maturity". In the fall of 1868, he was a student at the Faculty of Law in the Hungarian capital, but nothing "he found in Pest" pleased him. He was unhappy that his teachers did not speak Hungarian well, and there was "no one whose lessons I enjoyed listening to,"¹² something that was also noticed by other students who spent more time in beer halls and cafés. In this context, the student Ioan Slavici decided to attend the courses held by Alexandru Roman at the Department of Romanian Language and Literature in the capital of Hungary, a fact that left a strong mark on the training of the future intellectual.

Even if he was not delighted with the university environment, in Budapest the young Ioan Slavici joined the movement initiated by the Romanian students for the establishment of the *Petru Maior* Society. He was the one to translate the text of the statutes into Hungarian, so that they could be submitted to the government. He participated in the meeting of the society on October 18, 1868, during which

⁷ Lucian Drimba, *Iosif Vulcan* (București: Minerva, 1974), 32.

⁸ Gheorghe Petrușan, *Iosif Vulcan și revista Familia* (Szeged: Editura Uniunii Românilor din Ungaria, 1992), 34.

⁹ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 272.

¹⁰ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 271.

¹¹ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 55.

¹² Ioan Slavici, *Amintiri. Lumea prin care am trecut* (București: Minerva, 1994), 231.



the laws establishing the dualist regime were debated, as well as the case of the trial of those who had signed the the Blaj Pronouncement. The event had a strong national character. On October 28, 1868, he participated in the meeting to elect the society's management, being among the 34 members. The future writer carried out an interesting activity within the society, and at the meeting of December 31, 1868, he presented a literary work that was published in the magazine *Familia*. Because of the miserable situation in which he lived, in the spring of 1869 he fell ill, being hospitalized for several weeks. After his discharge, he returned to his native village, Șiria, and worked as a "writer" for the notary in Comlauș. He later left for Vienna. It can be seen that, since his student days, Ioan Slavici asserted himself as an intellectual concerned with the problems faced by Romanian society and tried to get involved in solving them.

Another society that had an important role in the formation process of the Romanian elite was *România Jună* from Vienna. Its formation was the work of a multitude of intellectuals "headed by Slavici, Eminescu, Teclu and Alex. Hurmuzachi."¹³ It was formed on March 25, 1871, by the merger of the two Romanian societies in the capital of the empire, the Literary-Scientific Society of the Romanians in Vienna, founded in 1864, and the Literary-Social Society Romania, founded in 1868. The division of the Romanian youth in Vienna into two societies with different orientations was not beneficial. As early as 1868, after presenting a communication entitled *The Union among Romanians in Its Historical Phases*, the intellectual from Bucovina Alexandru Hurmuzachi supported the idea of the unification of the two societies.¹⁴ The establishment of the dualist regime, the dispute between activists and passivists, but also the events in Germany and Italy urged the Romanian students to unite in one society. During 1869, a series of discussions regarding the unification of the two societies were held, but this was decided only in the fall of 1870. The unification of the two Romanian societies was initially supported by Alexandru Hurmuzachi from Bucovina and Aurel Mureșianu from Brașov, the latter being in 1868-1869 president of the Literary-Social Society Romania. In February 1869, those who supported the unification of societies will be joined by Ioan Slavici and Mihai Eminescu, who were members of the Literary-Scientific Society of the Romanians in Vienna. Some of the intellectuals were active in both societies, a fact that favored their union. This is the case of Mihai Eminescu and Ioan Slavici. On October 20, 1869, Slavici also appears as a member of the Literary-Social Society Romania, and in January 1870, the two were in the commission of the Literary-Social Society Romania to draw up the stat-

¹³ Gheorghe Moisescu, *Centenarul Societății Academice Literare România Jună din Viena* (Viena: Editura Coloniei Române din Austria, 1971), 5.

¹⁴ Dimitrie Vatamaniuc, *Ioan Slavici și lumea prin care a trecut* (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1968), 98.

utes and regulations of the new society. It is the period in which Mihai Eminescu campaigned for the "unconditional union" of the two societies, arguing that "the details of the name and statutes should be debated by the assembled societies."¹⁵

An important role in the unification of the two societies was played by the student Ioan Slavici, who arrived in Vienna in the fall of 1869 to complete his military service. He managed to continue his studies here. In the capital of the empire he found numerous students from all the provinces inhabited by Romanians, but also a Romanian elite made up of Romanian intellectuals who held important positions in the state. He had the opportunity to listen to the lectures given by the German jurist Rudolf von Ihering, who directed him to read "historical writings", as well as the lectures on political economy, given by the economist and sociologist Lorenz von Stein. He was strongly marked by his courses and he would confess that he forced himself to "match my own way of living with what Lorenz Stein said and Louis Blanc wrote about human needs."¹⁶ Also in Vienna, he had a lot to learn, even "walking between lessons in the corridors of the university, sitting in the cafés or walking here and there on the street through the city park."¹⁷ Here, encouraged by Eminescu, he began to read philosophy, but also to write and take part in the literary movement.

