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**The Meanings of Romanian Patriotism
in Three Texts from the Beginning of the 20th Century**

Fănel Teodorașcu¹

Abstract: In this paper, we intend to follow how the *patriotism* was explained to Romanians during the period preceding Romania's entry into the First World War. We consider our approach important and because on 1st of December 2018 the Romanians celebrated for the one hundredth time the Day of the Great Union. In our research, three texts, each of them belonging to another author, will be followed. The first text represents an orthodox Christian point of view on *patriotism*, the second text comes from the sphere of politics, and the last text on which we will stop embodies the military vision of the matter dealt with here. In addition to these three texts, we will also use articles that have been published in magazines such as: *Revista Generală a Învățământului* (The General Magazine of Education), *Revista Istorică Română* (the Romanian Historical Review), *Revista Grănicerilor* (the Guardian Magazine), *Revista Istorică Română* (the Historic Magazine), *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (the Romanian Orthodox Church,) Furnica, etc.

Keywords: patriotism; nationalism; history of press; education; communism

1. Some Explanations

In Romania, the political events that took place in recent years determined the national public space to talk seriously about *patriotism* again. After the fall of the *Communist regime*, which took place in *December 1989*, there was less talk of “patriotism”, which was associated, especially by young people, with the policy of the Romanian Communist Party (P.C.R.). Today, there is talk² of patriotism again. Attempts to define/redefine *patriotism* are made by specialists from different fields of activity. Not just in the speeches of politicians, university professors, sociologists, psychologists, etc. one can find references to how *patriotism* is understood, but also in some commercial advertisements (even if in the latter case the idea of patriotism is not clearly expressed, but only suggested). In this paper we do not intend to clarify the meaning of *patriotism*. There are already many works that have undertaken this goal. Our intentions are much more modest.

Over the years, “many meanings of patriotism” have been given, but most of these meanings were, if we were to believe the author of an article published in 1944, “false”. (Miclea, 1944, p. 2) In our research, we wanted to see how the *patriotism* was explained to Romanians during the period preceding Romania's entry into the First World War, at the end of which political events took place that led to the Great Union which took place on 1st of December 1918. We consider our approach as important and

¹ Senior Lecturer, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Communication and International, Relations, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Boulevard, 800654 Galati, Romania, Tel.: +40.372.361.102, fax: +40.372.361.290, Corresponding author: teodorascu.fanel@univ-danubius.ro.

² See (Marin, November 30, 2016). At <https://pressone.ro/ce-este-si-ce-nu-este-patriotismul/>The article was quoted on December 10 2018, at 05.01 p.m.

because in the year 2018 there have been hundreds of years since the aforementioned event. Three texts were chosen in this respect, each of them belonging to another author. The first (Teodorescu, 1912, pp. 482-499) of the texts chosen by us represents a Christian Orthodox point of view on *patriotism*, the second text (Iorga, 1914, pp. 3-12) comes from the sphere of politics, and the last text (Arifeanu, 1921, pp. 16-19) on which we will stop embodies the military vision of the matter dealt with here. The authors of these three texts are Ilie Teodorescu, N. Iorga and Virgil Arifeanu, respectively.

