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## The 1871 Uprising in Rakovica as Seen by the Romanian Press in Transylvania and Hungary

This study proposes a comparative analysis of the circulation of information between two peripheries of the Habsburg Monarchy (Croatia and Transylvania), respectively between a periphery and a center (Croatia and Pest), following the way in which the uprising in Rakovica in October 1871, together with its background and political connotations, were received, interpreted, and further transmitted to the Romanian-speaking public in Transylvania and Hungary by the Romanian press of the time. The objective of the study is to highlight the differences between the central and provincial press of an important ethnic group in Dualist Hungary, as well as to trace how a series of violent, unexpected, and potentially politically destabilizing events within one ethnic group were received and contextualized by the political elite of another ethnic group.

*Keywords:* Uprising in Rakovica, Romanian Press, Transylvania, Hungary, 1871

### Background and general framework

On October 8, 1871, the Romanian newspaper *Albina* [the Bee], which was published in Pest, cited *Neues Pester Journal* – “a newspaper often inspired from above” – affirming that “we are on the verge of a formal rebellion in Croatia and the military border.”<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian Prime Minister’s recent audience with the monarch was also linked to the potential rebellion. Unbeknownst to the newspaper’s editors, on the evening of the previous day, in the village of Broćanac, from the recently disbanded Ogulin regiment, within the Croatian military border,

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<sup>1</sup> *Albina* (Pest), September 26 / October 8, 1871, 1. Throughout the paper, English translation of the original Romanian quotations was made by the author.

Eugen Kvaternik, a Croatian lawyer and politician of radical orientation, had been proclaimed President of the Provisional Government of the Croatian People, and Regent. The next day, on the morning that the issue of *Albina* was published, the short and ill-fated Rakovica uprising began, which ended on October 11, 1871, with the defeat of the rebels and the execution of most of their leaders.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the Hungarian central press was discussing the question of a military uprising in Croatia, and that the rumors (unconnected to any local source) anticipated it by only one day, should not be surprising. On the one hand, the political situation at the time was very tense, the grievances of the various ethnic groups in the Habsburg lands after the Compromise of 1867 were deep, and hopes for a political reorganization of the Monarchy in a trialist or federalist formula were still alive.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the journalistic discourse was so polarizing, inflammatory, and radicalized that it gave the impression that a radical regime change, either politically or by violence, could take place at any time. What really happened was that the newspapers in Hungary, regardless of their language, cried “Wolf!” until finally the wolf happened to pass by and confirmed the “rightness” of the journalistic discourse. In this paper we will analyze only some of the newspapers in Hungary, namely those written in the Romanian language, which nevertheless reflected and summarized in their pages the content of the Hungarian- and German-language political newspapers, adding to them the Romanian political vision.

The main sources of the research were the political newspapers of the Romanians in Transylvania – *Gazeta de Transilvania* [The Transylvanian Gazette], *Telegraful Român* [The Romanian Telegraph] – and those of Hungary – *Albina*, *Federațiunea* [The Federation] – , as well as the few weekly or monthly magazines in the

<sup>2</sup> As these events are well known in historiography, we do not discuss them again here, all the more so as they are, in this study, the object of an imagological and press history analysis, and not the actual subject of the research. Selectively: Ferdo Šišić, *Kvaternik (Rakovička buna)* [Kvaternik (The Rakovica Uprising)] (Zagreb: Tisak Hrvatskog štamparskog zavoda d.d., 1926); Milutin Nehajev, *Rakovica: o 60. godišnjici smrti Eugena Kvaternika* [Rakovica: on the 60th anniversary of Eugen Kvaternik's death] (Zagreb: Redovno izd. Matice hrvatske, 1932); Nikša Stančić, “Od emigracije do Rakovice: Eugen Kvaternik i njegova koncepcija ustanka u Hrvatskoj 1871” [From Emigration to Rakovica: Eugen Kvaternik and his Conception of the Uprising in Croatia in 1871], *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 25 (1992), nr. 1: 39-56; and in particular the historiographical overview by Stjepan Matković, “Valorizacija Eugena Kvaternika u svjetlu pravaških ideologija i hrvatske historiografije od kraja 19. stoljeća do 1918.” [Evaluating Eugen Kvaternik in the Light of State Right Ideology and Croatian Historiography from the End of the Nineteenth Century to 1918], *Povijesni prilozi* 16 (1997): 223-242.

<sup>3</sup> Alan John Percivale Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1908-1918. A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamilton, 1948), 143-148; Charles Jelavich, “The Croatian Problem in the Habsburg Empire in the Nineteenth Century”, *Austrian History Yearbook* 3 (1967), nr. 2: 100-101; Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1974), 345-365; Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Belknap, 2016), 264-268, 292-299.