During 1870, Slavici was a promoter of the idea of the unification of the two societies and gave several speeches, among which we mention *On the freedom of man as an individual and as a member of society*. During this period, an important supporter of Slavici was Mihai Eminescu. The two followed the events in Transylvania with great interest and considered that after the establishment of the dualist regime "culture is the most powerful weapon of all peoples."¹⁸ On May 5, 1870, a meeting of Romanian students from Vienna took place and it was decided to unify the two societies. The issue of the organization of the new society was discussed in the meeting of January 19, 1871, when it was decided to "definitely unite them", the two old societies were dissolved, and a provisional committee was formed from the members of both societies, led by Ioan Slavici, who took the necessary steps for the approval of the statutes of the new society. On March 25, 1871, the new statutes were adopted, which were then printed. The statutes stated that the aim of the România Jună Academic Society was "the mutual cultivation of the members in the literary and national realm, the development of the social spirit and the help of members lacking material and financial means."¹⁹ After the approval of the statutes, the inauguration of the new society followed on April 8,

¹⁵ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 41.

¹⁶ Slavici, *Amintiri*, 247.

¹⁷ Slavici, *Amintiri*, 244.

¹⁸ Vatamaniuc, *Ioan Slavici și lumea*, 91.

¹⁹ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 42-43.



1871. Nicolae Oncu was elected president of the assembly. As president of the Literary-Social Society Romania, he declared its dissolution and the transfer of its members and assets to the new society. The same gesture was made by the representative of the Literary-Scientific Society. The 52 members present elected a management committee, the president being Ioan Slavici, who held this position until November 1871. At that time, Mihai Eminescu was also elected as librarian of the society. Also in this meeting, it was decided to keep the old slogan of the Literary-Social Society Romania, a verse by Andrei Mureșanu, “unite in thought, unite in feelings”,²⁰ the anthem being *Union is written on our flag*, composed by Ciprian Porumbescu on the lyrics of Andrei Bârseanu.²¹

The establishment of the new society was brought to the public’s attention through an announcement signed by Ioan Slavici. On April 11, 1871, Slavici, as president of the society, published a report where he stated that the “old divisions” had to be overcome, because the new society represented all the Romanian students in Vienna. He argues that the society is necessary so that youth are not denationalized when they “get into the midst of a foreign element.” From this document it appears that the two old societies were dissolved and România Jună Society appeared. His report was published in the Romanian press in the monarchy.

Since 1871, the leadership of the society has been involved in the commemoration of important events, which aimed to glorify the past, in order to develop a national consciousness. In May 1871, the Great National Assembly in Blaj from 1848 was celebrated. The event was organized in the Saint Barbara Church, and Slavici gave an emotional speech, in which he spoke about the significance of the events, “the memory of the day”, but also about the obligation of young Romanians to be guided by the “principles pronounced that day”.²² Then followed an artistic program, doine were sung, as well as the song “Awaken Thee, Romanian”. The celebration of May 3/15, 1848 became a constant in the events of the new society, the day being celebrated “not only by the students, but also by the members of the Romanian Colony in Vienna.”²³

Through the way *România Jună* was formed, through the people who were involved in its formation and the activities carried out in the first years, we can see that some ideas affirmed during the events of 1848 were also materialized in the case of Romanians from the dualist monarchy. The cultural unity of all Romanians was increasingly envisioned and “the dream of national unity and brotherhood of all Romanians”²⁴ appeared, which manifested itself through the organization of the Putna Celebrations.

²⁰ Moisescu, *Centenarul Societății*, 34.

²¹ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 43.

²² Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 246.

²³ Moisescu, *Centenarul Societății*, 61.

²⁴ Moisescu, *Centenarul Societății*, 6.

The new society enjoyed great success from the start. It can be observed an annual increase in its membership for almost three decades. Most of the members were young Transylvanians, but among them there were also students from "Romania, Bucovina, Banat and Hungary."²⁵ From 1890 it can be noted a decrease in the number of members of the society, but also in the number of Romanian students arriving in Vienna.