2. Some Definitions of Patriotism

In order to make an inventory of patriotism works, even of Romanian ones, it would take many years of thorough research. For this reason, we will only stop at some of the texts that refer to the Romanian patriotism. So, in an article published in *Vulturul* (the Eagle) in 1906, it appears that from all the feelings known by the man, the most powerful is “patriotic feeling.” It is also shown here that “the holiest and most exalting” love is “the love of the homeland”. According to the author of the article quoted, every human being “with pure heart and clear mind” loves “the country and the nation” and for this reason the greatest happiness he knows is to die for the homeland. (Patriciu, 1906, p. 1.) In 1933, in an article published in Oradea in *Cele Trei Crisuri*, Gh. Popescu spoke about the elements that distinguish the *patriotism of nationalism*: “In opposition to nationalism, patriotism has its deep roots in the land of the country. Patriotism involves the love of the earth that we and our ancestors were born on. The native land must be the garment that man must serve until death. The limit of this land is fixed by nature itself, by the property of people of the same nation, of the same origin, language, habits, the same feelings that connect a large family through strong bonds with similar purposes. In a country where boundaries are not naturally attached to the above considerations, patriotism turns into nationalism and nationalism in a mysticism.” (Popescu, 1933, p. 135) In 1919, the article “Patriotism and Patriotism” was published in the humor magazine *Furnica*. In this article, the author talks about the inferiority complex that Romanians have in relation to the French when it comes to *patriotism*: “That’s as old as time: the neighbor's hen makes bigger eggs. [...] Not. In the field of patriotism, be it French, the big guys, but we also do not let ourselves down. But this is the Romanian: he looks over the fence and seems warmer on the plot rather than in his own garden. (Yo, 1919, p. 6) “In 1921, in an article published in the *Revista Grănicerilor* (the Guardian Magazine), C. Cepleanu showed that “country love is something born in the Romanian soul” (Cepleanu, 1921, p. 4) Thus, Romanians are naturally patriots. They love the place where their mothers gave birth more than others do. (Cepleanu, 1921, p. 3) Finally, in a paper published in 1988 in the *Revista de Istorie* (History Magazine), Nicolae Ceausescu, the one who was “the president of socialist Romania”, is indicated as an example of a “great patriot”. (Oprîțescu, 1988, p. 750(6)) In the quoted paper it is also shown that “the masses led by the PCR, plenary engaged in a profound revolutionary work of building a new society, have given new meanings, qualitatively superior to patriotism. (Oprîțescu, 1988, p. 750 (6); p. 749 (5)). “We will specify in this part of our paper that, in 1943, a very interesting article about the *patriotism manual* published in Iași in 1829 was published in the *Revista Istorică Română* (Romanian Historical Review). But we will not stop on this article now, but we will mention it in the Bibliography.

3. a) Patriots Marry and have Children

In 1911, in Târgoviște, the steward Ilie Teodorescu held a conference called “Patriotic Sentiment” at a congress of the “Association for the Propagation and Spreading of the Homeland”. We reached the text of the conference through the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (Romanian Orthodox Church magazine), in

which it was published in August 1912. So, before showing “patriotic feeling” (Teodorescu, 1912, pp. 482-499), Ilie Teodorescu talks about what is not a “patriotic feeling.” In the opinion of the quoted author, “patriotic feeling” has been “over the centuries” of “many and different changes”. This is explained by the fact that, according to the author, in some people the “patriotic feeling” takes the form of “chauvinism” or the form of “cosmopolitanism”. Also, in this part of the text, Ilie Teodorescu establishes the “foundations of the homeland idea” and does so in the manner used above, showing what is not the *idea of a homeland*. More specifically, *the homeland* is not a “narrow idea” that the progress of human society will make disappear. Despite those who popularize false doctrines about *patriotism* and *the homeland*, Ilie Teodorescu shows that nothing can *break down* the noble patriotic feeling that is in the Romanians. The same author, however, points out that it is necessary for the patriots to take action against false doctrines. Patriots are advised, however, “not to exaggerate anything in supporting and preaching the idea of patriotic feeling.” This recommendation originated in the fact that “the patriot with many claims” does not help *patriotism*, but “ruins” it. The same source shows that patriots whose patriotic acts are exaggerated make the “patriotic feeling change and become *chauvinism*.” Patriots *with many claims* “push the love of native land to madness”. In the opinion of such patriots, *love for the native land* is not clean unless it is “built upon hatred” and if it is “not sustained by hostile attacks against anything foreign.” According to Ilie Teodorescu, the *patriotic feeling* must be based on ideas spread by *Christian religion*. In this respect, the author quoted recalls the “Sermon on the Mount”. *Christianity*, Ilie Teodorescu says, will never bless *chauvinism*, and the reason is that *beautiful patriotism* is “open” and “magnificent.” For “pure and holy patriotism” worse than *chauvinism* is only *cosmopolitanism*. The latter is considered by the author of the text we pursue as “a mask” under which, in fact, “selfishness” is hidden. *Cosmopolitanism* is, in most cases, “a ferment of social dissolution.”

