

Freedom And Censorship In Romania The Beginnings*

Adrian MARINO

Member of the Romanian Writers' Association

The idea of freedom

The idea of freedom has penetrated – or rather has made its appearance in – Romanian culture and society in its most direct, elementary, and empirical form: the affirmation of, and demand for, the freedom of will. We are less familiar with this problem, which has not been debated and deepened at all. It is an organic, fundamental, natural impulse, which escapes attention by its very degree of generality, spontaneity and use. Certain basic remarks must be made from the very beginning in order to understand and follow up the Romanian route and progress of the idea of freedom. This is in fact the first Romanian principle of free thinking, and, in the huge majority of cases, it is completely uncontrolled. It is nothing but a state of urgent necessity, subtracted from any justification or *constraint* (to remind us of Spinoza). This aspect is essential, since it lies at the bottom of the controversy between freedom and censorship, as we will see. Its beginnings are nothing “spectacular”. On this account many observers, especially foreigners, fail to take any interest in it, or they simply contest its existence. And still...

To act for no other reason than the existence of the need to want, without any other determination than the mere possibility of choosing and expressing oneself one way or the other, probably represents a fundamental, permanent and uncontrollable human impulse. From this point of view one may say that we are dealing here with a phenomenon which is not only permanent, natural and universal, but also “irrational”. In general, nobody feels the need to motivate his/her decisions in the very moment of their oral or written formulation. Everything is produced

* The text originally appeared in Romanian in the magazine *Observator Cultural* (Cultural Observer) no. 134, 17-23 Sept. 2002, p. 7-12. The subject discussed represents the topic of Prof. Marino's latest, forthcoming book, *Libertate și cenzură în România* (Freedom and censorship in Romania). All necessary references will be found in the volume. Also, the Preface, and the methodological chapter *Istoria ideilor* (History of ideas), will contain all necessary explanations about aims and methods.

naturally and inexplicably, categorically and indisputably. Gradually, this innate impulse receives some sort of outline, and a greater clarity. But, initially it is merely a latent and imperious urge, irrepressible and completely unmotivated.

It is, at the same time, easy to notice that such a behavior fully confirms all the contemporary Western analyses of this phenomenon. Hence the second observation: the initial lack of any theoretical approach and ideological or other justification. As these appear, they are nothing else in fact than the result of foreign influences, which are gradually organized into what could be called the first Romanian "ideology". However, this does not happen in all Romanian countries (Transylvania, Moldavia, Valachia), but first of all (and in fact exclusively) only in Transylvania: that is, in a region where cultural standards are much higher, and the intensity of written influences much more active, evident, and efficient. Wherefrom come the merits of the appearance, in this province, of the first attempts of Romanian reflections on such topics. These are quite modest, however, since the general cultural level itself has been modest at the beginning and lacking any tradition. It is also the essential explanation for the spontaneous liberation of consciousness and expression of free will from any norm, constraint, obligation or legitimacy. Belated notions, which are gradually organized into a beginning consciousness of "people's will", or "democratic will". But all these will be discussed later on, based on convincing details and documents.

The frequent invocation of the freedom of will, one way or another, entitles us to assume (if we do not exaggerate) that we are dealing in fact with a dominant natural Romanian ideology. An originally archaic, patriarchic, rudimentary language hides a few solid ideas, relevant and valid even today. If the theory that man was born "free" is true (as I personally believe), then the first Romanian sources fully confirm it. A man of "nature", at the beginning completely uncultivated, the Romanian thinks "naturally" free. Without going into "scientific" speculations and demonstrations for the moment, this is the only way (I think) to explain the resistance of Romanians to the idea of "norm", "law", "theoretical obligation", and its practice, evident even today. The idea goes on, just as spontaneously and empirically, and in its predominantly latent forms, beyond 1848. Liberal-democratic constitutions have not yet penetrated the "profound Romania". This is a situation with many consequences, which seem to become more and

more negative, morally, socially and politically speaking. But for the time being a retrospective view is very carefully called for.

Finally, it should also be emphasized that the route and career of “free will” varies considerably, depending on cultural-historical conditions, from one Romanian country to the other. More precisely: it has a different interpretation in Transylvania and the other two Romanian countries. In Transylvania, “free will” is conceptualized, and its explicit and especially implicit objectives are laid down in the 18th century. In Moldavia and Valachia it is expressed even earlier, but in occasional, unorganized forms, in an initially rudimentary and patriarchic manner of expression. This style is maintained until the chroniclers (18th century), very few of them detached from the background of traditional popular and religious culture.

The 18th century. Transylvania. “Free Will”

Against this background one can better understand first of all the way in which “free will” is analyzed and defined in some of its specific features. Even if the beginnings are not entirely conceived in a Western manner, the first attempts of conceptualizing, explaining and clarifying the “freedom of will” represent a considerable progress, worthy of being emphasized. At all events, it is for the first time that Romanian thinking confronts and acquaints something of the general attributes of freedom, and makes some considerable efforts to define and assimilate them.

At the same time, two essential statements should be highlighted; the first Romanian meanings of the idea of freedom are rigorously contemporary with the entire European tradition of the idea, both with its traditional, classic and synchronic, sources. It is an evident proof of a beginning “Europeanness” and “modernization” of Romanian culture. The second statement is that the chronological outsets of this “maturity” are rigorously attested, and can be precisely dated. In other words, it is situated between – the date is important – the last decades of the 18th, and the first decades of the 19th century. Such a dating helps us form a more precise and objective image on the Romanian beginnings of the idea of freedom.

I dare state (until contrary evidence is found) that the first Romanian who clearly expresses this idea is Paul Iorgovici, in his *Observații de limbă românească* (Observations on the Romanian language, Buda, 1799.) He says, “Everybody is free to think about anything as he knows better” (“Tot insul e slobod a gândi de fiecă lucră

după cum se pricepe”). “Our free will” (“Sloboda noastră voie”) makes this free thinking possible. It is part of “a man’s deeds which emerge from free will” (“faptele omului cele ce purced din slobodă voie”). It is “a natural law, which we know by the perception of our minds” (“lege naturală, care prin perceperea minții noastre o cunoaștem”). In the same period, Samuil Micu talked in the same way about “things and deeds willed and free” (“lucrările și faptele cele volnice și slobode”). “A deed cannot be called willed, unless it is done by the judgment of will” (“O lucrare nu se poate zice volnică, fără numai se face din judecata voii”, *Loghica*, 1799). A new notion appears thus: “necessity” or “constraint”. When the Romanians paid tribute to the Turks, “they did it out of necessity, not will” (“aceasta se datorează nu voinței lor ci necesității”, *Brevis Historica Notitia*). The history of the Romanians fully illustrates this objective reality. Surveying with a certain attention the sources of the period, one notices that in fact this idea of free will is quite widespread. The style is often dry, and the texts do not follow exclusively the idea that concerns us. Still, this idea is insistently recurring in theological debates. It is first of all illustrated by the case of Petru Maior (in the *Procanon*, 1782, as well as in some of his historical writings), who often uses the word “slobozenie” (obsolete; ‘freedom’). The word also has a polemical tone when it contests the authority of the Pope: “all bishops have free will and full power to oppose him” (i.e., the Pope), (“Tot episcopul deplin are voie slobodă și putere întreagă de a i se opune”). The idea of free will also recurs in other contexts. Evidently, Gh. Șincai also uses it. But the most interesting nuance seems to appear in the case of Ion Budai-Deleanu. In this context the notion has the meaning of *servitude volontaire*, in the sense of La Boétie: “for all these bad things today it is not the times which are responsible, but the man himself; for he has his mind and power, but for no good use.” (“...Aceste rele de astăzi nu vremurile de vină, ci tu însăși omule; căci ai minte și putere. Dar ce folos...”) Such ideas had no circulation in the period, as they all remained in manuscript, and were published only much later. But they existed. Thus, it is possible to speak about an underground continuity and solidarity of a truly free Romanian consciousness. Or as many as there were. Once again, a quantitative history of ideas proves dysfunctional in such specific circumstances.