The society had an important role in establishing links between young people from various Romanian provinces. Departing from the declared goal from the moment of its formation, the society also got involved in helping students lacking financial possibilities to continue their studies. It also carried out the organization of a "Romanian library and a reading house, where students had at hand newspapers, magazines and literature or science books from all the lands inhabited by Romanians."²⁶

Years later, Slavici would write: "The România Jună Academic Society had been established without much trouble, and we, its happy founders, looked forward to Saturdays when we met to spend hours together, a pleasant thing for all and for most at the same time useful, because we had gathered from all the countries where fate scattered the Romanians and only a few of us knew the Romanian language well, and some would only learn it here."²⁷ Referring to the way the meetings were held, he recalls that a police commissioner was also present, "most of the time a certain Mr. Toma, a Romanian from the Apuseni Mountains, who had settled in Vienna". He supervised them and "did his best" to keep them within the limits drawn by the society's statutes.²⁸

The friendship between Slavici and Eminescu led to a fruitful collaboration, the two being the main organizers of the Putna celebration, which had a strong echo in the era. The idea of organizing a large national assembly in Putna was born in Vienna in 1869, because it was desired to strengthen the ties between Romanians in different provinces in order to establish "unity in the cultural life of Romanians."²⁹ At numerous meetings of the society, details regarding the organization of the celebration were discussed. According to Slavici, "there had been agitations for a year, in order to create illusions in the hearts of the Romanians". Despite the difficulties they faced, they moved on, because they were supported by important political leaders in Romania, such as Mihail Kogălniceanu, Ion C. Brătianu, C.A. Rosetti or representatives of the Golescu family. On August 11, 1871, an appeal appeared signed by Slavici and Eminescu, in which it was stated

²⁵ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 44.

²⁶ Moisescu, *Centenarul Societății*, 6.

²⁷ Slavici, *Amintiri*, 45.

²⁸ Slavici, *Amintiri*, 45.

²⁹ Slavici, *Amintiri*, 47.



that “it was not the academic Romanian youth that produced the idea of the celebration, but it comes from the Romanian national consciousness.”³⁰ Following the student congress in Putna on August 16-17, 1871, a program was drawn up that highlighted the role of students in the formation of national consciousness.

It can be noted that a few months after its establishment, the new society was involved in a large-scale demonstration, whose main purpose was to strengthen the national solidarity of all Romanians. The students from Vienna, led by Slavici and Eminescu, aimed at “the realization of the cultural unity of the Romanians”. The demonstration in Putna, planned in Vienna since the founding of the România Jună Society, represented a great success for the newly founded society, which after this moment enjoyed great prestige. The representatives of the Petru Maior Society could not participate in the celebrations in Putna, due to the measures taken by the Budapest government.

At the beginning of each academic year, like other societies that were active in the capital of the empire, România Jună also organized the “acquaintance evening”, through which the new young people arriving to study in Vienna made contact with the older students. In addition to this, the New Year’s Eve celebration was also organized, where Romanian customs and traditions were presented. There is interesting information about the celebration in December 1872, when a quartet performed the song *The Romanian Language*, Ioan Slavici declaimed the poem *The Awakening of Romania*, and among the guests was Petre Carp, the diplomatic representative of Romania in Vienna, who toasted the health of the studious youth. Also then, Nicolae Oncu spoke about the Putna celebration, as an important national event.³¹

Annually, the România Jună Society organized a ball in Vienna, and it became famous, being among the most appreciated balls in the capital of the monarchy. At these balls, a representative of the Imperial House was present, as well as other intellectuals, people of culture, university professors or representatives of the Romanian Legation in Vienna. Over the years, these events also acquired a national cultural character because they promoted the folklore treasure as an important identity element of all Romanians. At the beginning of the 20th century, young students dressed in traditional attire and performed dances such as călușerul, bățuta, and brâul.

Important Romanian personalities, such as Ciprian Porumbescu, Andrei Bârseanu, Sextil Pușcariu, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Iacob Mureșianu, Vasile Goldiș, and later Nichifor Crainic or Lucian Blaga, were also active within the Romania Jună Society. There are those who, since their student days, asserted themselves as defenders of the national cause, and through the activities orga-

³⁰ Moiescu, *Centenarul Societății*, 35.

³¹ Moiescu, *Centenarul Societății*, 56-57.

nized in the decades that followed, they contributed substantially to the creation of Greater Romania.

The beginnings of Ciprian Porumbescu are connected to Vienna. In 1871, he was also involved in the organization of the Putna celebrations, being impressed by Slavici and Eminescu, then through a scholarship he ended up studying in Vienna. Here the young from Bucovina not only discovered the capital of classical music, but also Romanians from all corners of Romanianism, gathered around the România Jună Society. He was part of this society, for which he composed the anthem *Union is written on our flag* and created a society choir. Inspired by the Viennese atmosphere, he published *Collection of social songs for Romanian students*, which included 20 choral pieces.

