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THE ACADEMY OF ROMANIAN SCIENTISTS ORGANISED A DEBATE ON A THEME OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE

THE SCHOOL, THE CHURCH AND THE ARMY – INSTITUTIONS WITH A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE GREAT UNION

On November 8, 2018, at 10.00 a.m., the Marble Hall of the Palace of the National Military Circle, hosted the National Debate “THE SCHOOL, THE CHURCH AND THE ARMY – INSTITUTIONS WITH A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE GREAT UNION”. The event was organised by the Academy of Romanian Scientists, as part of the celebration by this institution of a century since the end of the First World War and the Centenary of the Great Union. The debate was attended by representatives of State institutions, members of the clergy and the academic staff, scientists and pundits, scientific researchers, university and pre-university teachers.

The debate aimed to highlight the specific way in which the School, the Church and the Army were involved in Romania’s participation in the First World War and in the process of uniting the Romanian provinces with the Mother Country and the role played, more often than not, at the price of the supreme sacrifice, by teachers, priests, soldiers and officers in the achievement of the ideal of freedom, national unity, Great Union and Greater Romania.

The topics under discussion were: The role of the School in the emancipation of the Romanian people and the awakening of national consciousness in late 19th and early 20th centuries; The country’s teachers in the first line and at the head of the process of making the Great Union; The Church, pillar and cohesion factor of Romanian existence throughout history; Priests and prelates, on the front of WWI and in the national mobilisation of the Kingdom and of the Romanian provinces; the Romanian Army – from the War of Independence to the Great War: in the service of the country, of freedom, of identity and of Romanian unity; Pages of sacrifice and glory: Mărăști, Mărășești, Oituz – “They shall not pass!”; Contribution of the Army to the process of union of the country through the three fundamental acts: the Union of Bessarabia with Romania (March 27, 1918), the Union of Bukovina with Romania (November 28, 1918), the Union of Transylvania with Romania (December 1, 1918); The role of the Army in defending the

Great Union, after December 1, 1918. In this broad historical and thematic context, the talks also made a leap into the present through the theme: The School, the Church and the Army, a century after the Great Union. Their role in the present and future of Romanians and Romania.

The Debate began by the speech of Professor Adrian BADEA, President of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, who pointed out that this event is part of the series of manifestations dedicated by the institution to the Centenary both in our country and abroad. The School, the Army and the Church, said he, are three institutions that played a major role in the achievement of the Great Union. The unification of all Romanians is an ideal that runs through our history, a process spread over the ages, ignited by Michael the Brave as a flame, which never again disappeared from the conscience of our people. That is why the Great Union is the corollary, the apotheosis of a long process. President Badea pointed out the Romanians' blood sacrifice in the First World War, confirmed by official statistics: more than 300,000 soldiers fallen on duty, more than 75,000 dead officers, more than 80,000 seriously injured, plus more than 700,000 deceased among the population because of the crimes of foreign armies, hunger, disease and cold. The Church, the School and the Army kindled in the mind of the Romanians the love for the country and for the ideal of the national unity, concluded the President of AOSR.

Professor Ioan Scurtu (Full Member of AOSR) presented a history of the Great Union's formal reception a century ago, and later, in the Stalinist period, to this day. Over the years, depending on regimes and ideologies, there were also voices that questioned the legitimacy of the great historical event. The historian stressed that the ideal of unity illuminated as a flame the consciousness of the Romanian people, and highlighted the important role of our scholars in the awakening of the national consciousness among the masses and the fundamental contribution of the politicians who knew how to capitalise on this awareness and on the historical context. Professor Scurtu quoted Blaga, a participant in the great event in Alba-Iulia, who was impressed by the people's extraordinary enthusiasm, and Iorga, who spoke about the Romanian people calling it a people of "martyrs and heroes". Professor Ecaterina Andronescu (President of the Section of Chemical Sciences of the Academy of Romanian Scientists), Minister of Education in several cabinets presented a comprehensive history of Romanian education, from its origins to the present-day, stressing the fact that the school always accompanied our becoming as a people, contributing fundamentally to the development of Romanian civilisation. It is a history that starts