There is also a beginning in the analysis of the essential attributes and objectives of free will. Even if one beware of any over-interpretation of more or less occasional texts, there are a series of observations and conclusions, not at all accidental, which cannot be

overlooked. Some of them surprise one by their radicalism, especially if measured by the “standards” of the age.

The most important of these seems to be the urgent invitation, if not “summons”, to a lucid and rational analysis of the moral, cultural, social, and political situation in Transylvania. The Romanians are forcefully urged by Samuil Micu in his *Scurtă cunoștință a istoriei românilor* (A short history of the Romanians), “to start to remove their animal-like feelings” - or, in other words, “sub-human” (“să înceapă a lepăda simțirea cea dobitocească” or “subumană”). They should start “to open up the eyes of their minds” (“să-și deschidă ochii minții”), “to start to think... because it is through learning that wisdom can be gained, and by wisdom: happiness” (“să înceapă a gândi... că prin învățatură se câștigă înțelepciune și prin înțelepciune se dobândește fericirea.”) This is an open appeal to human reason, “to the speech of the mind, because this is the power which often reveals the connections, the unity and the truth” (“cuvântarea minții, că aceasta este puterea prin care îmbinarea și unirea și adevărul chiar și des se cunoaște”). It presupposes analysis, critical circumspection. Thus an open appeal is made to critical doubt. For this reason the words of not all writers should be taken for granted. In conclusion, “they should not be believed without being tested, that it really is that praised mastery which the scholars call by a Greek name critique or judgment, by which testimonies are judged” (“nu trebuie fără cercare a le crede că într-adevăr stă acea lăudată măiestrie care cărturarii cu nume grecesc o chiamă critică sau judecare care osândește mărturiile cele aduse”, Samuil Micu, *Cuvânt Înainte* (A Foreword), *Istorie eclesiastică sau bisericească a lui Fleury* (An ecclesiastical or church-history of Fleury), ms.)

Facts should be estimated thus in details (“cu amănuntul”) and carefully (“cu luare aminte”). The principle of imposed authority is ignored, or what’s more, contested. This is an important moment in affirming the Romanian critical spirit, and not only in Transylvania. Its clearest and most conclusive formulation is probably due to Paul Iorgovici. In his *Observații de limbă rumânească* (1799), he declares that “in this work I have followed nobody, and I have not let myself be led by the authority (ability, rule) of many who think differently” (la așa lucrare n-am urmat pe nimeni, nici nu m-am lăsat a duce nici prin autoritatea (vrednicia, domnia) a multora care altminterea gândesc”). On the basis of this principle Petru Maior also contests in his *Procanon* the principle of papal authority. In a culture lacking critical tradition, such controversies become quite “subversive”. “The Pope’s infallibility is but an illusion”

(“Infailibilitatea papii nu este decât o iluzie”). The refusal of mystification is complete. The main preoccupation is the truth. The same author openly states it too in a text from 1818: “It is difficult not to speak the truth” (“Cu anevoie iaste a nu grăi adevărul”).

Once it has reached this stage of assimilation, Romanian critical spirit starts out to several directions. One very important direction is what we call today the theory of cognition. According to Samuil Micu, it has two principles at its basis: that of contradiction (“începutul zicerii împotrivă”) and the principle of sufficient cause (“începutul pricinei destule”). In relation to social life, this principle justifies the rejection of all institutions and laws which have no “sufficient cause”. Did Samuil Micu realize the huge subversive potential of this principle? Personally, I would not go that far. But, sometimes, the way to revolt is – in theory, at least – open. At the same time, the scientific debate over the central topic of the age (the continuity of the Roman element in Dacia, the Roman origins of Romanians and the Romanian language, Eder, Sulzer, etc.) gains an indisputable theoretical foundation. And whatever is valid for the philosophical truth, is also valid for the historical one. Taking over Baumeister’s idea, Samuil Micu in his *Loghica* claims that philosophy should “build whatever it says on true and firm grounds” (“cele ce zice pe temeiuri adevărate și neclintite să le zidească”). It becomes thus evident that historical analysis and recollection must respect the same principle.

An identical intellectual and theoretical process of consciousness can also be found in the case of Ion Budai-Deleanu, as a sign that he also belonged to the *Geist* of the age. Here one finds, first of all, the notion of a metaphysical, “Cartesian” doubt. In the quest for the truth, we find situations in which “even if we cannot fully deny it, we do not look at it as a true thing that the man should search for the truth” (“măcar că nici nu putem tăgădui cu totul, dar nici nu privim ca lucru adevărat că se cuvine omului să caute adevărul”). In other, essential cases (such as the withdrawal of the Romans from Dacia under the rule of Emperor Aurelian) what is called for, is a “recognized demand of criticism that, while questioning the authenticity of a historical evidence, one should have in mind not only whether its author can be trusted, but also if the event he narrates is credible. Was it really possible?...” (“o exigență recunoscută a criticii ca la cercetarea autenticității unei dovezi istorice să se aibă în vedere nu numai dacă creatorul este demn de crezare, ci și dacă evenimentul relatat este credibil. A fost oare posibil?...”). A “healthy critical spirit” imposes this demand. Buried in a manuscript, written also in German, but published only much later, this important principle had no

circulation either. But it did exist. It was expressed right after 1791, and it proved the vitality and awareness of Romanian critical consciousness in Transylvania, back in the last decade of the 18th century.