Romanian language – *Familia* [The Family], *Transilvania* [Transylvania], and *Gura Satului* [The Village Gossip].<sup>4</sup> The political newspapers were published two times a week, and had from a few hundred subscribers (those in Transylvania) to around a thousand (those in Hungary).<sup>5</sup> Their content was broadly aimed at the same type of audience – the urban bourgeoisie, intellectuals and village intelligentsia, priests, and, to a lesser extent, wealthy peasants – but their geographical location and the profile of their editors influenced both the process of selecting and relaying information as well as its analysis.

The Romanian newspapers from Hungary were published in Pest, and their editors were familiar with state politics, rumors, and gossip in the capital city. *Federațiunea* was edited by Alexandru Roman, a university professor, MP, and member of the National Romanian Party in Hungary,<sup>6</sup> and was the newspaper that provided the most rigorous information and realistic analysis of the situation in Croatia. Its direct competitor, the newspaper *Albina*, was also published in Pest, by a lawyer, MP, and member of the Romanian National Party in Hungary, Vincentiu Babeș.<sup>7</sup> The news coverage and presentation were relatively similar to those of *Federațiunea*, but less explicit, and the analysis was more speculative.

Transylvanian newspapers were operating in a periphery of the Monarchy and in a political environment less connected to the politics of the day, but at the same time more radicalized due to the recent loss of the province's autonomy in 1867. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* was a traditional newspaper, published in Braşov/Kronstadt/Brassó, whose editor, Iacob Mureşianu, had been a high school teacher,<sup>8</sup> and his political experience was limited. *Telegraful Român* was the official newspaper of the Orthodox Archbishopric of Sibiu, and its editor, Nicolae Cristea, was a priest and professor at the Theological Institute in Sibiu/Hermannstadt/Nagyszében, with equally little political experience.<sup>9</sup>

Of the weekly magazines, only *Familia* – issued in Pest and edited by Iosif Vulcan (a lawyer and man of letters with political leanings)<sup>10</sup> – published a short report

<sup>4</sup> Collections of these periodicals can be accessed in full at <https://dspace.bcucuj.ro> (last accessed on July 2, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> George M. Marica, *Studii de istoria și sociologia culturii române ardeleni din secolul al XIX-lea*, Vol. 1 [Studies on the History and Sociology of 19th Century Romanian Culture in Transylvania. Vol. I] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1977), Tables in Annexes (pages not numbered).

<sup>6</sup> Gelu Neamtu, *Alexandru Roman, marele fiu al Bihorului (1826-1897)* [Alexandru Roman, the Great Son of Bihor] (Oradea: Fundația culturală „Cele trei Crișuri”, 1995), 135-146.

<sup>7</sup> George Cipăianu, *Vincentiu Babeș (1821-1907)* (Timișoara: Facla, 1980), 112-139.

<sup>8</sup> Iuliu Moisil, *Iacob Mureşianu* (Bistrița: Minerva, [1937]).

<sup>9</sup> Keith Hitchins, “Nicolae Cristea și mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania” [Nicolae Cristea and the Romanian National Movement in Transylvania], in: *Studii privind istoria modernă a Transilvaniei*, ed. Keith Hitchins (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1970), 117-166.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Nemes, *Another Hungary. The Nineteenth-Century Provinces in Eight Lives* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 121-49.

on the events in Rakovica. The humorous weekly *Gura Satului* was also founded by Iosif Vulcan (1867), but the position of editor-in-chief was taken over shortly afterwards (1870) by a lawyer and politician, Mircea V. Stănescu;<sup>11</sup> however, the latter did not publish any material on the Rakovica uprising and generally published very little material on Croatia. *Transilvania* was a cultural magazine of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture (ASTRA). It was published in Sibiu and edited by George Barițiu, probably the most important political and cultural figure of the Romanians in the Habsburg Monarchy at the time; its primarily cultural orientation contributed to the lack of interest in the violent events in Croatia, but Barițiu's private correspondence also does not contain any reference to these events.<sup>12</sup>

The range of journalistic sources in the Romanian language available at the time in Transylvania and Hungary showcases the difference between political newspapers, which discuss the situation in Croatia and refer to the events in Rakovica, and cultural or social magazines, which almost completely ignore them. The latter, due to the fact that they were not paying the bail required of political newspapers, would not have been allowed to comment on the events anyway, but at most to present them factually – an aspect that probably contributed further to their lack of interest.

In a previous study, we discussed the image of Croatia and the Croats reflected in the Romanian press of the time, stressing that it was an elitist construct, created by educated people (journalists, politicians, intellectuals) and aimed primarily at representatives of the middle and upper classes. We have shown that most of the Romanian journalistic interest in Croatia was generated by, and focused on, the field of politics, but beyond the reporting of certain specific events, the analytical model remained quite stereotypical and drew primarily on anti-Hungarian discourse. The Croats were usually characterized as more politically active than the Romanians, and the 1868 pact remained a landmark and a desideratum for the Transylvanians, who had failed to preserve provincial autonomy. A second characteristic of the Croats that appears recurrently in the Romanian press is their martial attitude. Here, too, there is no lack of comparisons with the Romanians. While the military qualities of the two peoples are claimed to be equal, in terms of general attitude, the Croats were seen as being much tougher and more resolute, traits of character which also explain their political success. On the whole, it can be said that the Croats represented for the Romanians, throughout the entire