with the School of Cenad in Banat and ends with the Romanian universities of today, of which 12 entered the Shanghai rankings, which is a remarkable performance for our education. In her speech, she outlined the contribution of certain outstanding personalities such as Gheorghe Lazăr, Spiru Haret, Constantin Angelescu to the foundation and development of Romanian education. “A country cannot develop without learned people. The Romanian school has made an important contribution to the country’s development,” concluded Mrs. Andronescu. In this context, she expressed her regret that many young people are going abroad without the intention of returning home, which is a serious problem for the country’s future. Gen. (r) Prof. Teodor Frunzeti (President of the Section of Military Sciences of the Academy of Romanian Scientists) appreciated that the year 1918 represents the corollary of the Romanian State’s modernisation. The first manifestations regarding the Unification about which there is evidence go back to Mihai Viteazul, the ideal of unity becoming more and more acute after 1848. The first success of the national idea is represented by January 24, 1859, followed by the country’s Independence, sanctified by the blood of the heroes, more than 10,000 dead and wounded. Romania’s entry into war, continued General Frunzeti his speech, expressed a strategic national interest in fulfilling the ideal of the Union. In this process and in our history, the Army, the School and the Church have been and are fundamental institutions. These three institutions, in a cumulative and synergistic action, have kept the national ideal alive, and have generated that unity of will and action needed in achieving the Union’s goal. Those who fulfilled the national ideal deserve our undying gratitude, in the Year of the Centenary, forever and ever. Today we must struggle for the modernisation of Romania within the Euro-Atlantic community, to which our country rightfully belongs, underlined Professor Frunzeti.

The role played by the Army in achieving the Great Union was of an overwhelming importance, said Professor Ioan Solcanu (President of the Section of Historical and Archaeological Sciences of the Academy of Romanian Scientists), who depicted the history of the events in Russia during the war and the way they influenced the subsequent developments in Romania. With relevant data and arguments, analysed in the logic and causality of those historical moments, the Iasi teacher pointed out that the Army had fully done its duty to the country. General Anghel Andreescu (Full Member of the Section of Military Sciences of AOSR) developed a topic of special interest, i.e. the contribution of the Romanian secret services to the achievement of the Great Union. From his presentation, supported by facts and figures, it results that the Romanian

secret services played an important role in the events that led to the achievement of the Union. He pointed out that Romania must have an Army, because the country cannot defend itself only with a “chest of steel”.

Professor Petru Andea, State Secretary in the Ministry of National Education (Full Member of AOSR), said that “it was the people that made the Union” and referred to the “anonymous leaders” that contributed to the achievement of the national ideal. The Church played an “extraordinary role” in the First World War and in the achievement of the Union, the priests and all its ministers proving a spirit of sacrifice and patriotism. Thus, the Church played a fundamental role in the great events of our history in Transylvania, said Professor Andea, giving as examples the riot of Horea, Supplex Libellus, Avram Iancu, the Transylvanian Memorandum, or the First World War. The speaker ended by quoting Academician Ioan-Aurel Pop, President of the Romanian Academy, according to whom the act of Alba-Iulia is equivalent to the second foundation of the Romanian people after the one achieved by Apostle Andrew at the mouth of the Danube, superposing Christianity over the Greek and Latin civilisations. Alexandru Cumpănașu, President of the National Coalition for Modernisation of Romania, highlighted the major role of the Orthodox Church in the process of unification of the country through education and human sacrifice, through the priests who supported the soul of the soldiers and who were always by their side, and through the Romanian Army and the peasantry that fought and made the supreme sacrifice. The peasants played a key role in the Romanian Army, and Romania and the Romanian Provinces had the chance of visionary politicians. Criticising Romania’s current situation, the political struggles, the situation of Romanian resources and wealth, Alexandru Cumpănașu stressed that we must learn from the lessons of the past. Historian Petre Țurlea (Full Member of AOSR) spoke about the pivotal role of the school in achieving the Great Union. As in all the Romanian history, the school continues to play an important role in Romania’s modernisation process. The historian highlighted the need for today’s generations to work together so that Romania might continue to exist and become a prosperous country. To this end, we need to strengthen the school and “restore it as a national school”.