Religious freedom

Not less important and significant is the practice of free thinking against the repressive, retrograde aspects of traditional, dominant religious mentality. It is a decisive step towards a beginning of a Romanian secular culture. One can assist here at the first categorical denouncement of the main obstacles: prejudice and superstition. Such a critical attitude begins to be uttered quite frequently. “To get people out of superstition” (“a scoate pe oameni din superstiție”), and of “vain beliefs” (“deșarte credințe”) was one of the main concerns of Dositei Obradovici, who had a powerful influence in the Banat area. Paul Iorgovici also uses, and glosses too, this central notion, in the same spirit. Samuil Micu translates, in a Gallic spirit, Claude Fleury’s church history, including the *Discours sur l’histoire ecclésiastique*, which contains the praise of ecclesiastical erudition. According to Fleury, in a different place, “la superstition est fille de l’ignorance”. Samuil Micu takes up again this guiding idea, praised in the case of Peter the Great, who “has chased out and dispersed the fog of ignorance and void superstitions, and has invited men of letters in the country” (“au gonit și au împrăștiat negura și ceața neștiinței și a deșartelor superstiții și bărbați învățați au băgat în țară”). The text is dated 1782. In the *Loghica*, the rational argument of systematic doubt is also present: “let us beware of prejudices and wait for a while in doubt until with a better awareness and caution we would think [...] and judge at the same time” (“să ne ferim de prejudecăți și puținel să așteptăm având îndoială până ce cu mai bună trezire și luare aminte vom cugeta [...] fără nu îndată a judeca”). Other texts of the same orientation are sharply polemical. It is the case of Piuaru Molnar, for whom prejudice is the work of the ignorance and irresponsibility of the “charlatans” who propagate it. All prejudice is worth nothing but mockery. Unfortunately, “an ill-fated ending has often proved the ignorance and irresponsibility of these charlatans” (“un sfârșit nenorocit a dovedit nu arareori ignoranța și iresponsabilitatea acestor șarlatani”). They are those who propagate old women’s cures (“leacurile băbești”), belief in bad signs, or the reading of apocryphal books like *Carte de zodii* (Book of zodiacs), *Gromovnic*, or *Trepetic* (popular books of fortune-telling). These interpret in an allusive, irrational, superstitious, and what’s

more, even ridiculous way all kinds of pretended heavenly and earthly signs. These are, indisputably, an inferior stage of knowledge.

Thus, secular mentality begins to become a reality in 18th century Transylvanian culture. Obviously, still in limited circles, since Romanian culture was in an incipient, modest stage of development. However, Transylvanian culture was enriched with a new dimension. Three influential factors acted in this direction, more powerful than in Moldavia and Valachia. First and foremost, it was the progress in consciousness and free thinking, and its results described. Next, there was the influence of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment fundamentally opposed religious edification and education, by its new and innovating cultural air. Finally, as we will see, a certain state policy favored secularization, by a series of decrees, very “progressive” for the age, and which considerably diminished the authority and prestige of the Church of any confession. It was an important event, quite discreet at a first glance, yet with a durable effect. The new mentality was felt even from the period of bishop Inocențiu Micu Klein. He, in a memorial to Pope Benedict XIV from 1745, made the essential dissociation between “natural and divine right”. Samuil Micu followed the same direction in his *Legile firei, itica și politica sau filozofia cea lucrătoare* (The laws of nature, ethics and politics, or practical philosophy, 1800), a translation-reworking after Fr. Ch. Baumeister, a synthesis of Wolfian philosophy. The basic principle is the same again: “the laws of nature” (“legile firei”), well distinguished from the laws of the divine.

This dissociation was going to have a great career, and it stood at the basis of the entire political-social organization. Political and religious power were plainly distinguished. Petru Maior also discussed at length in his *Procanon* “about the limits of churchly and imperial power” (“despre hotarele puterii bisericești și împărătești”): “The Church has no power over earthly things” (“Biserica nicicum nu are putere spre cele vremelnice”). Hence the questioning of papal authority and infallibility, which cannot oppose the Emperor. Moreover, he deplores “the lack of knowledge of the borders between churchly and imperial powers” (“cât este de lipsă cunoștința hotarelor puterilor bisericești și împărătești”). “The Pope is not even vested [...] this is not faith but superstition and churchly fortune telling” (“Papa nici nu este vesmântic [...] aceasta nu este credință ci superstiție și cimilitură bisericească”).

For the mentality of the age, the radical modification of the principle of state authority is really “revolutionary”. The priests are precisely instructed about “listening to the lords and masters of all”

("ascultarea domnilor tuturor și stăpânilor"). In addition, there is the abolition of many monastic orders by Joseph II in 1781, and the decrease of the number of priests in general (also approved by bishop Ion Bob in 1785: "The suggestion and wish of the high Court and Royal government about being too many priests" ("Cugetul și voia înălțatei Curți și ('răiascului guberniu că preoții și acum fiind prea mulți")), which makes us even better understand the new spirit of the age. It is this spirit which made Gh. Șincai leave the monastery in 1784, and which made Petru Maior and I. Budai-Deleanu refuse to become monks. Their free will gained full ground, even in this non-conformist way. Maior became a parish priest in Reghin, and Budai-Deleanu led an administrative-judicial career in Lemberg. Monasticism lost much of its traditional prestige.

All these new orientations were even more remarkable as traditional mentality and religious spirit continued to dominate the profoundly rural Transylvania all throughout the 18th century. Some of these fissures also had other notable results. The translation of secular books intensified the new state of spirit, even if it concerned first of all the translator himself, and a very limited circle of readers.

Gradually, still, a de-sacralization of the religious "holy book" began. A book published in Vienna, in 1779, called *Bucvariu*, for strictly pedagogical purposes, and republished in Buda, Blaj, and Sibiu, had a secular moral orientation and content. The secular book represents the new cultural ideal. Those authors are recommended "whom young people may find useful, apart from religious books" ("din care să poată trage tinerimea vreun folos, afară de cărțile bisericești"). It is a "policy" also applied by Samuil Micu, in his translations (*Belisarie* by Marmontel, *Esopia*, *Varlaam and Ioasaf*). In the *Procanon*, Petru Maior offers no respect to "the churchly books from Rome" ("cărților bisericești de la Roma"). "Oh, I wish God had protected the Romanian nation from this kind of learned men and theologians" ("O de-ar fi apărat Dumnezeu neamul românesc de acest feliu de oameni învățați și teologi"). The same reserve can be found in the case of Samuil Micu's translation of Fleury about "gossips, tales and fables..." and the "tales of midwives and nurses", taken over with "blind respect", as "true and sacred things" ("bârfele și poveștile sau fabulele...", "poveștile moașelor și ale doicilor", "ca niște lucruri adevărate și sfinte"). The *Țiganiada*, version B also reveals "void beliefs" ("deșarte credințe"). At the same time, Piuariu Molnar declares that he does not believe in the divine origins of rhetoric in his *Retorică. Adecă în învățătura și intocmirea frumoașei cuvântării* (Rhetoric. That is, the study and composition of fine speech, Buda, 1798).

In this case, as in others from the same age, one can also speak about the influence of Masonic lodges.

This expression of free will and its consequences in Romanian culture in 18th century Transylvania is even more important as it was actually contemporary with Europe exactly by this free thinking. A simple comparative view shows that the rejection of miracles (already by Spinoza), the praise of reason and critical spirit, the criticism of prejudices and superstitions, of bigotry and intolerance are just as much commonplaces of 18th century European Enlightenment. This contribution, not yet fully evaluated, should never be ignored.

It is characteristic for the spirituality of the age that the idea of free thinking and consciousness did not remain at a merely theoretical level in Transylvania. It was expressed especially by very precise social aspects. From more or less abstract and “elitist” theories, they turned to concrete, practical, popular demands, which led to real mass movements. It can be said from this perspective that religious freedom was the most popular form of the idea of freedom in 18th century Transylvania. It involved, in one way or another, very broad social media, especially following the act of the Union with the Church of Rome in 1700, and the steps preceding it in 1677 and 1698 of the metropolitan bishop Atanasie Anghel. This act is presented as an act of free will, as the diploma of Leopold I. from March 17, 1700 states it: “Of our free will we unite with the Catholic Church of Rome” (“De bună voia a noastră ne unim cu biserica Romei, cea catolicească”). At the same time, they claim the right “to be free to follow the old calendar” (să fim slobozi a ne ținea după calendarul vechi”). This ambiguity reveals the complexity and polysemy of the idea of freedom in that period and circumstances, as well as the double motivation of both the adhesion and the rejection of the Union. In both cases, actions which are legitimate and free.