In 1883, the first yearbook of the society was published, which included several representative works, among which was Mihai Eminescu's poem, *The Evening Star*, the president of the society being Traian Mera from Arad.

In the period 1882-1884, Vasile Goldiș was also a student at the University of Vienna, where he had as professors Teodor Vogt in philosophy and Michael Gittbauer in universal history. Arriving in the most important center of the empire, Vasile Goldiș became a member of the România Jună Society, whose secretary he was during his student days.

The beginnings of Alexandru Vaida-Voevod's political activity are linked to România Jună from Vienna, where he studied medicine. According to his notes, he was elected secretary of the society when he was in his second year of studies, with N. Comșa as president. In the same period, he also received a correspondent's card from "the editorial office of the *Tribuna* newspaper."³² Later, Vaida-Voevod would become "general secretary, vice president, and then president of the România Jună Society."³³ The experiences he had in the imperial capital during his student years led the young Transylvanian man to "launch himself into the political struggle" and "put himself in the service of the nation."³⁴ It is the period when a large part of the Romanian intelligentsia arrived in Vienna to hand the Emperor the Memorandum. In this context, the România Jună society had an important role. As president of the society, Vaida-Voevod organized the "festive reception of the delegation" and in the following months he became "the liaison between the families of the Memorandists in detention and the Romanian society beyond the mountains."³⁵ The work carried out in Vienna by Vaida-Voevod had a strong impact on him, marking his entire life. According to his notes, until that moment he stood out as a supporter of socialism and the Marxist movement, but the in-

³² Alexandru Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I (Cluj Napoca: Dacia, 1994), 67.

³³ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 75.

³⁴ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 5.

³⁵ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 5.



teraction with the Memorandists caused for the young student “the shaking of the Romanian conscience”, even if “the background of socialist thought remained sedimented in my consciousness for life.”³⁶

The society’s activity was supported by the most important Romanian leaders. In Vienna, Aurel C. Popovici often arrived among the Romanian students, and “like a real teacher explained to us one historical stage of our past”,³⁷ supporting the idea of forming an intelligentsia, because “the more talented men we have, prepared and active, the faster our nation will progress and in real time.”³⁸ The attitude of Aurel C. Popovici deeply marked Vaida-Voevod. Thanks to Aurel C. Popovici he was “initiated into the secrets of political discourse”. In his memoirs he confesses that with him he attended a dinner party together with the leaders of the Memorandists and their German, Slovak and Serbian friends. Aurel C. Popovici spoke there to the Memorandists and assigned Vaida-Voevod to speak in German, so that the representatives of the other ethnic groups also understand the problems of the Romanians in the dualistic monarchy. Among those present were Vasile Lucaciu, Iuliu Coroianu, Eugen Brote, and Ioan Rațiu.³⁹

Vaida-Voevod sympathized with the Memorandist movement, which he supported with all his might. He would later write: “as a member of România Jună, together with the other colleagues, I was at the disposal of the Memorandists”. Coming into contact with “Dr. I. Rațiu, V. Lucaciu, I. Coroianu, their comrades, participating in all the demonstrations and assemblies, we arrived, naturally, in full political turmoil.”⁴⁰ In Vienna, the Romanian colony and students offered the Memorandists a banquet attended by representatives of the capital’s academic world, as well as leaders of the Germans, Slovaks and Serbs. It is the time when Vaida-Voevod became acquainted with the political world of the dualistic monarchy. The young Alexandru Vaida-Voevod is the one who, after the conviction of Aurel C. Popovici, will induce the Romanian students in the capital of the empire to sign a manifesto, which he will also do in Budapest, where he stopped at the headquarters of the Petru Maior Society. There, after reading the manifesto, it was “signed by all the more than 40 members of the society present.”⁴¹

As president of the society, in the period 1894-1895 he was involved in the organization of the jubilee celebrations, on the occasion of the 25 years of activity of the România Jună Society. At the event, in addition to the Romanian students from Vienna, some personalities were also present, including Emil Ghica, the dip-

³⁶ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 68.

³⁷ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 68.

³⁸ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 68.

³⁹ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 70.

⁴⁰ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, IV, 7.

⁴¹ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 72.

lomatic representative of Romania in Vienna. According to the media of the time, the celebrations lasted 3 days and ended with the music performed by the orchestra conducted by Johann Strauss.