The series of the intervention continued with lectures focussed on subjects circumscribed to the general theme of the Debate. Let us cite just some of them: Prof. Jipa Rotaru – “The Romanian Army in the service of the Great Union”, Gen. Prof. Gheorghe Boaru – “The role of the Army in

defending the Great Union, after December 1, 1918”, Associate Prof. Adrian Ignat (Archiepiscopate of Târgoviște) – “The role of the Romanian Orthodox Church in maintaining the unity of the Romanian people during the First World War”, Lecturer Dumitru Carabaș (Archiepiscopate of Constanța) – “Clerical life in Dobruja between 1878 and 1918. Places of worship built in the county of Constanta”, Professor Radu Vergatti – “The role of the school, school teachers and teachers in the process of achieving Greater Romania”, Gen. Prof. Cristea Dumitru – “Transmissions of the Romanian Army during the War for the Unification of the Nation (1916-1919)”, Gen. Prof. Mircea Udrescu – “Duplicitous actions towards Romania and its army between 1914-1920”, Gen (r) Grigore Stamate – “the Army and the Church – the same faith, the same ideal”, Prof. dr. Victor Ciorbea – “The role of the military clergy during WWI, as reflected in the Journal MISIUNEA”, Col. dr. eng. Anatol Munteanu – “The military priest ALEXEI MATEEVICI, personality and promoter of the Union”, Prof. Mihai Drecin – “Romanian banks in Transylvania and the national school 26. Case study: ALBINA bank of Sibiu and the mass of students 1895-1918”, Prof. Octavian Buda – “Physicians and the Great Union”.

The conclusions of the debate will be elaborated in a Final Synthesis, which will be handed over to political authorities, disseminated in academic and educational environments and presented to the public opinion. The communications presented in the event will be gathered in the volume “The School, the Church and the Army - Institutions with a Fundamental Role in the Achievement of the Great Union”, edited by the Academy of Romanian Scientists under the auspices of the Centenary.

At the end of the Debate, Prof. Adrian BADEA, President of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, said: “In this very special space, with a symbolic value, and I mean the Marble Hall of the National Military Circle, in which the paces of history still resound, we brought to the dialogue table, scientific, political, military and cultural personalities of today’s Romanian elites, gathered around a theme of cardinal importance, namely the values of our history and the love of the Country. In this very privileged setting, important truths have been spoken both for our history and for our present and future. A constant idea, which has crossed the opinions expressed here, and which I have myself expressed on many occasions, is that we have to learn from the lessons of history. Be they good or bad. Through such manifestations, which we shall continue to

organise at the highest academic standards, I believe that we can bring together the elites of today's Romania in a necessary debate concerning the present and especially the future of Romania. The Great Union must be for us at the Centenary and beyond it, a master lesson of history.”

The National Debate “The School, the Church and the Army - Institutions with a Fundamental Role in the Achievement of the Great Union” is part of the “CENTENARY” Programme of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, organised on the occasion of the celebration of a century since the end of the First World War and the unification of the Romanians and of the Romanian Provinces in one country, Greater Romania. Complex as structure, wide in scope and diversity, dense in academic activities and events, the “CENTENARY” Programme includes scientific events, international conferences, symposia, sessions, workshops, cultural and educational projects, book editing, proceedings volumes, digital works, all of them projected nationally and internationally throughout the year 2018. Further details on the site of AOSR: <http://www.aosr.ro/program-centenar-aosr/>

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