The resistance movements against the Union, the most important of which was that of the monk Sofronie from Cioara, all have at their basis the appeal to an essential freedom of consciousness. Greek-Catholic historians of the 19th century saw Sofronie as a Russian agent of Slavic Pan-Slavism, as he seems to have actually been. But regardless of the source of his political inspiration, the argument of the rejection of the Union is, theoretically speaking, irrefutable. However much some people would accuse the Orthodox of “superstition”, their motivation, at least theoretically, is very legitimate. It was preceded by a long series of actions and protests, beginning even in the period of the Union, in 1701. Of all these, the best known is the *Plângerea Sfintei Mănăstiri a*

Silvaşului (The complaint of the holy monastery of Silvaş), which unmasks the “wicked union” (“ticăloasa uniație”) and the “terrible tyranny of the pope” (“cumplita tiranie a papei”). The previously mentioned memorial of Inocenție Micu from 1745 denies the jurisdiction of the “Jesuit theologian” over the unified Church. In several memorials addressed to the Imperial Court (1751, 1758, 1759), the Orthodox claim that “the oppression be lifted, and the freedom of our old religion of Greek law be restored.” (“ridicată opreliștea și restituită libertatea vechii noastre religii de lege grecească”). This is the exact sense and objective of Sofronie’s ample movement: the free practice of the Orthodox religion, *liberum religionis exercitius*, as it says in the request addressed to General Bukhov, who was leading the repression. Or, in other words: “the right to keep from now on the Orthodox religion”, because “we do not want to subdue our faith and soul” (“dreptul de a ținea de acum înainte religiunea ortodoxă”, “credința și sufletul nostru nu vrem să le supunem”). It is also notable how they recognize the freedom of faith of the United (the Greek-Catholic): “whoever wants it, may keep it” (“o țină cine va vrea”). In 1759, the same Sofronie fights for the “free will of all, united or not” (voia liberă a oricărui unit sau neunit”). One year later, he invokes, in the spirit of free choice, “human rights” (“drepturile omenești”). Even if some testimonies in the age may be suspected of secular ideological influences, it is clear that the idea of the equality of religions made a considerable impact on consciousness. This is a conviction not only very widespread, but also having a tradition in Transylvania. This is a fact still less known, only revealed by recent research, nonetheless fully convincing. To this, the whole ideological tradition of the *Școala Ardeleană* (Transylvanian School; a Romanian cultural movement in 18th century Transylvania) is added.

Thus a Hungarian chronicle from the 13th century speaks about the “allowance of free practice of the Greek rite”. A Catholic source from the 14th-15th centuries mentions the believers of the oriental Church: “They believe that every man can save his soul in his own right”. The principle of *salva sua eligendi libertate* is often mentioned; for example, by the Orthodox inhabitants of Braşov, in 1724. On the other hand, Inocenție Micu claims the right of the Greek-Catholics to build churches. The progress of the idea of religious literature, spreading over the entire learned sphere of Transylvanian ideology, is especially essential. Historical precedents are also mentioned, for example by Samuil Micu, who reminds that the Turks allowed in all their provinces “the free practice of the Greek and Roman-Catholic religion” (“liberul exercițiu al

religiei grecești și romano-catolice”, *Brevis Historica Notitia*). Also for Șincai, the Greek cult has always been free – a principle stated in both the *Chronica*, and in *Supplex*. This is the same claim which can be found, well emphasized, at Petru Maior, referring mainly to the rights of the Orthodox clergy after the Union.

The debates and demands formulated by the *Supplex* are especially important for the progress and full clarification of the idea of religious freedom. It is probably Budai-Deleanu who expresses them most clearly. He mentions not only the historical precedent of the oriental Church, which has enjoyed a “complete religious freedom” (“o libertate religioasă deplină”), but he also formulates desiderata of maximum clarity: “that Romanian Orthodox religion should have equal rights with the four accepted religions, and its priests should be considered equal with the priests of the accepted religions” (“religia română neunită să aibă drepturi egale cu ale celor patru religii recepte, iar preoții ei, să fie considerați cu totul egali cu preoții religiilor recepte”). Again, in the *Țiganiada* by Budai-Deleanu, versions A and B, there are precise references to the freedom of believing or not. Let us not burden this page with new quotations.

Moreover, it should not be ignored that the same beneficial state of mind is reflected in an independent spirit, outside any confessional dispute, in the case of Paul Iorgovici: “So we shouldn’t judge anybody by his confession, but respect everybody by their deeds” (“Deci noi să nu judecăm pre nimeni de care lege este, ci pe fiecare să-l cinștim după faptele sale”). But the most significant and eloquent evidence is the fact that the idea of religious freedom is so powerful that it penetrates even the lower strata of Romanians from Transylvania. There is an open appeal, lacking any inhibition, to “the freedom to pass from one cult to another” (libertatea de a trece de la un cult la altul”). In other words, reference is made to the Edict of Tolerance of Joseph II. from 1781, which allows the Greek-Catholics to return to Orthodoxy, after a short period of reflection and discussion with the priest: “in order to free myself from one Church to be able to pass to another” (“Pentru a mă elibera de la o biserică ca să pot trece la alta”). There is knowledge about at least four written declarations, from 1784, in this respect, and this is indeed eloquent.

All this is the immediate effect of the official policy of confessional freedom and tolerance, the evidence for it being the series of decrees from the period of the Union, starting with that of Emperor Leopold I. (12 Dec. 1701): “Be it the free will of Romanians to join any

of the four accepted religions, or to keep their own religion” (“Românii să le stea de voie liberă a se uni cu oricare din cele patru religii recepte sau de a-și păstra religia”). A whole study could be written on this matter, including the previous decrees on the same topic, with several references and hints. As illustration of our topic, we only mention two decisive moments, inspired by exceptional historical events. The riots of monk Sofronie are undoubtedly the cause of several instructions, proclamations and decrees of Maria Theresa. An important one of these, on the 13th of July, 1759, is a decree of tolerance regarding those who have separated from the Union. The disturbances continued, and this brought about a new decree (March 21, 1760), for the approval of the demand of the Orthodox for a bishop of their confession.

The second instant, even more important, were the reforms of Joseph II., and especially their spirit. It is a fundamentally liberal spirit, generally understood by the notion of “Josephinism” (*ich will Freiheit*): the full equality of religions, interdiction of forced conversions, freedom to pass from one confession to another. This is the essence of the famous *Edictum Tolerantiae* (11 June, 1781), translated into Romanian in 1782. Rigorously formulated, points by points, it also expresses something of the bureaucratic, yet efficient spirit of the imperial-royal administration. Even more efficient, as it is followed by some even clearer instructions. These are emitted in the same spirit of secular nationalism, according to which both the school and the church are in the first place a *politicum*, that is, definitively withdrawn from the guardianship of clerical authority. The declarations of Chancellor Kaunitz follow the same direction. There is also another phenomenon which is worth the attention. Even if Joseph II., under the pressure of the events of the French Revolution, is constrained to annul some of his “too reformist” decrees, he does not give up the Edict of Tolerance. Moreover, some ordinances from 1791 and 1792, following the Emperor’s death in 1790, (among which one of Emperor Francis I.) interdict the discrimination of “the Romanians of Greek-Orthodox faith” (“românilor de credință greco-ortodoxă”).