<sup>11</sup> Daciana Marinescu, '*Gura satului*' (1868-1871) – o '*foaie din Austro-Ungaria*' [The Village Gossip (1868-1871) – a periodical from Austria-Hungary] (Bucharest: Pro Universitaria, 2014), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Selectively: Keith Hitchins, Liviu Maior, eds., *Correspondența lui Ioan Rațiu cu George Barițiu (1861-1892)* [The Correspondence of Ioan Rațiu with George Barițiu] (Cluj: Dacia, 1970); Ștefan Pascu et alii, ed., *George Bariț și contemporanii săi*, Vol. I-X [George Bariț and his contemporaries, Vol. I-X] (București: Minerva, 1973-2003).

dualist period, a permanent touchstone in the construction of their self-image and the embodiment of success in political relations with the Hungarians.<sup>13</sup>

In order to fully understand Romanian journalistic discourse, it is necessary to also discuss the provincial political context. At the time of the Compromise of 1867, the Romanians of what was to be Dualist Hungary lived in two distinct provinces: Hungary and Transylvania. Those in Hungary were integrated into the provincial political system and continued to participate in parliamentary elections after the Compromise. The Transylvanians, on the other hand, had been divided, since the elections for the last provincial Diet in autumn 1865, into two camps: the passivists, who refused to participate in the elections, and the activists, who believed that the only way to defend their rights was to participate actively in the representative institutions. After the Compromise, amid the failures of the activists in the Hungarian Parliament to achieve the expected political concessions, but also because of the more restrictive franchise in Transylvania compared to Hungary, the passivists gained a majority in the board of the newly formed Romanian National Party of Transylvania (1869) and imposed their tactics. Their main argument was a juridical one: participation in the parliamentary elections and entry into Parliament would have represented recognition by the Transylvanian Romanians of the dualist system, i.e., the loss of provincial autonomy. Convinced that this political system would be as short-lived as the previous ones, the passivists hoped to achieve more through this attitude in the medium term than through minor concessions procured from the Hungarian government through parliamentary arrangements. Their attitude was also supported by the Romanian political elite in Hungary proper (i.e., the National Romanian Party in Hungary).<sup>14</sup> However, the approach of the 1872 election year meant the organization of a new party conference, in which the official electoral tactics were to be decided, an essential aspect to be taken into account in the analysis of the journalistic discourse of the time.

Therefore, in mid-1871, the political situation of the Romanians in Transylvania was rather uncomfortable: they had failed to preserve the autonomy of the province and were internally divided, and the division was partly fueled by the attitude of the Romanians in Hungary, who encouraged passivism. Hopes for a favorable compromise with the Hungarian government were minimal, but amid growing discontent in Bohemia and Croatia it was expected that a pan-Slavic movement would force a reconsideration of the dualist formula and provide an opportunity for the Romanians to renegotiate Transylvania's status within the Kingdom of Hungary.

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<sup>13</sup> Vlad Popovici, "Notes on the Image of Croatia and the Croats with the Romanians from Transylvania", *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Series Historia* 61 (2016), nr. 2: 93-108.

<sup>14</sup> Keith Hitchins, "The Rumanians of Transylvania and the Ausgleich, 1865-1869", in: *Studies on Rumanian National Consciousness*, ed. Keith Hitchins (Nagard: Pelham N.Y. etc., 1983), 139-170.

## Croatia in 1871 and the issue of the Diet

The elections for the Croatian Diet, held shortly after the appointment as Ban of Koloman Bedeković, in late spring 1871, were won by a large margin by the National Party, with both pro-Hungarians and radicals left in an absolute minority. However, the convening of the new Diet of Croatia was successively postponed,<sup>15</sup> a fact constantly reported in the Romanian press.<sup>16</sup> When a Croatian delegation was sent to Vienna to protest against political abuses in the country, the Romanian press in Transylvania – where Romanians already had a long tradition of sending petitions to the monarch<sup>17</sup> – saw these events, along with others in the Monarchy, such as Archduke Rudolf's visit to Bohemia, as a prelude to the end of the dualist system.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the Romanian press in Hungary speculated on the lack of popularity of Prime Minister Gyula Andrassy among the South Slavs.<sup>19</sup>

Support for the political cause of the Croatian nationalists, and exaggerated optimism about the impact of events in Croatia on Hungary, or even on the Habsburg Monarchy, were the dominant note in the Romanian press throughout the summer of 1871. Their electoral success was presented as an example to follow – “Courage, together with determined and coordinated struggle overcome all difficulties”<sup>20</sup> – but also as a model for a new franchise for Transylvania, which was supposed to be the guarantee offered by the Hungarian government for the Romanians in that region to give up their passivity.<sup>21</sup> The fact that the Croat Nationalist Party was aiming to demand the renegotiation of the unionist pact of 1868 was an encouraging signal,<sup>22</sup> and in this context rumors about pan-Slavic links invoked by the Hungarian press were also perpetuated: “with Czech money, both the Croats and the military border are being agitated, and they are protesting through the assembled national deputies against the measures taken by the ministry to postpone the Diet for January [1872], and are delivering their protest to the king in Vienna; and the Borders are complaining against the measures taken in view of their provincialization, as oppressive.”<sup>23</sup> Pan-Slavic support was

<sup>15</sup> Robert William Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy* (London: Constable & Co., 1911), 86-87.