Against the backdrop of the Memorandist movement, Vaida-Voevod came into contact with some political leaders from Romania as a student. According to his memoirs, when he arrived in Bucharest, he obtained from Take Ionescu, the minister of public instruction, the sum of 5000 florins for the dormitory of Romanian students in Vienna. As president of the România Jună Society, he enjoyed the support of Aurel C. Popovici and followed his advice. "Following the advice of Aurel C. Popovici, during my presidency I had introduced the habit of presenting myself, at the head of a delegation with the tricolor ribbons on our chests, at the festive meetings and parties of the sister societies", a fact that will mark the beginning of the solidarity of the non-Hungarian peoples of the dualist monarchy and which will culminate in 1918, with the organization of the congress of the oppressed nations in Rome.

It is the period in which the solidarity of the non-Hungarian peoples is born in the Viennese student world. As early as 1893, stable relations appeared between the Slovak student society in Vienna, Tattran, and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, as a representative of România Jună. The collaboration also extended among the Romanian students in Budapest, and "the Romanian and Slavic students will meet on February 24, 1894 at the banquet organized by the Petru Maior Society in honor of the release of the Slovak publicist and politician, Svetozar Hurbán-Vajanský."⁴² The trial and sentencing of the Memorandists in Cluj made this solidarity manifest also among the Slovak students, who in large numbers expressed their "adhesion to the cause of the convicted Memorandists"⁴³. The cause of the Memorandists was also supported by the representatives of the Serbs. The process of the Memorandum and the measures taken by the Hungarian political class for the millennial celebrations led to the idea of gathering student societies of national minorities under a single flag to protest. In this regard, a preliminary meeting initiated by Vaida-Voevod took place, attended by representatives of all non-Hungarian students.⁴⁴ They scheduled a rally for May 2, 1896, but it did not take place, being banned by the authorities in the Hungarian capital.

The *România Jună* Society had an important role in the era by contributing to the training of the Romanian intelligentsia. According to Vaida-Voevod, it was "the only non-Slavic society" active at the University of Vienna, and "as its members conformed to settle disputes of honor in a chivalrous way, our society enjoyed a good reputation and sympathy in Germania Society (literary society),

⁴² Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 327.

⁴³ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 327.

⁴⁴ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 329.



which included all the German societies - and the combative ones - with about 10,000 members.⁴⁵ Referring to his youth and the activity carried out as a student, the future Prime Minister of Romania would write: "I owe a lot to România Jună. First of all, the parliamentary school, to know the use and abuse of statutory and regulatory provisions, the routine of debating, fighting back, etc. Without the apprenticeship and training in the România Jună meetings, I would not have had the necessary preparation to be able to face, later, the situation in the Budapest Chamber."⁴⁶ Already during his Viennese studentship, he became a member of the Romanian National Party. The activity carried out by Vaida-Voevod in România Jună was also appreciated by his former colleagues, who considered him "a catalyst of the students, of the Romanian colony in the capital of the empire."⁴⁷

Ioan Slavici had an important role both in Vienna and in Budapest. After finishing his studies, he arrived in Romania, but continued to collaborate with the two societies.

Since he was in Vienna, thanks to his friendship with Eminescu, the young Slavici took over the Junimist ideas, which he tried to promote in Budapest as well, after he returned there to finish his studies, but found that "the students who are members of the Petru Maior Society show coldness towards the new current of ideas right from the beginning."⁴⁸ This atmosphere was supported in Budapest by Iosif Vulcan and Alexandru Roman, who continued the tradition of the Latinist school.⁴⁹ Despite these differences, Ioan Slavici remained close to the Petru Maior Society, his name appearing in numerous documents from the society's archive.

The last two decades of the 19th century also represent a period of glory for the Petru Maior Society. It can be seen that, following the measures taken by the Hungarian political class, the number of students arriving in the Hungarian capital increased. Under these conditions, after 1885 there was a "reactivation of society"⁵⁰ for a decade.

Vasile Goldiș arrived as a student in Budapest in the academic year 1881-1882. In the summer of 1881, he finished the courses of the Royal Superior High School in Arad, being head of promotion, and received his baccalaureate with the "eximio modo" distinction. He was a student in both Budapest and Vienna. Following the intervention of his uncle, the teacher Iosif Goldiș, he benefited from a scholarship from Bishop Ioan Meșianu, "who urged him to attend university courses prepar-

⁴⁵ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, I, 79.

⁴⁶ Vaida Voevod, *Memorii*, IV, 8.

⁴⁷ Mihai Racovișan, *Alexandru Vaida Voievod între Memorand și Trianon (1892-1920)* (Sibiu: Tipotrib, 2000), 29.

⁴⁸ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 235.

⁴⁹ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 235.