Even if there is inevitably a certain difference between the word of the administrative disposition and its practical application, the official term, *Das Toleranz-Patent* (13 Oct. 1781) introduces a new and modern element in the ideology and language of the age, evidently contrasting an entire past of religious abuses and persecutions. A radically new concept appears, which marks, once more, a new terminology of freedom in 18th century Transylvania. Theoretically, at least, full freedom of religion and cessation of all persecutions is proclaimed, the equality of all confessions

is recognized, and their free oral and written expression is granted. The traditional Moldavian-Valachian mentality, an inevitable term of comparison in the age, is much surpassed. Most remarkable is the fact that the new idea and the new term surpass the sphere of religious rights and penetrate the language of secular texts, as notable in the case of Piuaru Molnar or, especially, Paul Iorgovici. He, in the dedication of his *Observații de limbă rumânească*, addressed to the Serbian bishop Shakabent, proclaims the bishop as “the example of tolerance and love of man” (“exemplul toleranței și al iubirii de om”). His text is more than edificatory: “Let us not condemn nor hate those who do not follow Christian law, or who are Christians but a little different from the old Church of the East” (“Să nu osândim, nici să nu urâm pre cei ce nu sunt de legea creștinească, au sunt creștini dar se despart puțințel de la biserica veche a răsăritului”).

Here again the synchronicity with European ideology is more than obvious. References to the “freedom of thinking” and “tolerance” are so great in number that bibliographic references are unnecessary. In Marmontel’s *Belisaire*, for instance, which attracted the attention of Samuil Micu, it is clearly stated: “The minds are not enlightened by the flame of the stakes” (“Nu se luminează spiritele cu flacăra rugurilor”). And one can find any number of such examples. I only wish to highlight the essential fact that the Europeanization of our liberal ideology has made yet another step towards its original sources. The *Rights of Man* (1787) of the Anglo-French American Thomas Paine may also be mentioned as a term of comparison, in order to even better realize the truly international extension of the idea of tolerance.

Political and social freedom

The history of the formation of Transylvanian nationalism is well-known enough to be explored again in this framework. An important contribution in this matter was due to the Hungarian historian Zoltán I. Tóth, whose work, followed by the commentaries of Adrian Cioroianu, *Primul secol al naționalismului românesc ardelean, 1697-1792* (The first century of Transylvanian Romanian nationalism) only became accessible in Romanian translation in 2001. The role of the Greek-Catholic bishop Inocenție Micu Klein, the great initiator, is highly emphasized. Still, some further shading can be added to it, in the spirit of a liberal idea. It is very true that the beginnings of national history and the consciousness of Latinity form and strengthen the conviction, now openly expressed for

the first time, that “it is a great thing to be born a Romanian” (“mult iaste a fi născut român”), Samuil Micu, *Scurtă cunoștință a istoriei românilor* (A short history of the Romanians). It also cannot be overlooked that this “nationalism” has never, absolutely never opposed the domination of the Austrian emperors. On the contrary, they always emphatically affirm their fidelity, “sacred towards the House of Austria” (“cu sfințenie față de Casa de Austria”), by the same Samuil Micu, *Brevis Historica Notitia*. The consequences of this deeply rooted regional nationalism can be felt even before the period of the Union. The very idea of “Union” is accepted with difficulty, and with clear conditions. These are quite evident especially in the memoirs of Iuliu Maniu, but this problem exceeds the framework of our concerns.

Doubtlessly the idea of freedom of expression fully legitimates the assertion of the Romanian national idea, and what is more, makes it more rigorous, energetic, and even aggressive. This is in fact its really new aspect: the imperative spirit of the assertion of the national idea. Because, as D. Țichindeal expresses, translating and reworking the work of Dositei Obradovici, “Indeed, we must speak” (“Ce e drept, trebuie să vorbim”). Sentences like “our free will” (“sloboda voie a noastră”), “so that they could think even more freely” (să poată cugeta și mai slobozi”), read in the works of Paul Iorgovici or Samuil Micu, obviously reveal a sense not only openly demanding, but *verbi gratia* also “subversive”. The fact that sometimes these sentences, clearly “suspicious”, only remain in manuscript because of censorship, does not alter their radical spirit. It is well perceived in all the memoirs of the Hungarian nobility, especially in the period of the uprising of Horea, full of indignation: the Romanians are “slothful, bad, criminal, and still want freedom” (“trândavi, răi, nelegiuți, și totuși vor libertate”). This definition becomes insultingly stereotypical.

It can also be said that the idea of the equal rights of all confessions and nationalities is even stronger and more emphatically expressed than the national idea itself. Equality is not only theoretically expressed – as, for instance, by Paul Iorgovici: “without looking at nationality or religion” (“fără uitarea la nație sau religie”), because rational thinking “belongs to all men, without discrimination” (“este la tot omul, fără discriminare”), or by Budai-Deleanu, who asks for “equal rights and immunities” (“drepturi și imunități egale”) –, but it also forms the object of precise political claims. A petition from 1790 asks for equal rights for the clergy, nobility, free peasants, and the “colonies” (as the serfs were called). The whole politics of Joseph II. meant in effect the

equality of all the nations of Transylvania, “accepted” or “unaccepted” (like the Romanians). An eloquent testimony thereof is a short discourse of Horea, recently published, held on February 13, 1753, at the *True Understanding* Masonic lodge in Vienna, in which Joseph II. is praised for considering all his subjects “brothers”, with no discrimination. (Mozart was a member of the same lodge.) But Horea’s text goes further than that, by an open call to arming and riot: “Hands up with arms” (“Mâna în sus pe armele”). This proves that the uprising from 1785 had already been conceived at that time.

The idea of the “social contract” legitimates just as much the right to revolt. Samuil Micu interprets Baumeister (disciple of Wolf) in this sense: “... when the emperor runs terribly wild and tyrannically rules the lives and fortunes of the people” (“... când împăratul sălbăticiindu-se cumplit tiranește în viața și averile norodului”), then he opens up the way for free thinking and resistance. Another direct Masonic influence for Horea’s revolt came probably from the emissary agents (probably Russian agents) Mihail Popescu and Salis. Popescu, a former Russian officer, belonged with certainty to another Viennese lodge, “Zu den drei Adlern”. Piuaru Molnar was also a member of a lodge in Sibiu, called “St. Andreas zu dem drei Seebältern”, which also initiated other Romanians. The influence of these liberal-reformist movements was great in the age. Masonry and the influence of the French Revolution are at the origins of the Hungarian “iacobine” movement of Ignác Martinovics, the “Reformer’s Association”, in 1792. The planned *Philosophical Society of the Romanian Nation* (Societatea filosoficească a Neamului românesc), in 1795, had the same origins. This society also intended to publish a periodical, *Vestiri filosoficești și moralicești* (Philosophical and ethical news), which would have propagated commonwealth (“binele de obște”), and “the beams of dawn for enlightening the Romanian nation” (“raze ale zorilor spre luminarea neamului românesc”). The plan failed however, because of the vigilance and alarm of repressive authorities.