<sup>16</sup> *Albina*, June 18 / 30, 1871, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Hitchins, “The Rumanians of Transylvania,” 151-153.

<sup>18</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (Braşov), June 26 / July 8, 1871, 3; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, July 17 / 29, 1871, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Federaţiunea* (Pest), June 25 / July 7, 1871, 269.

<sup>20</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, August 4 / 16, 1871, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, August 28 / September 9, 1871, 1; *Federaţiunea*, May 12 / 24, 1871, 205.

<sup>22</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, September 8 / 20, 1871, 1; *Federaţiunea*, May 26 / June 7, 1871, 25; *Federaţiunea*, June 2 / 14, 1871, 233.

<sup>23</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, September 15 / 27, 1871, 2.

also underlined when discussing the question of Bohemian aspirations to a tri-  
alist monarchy.<sup>24</sup>

The way the Romanian press analyzes and presents to the public the political events in Croatia in the summer of 1871 has at its center the issue of the Diet, more precisely its postponement: the internal political struggles, the appeal to the monarch,<sup>25</sup> and even the intensification of pan-Slavic ties are presented as results of the Croatian government's decision (influenced by the Hungarian government) to prevent the natural course of the political process.<sup>26</sup> This perspective is obviously grounded in the political realities in Zagreb, but it must also be read in light of Romanians' political experience and desires: in 1865, the prorogation of the Transylvanian Diet in Sibiu and the monarch's failure to sanction its laws were the clear signals announcing the Compromise and the loss of Transylvania's autonomy.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the political efforts of the Croats for a Diet that would renegotiate their relationship with Hungary found a favorable echo in the experience and expectations of Romanian journalists and the Romanian public at large.

At the same time, another similarity between the two imperial peripheries was constantly on the media agenda: the situation of the military border.<sup>28</sup> The military border in Transylvania had been disbanded in 1850 but continued to operate in the Banat, where there was also a Romanian regiment (the 13th Border Regiment from Caransebeș/Karánsebes).<sup>29</sup> In this context, the issue of demilitarization of the Croatian border was also discussed, focusing on its implementation without prior consultation of the border guards, and on the resulting tensions, as well as on the similarities with the disbandment of the military border in Transylvania. In the latter's case, the former militarized communities had to initiate lawsuits lasting over ten years in order to regain the right to fully use their former common property (forests, pastures, mountains, etc.),<sup>30</sup> a situation that was also predicted for Croatia: "for the present fate of Transylvania and Croatia has taught us that our present masters [i.e., the Hungarians] no longer place the slightest value on the voice of the people, and even the most modest and just wishes of

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<sup>24</sup> *Telegraful Român* (Sibiu), June 24 / July 6, 1871, 197-198; *Federațiunea*, November 10 / 22, 1871, 445.

<sup>25</sup> *Federațiunea*, September 11 / 23, 1871, 373; *Federațiunea*, September 15 / 27, 1871, 377; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, September 11 / 23, 1871, 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Federațiunea*, September 18 / 30, 1871, 381.

<sup>27</sup> Hitchins, "The Rumanians of Transylvania," 142-144.

<sup>28</sup> *Telegraful Român*, June 24 / July 6, 1871, 197-198.

<sup>29</sup> On the Romanian border regiment from Banat see Irina Marin, *The Formation and Allegiance of the Romanian Military Elite Originating from the Banat Military Border* (PhD thesis, University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2009), 42-75 for a thorough literature review.

<sup>30</sup> *Federațiunea*, June 9 / 21, 1871, 245; *Federațiunea*, June 4 / 16, 1871, 286.

the people seem to be deliberately disregarded by the men called upon to care for the prosperity of the state and its citizens. The reforms published for the military frontier again prove our last statement” [referring to the situation of the forests on the military frontier, half of which were intended to pass into the ownership of the Hungarian Ministry of Finance].<sup>31</sup>

The failure to resolve the political crisis during the summer led to a radicalization of the attitude and discourse of the Croatian National Party’s representatives, frustrated by the fact that, although they had won the elections, they were *de facto* still in opposition. The legal difficulty of their position, both in relation to the Croatian executive and the Parliament in Pest, was highlighted by the Romanian newspapers. *Albina*, headed by the lawyer and MP Vincențiu Babeș, analyzed the situation, concluding that the precarious political position of the National Party (still referred to as “opposition,” although they had officially won the elections) was also due to the provisions of the Compromise of 1868 (Law XXX/1868).<sup>32</sup> This stipulated that the mandate of Croatian MPs in the Parliament in Pest did not expire when the Croatian Diet ceased its work, but when the Hungarian Parliament closed. For this reason, the new Croatian parliamentary majority could not invoke any legal right to send MPs to the Parliament in Pest.<sup>33</sup>

