

Emil Stoian, Sebastian Mălușelu - *Întâia vizită în Transilvania a Regelui Ferdinand și a Reginei Maria*, Second Edition (Baia Mare: Marist Publishing House, 2019), ISBN: 9786068801216, 216 pp.

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The book *Întâia vizită în Transilvania a regelui Ferdinand și a reginei Maria* (The First Visit to Transylvania of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie) represents, from a historiographical point of view, an extremely significant and welcome appearance in the landscape regarding the destiny of Romania, forged on December 1, 1918, and of the Kings who united the country and nation, Ferdinand- “the Loyal” and Marie- “The Mother of the Wounded.” The initiative for this editorial product belongs to Mr. Emil Stoian and Mr. Sebastian Mălușelu, and we appreciate it accordingly.

The publication is welcome because it enlightens us on the King and Queen’s first visit to Transylvania, completed with the Motherland, an event of particular importance that took place between May 22 and June 2, 1919. The book capitalizes on the efforts of authors who were highly engaged in the subject and who investigated and shared novel information existing in the press at the time in the cities and localities visited by the Monarchs, as well as photographs.

It is an undeniable merit of the book signed by the authors Emil Stoian and Sebastian Mălușelu, that we allow ourselves to emphasize, namely, the persistence and affectionate approach to the subject, which proves that for them this theme represents one of the issues they have at heart. This fact is confirmed by the 216 pages that testify to a close understanding of the event, mediated by the exploration of documents that reconstruct in the spirit of truth the dimension of this truly historical event – the visit of the Romanian Monarchs to reunited and liberated Transylvania.

The book we have the honour to present has the following structure, intended to reproduce the visit of the kings of Romania to Transylvania. It is prefaced by a “Foreword” written by the authors, after which it is presented in the space of twenty pages (pages 5-25) “The First Visit to Transylvania of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie.” The following section, which runs from page 25 to page 216, exposes the regions that the Romanian monarchs travelled through. The route reproduces their visit to Transylvania. Consequently, the eloquent moments are presented with the iconography related to the visit to Predeal, Brașov (May 22, 1919), Oradea Mare (May 23, 1919), Békéscsaba, Careii Mari (May 24, 1919), Baia Mare, Jibou, Dej, Bistrita (May 26, 1919), Gherla, Cluj (May 27, 1919), Turda (27-28 May 1919), Câmpeni (May 28, 1919), Tebea, Abrud (May 29, 1919), Alba Iulia, Blaj (May 30, 1919), Copșa Mică, Sibiu (May 31, 1919), Săliște, Făgăraș, Brașov (June 1, 1919). Likewise, the authors depict the prevailing ambiance in Bucharest, the capital of the country, during their departure on May 22, 1919, and their subsequent return on June 2, 1919.

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The iconography of the book is exceptional, with highly evocative and representative pieces. These images aim to help readers immerse themselves in the lively sense of patriotism felt by the people in the places visited by the Kings of Romania. In addition to the pictures exposing the Romanian kings in various stances during their youth, the book stands out with photographs of famous Romanian Army generals, such as Traian Moșoiu, Ștefan Panaitescu, Gheorghe Mărdărescu, and Ioan Boieriu. Finally, a notable addition to the collection of images is the depiction of the residents of Poiana Sibiului attending the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia.

These highly representational photographs, which are of foremost importance and serve as genuine historical records, aim to recreate the welcoming and patriotic ambiance in which the Romanian authorities were welcomed. The photographs of excellent quality, even if they are black and white, were captured on the visit of the Romanian monarchs to Oradea and then to the other locations.