The complexity of the national feeling also increases by its social dimension. There are in fact two kinds of inseparable reactions. Social criticism is implicit. It becomes obvious first of all by the criticism of serfdom, of the inferior social status of the Romanians, the population greatest in number in Transylvania. “Oppression gives birth to a soul of slaves” (“Asuprirea naște suflete de sclavi”), as Budai-Deleanu rightfully notes. This is a typical expression of Josephinism. Otherwise, serfdom was abolished by the patent issued on August 22, 1785 by Joseph II., as a direct consequence of the uprising led by Horea. If we think of the fact

that slavery was abolished only in 1848 on the French colonies, or in 1865 in the United States, following a civil war, we realize by comparison the importance, albeit symbolic, of this radical reform. It is truly “revolutionary”; or, at any rate, a direct attack against the old feudal hierarchy of Transylvania. “We will all be free as we wish, and without fear of the master of the place” (“Vom fi slobozi fieștecare după plăcerea noastră însă și fără frica domnului locului”).

On the large international echo of Horea’s uprising, one may find the pamphlet of Brissot de Warville, *Seconde lettre d’un défenseur du peuple à l’empereur Joseph... sur la révolte de Valaques ou l’on discute à fond le droit de révolte du peuple* (1785). This fact is first of all very eloquent. The text is mentioned and studied by Romanian historians (N. Edroiu, Pompiliu Teodor). The revolutionary deed is saluted with great and legitimate satisfaction by Samuil Micu and Gh. Șincai. The popularization of the abolishment of serfdom by translating the imperial decree into Romanian contributes to an even greater extent to the formation of a new kind of social consciousness: “Now we are free people” (“Acum suntem oameni slobozi”). This claim of the oppressed class was felt even back in the period of the revolts of Sofronie (1760): “the power of the Lord has passed, now we are the Lords” (“trecut puterea Domnului, acum noi suntem Domni”). And the ultimatum from Deva, addressed to the Hungarian nobility, states even more clearly (on 11 November 1764) in an evidently learned ideological formulation: “There shall be no more nobility” (“Nobilime să nu mai fie”). There are precise regulations about the division of estates, so that the nobility “should also pay taxes like ordinary people” (“să plătească dare ca și poporul de rând”), and also other social claims now formulated for the first time against traditional feudal order. The “learned”, liberal-reformist source of inspiration is more than evident.

It has a strong and at that time still new philosophical justification: the idea of “humanity” (“umanitate”), of “natural law” (“lege naturală”), and of “commonwealth” (“binele cel de obște”), the well-being of the whole society. The abolishment of serfdom (even the use of the name “serf” is interdicted) gains its inspiration from such principles. For Joseph II. serfdom is “mankind’s degradation to slavery” (“această degradare la sclavie a omenirii”). Its abolishment is “called for by commonwealth and personal freedom which is a right of every man from nature and from the state” (“o pretinde binele public și libertatea personală care i se cuvine oricărui om de la natură și de la stat”). The “laws of nature” (“legile firei”) and “commonwealth” (“binele cel de

obște”) are the new terms in use. “Natural law” (“legea naturală”) was mentioned already by bishop Inocenție Micu, and now it becomes a firm conviction of Samuil Micu, a committed adept of “natural rights” (“drepturile firei”), “natural laws” (“legile firei”), according to which serfdom was “a kind of pagan slavery” (“era un chip de robie păgânească”) (*Legile firii, ithica și politica sau filozofia cea lucrătoare*, 1800.) Those who think like this, they do it out of “burning for mankind” (“din ardere către omenire”), as expressed by Paul Iorgovici in his *Observații de limbă rumânească* (1799). Piuariu Molnar also had similar convictions, as “a friend of men” (“amic al oamenilor”), and author of a laudation in his *Retorica* (1798): “such a fine construct is a man” (“zidire așa de frumoasă iaste omul”). These humanist ideas introduce a practically new language in the ideology of the age.

The French Revolution, by the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, plays an even greater role in the spreading and explanation of these innovative and profoundly reforming ideas. These become quite widespread in the age, after 1790, inclusively in the Hungarian and German press. The latter speaks of the “Rights of the Saxon nation”, in the light of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. Moreover, the declaration begins to be translated in the newspapers of Martin Hochmeister (*Der Kriegsbote*, 1785-1792 and *Siebenburgerbote*, 1792-1794.) They salute the demolition of the Bastille as “a monument of despotism” (“acest monument al despotismului”). The circulation of the *Declaration* in the Romanian publications of that time, starting with its basic principle “Everybody is born free” (“Toți se nasc slobozi”), as Samuil Micu says in his *Legile firii, ithica și politica...*, is quite obvious. Joseph II is lauded in 1791 because of “having understood the clean and simple rights of both the man and the citizen” (“a înțeles drepturile curate și simple, atât ale omului cât și a cetățeanului”). Similarly, the *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* (1791) is directly influenced by “the rights of both the man and of civil society”, as its most competent researcher, historian D. Prodan repeatedly mentions. One might even say that it is a commonplace of the incipient Romanian liberal thinking. The *Declaration* can be found also in a work of Ioan Monorai, written in Latin. The equal right to happiness is largely debated in a manual of morals, *Ducere de mână către cinste și dreptate* (Taking by the hand towards honor and justice, 1793). It was also recognized, in 1784, in a Dutch newspaper, which praised Joseph II for abolishing serfdom, in the name of “the sacred rights of mankind”. This reference, somewhat

“exotic” and marginal, can be found in the work of the same scholar D. Prodan.

Towards free press

The death of Joseph II. and the revocation of certain decrees did not bring about the diminishment of free will and thinking and the claim for the right of free expression. On the contrary, a tendency to organize and radicalize free expression can be observed after 1790, under the ever more obvious influence of the French Revolution. The number of protests, petitions, and memorials addressed to Vienna increases. The *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* would not have been possible under different conditions. The preoccupation for circulation and propaganda becomes more and more evident. Social-political vocabulary is enriched. New social objectives are formulated, and the old claims become intensified. These are formulated in a new style, which indicates the new state of mind of free thinking, without the inhibition of being different or unofficial. Still, it is not a mass trend. But the “ease” – to say so – with which the ideas of “freedom”, “the raising of the country”, or respect for “the laws of the truth” are invoked in 1782, in a petition addressed to Joseph II, is much surpassed by the vehemence and radicalism of some later formulations. Gh. Șincai expresses himself in this style: “Do not believe them, oh you Romanian, because they only want your purse in order to fill theirs and you would stay a slave” (“Nu crede, o române, pentru că numai punga ta o voiesc ca să umple punga lor și tu să rămâi rob”) *Cronica*, (first edition 1853). Budai-Deleanu, in the final verse of the *Țiganiada* version A, expresses the ultimate alternative of the Romanians: “Take us ... either to freedom, or to death” (Du-ne ... ori la slobozie, ori la moarte”). The expression *Frei oder Tot* also circulated at that time in a Belgian manifesto, mentioned by the German press in Sibiu.