This was also one of the reasons why the manifesto of September 20, 1871, signed by the majority of Croatian nationalist MPs, disavowed the Compromise of 1868 and rejected the appointment of the Croatian Ban by the Prime Minister of Hungary.<sup>34</sup> The Romanian press kept its audience informed of these developments, taking information from both *Obzor* and *Pesti Naplo*, and the Romanian editors speculated on the moment, taking up the theme of the “solid guarantees” (i.e., the modification of the electoral legislation, particularly for Transylvania) that the Hungarian government, which seemed at the time to be in a not very favorable position, should have offered in order to obtain the cooperation of the nationalities.<sup>35</sup>

Various local news reports complete the picture of the Croatian territories being on the brink of insurrection against Hungary. Towards the end of September, *Albina* devoted several columns to the problems in the Croatian military border (e.g., abuses of General [sic] Rosenzweig in Sisak), but also in the counties formed after the dissolution of some regiments (e.g., political difficulties encountered by

<sup>31</sup> *Albina*, July 18 / 30, 1871, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Law XXX/1868, Article XXX of the law of 1868 on the settlement of public law issues arising between Hungary and Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia, <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=86800030.TV&searchUrl=/ezer-ev-torveny%3Fkeyword%3D1868> (last accessed July 2, 2022).

<sup>33</sup> *Albina*, September 5 / 17, 1871, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question*, 87.

<sup>35</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, October 2 / 14, 1871, 2; *Albina*, September 19 / October 1, 1871, 1.



Colonel Ivan Trnski in Bjelovar).<sup>36</sup> Shortly before the events in Rakovica were announced, the *Federațiunea* picked up a news item in *Obzor* about the protests in Rijeka over recruitment abuses and the departure from the city of the governor, Count Zichy.<sup>37</sup>

While reading the Romanian press in Hungary and Transylvania in 1871, up to the time of the Rakovica uprising, one gets the impression of a gradual accumulation of political tensions in Croatia, but also of public movements that accompany them, as a result of the Diet's postponement, of the discontent in the military border, and, in general, of the lack of political tact of the government in Zagreb, supported by the one in Pest. However, this overall picture, which on the whole largely reflects reality, was not equally distributed between the newspapers in the two regions inhabited by Romanians. The central newspapers in Pest, which had fewer subscribers in Transylvania, published more frequent and more detailed correspondence on the Croatian area – probably also because they had easier access to information and because the issue of Croatia was more present in public debates in the capital. Transylvanian newspapers published fewer articles, and the differences in perspective and interest between the two main journals were greater. *Telegraful Român*, for example, published almost no news about Croatia between June and October 1871, and even ignored the “September Manifesto”. *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, on the other hand, constantly published information on the political situation in Croatia, although less detailed than the newspapers in Pest. The explanation for these differences lies in the fact that *Telegraful Român*, being the official newspaper of the Orthodox Archbishopric, had a solid subscriber base among priests, was subsidized by the Orthodox Church, and had to adopt as neutral a political stance as possible, whereas *Gazeta Transilvaniei* was an independent newspaper that depended on the number of subscribers and had to attract them with as varied and interesting news as possible.

We can therefore consider that, in the autumn of 1871, the different categories of the Romanian-speaking public in Transylvania and Hungary had differentiated access to information on Croatia, depending on the newspapers to which they subscribed. In general, those in Transylvania benefited from less information, which came from a single source: *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, while those in Banat and Hungary were better informed on the subject. Even if newspaper subscriptions were not exclusively geographically circumscribed, they largely respected this criterion, and only a miniscule number of individuals (on the order of dozens of subscriptions) was interested and could afford to subscribe concurrently to several periodicals. These aspects are important to understand the media impact of the Rakovica events of October 8–11, 1871, among Romanians.

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<sup>36</sup> *Albina*, September 9 / 21, 1871, 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Federațiunea*, September 25 / October 7, 1871, 389.

## The Rakovica uprising and its consequences

For the readers of most Romanian newspapers, the news about the military uprising in Rakovica came somewhat naturally as a continuation of the political tensions they were already familiar with from the press. The news arrived to the readers only after the suppression of the uprising, partly because of the slow speed at which information circulated, and partly because some editors, probably unsure of how the situation would evolve, preferred to wait for events to unfold, choosing to present news collages rather than publishing unreliable news that would have damaged their credibility. A number of rumors circulated, however, admittedly of a general and rather inaccurate nature. We have already mentioned the rumors circulated on October 8 in *Albina*.<sup>38</sup> A week later, on October 15, when the events in Rakovica were already over, *Telegraful Român* published a story about a possible riot in Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), but the editors exposed the piece of news very cautiously, with the explicit mention that it was a rumor and that “until more positive news [arrives], we give it, [but] under all reservation.”<sup>39</sup>