After talking about the *flawed* variants of *patriotism*, Ilie Teodorescu moves his attention to “the true patriotic feeling.” So, for the true patriot “homeland is the first necessity.” This situation is explained by the fact that the homeland “is the condition of individual development, it is the protection of social life, the vessel that prevents the waste of precious liquid; it is for the world, under its current conditions, the solid embankment, but indispensable, against anarchy. The *true patriot's* life “does not begin exclusively at his birth and does not end at his death.” It started with “our parents and our ancestors” and continues with our sons and grandchildren. In order to be able to grow, respecting the “law of nature given to us by God,” the *patriot* must adhere “to the land of the homeland, to its tradition and history.” Having exposed the basic principles of *patriotism*, the author begins to talk about the *patriotism of Romanians*. So, the brotherly feeling of the Romanians is in danger of being thrown under the pressure of *insults* and *unwarranted criticism*. Those whom Ilie Teodorescu points the finger at in this regard are members of political parties and journalists.

In Romania, *public life* is “noisy,” and *the face of social life* is “unattractive”. Despite these shortcomings, says the same author, Romania has something to be proud of: the *Romanian army*, the *Romanian universities*, the *Romanian Academy*, the *Romanian artists and writers*, the *Romanian priests*, the *Romanian family* and the *Romanian people*. Romanians must, however, have the “strong faith in God” and remain *Orthodox Christians* in addition to those shown above. According to Ilie Teodorescu, Romania, if “it will not be an Orthodox Christian,” “loses any more significant action”. Ilie Teodorescu asks the Romanians not to be “patriots of persuasion, but of action”. The patriotism of action requires that Romanians work together “harmoniously so that *Romania has citizens, have good laws and, finally, have brotherly peace.*”

The first *action* that *patriotism of action involves is marriage*: “The wedding has its own laws and it is the duty of the man to obey it. As for celibacy, I find, according to the teachings of the Apostle Paul,

that it is sublime or miserable. (Teodorescu, 1912, p. 492). “In particular, celibacy is” sublime “when it is the result of” a compelling debt “and is miserable when it is the result of needs “of human nature”. Marriage is important, says Ilie Teodorescu, because God created men “with the help of man.” The absence of *domestic life* results in the *depopulation of the country*, and a country without children is a country without soldiers willing to defend their country at all costs. For a Romanian to be considered a *patriot of action*, it is not enough for him to marry and to give sons to the country. He has to give his sons *a solid education*: “Education is the first and most important power of movement of a nation. Let us give Romania the bright, generous, devoted, patriotic sons and, if we want them to be truly useful and worthy, to drink them with the living and wonderful water of the Orthodox Christian faith. (Teodorescu, 1912, pp. 493-494) “The second action of the *patriotism of action* relates to the need for “good laws” of Romania, in order to be well governed. Romania is governed by the people, through its representatives in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. For this reason, Ilie Teodorescu shows, the patriot has the “duty” to *tell his opinion*, to *speak*. The great power of the people is the *vote*, which must not be left to the care of those who do not understand its true role. By voting, the patriots contribute to “endowing the homeland with good laws”. Finally, the third action of *patriotism of action* is related to *preserving the brotherly peace*: “Fraternity is the cement to which human beings are bound to build a nation. As the cohesion of sand grains form the rock, as love builds the family, so brotherhood grows and develops the nation. From this, one can see how bad is evil and how stupid is the foolishness of those who, under the pretext of adjusting a law or changing a regime, tend to raise storms and scratches. (Teodorescu, 1912, p. 496) “In support of his claims of brotherhood, Ilie Teodorescu brings the words of the Savior: “You have heard that it was said to the former: «Do not kill»; and whoever will kill, will be worthy of judgment. But I say to you: Whoever gets angry with his brother shall be worthy of judgment [...]” (Matthew 5, pp. 21-22). Romanians, although they are brothers, are “enemies of one another”. For this reason, Ilie Teodorescu asks the *true patriots* to “keep against the lost, deceived, unconscious and weak a war of light and fraternity and not attack.” The Romanian *who truly loves his homeland* must stop his “selfish impulses “and work firstly, *for the country*. The Patriot says he is “a drop of water in the ocean of his people”. *The heart, the life and the forces* of the patriot belong to his homeland.