With all the (inevitable) scarcity of the sources and the lack of tradition of such analyses, this instant remains important for the development of free consciousness in Transylvania and elsewhere, in the 18th century. A series of original moments can be clearly noticed, and these prove, seen from above, a considerable ideological progress. First of all, the enrichment of the social and political vocabulary, even more remarkable still since it was only with great difficulty that the mentality of the age could assimilate this new terminology. At the beginning, it only sneaked in allusively, like in a poem by Budai-Deleanu, *Sybilla de*

ano 1795. Here, the notion “the new law” (“legea cea nouă”) appears as well, poetically associated with the memory of Carthage (which, as we all know, was destroyed). In the same year, Gh. Șincai, openly opposing bishop Ion Bob, in a moment of euphoria, *in vino veritas* (not very infrequent in his case), proudly claims to himself the idea of “conspiracy”, “rebellion”, and even the “leader” of all these, although the object of the conflict between him and Bob is rather small. The price paid however is great: his dismissal from the seat of director of Romanian schools. The circulation of certain new notions like “rights of the man and the citizen”, “liberty”, “equality”, “fraternity” becomes more intensive. It is not only the *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* where one may come across the idea of “free people”, or “rights of the citizen”. These are qualitatively new ideological-political notions, superior to the traditional “laws of justice”, called for by Horea too in his trial.

A practically new phenomenon and episode is the assimilation of the very idea of revolution, which gives place to favorable or hostile opinions. One may speak about a real success of the idea of revolution (and of the French Revolution) among the Romanians in Transylvania. A Hungarian source from 1793 mentions that there are Romanians who know the French Revolution by heart and explain it to others. Moreover, “the peasantry wishes that the French came to our country”, an evident effect of the Napoleonic wars. Another Hungarian source (the poet Ábrahám Barcsay) notes on July 5, 1793, that “there are Romanians, and this not a fairy tale [...] who know the French Revolution word by word”. “This is nothing bad for us peasants, since we will not serve our masters, but one will be like the other”. So, one of the ideas of the ultimatum from Deva, addressed to the Hungarian nobility in 1784, during Horea’s uprising, is repeated with even greater intensity. The Polish liberal constitution from 1791 is also known here. The German press (*Der Kriegsbote*) takes note, even if disapprovingly, of the new state of mind: “everywhere the spirit of freedom is spreading like an electric spark to all the peoples mature enough to receive it”. The popular excesses are condemned: this is where the “badly understood idea of freedom may lead”. Still, the fact that it can also be well understood does not escape attention. The journalistic plans of Paul Iorgovici are confronted with such ambiguous arguments: “The too dangerous ideas of freedom of the French are spreading with great fastness”. The number of German pamphlets on this topic is greater than one might suspect.

The French Revolution creates, by the wars that followed the imperial period and in which Romanian regiments also participated as

part of the royal-imperial army, a number of real symbolic heroes. The most famous of them is doubtlessly Napoleon, who became a folklore character of high prestige. He is seen as a virtual liberator, a national hope for the Romanians. The allegory of the French Revolution, also having Napoleon in its center, can be found in the *Țiganiada*, version B (song IX). Gh. Șincai pays homage to it as well, just like Piuariu Molnar. He is invited, in a naïve popular style, to intervene for the benefit of the Romanians: “Bonaparte nu-i departe,/ Vin, digrabă, fă dreptate” (Donaparte, we aren’t far, come at once and make justice). The exile on Saint Helena island causes sentimental reactions of sympathy and grief, profound laments in Romanian folklore: it was one more deeply felt national disappointment.

Despite all the historical accidents, the influence of the “journalistic” policy of the Habsburg Empire became more and more visible in Transylvania at the end of the 18th century. The translation of the large amount of ordinances, decrees and circular letters into different languages, among which also Romanian, is an event with considerable consequences. The idea circulates and strengthens that a potentially free press in Romanian is both necessary and possible. This is an influential phenomenon with great prospective consequences. The idea of freedom receives a determining impulse, following its own, intrinsic dynamics, coming from the influence of the Enlightenment on the one hand, and the policy of the official, administrative publicity of the authorities on the other. The phenomenon of censorship – to which I will return in details – emphasizes even more this state of mind, but also of cultural, civic, and essentially national activism. Romanian publications, essentially free, become not only a theoretical, but also a practical necessity, confronting with great obstacles. But the impulse is direct, and proves irreversible in time. A partly foreign observer, the Serbian Dositei Obradovici from the Banat, lucidly notes: “Until the Romanian people has no books in its (national) language, it will be forced to lie in the **Darkness of the Mind** and in **Barbarism** and to become even worse” (“Până când Poporul român nu va avea cărți în limba (națională) până atunci e silit a zăcea în **Intunericul Minții** și în **Varvarie** și tot mai spre rău a ajunge”).

Dominated by this mentality, and definitely influenced by the liberal, multiethnic Masonic spirit of the age, the first efforts are observed to found a real Romanian press. The initiative belongs to the *Philosophical Society of Transylvania*, and has two purposes: in 1789, *Foarte românească pentru econom* (A Romanian paper for the countryman), also in a German version, *Walachische Zeitung für der*

Landman; and in 1795, *Vestiri Filozoficești și Moralicești* (News from philosophy and morals). The program, entirely enlightened, is quite rich: it contains the popularization of sciences as common possessions of the entire mankind, and the economical elevation of the Romanians. The spirit is secular: “Philosophical parts separated from moral theology” (“Părțile Filozoficești osebite de Theologia moralicească”). Piuariu Molnar has a significant contribution to the accomplishment of this project, which has to face – as it could be expected – political, administrative, and... mailing obstacles. In the same spirit, Paul Iorgovici intended to publish a *Calendar from the Birth of Christ. 1794* (*Calendar de la nașterea lui Hristos 1794*), translated from Serbian, but also containing French moralizing stories. The great impulse given by imperial journalistic policy (decrees, regulations, circular letters, leaflets) to the press and even to political-social pamphlets needs to be highlighted. Stimulated especially by Joseph II, these fully demonstrated their beneficial effects. The superiority of Transylvanian journalism compared to the other Romanian states (Moldavia and Valachia) is more than evident.

The “liberal” spirit of such initiatives is truly significant for their historical timing, in the sense of free, uncensored communication of information, under the more and more visible pressure of the events of the French Revolution. In Transylvania, these are mainly circulated in the German press, well and fast informed (the first piece of news about the Revolution in the *Siebenbürger Bote* dates on August 11, 1789). Thus, the basic principles of freedom, justice, and equality become more and more widespread and accessible. Free thinking, the freedom of the press and religious tolerance, the rights of man (*Der Kriegsbote*, 73, 18 Sept. 1789, p. 591) become more and more the guiding notions of the ideological, and implicitly also political consciousness of the age in Transylvania. The event is of major importance. German historians (I.C. Eder, 1791) acknowledge the right of Romanians (in a more or less condescending way) to “think for themselves as they like” (“să gândească singuri cum le place”). The *Țiganiada* (version B, IX, 34, note) praises “free” literature and press. Of some wedding songs it is said that “I have found them easy, that is, with great liberty” (“le-am aflat ușoare adecă cu multă slobozenie”). Restrictive conventions and prejudices are beginning to be defied in this domain too; an anti-canonical reaction.