The first concrete information was published in *Albina* on October 12, citing telegraphic news from Zagreb on October 11, which mentioned disorders and “riots of the mobs” in the Ogulin regiment, and the dispatch of two infantry battalions from Zagreb to “calm the spirits”.<sup>40</sup> However, this was rather general news, especially as collective violence in small areas was common at the time (although sending in two battalions admittedly surpassed the usual military show of force in such cases). The first detailed and coherent account – in fact a succession of correspondences from Zagreb accompanied by brief comments – was published in the *Federațiunea* on October 14. We reproduce the text below because, in terms of detail, it covers most of the information about the Rakovica uprising that circulated in the Romanian-language press in Transylvania and Hungary:

Heavy storm clouds begin to loom on the Austro-Hungarian horizon. The unrest of the people on the military frontier exaggerates into revolt. The electric wire brought us the following tragic news from Zagreb, dated 11 July, which we reproduce without comment: ‘On 9 July,’ says the telegram, ‘disturbances broke out in the Ogulin border regiment. 200-300 men of the Rakovica company revolted – it is not known under whose leadership. According to a news report here (Zagreb) Major Rašić became a prisoner. Supreme Commander Mollinary immediately orders the nearby regiments to move in order to suppress the uprising with armed force. The mutineers ransacked the company’s arms store and shot a non-commissioned officer. Major Rašić

<sup>38</sup> *Albina*, September 26 / October 8, 1871, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Telegraful Român*, October 3 /15, 1871, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Albina*, September 30 / October 12, 1871, 1.

and two officers escaped with their lives. Following the strong measures of the commander-in-chief, the rebels are likely to be surrounded. From Zagreb a battalion of the line left for the fortress of Karlstadt to reinforce the garrison there.’ Another telegram from Zagreb, dated 11 l.c. [i.e., current month], informs that the rebellion remained localized and that the motto of the rebels was: *the suppression of Austrians and Hungarians*.’ Finally, the news of 12 l.c. tells us that the rebels were dispersed at Ljupča by two companies of the Otocan regiment, led by Colonel Schestak; the insurgent leaders Rakijaš, Kvaternik and Bach were left dead on the battlefield, and some wounded insurgents and the leader Čuić escaped in the mountains.’ As can be seen from the above telegrams, the uprising was soon suppressed, but we do not know whether the success of Commander Mollinary also soothed the spirits of the border guards – which we hardly believe could be done with iron.<sup>41</sup>

The above text was published on the front page of the newspaper, while a number of other pieces of information, probably received just before sending the issue to press, were placed on the back page. Most of them repeat excerpts from the above paragraph, the only novelty being the naming of the leaders: “Kvaternik, lawyer in Zagreb; Bach, editor of the *Hervatska* newspaper, who not long ago defrauded 15,000 Gulden, postal money.”<sup>42</sup> A day later, *Albina* also announced the end of hostilities:

According to reports from Zagreb yesterday and the day before, the rioters were surrounded and beaten and scattered, and their leaders killed. At the head of the rebellion were some of the exalted nationals from Starčević’s party, such as Kvaternik, Rakijaš and Bach, who were killed in the fighting.

\*The Ogulin Regiment Territory is part of the Croatian military frontier dismantled by the Hungarian government, 48 square miles and with 60,000 inhabitants, poor but very spirited, wild and daring. The overrun part of the territory, the Rakovica company, borders Turkish Dalmatia and is a complex of barren mountains with a harsh climate.<sup>43</sup>

In Transylvania, due to the speed of information circulation – which came via Budapest, either telegraphically or in the pages of newspapers – the first news about the uprising was published on October 18 (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*) and October 19 (*Telegraful Român*). The difference in dates is simply a matter of the day of the week on which the newspapers usually appeared, so it is not relevant. More important, however, is the difference in approach.

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<sup>41</sup> *Federațiunea*, October 2 / 14, 1871, 397.

<sup>42</sup> *Federațiunea*, October 2 / 14, 1871, 400.

<sup>43</sup> *Albina*, October 3 / 15, 1871, 2.

*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, which regularly reported on Croatia, especially on the Diet and military border issue, gives very little concrete information, emphasizes the anti-German and anti-Hungarian character of the uprising, and takes from *Die Presse* the assertions that the uprising was the result of “Czech-Russian agitations”. The rumor of the uprising in Sirmium is also mentioned, which drew the image of events developing on a wider geographical and political scale than in reality.<sup>44</sup> In the next issue, the suppression of the revolt and the death of the leaders was announced very briefly,<sup>45</sup> while the front page was almost completely occupied by an article reproduced after *Gazzetta di Milano*, praising the federalist aims of the Hohenwarth cabinet.<sup>46</sup> A few days later, events began to be presented (admittedly, highlighted as hearsay) as being orchestrated by Gyula Andrassy to compromise the federalist idea in Austria-Hungary and pan-Slavism.<sup>47</sup>