b) National Solidarity Creates True Patriotism

In a work dedicated to N. Iorga, Pamfil Șeicaru tells how in the autumn of 1917, when he was returning from the front, he went home to the great historian, in Iași, “to expose him the state of mind of those in the trenches.” (Teodorașcu, 2014, p. 165) Following the talks with Șeicaru, Iorga would have said: “I don’t watch who holds the flag of the country, I see the flag of the country, I defend the flag of the country.” (Șeicaru, 2002, p. 169) In this key must be understood, we say, the patriotism of N. Iorga.

On September 8, 1914, N. Iorga held in Galați a conference on *true patriotism* (Iorga, 1914, pp. 3-12). Though he did not appreciate “raillery,” N. Iorga testified in our text that he had the habit of using *irony* when he spoke of “ridiculous and corrupt exaggerations,” which he considered both “vain” and “unhealthy.” Thus, N. Iorga will use *irony* in the text we follow, but not the “brutal raillery”. The explanation is that, according to the author, in the national political past there were times when the “reprehensible pedagogy of mockery” prevented the harmonious development of Romania.

In the months following the outbreak of the “Great War,” *Romanian statemen* (Teodorașcu, 2015, pp. 23-24) could not decide on the side with which Romania would enter the battle (Bacalbașa, 1936, pp. 179-195). There were many who said that Romania had to give up neutral attitude as quickly as possible to enter the “war” (Bacalbașa, 1936, p. 184). The thoughts of the Romanians were taken by war (Bacalbașa, 1936, p. 183). For this reason, N. Iorga showed in his conference that “patriotic

demonstrations” are natural and often have a *real value*. However, the quoted author believed that *patriotic demonstrations* are useful to the country only if those participating are prepared to turn their *patriotic slogans* into *patriotic deeds*. For example, *patriots* who ask for their country to enter a war must be the first to ask for enlistment to fight in that war. According to N. Iorga, a patriot is not allowed to joke about *the name and the colors* of his country. For this reason, any word spoken in the name of the country must be “a holy duty for the greatest sacrifices”.

In order for Romanians not to confuse *true patriotism* with *less true patriotism*, Iorga defines the first. In fact, Iorga will define what can be defined as a *patriotic feeling*: the *purpose* it pursues and the *means* it uses. According to N. Iorga, the patriots are divided into two categories. First of all, it is the category of those who begin to feel patriotism when a great danger lies “on the borders of their country”. They are embraced, in “bad times,” by the sincere desire to “fight for the defense of national territory”. Besides this category of patriots, there is also the category of patriots who always have patriotic feelings. The patriot in the second category differs from the patriot in the first category “through his work”.

Work, says N. Iorga, is part of man’s *nature*. For this reason, only “the sick, the fool and the vicious” are entitled to be lazy. But work is also two ways. Starting from an Asian legend, N. Iorga shows that work can be “white” or “black”. *White labor* is *holy*, and *black labor* is *curse*. For training patriots, the first of the two types of work are very important, but it is not enough. The “holy” work creates “good people”, “people of faith,” but not “true patriots”. *True patriotism* comes from “the great, continuous patriotic act of full, absolute national solidarity.” This type of *patriotism* develops a “militant power” of a nation: “The moral powers that are meant to merge at any moment in the active moral unity of the nation are multiplied and strengthened by every blow of grabbing axe, by each turn of the wheels, through each line written and by every thought that flies.” According to N. Iorga, “these moral powers “represent the” sure factors of victory “.