⁵⁰ Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 63.

ing for a teaching career, in the perspective of occupying a teaching position at the Pedagogical-Theological Institute in Arad."⁵¹ The Bishop of Arad also indicated that the scholarship was granted so that the young student could study "in a philosophical faculty choosing pedagogy and its branches as his main study, in order to prepare as a teacher for the Diocesan Pedagogical Institute, where there is a great need for teaching staff."⁵²

He began his studies in Budapest and continued them in Vienna, from where he returned to the Hungarian capital to complete them in the academic year 1884-1885.⁵³ In December 1887 he obtained the diploma of professor of history, philosophy, and Latin. Like Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Vasile Goldiș was also attracted to socialist ideas, being concerned with identifying solutions for a better life, and it can be seen that "from his youth he expressed his desire to put himself at the service of his nation". He was marked by Kammerer's socialist ideas, recalling in his diary that he was in Vienna and witnessed his execution: "I saw Kammerer die with a smile on his face. And at that mocking smile I shuddered as if you had heard the words: This man died for an ideal."⁵⁴

Arriving in the capital of Hungary, Vasile Goldiș would discover a new world, but also important teachers who left their mark on his training, such as Eötvös Loránd, Alexandru Roman, Aladár Ballagi. He was also marked by some aspects related to the social element, discovering an aristocratic world totally different from the world from which he came. Ever since he arrived in Budapest, he became a member of the Petru Maior Society. At the debates organized by the Petru Maior Society, he had the opportunity to meet other Romanian students, including Iuliu Maniu, Alexandru Lapedatu, Virgil Onitiu, Constantin Diaconovici. According to the minutes of the society completed in the ordinary meeting of November 30, 1884, chaired by Sebastian Olariu from Banat, Vasile Goldiș's proposal is accepted that "welcomed guests" should be entered in the notices convening meetings and Mr. President should recommend to the society that their names should then be entered in the minutes too.⁵⁵ In the same meeting, collaboration with a student society of Serbs was also discussed. It is stated that "their invitation is accepted with pleasure and the 'Kolo mladih srba' society is assured of the cordial feelings

⁵¹ Marius Ioan Grec, Marțian Iovan, Stelean Ioan Boia, *Vasile Goldiș. 150 de ani de la naștere (1862-1934)* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2012), 39.

⁵² Eugen Gagea, *Vasile Goldiș. Studii și documente*, II (Arad: „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, 2015), 19.

⁵³ Stelean Ioan Boia, „Studenti arădeni în universități din Europa (secolul XIX și începutul secolului XX),” *Studii de Știință și Cultură*, Arad, III, nr. 4 (decembrie 2007): 46.

⁵⁴ Gheorghe Șora, „Pagini inedite din jurnalul de tinerețe al lui Vasile Goldiș,” *Acta Musei Napocensis* XVIII (1981): 557.

⁵⁵ Unpaginated document, Archive of the „Vasile Goldiș” University Memorial Museum in Arad.



of the 'Petru Maior' society, in addition to expressing the hope to be able to see them several times as guests at its meetings."⁵⁶

As a member of the Petru Maior Society, Vasile Goldiș supported the idea of Romanian solidarity and the strengthening of ties between Transylvanian Romanians and those in Romania. He attended several lectures and participated in numerous meetings of the Romanian youth where the events that were to be organized within the Petru Maior Society were discussed. In 1886 he was elected to the management committee of the society and got involved in holding conferences and performances, promoting the idea that foreign students should be attracted to them. At the Petru Maior Society, he was also disappointed by the attitude of some compatriots. In his diary he would note on March 27, 1886: "today I translated Horace's Ode and I went to the Petru Maior Society", where "not even one knows perfectly Romanian. But it's also hard to know. Every man forms words borrowed from Latin according to his taste. This is a completely dangerous procedure for the Romanian language."⁵⁷

Even during his studies, Vasile Goldiș was also concerned with political life, expressing his support for the Hungarian deputy Mocsáry Lajos.⁵⁸ Regarding the support of the Hungarian deputy, Vasile Goldiș wrote to his friend Ioan Suci, pointing out that "Romanian intellectuals must support him, because he spoke beautifully in parliament about the issue of minorities."⁵⁹ He was a good observer of the events of the time and followed the evolution of important personalities, a fact proven by the entries in his diary. He showed his sympathy towards the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, whom he considered a representative of the new world.

After finishing his university studies, in 1886, he returned to the Romanian world and worked until the beginning of the 20th century as a teacher in Caransebeș and Brașov. Years later, he would write that he was trained during his student years in Budapest and Vienna, noting: "I fondly remember the days spent in the society of my colleagues from that time, two years at Petru Maior, in Budapest, and two years at România Jună, in Vienna. In our young souls since then, the intensification of the struggle to hasten the realization of the holy ideal that sweetened our lives and strengthened our souls was born."⁶⁰

In the fall of 1892, Traian Vuia arrived as a student in Budapest, at the Technical University, engineering department, also obtaining a scholarship worth 300

⁵⁶ Unpaginated document, Archive of the „Vasile Goldiș” University Memorial Museum in Arad.