*Telegraful Român*, which had almost completely ignored the political developments in Croatia in 1871, treated the subject differently. Initially it presented a complete and coherent account of it, similar in content to the one in *Federațiunea* (possibly even inspired by it), to which it added a brief note about a possible governmental crisis in Cisleithania<sup>48</sup> (which indeed followed). In the next issue it presented the end of events, the death of the leaders, and the capture of David Starčević’s documents, which linked the uprising to a wider, pan-European revolutionary movement. It also reproduced similar news taken from Hungarian newspapers, but with a strong dose of skepticism (“how true are these discoveries, let the *Reform* [the newspaper which originally published the news] itself figure out”).<sup>49</sup> Later, *Telegraful Român* provided the Romanian public with a long and very detailed account of the events, following step by step the actions of the leaders of the uprising, the moment of Major Rašić’s escape, the armed clashes, and the capture and execution of the leaders,<sup>50</sup> then devoted several columns to the comparative analysis of the rights and obligations of the border guards in Croatia and Banat.<sup>51</sup>

Shortly after the rebellion was put down, the first analyses were published, highlighting two lines of interpretation. The first, more reserved, in the columns of *Telegraful Român* and *Federațiunea*, linked the events to the political crisis in Croatia and to the influence of Hungary. These were, however, general

<sup>44</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, October 6 / 18, 1871, 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, October 9 / 21, 1871, 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, October 9 / 21, 1871, 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, October 13 / 25, 1871, , 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Telegraful Român*, October 7 / 19, 1871, 319.

<sup>49</sup> *Telegraful Român*, October 10 / 22, 1871, 323.

<sup>50</sup> *Telegraful Român*, October 14 / 26, 1871, 327-38.

<sup>51</sup> *Telegraful Român*, October 17 / 29, 1871, 331.

considerations, with no reference to the particular situation of Kvaternak, to his past revolutionary attempts, or to the precarious political and social position following his failure to secure a parliamentary seat in 1871. It is obvious from the information provided by the Romanian press that its editors, although some of whom were also members of the Hungarian Parliament, knew little about political life in Croatia. The level of explanation remains rather general, related only to the sphere of state politics and disconnected from the biography of the leader of the revolt and the personal preconditions that contributed to his actions.

The second line of interpretation, supported especially by *Gazeta de Transilvania*, favored a conspiratorial perspective, according to which the events in Rakovica were part of a wider plan of the Hungarian government to compromise the Croatian national opposition by associating it with a violent movement.<sup>52</sup> A number of rumors linking the uprising to the Hungarian government were also picked up by *Albina*, which reported that documents found on the rioters, politically compromising for the Hungarians, had been sent directly to the Imperial Court.<sup>53</sup> Without any direct analysis (which it could not provide, due to not being a political newspaper), the magazine *Familia* launched similar ideas to the public, under the guise of a press review of Czech, Serbian, and Croatian newspapers.<sup>54</sup> Similar opinions, extending the conspiracy to the level of European politics, were also taken up in the French press. According to the newspaper *Le Siècle*, cited by *Gazeta de Transilvania*, the violent events in Croatia, similar to the political unrest in Serbia and Romania that year, were nothing but the result of the international policy of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, in tandem with the new Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, former Prime Minister of Hungary, Gyula Andrásy, who aimed to destabilize or politically discredit the small nation-states in the region and the non-Magyar ethnic groups in Hungary in order to achieve an ambitious geopolitical goal: Hungary's expansion to the Black Sea.<sup>55</sup>

By the end of November 1871, references to the riot had already become incidental, and media attention was focused more on the questions of Croatian MPs in the Pest Parliament.<sup>56</sup> Within the latter, the opposition of the nationalities, through the Romanian and Serbian deputies from Banat and Vojvodina, used the events in Rakovica, together with other grievances, such as the defective regulation of the demilitarization of the border, and the situation of the electoral legislation in Transylvania, to justify a motion against the vote on the 1872 budget.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, October 16 / 28, 1871, 3-4; *Albina*, October 7 / 19, 1871, , 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Albina*, October 24 / November 5, 1871, 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Familia* (Pest), November 14 / 26, 1871, 550.

<sup>55</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, November 10 / 22, 1871, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, November 17 / 29, 1871, 3; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, November 27 / December 9, 1871, 2.

<sup>57</sup> *Albina*, November 28 / December 10, 1871, 2; *Federațiunea*, November 27 / December 8, 1871, 474.

Beyond its symbolic value, this motion had no practical effect, being signed by only a handful of parliamentarians. The year ended with an account of the negotiations between the new Hungarian Prime Minister, Menyhért Lónyay, and the leaders of the Croatian National Party, who are presented as the main winners of the political game of the year just ending.<sup>58</sup> The comparisons between Croatian political autonomy and the loss of Transylvanian autonomy continued,<sup>59</sup> accompanied by the traditional positive image of Croats in relation to Romanians, in terms of political attitude.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions

From the perspective of the history of the press in the Habsburg Monarchy, the Rakovica uprising is a good opportunity to study the circulation of information, journalistic sources, the level of detail of knowledge, and the ability to explain events in another region of the Monarchy. In 1871, Croatia was, and continued to be, a constant presence in the Romanian press of the time, both through reports of events in the province and through the mention of interpellations in the Hungarian Parliament concerning the Croatian question, made by both Hungarian and nationalist deputies. The reasons for this constant interest were the comparable political situation between Croatia and Transylvania and the existence of the military border in both provinces and in Banat.