c) Patriotism is measured when the Country is in Difficult Times

In this part of our research, we will use the book entitled *Cartea Românilor. Manual de educație națională pentru cetățeni și ostași* (Arifeanu, 1921, pp. 16-19) signed by Virgil Arifeanu. The volume we used was published in 1921, but it should be said that much of this work (127 pages out of a total of 183 pages) was taken from the brochure *Pentru Armată și Neamul Românesc* (For Romanian Army and People), which was published in 1913. We also show here and that some of the ideas about patriotism used by Virgil Arifeanu are quoted by Major Octav Boian in “Virtuțile ostășești (Soldiers’ virtues)”. Therefore, according to Virgil Arifeanu, *patriotism*, also known as *the love of the homeland*, “is the love that each Romanian must have for Wallachia and for the Romanian nation.” In fact, *the love of the homeland* is, as the quoted paper shows, which every man must have for his own country. *The patriotic feeling* is the *noblest and most powerful* of the feelings that man has or ought to have. This *feeling*, the quoted author points out, makes the one who has it “to sacrifice his fortune and even his life for the good and defense of his homeland, subduing all his private interests.”

In the quoted paper, *patriotism*, from which “that moral force, that strength of character” rises, through which people manage to assault their enemies, “is the strain of all secular virtues.” In peace time, *the feeling of patriotism* seems to be “numb in our hearts,” and its glow is only visible in certain situations: when we talk about “the glorious past or suffering of the nation,” “when the interests of the Motherland are at stake” or “when news from outside rush our pride and ambition.” “In the difficult days of the country”, the feeling of *patriotism* “bursts like a flood and shines like a sun in all hearts and in all the strata of society.” (Boian, 1921, p. 16)

Only in the difficult moments the *Romanian patriotism* can be measured. In the days of *despondency*, all Romanians “stand up for the defense of the ancestral field”. These days one can see what patriotism is: *devotion to the homeland*. Patriotism is the “strain of virtues” and “it supports itself” *discipline, devotion, courage, military honor, and military duty*. Without *patriotism*, the quoted text reads, there can be no heroic deeds. The power of a country, shown in the same source, is in the power of love that its soldiers carry.

4. Conclusion

According to Dimitrie Bolintineanu, *patriotism* does not consist only in the patriot's love for his country, but also in his desire to put “general interests” before “personal interests”. (Bolintineanu, p. 72) The same writer also points out that “the feeling against patriotism” is “cosmopolitanism”, this being explained by the fact that “nationality” is at the *core of patriotism*. (Bolintineanu, p. 73) According to Mihai Eminescu, instead, *patriotism* is love for *the country's past*, not love for the land of the country, because there can be no “country love” if there is no “cult of the past”. (Bolintineanu, p. 73) In a study (Bolintineanu, p. 73) published in the beginning of 1939, Constantin Atanasiu, in the *Revista Generala a Invatamantului* (General Education Review), showed that *patriotism* is one of the ideas that “*are the basis of individual and collective soul power*”. These *ideas*, including *patriotism*, need to be *revised* when the “people battle” conditions change in a significant way. The importance of *patriotism*, the same author shows, does not have to be doubted, because it represents one of the *two ideas*¹ that represent the “foundation of soul power” and which “can be considered levers of moral resistance of a nation”.² According to some authors, RCP members are those who have managed to give patriotism a new, superior quality to the one known at the time of the establishment of the communist regime in Romania. In a recent work (2017), commenting on a definition of King Michael's³ patriotism, Cristinel Munteanu said that “we are the children of the homeland, but we ourselves ought to love it not only as a mother, but also as a daughter”.

There are many journalists who have written about *patriotism*. There are also many people who have spoken of the *patriotic feeling*. Priests and intellectuals have also been among those who have tried to explain *the meanings of patriotism*. We have seen in our work that, according to some authors, true patriotism is the feeling that causes the patriot to marry, to have children, to respect his right to vote, to work for his country, etc. Other authors, on the other hand, consider that patriotism is truly visible only when the country is in great danger. According to the latter, patriotism can be measured only when the country is in difficult times. It is hard to say which of the definitions of *patriotism* we are pursuing in this paper is the most comprehensive. In fact, even N. Iorga, one of the authors of the texts on which we stopped in our research, said that no one is allowed to define a feeling. A feeling is, said the same author, whether respected or crushed.

¹ The second idea that Constantin Atanasiu refers to is the *Ideal*.

² *Ibidem*, p. 49.

³ King Michael defined *patriotism* as follows: „Being a patriot means to love your country as it is, but, at the same time, to do all you can to make it better”.

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