

# Builders and Martyrs of the Unification

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## ALEXANDER I. LAPEDATU, ONE OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE UNIONIST IDEA IN AN INTEGRATIVE EUROPE.

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*Abstract.* Alexandru I. Lapedatu (1876-1950), Vice-President, President and Secretary General of the Romanian Academy, expressed his conviction that promoting the cultural development is an essential mission of the State and the nation, and proposed and implemented policies pursuing the enhancement of the cultural and artistic prestige of all cities, and of the country as a whole. As Cults and Arts Minister for almost seven years, Alexandru I. Lapedatu pursued a wide the areas of activities as a minister has established a legal frame for the cults in the unified Romania, besides the Orthodox Church, the Romanian Greek-Catholic (united), Catholic (of Latin, Greek and Armenian ritual), reformed (Calvin), evangelic-Lutheran, Unitarian, Mosaic, Muslim and Baptist. He worked too towards a legislation reinforcing the State sovereignty and secularity. Thankfully, the Communist regime ordered his arrest, and he was arrested in the night of 5/6 May 1950 in the group of "dignitaries". He passed away on 30 August 1950 in

the prison from Sighetu Marmatiei and was buried in a common grave without a sign. This Man unique was Alexander I. Lapedatu, One of the Founding Fathers of the Unionist Idea in an Integrative Europe.

*Keywords.* Founding father of the unionist idea, integrative Europe.

1. In the Collective Memory of the Romanians, there is still a sense of the Adoration of the ancient sayings sometimes stronger, sometimes only in the whisper as they will contain until the End of the Ages: Utterances, Writings, Sacrifices, Struggles, Deaths, transformed into national Consciousness, strengthened with increased Christian Faith.

1.1. Had it not been Miron Costin, who would say that the Moldovan and Wallachian, and Transylvanian people are also one People; a Chronicler who teaches us that reading books is not "a more skillful delay". If after one as Miron Costin, he would not have followed one as Inochentie Micu-Klein who would write among the first, if not the first, two prophetic and sacrosanct Words, comprehending as an eternal History: "*Natio Valachica*." If there had been one as Inochentie Micu-Klein insisting and stubbornly repeating before the Empire and the

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Papacy, he would argue with the still unrecognized rights of our Christian nation, “*Natio, et Religio Valachorum*” [*Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, 1699, 1701, 1743] and so on...

1.2. Unless one as Petru Maior followed, a *1848 Generation* [Alecsandri and Bolintineanu, Ghica and Kogălniceanu, Dumitru Bratianu and I. C. Bratianu, who were to prepare the Union in 1859, then *the Generations of the Great Union* (1918)] did not it is known what would have been today with this “united, great Romania, which we see as a guard of Civilization at the Gates of the East.”<sup>1</sup>

2. About the Romanian “spiritual Heroism”, some have written, others have provided a Guarantee with their Being. The memorable Words of the Forefathers will thus inevitably be found in the minds and hearts of our great Martyrs, those who sacrificed themselves to the Union of the People, to the United Principalities of Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania and Bessaraby, through “the mind and the heart” of “our descendants and our descendants' descendants to the end of time.”<sup>2</sup> 2.1. To the last Parable, here is the Thought and the Word of an inspired and, as always, paradigmatic Balcescu:

“The Mission of the Romanians, seated at the Gates of the civilized World, is to fight Barbarians. ‘You are the watch of the World, O, my Homeland, sacrifice yourself!’ A holy and glorious Mission given to the Romanians by the Providence for the good of Mankind, and which they never betrayed. Whenever a great danger threatened Europe and the Civilization of the world, Romania, as a sentinel ready for sacrifice, was at his post, ready to do on his duty.”<sup>3</sup>

These sacred Words will have been recited, memorized, have been rethought many times, by the great Men of the Nation, of the 1918 Union, of the Destiny-Events of all Romanians. We will find them, if we look into the Alexander I. Lapedatu Palimpsest-Life, Life, Work, and Death of this unique and paradigmatic Man of his Nation.

3. Alexander I. Lapedatu (1876-1950), is one of the Union's artisans, through his visionary Vision, through and by his Writing, through and by the pragmatism of his Activity. He belonged, as claimed by a great contemporary Historian, Ioan-Aurel Pop, in the speech given at the Romanian Academy [12 September 2016], “from the noble spire of the Romanian townspeople or town-peasants born north of the Carpathians, on the starting line”, from Sibiu's ‘Marginime’, arrives, through the Olt Country, to Braşov ‘Şchei’ and goes away. Worthy of being retained is his Faith, which illuminated his Work to the end of his Life, namely that “the Romanian Soul will free itself from complete disorientation in which it struggles for Decades, gaining an

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<sup>1</sup> M. Ştefanescu. *Filosofia românească* [Romanian Philosophy], Bucharest: Ed. Caselor Naţionale, 1922, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> A Sentence of Stephen the Great cf. *The Trilogy of Moldova*, a historical trilogy written by Barbu Ştefănescu Delavrancea. It consists of three theater pieces: *Apus de Soare* [Sunset, 1909), *Vifor* [Storm, 1910) and *Luceafărul* [Lucifer, 1910).