⁵⁷ Șora, „Pagini,” 565.

⁵⁸ Eugen Gagea, *Vasile Goldiș. Studii și documente*, II, 20.

⁵⁹ Eugen Gagea, *Vasile Goldiș. Studii și documente*, II, 20.

⁶⁰ Petru Chiș, *Vasile Goldiș. Activitatea școlară în contextul imperativelor naționale* (Arad: „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, 2000), 25.

florins from the Gojdu Foundation. Traian Vuia was one of the few Romanians who at the end of the 19th century studied at the Technical University. According to the research done by Cornel Sigmirean, in the academic year 1892-1893, when Vuia started his studies, there were 714 students at the Technical University of Budapest, of which 6 were Romanians, including Traian Vuia.⁶¹

Arriving in Budapest, Traian Vuia found an active Romanian elite there, the Petru Maior Society playing an important role in it. From the first year of his studentship, Vuia was elected a member of the management committee of the Petru Maior Society. As a member of the committee he had to attend weekly meetings of the society. In the academic year 1892-1893 he was a librarian and was also part of the literary committee, headed by Ilarie Chendi, and in the year 1894-1895 he was elected as a notary, also active in the literary committee until the end of the academic year 1894-1895. Under these circumstances, Traian Vuia was trained and started his activity in Budapest. Vuia's affirmation began when he was a student, when he gave some scientific speeches during the activities organized by the Petru Maior Society. At the literary-musical evening on December 1, 1895, he presented his study *On Genius*. At most of the activities in which he participated he presented communications with technical content, in which he debated the problem of flight with heavier-than-air apparatus. In his research, Vuia started from a series of observations made since his childhood, when he was fascinated by kites. Banat historian Dumitru Tõmoni, a good connoisseur of the articles written by Vuia, states that since his student days, Vuia brought a new vision on how foreign capital should be used in the Hungarian economy. Vuia did not agree with the position of the Hungarian political class, which used foreign capital to create a Hungarian state on the "ruins of non-Hungarian nationalities". The takeover of foreign capital by certain individuals and industrial enterprises has led to "the emergence of a worrying economic state", Vuia anticipating a financial crisis.

For Vuia Budapest remained the place where he spent his youth. It was trained and started its activity in Budapest. Arriving in the most important libraries in Budapest and being surrounded by an important intelligentsia active in the capital of Hungary, Vuia was trained as one of the most important intellectuals of humanity, a pioneer of world aviation.

The movement and then the trial of the Memorandists echoed in Budapest as well, where the collaboration with the Slavic students was strengthened, and the contacts with them became more and more frequent.⁶² In December 1893, 60 Romanian, Serbian and Slovak students met, and Iuliu Maniu gave a speech asking for the continuation of the struggle. On January 1, 1895, the Petru Maior Society organized a literary evening. It can be observed that in the period that

⁶¹ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 605.

⁶² Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale*, 326.



followed, representatives of the Serbs and Slovaks were also present at more and more events of the Petru Maior Society. On these occasions the students will sing national songs and make toasts for a better understanding.

Against the background of these events, in 1895 the Petru Maior Society was suspended by the Hungarian authorities. An investigation was launched against it, under the pretext that the statutes were not respected and it was involved in political activities against the Hungarian state. In this context, the statutes were redone, and the society resumed its activity in July 1896. It is the moment when numerous Romanian intellectuals became supporters of the society in the capital of Hungary, donating sums of money or various goods so that it could reorganize and function. It is worth mentioning in this regard the support given by the representatives of the Mocioni family, who on May 19, 1898 organized a musical soiree under the patronage of Alexandru Mocioni of Foeni. In fact, the Society had its headquarters in a house belonging to the Mocioni family. The society was also supported by numerous banks from Transylvania and Banat, which donated a symbolic amount annually.

On the list of founding members of the society, published in the Almanac of the Petru Maior Society from Budapest in 1901, Alexandru Mocioni of Foeni, Elena, Eugenia and George Mocioni of Foeni, Emanuil Ungureanu appear, and Traian Dobra, Dr. Athanasie M. Marienescu, Coriolan Brediceanu Partenie Cosma, Alexandru Mocioni de Foeni, Ioan Moldovan, George Popa, Nicolae Popa, Ioan Slavici appear as honorary members.