The attention paid to Croatia by the Romanian press gradually increased between June and October 1871, as the political crisis surrounding the postponement of the Diet's opening escalated. However, although it reached the point where real political tension and the radicalism of journalistic discourse anticipated the violent events that followed, the level of detail known to Romanian editors (and through them to the Romanian public) about political life in Croatia remained fairly generalist. This can be seen in the analyses and explanations of the uprising, which omit or downplay the role of the leaders and the personal reasons that drove them to revolt, and privilege instead either a moderate but very general view, linking the uprising to political pressure from Hungary, or an openly conspiratorial one. The latter covers a wide spectrum: from the involvement of the Hungarian government to undermine Croatia's position and the prospect of federalizing the Monarchy, to geopolitical plans directed by Bismarck and Andrassy, or even links to left-wing, pan-European revolutionary movements.

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<sup>58</sup> *Federațiunea*, December 25, 1871 / January 6, 1872, 517; *Federațiunea*, December 29, 1871 / January 10, 1872, , 52; *Albina*, December 29, 1871 / January 9, 1872, 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, December 15 / 27, 1871, 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, December 29, 1871 / January 10, 1872, 2.

Conspiratorial explanations aside, the actual information that reached the Romanian public was generally correct, partly because it was mostly taken from Hungarian or German-language newspapers in Pest or Zagreb. The time it took for the information to reach the Romanian public varied from a few days in the Hungarian capital to about a week in Transylvania. The fact that the newspapers appeared only twice a week contributed further to the lengthening of this time span, and, most probably, some of the Romanian readers were already informed about events from the Hungarian and German newspapers, which were issued four to five times a week, or even daily.

There is only a partial correlation between the general attention that the Romanian-language press paid to Croatia and the attention it paid to the Rakovica uprising. The newspapers in the Hungarian capital (*Albina*, *Federațiunea*) had broadly the same discourse on the political situation in the summer and autumn and on the riot: *Federațiunea* provided more rigorous information and a more balanced analysis, but *Albina* was somewhat more vehement and gave more space to conspiracy theories. In Transylvania, *Gazeta de Transilvania*, which had a radical discourse and politically supported the Croatian nationalists in the hope of a revision, in perspective, of the Compromise of 1867, perpetuated its attitude and made room in its columns for the most fanciful conspiratorial explanations. On the other hand, *Telegraful Român*, which had previously shown little interest in the news from Zagreb, gave the most rigorous and detailed account of events and maintained a moderate explanatory line.

The Rakovica uprising thus functioned, for the Romanian press in Transylvania and Hungary, as a litmus test, which highlighted the political and journalistic perspective of each editorial collective, but also the limits of knowledge of the Croatian space and realities by the members of the Romanian elite of the time. Despite these obvious limitations, through the detailed accounts provided by at least two newspapers, the Romanian-speaking and -reading public at large had the opportunity to become familiar with contemporary realities in Croatia at a level of detail that was not previously specific to newspaper articles. Of course, the exceptional nature of the event played an important role in this, and after the echoes of the uprising died down, the newspapers quickly returned to the two basic issues in Romanian journalistic discourse about Croatia: the political relationship with Hungary, and the military border.

## Newspapers

*Albina* (Pest), 1871.

*Familia* (Pest), 1871.

*Federațiunea* (Pest), 1871.

*Gazeta Transilvaniei* (Brașov), 1871.

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## **Ustanak u Rakovici 1871. u rumunjskom tisku Transilvanije i Mađarske**

### **Sažetak**

U članku se donosi komparativna analiza informacija koje su kružile između dviju periferija Habsburške Monarhije (Hrvatske i Transilvanije), odnosno između periferije i središta (Hrvatske i Pešte). Autor prati način na koji je tadašnji rumunjski tisak primio i protumačio ustanak u Rakovici u listopadu 1871., uključujući njegovu pozadinu i političke konotacije, te prenio te informacije rumunjskoj javnosti u Transilvaniji i Mađarskoj. Cilj istraživanja bio je istaknuti razlike između središnjeg i pokrajinskog tiska namijenjenog toj važnoj etničkoj skupini u Ugarskoj za vrijeme dualizma, kao i ispitati kako je niz nasilnih, neočekivanih i potencijalno politički destabilizirajućih događaja unutar jedne etničke skupine primila i kontekstualizirala politička elita druge etničke skupine.

*Ključne riječi:* Rakovički ustanak, rumunjski tisak, Transilvanija, Mađarska, 1871.