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Bălcescu, *Precuvantare, Cântarea României*. [Foreword. The Song of Romania]. *Opere*, Alexandru Odobescu (Eds.). Bucharest, 1887, p. 573.

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harmonious whole unit's views for the purpose of a single action, which any illuminated Nation - especially our - must have as ultimate Goal of his perfect National Life..."<sup>4</sup>

3.1. Even if it cannot be considered as *Πρῶτος μεταξὺ ἴσων*, or *primus inter pares*, Al. I. Lapedatu finds his place, as *unus inter ares*, at the Crossroads of the unrepeatably shaped, modeled, inspired by Herodotus or Tacitus, alongside Victor Babes, Nicolae Bănescu, Ștefan Bezdechi, Vasile Bogrea, Romul Cândea, Constantin Daicoviciu, Constantin Diclescu, Silviu Dragomir, Onisifor Ghibu, Nicolae Iorga, Ioan Lupaș, Theodor Naum, Constantin Marinescu, D. M. Teodorescu, Ioan Ursu, Francisc Pall, Coriolan Petranu, Vasile Pârvan, David Prodan, Sextil Pușcariu, Emil Racoviță, Romulus Vuia.

3.2. Vice President, President and Secretary General of the Romanian Academy, was convinced that the promotion of cultural development is an essential mission of the State and the Nation. As such, he proposed and implemented cultural Measures for the Prestige of all the cities in the Country and for the cultural and artistic prestige of Romania. As a Minister established a legal framework for the Cults in a united and unified Romania, pointing out that in the United Romania, in addition to the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Catholic (united) Greek Catholic Church was recognized by the State, the Catholic (Latin, Greek and Armenian Rite), Calvinist reformed cult, Lutheran evangelical cult, Unitarian cult, Mosaic cult, Muslim cult and Baptist cult.

3.3 In his political work, Alexander I. Lapedatu developed a legislative project that would strengthen the Sovereignty and secular character of the State. Later, as Gratitude, the Communist regime ordered his arrest on the night of 5/6 May 1950 in the 'dignitaries' group. He died on August 10, 1950, in the prison in Sighetu Marmatiei, and he was thrown into a common Pit, with no sign on the Grave. This was Alexander I. Lapedatu, One of the Founding Fathers of the unionist Idea in an integrative Europe.

4. By giving him a late Tribute, we would like to point out that the Small, Partial, Temporary Unions, as well as the Great Union of all Romanians, obviously, represents a fragment of the Unionist mentality, specific to both the historical Europe - from the Holy Roman Empire to the Third Reich; as well as to contemporary European Union, which unlike the Great Union of All Romanians, will try to temper the nationalist Ethos and Enthusiasm. Indeed, since the beginning of the Century, the effervescence of unionist political Projects is only competing with behind-the-scenes intrigue and war preparations.

4.1. Thus, in 1906, Aurel C. Popovici launched his Project of the *United States of Europe*, a project reshaped in 1923 by the Count Richard Nikolaus von Coudenhove-Kalergi, who proposed in his *Pan-Europa* volume a project of a Confederal Europe. In 1929, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann were going also to make an initiative of a *Memorandum* concerning the political will to form a European federal system the political imperative of establishing federal regime. But we should not forget when we celebrate the Great Union, that it would not have been

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<sup>4</sup> Alexandru Lapedatu, *Scrieri alese. Articole, Cuvântări, Amintiri*, [Selected Writings. Articles, Words, Memories], Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1985, p.50.

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possible without the collapse of Empires and without the will of the great European and world Powers.

4.2. And we could not talk today about the Great Union, not to mention the 'balance of terror' behind the Iron Curtain, but also the Founding Fathers who laid the foundation for the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950. Today, in the Romania's Great Union Centennial, we must remember the Treaty of Rome (1957), which establishes the European Economic Community (EEC), the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999). All these Treaties and many others have protected and will protect our Great Union. They consecrate and seal our historical, national, political, economic and military Truth.

4.2.1. In this context of European Union and Harmony, I think, we need to read and understand the Vision, the Work, the Activity, and the Sacrifice of Alexander I. Lapedatu, One of the Founding Fathers of the unionist Idea in an integrative Europe. Today, the Alexandru I. Lapedatu Words, spoken on July 17, 1918, at the commemoration of Aurel C. Popovici, his mentor in politics, seemed to have a strange resonance like a tragic premonition. Alexander I. Lapedatu, like Aurel C. Popovici,

"affirmed himself in public life until the end, when he died [...], he was and remained the slave of the same political ideal, the Ideal of his Nation; his probity and integrity have not ended at all, and no doubt or unbelief has dwelled in his Soul, adorned with noble and high Virtues. He closed his eyes as he lived, without having bowed his head to the enemy, from the innate humility of inherited servility, or, worse, from sinful interest. For this moral, national and nationalist Attitude, he earned the eternal gratitude of a whole Nation."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Miscellanea*, pp. 37-40. Apud I. Opriș, I. (1996). *Alexandru Lapedatu in the Romanian Culture*. Bucharest: Editura Științifică, sqq.

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