The two societies were important training centers in the spirit of national culture. Here, young Romanians from the dualist monarchy could enrich their knowledge of the Romanian language, learn about the values of Romanian culture, a different history and discover “the true precedents of the nation.”⁶³ Even if they supported the national cause and contributed to the training of an elite, there are also some differences between the two societies. Because it was located in Vienna and was not controlled by the Hungarian authorities, the România Jună Society had an advantage over the Petru Maior Society. Within the România Jună Society, Romanians from all over have been active, while within the Budapest society there were only Romanians from Hungary, citizens of Romanian origin born in the “countries of the Crown of Saint Stephen”. Thus, young Romanians from the dualistic monarchy were active in România Jună, both from Hungary and Bucovina, but also from Bessarabia and Romania. Analyzing the list of members from the academic year 1872-1873, we find that there were 28 from Bukovina, 24 from Transylvania, Banat and Hungary, 1 from the Balkan Peninsula and 14 from Romania. Romanians from Bessarabia also appear gradually, in the academic

⁶³ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 273.

year 1882-1883 there were 8 from Bucovina, 20 from Transylvania, Banat and Hungary, 1 from Bessarabia and 4 from Romania.⁶⁴ Until 1900, the society was frequented by many young people from Romania. Their number was high in the first years of activity of the România Jună Society, in the academic year 1874-75 it reached 88, then their number began to decrease, reaching 41 in the academic year 1899-1900. In the case of young people from Romania, they appear every year, even forming the majority of members in many years, but their number gradually decreased because they turned to other university centers. They were followed by those from Transylvania, Banat and Hungary, most of them being in the academic year 1880-1881, when there were 37. Young people from Bucovina were also constantly entering the society. At the beginning they were numerous, in the academic year 1874-75 their number reached 41, then their number gradually decreased, and in the academic year 1894-1895 there were only 5. It is interesting that Romanians from Bessarabia also appear, in the period 1871-1911 being 10, to which 5 from the Balkan Peninsula are added.⁶⁵ In this context, the România Jună Society, more than the Petru Maior Society, was a bridge between young Romanians everywhere, as well as between them and European culture, contributing to the training of great personalities from Romanian culture, and the Petru Maior Society represented "the main school of education in the spirit of national culture"⁶⁶ for Romanians from the "countries of the Crown of Saint Stephen". Most of the personalities of the culture and political life of the Romanians in Austria-Hungary were also members of one of the two societies.

Conclusions

In the second half of the 19th century, Vienna and Budapest were the most important university centers frequented by Romanians from the Dual Monarchy. In the case of Vienna, we can also identify young Romanians who came to study from Bukovina, from Romania and even Bessarabia or the Balkan Peninsula. After they arrived to study in Budapest or Vienna, the young Romanians began to get to know each other, but also to learn more about Romania as well. During the activities carried out within these societies, friendships were made that lasted a lifetime. Here some of the young Romanians started to fight for Romanians' rights, for a better life. In these university centers some of them were trained as intellectuals, others as politicians, becoming leaders of their generation. One can conclude that in the two societies "a large part of the future politicians of later times, Vasile Goldiș, Iuliu Maniu, Ștefan Cicio Pop, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Aurel Lazăr, Oc-

⁶⁴ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 289.

⁶⁵ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 289.

⁶⁶ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 273.



tavian Goga, Vasile Stoica, started their political life.” They continued their political engagement after finishing their studies, becoming “artisans of the realization of Greater Romania.”⁶⁷

Rezumat

În a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea atât la Viena, cât și la Budapesta erau numeroși studenți români, dar și o elită românească formată din câțiva intelectuali români ce dețineau funcții importante. Viena și Budapesta au fost cele mai importante centre universitare pentru românii din Transilvania. Ajunși în cele două capitale, tinerii români vor conștientiza problemele cu care se confrunta societatea românească și unii dintre ei se vor implica în diferite activități ce aveau ca scop soluționarea acestora și emanciparea românilor. Dintre aceștia îi amintim pe Nicolae Oncu, care se va remarca ca director al unei importante bănci românești din monarhia dualistă, pe viitorul publicist Iosif Vulcan, compozitorul Ciprian Porumbescu, omul politic Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, scriitorul Ioan Slavici, omul politic Vasile Goldiș, sau geniul poeziei românești, Mihai Eminescu. Cele două societăți ale studenților români din capitalele Austro-Ungariei sunt importante, pentru că aici s-au întâlnit și au legat prietenii acești tineri, care peste mai puțin de un deceniu se vor afirma ca importante personalități, activând atât în România, cât și în rândurile românilor din monarhia dualistă și devenind susținătorii ideii unității naționale a tuturor românilor. Începuturile activității lor se leagă de experiențele trăite la Viena și Budapesta.

Cuvinte cheie: români, studenți, asociații, elită, cultură

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⁶⁷ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 315.