In her book *Daily Notes*, Queen Marie recounts the appreciation that she and her husband, King Ferdinand, had been receiving in all the localities visited during their 10 days in Transylvania. For example, “we had an extraordinary reception in Bichiș-Csaba,” “everywhere our troops behaved admirably, and everyone and all nationalities praised them, which makes us immensely proud.” In Oradea, the Queen records: “We had an extraordinary welcome. Frantic joy of the people who came from all the surrounding villages to greet us. Wonderful costumes, extraordinary ovations, and religious services in all churches; they were pursued by the entire population, led by priests representing their villages. I went out to the window to greet the peasants, who were all in frantic ecstasy, for to them, this was freedom after centuries of oppression. Queen Marie's record in the same book on the conduct of Romanians in Békéscsaba on May 24, 1919, is also suggestive: “each group that came to welcome us carried a large tricolour flag that they waved, and their ovations and cheers were deafening. Our departure to the station was attended by thousands and thousands of peasants who cheered us until they were hoarse.” The visit to Cluj on May 27, 1919, was remarkable, as evidenced by the images depicting the enthusiastic welcome of the local community for the esteemed Romanian dignitaries.

The book we are presenting reflects the deep affection and loyalty of the Romanian people towards their Monarchs, as depicted in its iconography. By examining the images rather than relying solely on written evidence, one can readily reconstruct the feelings of Romanians, ranging from local officials to military leaders and the public in attendance. The photographs in the book unequivocally indicate that the Transylvanians expressed admiration and approval for their Kings. Regardless of their religious beliefs, the Transylvanians regarded the Kings as the embodiment of the newly established Romanian state, symbolised by the momentous event of December 1, 1918. Joy, enthusiasm, love, gratitude, and respect were prominent emotions that characterised the overall atmosphere, serving as evidence of the deep affection that the Transylvanian Romanians held for King Ferdinand and Queen Marie.

The voluminous collection of images shown provides compelling evidence to persuade any reader that the visit of the monarchs of Romania to Transylvania was veritably documented as one of the most remarkable events following the

establishment of Greater Romania, as acknowledged by the authors. The writers of the book have conducted a scientific analysis of the information gathered from the entire Romanian press during that period, which accurately documented the momentous events of the Romanian monarchs' visit. Newspapers such as *Neamul Românesc*, *Dimineața*, *Oltul*, *Universul*, *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, *Duminica*, *Unirea*, along with historical literature, provide a comprehensive account of the Romanian kings' visit in all its aspects.

We allow ourselves to present sequentially the visit of the kings of Romania to Țebea, the place which, through the grave of Avram Iancu and his brothers of beliefs and ideals, became the symbol of Transylvanian patriotism. In Țebea, the official column stopped at Avram Iancu's grave and Horea's oak tree. Here, the Queen knelt and placed a wreath on Iancu's grave. "Get up, Iancu! Our tragedy and pride! For Your sovereigns, the Lords of Great and Eternal Romania, have come to worship at Your tomb in remembrance of You!" The reception they received all the way was as great as possible, writes the newspaper *Unirea from Blaj*, as the fearless but good and noble Transylvanian peasants were, the strength and pride of our nation in Transylvania." At Avram Iancu's grave in Țebea, King Ferdinand uttered with real satisfaction in front of the thousands of Romanians present and the subprefect, Dr. Nerva Uncu: "Indeed, Avram Iancu and Horea are the forerunners of the idea that has materialised into reality today." The esteemed monarchs paid homage to the revered Avram Iancu by planting an oak tree at his grave, near Horea's oak tree. This act symbolised their profound admiration for the rich history of Transylvania, which is epitomised by the remarkable figures of Avram Iancu and Horea.

The conclusive appreciation of the exceptional visit of the Romanian Sovereigns to Transylvania from May 22 to June 2, 1919, was, we believe, made by the poets Octavian Goga and I. Ghe. Duca. They would have told the writer Radu Cosmin (1879-1959) that the reception of sovereigns in Transylvania "was like a fairy tale!" We highly value the extensive content that we have examined, which focuses on the historical documentation of the Romanian monarchs' visit to Transylvania. The book's vast photographic illustrations undoubtedly serve as a monumental tribute to the centenary anniversary of the establishment of Greater Romania.