The broadening of the sphere of knowledge, especially didactic, is very significant. Freedom penetrates thus the old canons and programs. A text from 1794 by I. Iercovici notes the fact that “the Romanian nation

has now free access to all schooling, that is Latin, Hungarian, German schools and other professions are free for them” (“neamului românesc stau acum toate învățăturile slobode, adecă școală latinească, ungurească, nemțească și alte meșteșuguri stau deschise.” Evidently, the need for a new type of schoolmaster, more modern and receptive to innovations, is also felt. The *Carte trebuincioasă pentru pentru dascălii școalelor de jos rumânești neunite* (A helpful book for the schoolmasters of Orthodox Romanian general schools, 1785) expresses the need for new exigencies: the schoolmaster should be found “clever and free of other thoughts and of great care for what he is going to do” (“să-l găsească de deștept și slobod de alte gânduri și cu mare luare aminte de cele ce o să apuce”). Even more than that, the semantics of certain central notions broadens. It is freed from old, restrictive, official meanings. A typical case is the notion of “homeland” (*patrie*) which becomes “national”, leaving behind its former civil-political meaning: “the language and the nation walk by the same steps” (“limba și nația cu același pas pășesc”), as Paul Iorgovici says. This thesis is essential in the *Observații de limbă rumânească* (Observations on the Romanian language), section III, *Reflexii despre starea românilor* (Reflections on the status of the Romanians). The homeland is identified with the nation: “The *homeland* [...] that is, the *country* and the land and the language in which (somebody) was born” (“*Patria* [...] adecă țara și pământul și limba în care (cineva) s-a născut”). One finds the same conviction at Samuil Micu: “To keep and defend the homeland and the estate and the freedom” (“*Patria și moșia și slobozenia a o ținea și a o apăra*”). The previous ambiguity, still perceptible in the case of the well-meaning “official”, Piuaru Molnar, in a lecture held in 1791 (*Paraenesis*... “your gratitude towards the homeland” (“recunoștința voastră față de patrie”), defined and symbolized still by the central Viennese authority) is evidently outgrown. The “homeland” can only be perceived in close connection with the idea of “freedom”. Gradually, the notion receives a political tone, in order to become, in 1848, “national” or “political” freedom. An ideological change of a major importance.

The Latinity of the people and their language – a central principle in this whole action of demands – is constantly facing a powerful obstacle: Russian influence exercised by the Orthodox Church. The ardent propagators against the Union (not only Sofronie, already mentioned, but also Visarion Sarai and “Popa Tunsu”, Molnar’s father) act as the true agents of Pan-Slavism. This is done also by direct diplomatic contacts with Vienna (between Empress Elisaveta Petrovna

and Maria Theresa), by memorials of the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Church, by direct visits to Moscow, like that of the priest Mihail Popovici (1770-1771) from the Banat. They are speaking about “religious emancipation”, “national feeling”. Yet, it is forgotten that the Greek-Catholics also claimed and maintained the same “Romanian national feeling”, with a matter-of-fact historical lucidity. Petru Maior knew very well that Slavic was the language of Orthodoxy in all Eastern Europe. It disappears from the chanceries only at the end of the 16th century, and in church it is used until the beginning of the 18th.

Although the Latin alphabet is not completely unknown (the *Catechism* of Ștefan Fogăși, Alba Iulia, 1648; a *Bucoavnă* (an alphabet book with Cyrillic letters) from 1744 uses alternatively Cyrillic and Latin letters, and there are further examples), openly polemical claims for it are not made until Samuil Micu. He opposes the idea that Romanian would be a “bad language”; on the contrary, it is supposed to have used the Latin alphabet before the 15th century (a more than obvious exaggeration). Dimitrie Cantemir’s ideas are taken over also by Petru Maior (*Disertație pentru literatura cea veche a românilor* (A dissertation on the old literature of the Romanians), 1812). It is not the Romanians who are responsible for the introduction of Cyrillic letters, but “the Russians or Slovenians”. But the power of custom and tradition is great, and such an idea still seems very “avant-garde”.

A general obstacle against the cultural emancipation of the Romanians – to which we shall return later on in detail – is the existence of censorship. In an absolutist regime the demand of political freedom is practically impossible. But the idea of free press claims its place in the minds more and more visibly. Sometimes, indirectly but quite transparently, even in newspapers, especially under the influence of the French Revolution. In 1795, for instance, the objective observation is made that “the happenings of times run permanently through the gazettes” (“aleargă neîncetat întâmplările vremilor prin gazeturi”). The freedom of information is implicit. Budai-Deleanu eulogizes the press of “men without prejudices” (“oamenilor fără prejudecăți”), a notion permanently opposed (*De originibus populorum Transilvaniae*, IX, XLI, XLIV). Still, it cannot be overlooked that the imperial-royal censorship was not so fierce as might be suspected. One way or another, German press at least is requested to make note of the real events of the French Revolution, without commenting on them. This represents, in all events, if not a considerable progress, then at least a notable freedom of mind.

The example of “Europe”

By its geographic placement, and even more by its entire spiritual openness in the age, Transylvania as the first of the Romanian countries was found in the situation of invoking, eulogizing and cultivating the European model. Now for the first time the European spirit penetrates, powerfully and with great conviction, Romanian culture. The “discovery” of Europe begins to happen. We should not overlook this considerable cultural progress. Samuil Micu is very explicit in this matter: Romanians “should look at the most learned nations, and follow them” (“să caute la neamurile cele mai învățate, pe acelea să le urmeze”). The motivation is significant: Europe is the fountain of “lights”, as the manifesto of the *Philosophical Society* states in 1795. “In a century as enlightened as our own”, Budai-Deleanu continues, there cannot be any other spiritual choice.

“Europe” at the beginning of the 19th century was an issue on the agenda. The Romanian language – as Petru Maior says – is a “language of Europe” (“limbă a Europei”). The Prologue to the *Țiganiada* mentions, besides the Romanians, “other nations of Europe” (“alte neamuri ale Europei”). The awareness of pertaining to this geographic and especially cultural continent is very vivid. “Our Europe” represents not only a humiliating term of comparison (according to a Hungarian source, the “Vlach nation is the stupidest in Europe”), but also a cultural ideal, motivated also by a demographic reality. The solidarity with the catastrophes on the Continent is alive and openly stated. In 1717, it was known in Transylvania that “there was a drought in all Europe”.

The problem of the sources of these influences was, is, and will be studied for a long time. Schooling in the West – which for Romanians from Transylvania did not go beyond Vienna and Rome – and traveling, that is, the direct experience of the West had decisively contributed to this new state of mind. The journey of Paul Iorgovici and others from the Banat to France and England (1792-1793) is sometimes controversial. But a text by Dositei Obradovici, I think, is fully explanatory. England had, of all the countries of the West, the best reputation of liberalism: “While I was with you in London, there was no free word” (“Pînă eram cu voi în London nu mai era slobod nici un cuvânt”) (meaning in the Banat). He also knew about the existence of “Adison” (*sic*), and this presupposes acquaintance with the famous *The Spectator*. For the time, it means a “premier” and a considerable acquisition, and it is a major event for the modernization and development of Romanian culture.