

## HISTORIOGRAPHY AND POLITICS IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA. NICOLAE TITULESCU CASE

Gabriel Moisa\*

**Abstract:** *Nicolae Titulescu's case and his rehabilitation done by the Romanian historiography in the years of the communist regime represent a model of recycling the past according to the needs of the present. It has become a certainty that, if needed, history could be rewritten according to the current ideological imperatives. This is the teleological approach of the historical writing where the past is seen in terms of the present. Without passing judgements of absolute value on the above mentioned aspects, Nicolae Titulescu's presence in the main tensioned moments of the Romanian-Soviet relationships of the '60s-'80s, after having been a taboo for the previous two decades, makes us think that Titulescu was firstly instrumentalized for ideological and political purposes, and secondly for reasons that focused on finding out the historical truth.*

**Keywords:** Nicolae Titulescu, communism, ideology, historiography, politics

Nicolae Titulescu (1882-1941) was an extremely important personality of the Romanian and European diplomacy during the two World Wars. For almost four decades, he played an important role in Romania's public life becoming, during the inter-war period, one of the most prominent personalities of the international life. He was minister of finances (1917 and 1920-1921), delegate at the Paris Peace Conference (1920), minister plenipotentiary in London (1922-1927), minister of the foreign affairs (1927-1928 and 1932-1936), Romania's permanent delegate (1920-1936) at the League of Nations (where he was elected president in 1930 and in 1931, being the only person who held this position twice). He became famous for his outstanding rhetorical talent attended by a vast documentation and a rigorous argumentation.

Nicolae Titulescu initiated a series of diplomatic contacts with the USSR where Maxim Litvinov, head of the Russian diplomacy, accepted serious discussions on the fate of Bessarabia, being on the point of acknowledging the integration of this historical Romanian province to the Great Romania in 1918. This situation led to Nicolae Titulescu's being overlooked for a good period of time after 1945 due to the fact that Bessarabia was annexed to the Soviet Union under the name of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Any remark on Bessarabia was strictly forbidden by the communist regime that was then in power in Romania. Under the circumstances, Nicolae Titulescu, besides being considered a "retrograde" together with the entire inter-war Romanian political class, *had* also *sinned* for having negotiated with Maxim Litvinov on the issue of Bessarabia.

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\* Conferențiar dr., Universitatea din Oradea; e-mail: gabimoisa@hotmail.com

Consequently, his name fell into oblivion. This aspect also marked his historiographical destiny for a very long period of time after World War II. Nicolae Titulescu was re-evaluated, but only on certain segments of his activity and only when the communism with national emphases made its appearance.

Before 1948, year that was marked by fundamental changes in the Romanian society and historiography, Nicolae Titulescu meteorically returned to the researchers' attention. Living in France after 1937, he continued to criticise Fascism and Nazism as well as Romania's direction in foreign politics after 1939. Nicolae Titulescu died on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1941 at Cannes. The event was little propagated through the media in Romania since the pro-German Ion Antonescu government did not agree to Titulescu's point of view on Romania's current foreign alliances. Consequently, during 1941-1944, Nicolae Titulescu was little discussed in Romania. Only in 1945, four years after his death, Beno Brănișteanu published a book entitled *Nicolae Titulescu. Recollections. Notes. Considerations (Nicolae Titulescu. Amintiri. Note. Reflecții.)*. The 107 pages, written according to the author "*all in one breath since the day I found out about Nicolae Titulescu's death*"<sup>1</sup>, included a series of recollections, considerations and notes on Nicolae Titulescu. The book was written from memory, with no documentation or press what so ever, as the two, Nicolae Titulescu and Beno Brănișteanu had been close friends. Beno Brănișteanu presented Titulescu's personality in an almost exclusively positive light, praising Romania's foreign politics set up by Titulescu on maintaining the solidarity of the smaller states that came out victorious in World War I and on trying "*to come to an agreement with Russia in order to maintain Great Romania's territorial integrity*"<sup>2</sup>. Nicolae Titulescu's only weak point was that he had not become a member of any political party, thus isolating himself from the internal political life. His long absence from the country led to his withdrawal from the Romanian diplomacy. According to Beno Brănișteanu, Nicolae Titulescu was "*an unhesitating patriot*"<sup>3</sup>, this being the dominant feature of his personality.

During the regime of "popular democracy", 1945-1948, the name of Nicolae Titulescu would be barely heard. After the communist regime came into power in 1948, Nicolae Titulescu disappeared completely from the historiographical stage. His name was not even mentioned, as if this personality had never existed. Almost all inter-war historians ended up in prison and those who were not imprisoned were dismissed, anathematized in public institutions such as archives or research institutions where they had no contact with the public. Under these circumstances, "specialists" made their appearance in the Romanian historiographical field who had nothing, or almost nothing, in common with the historical research. Their leader was Mihail Roller. Historical research entered a unique stage where the tone was set

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<sup>1</sup> Beno Brănișteanu, *Nicolae Titulescu. Amintiri. Note. Reflecții*, București, Edit. Socec, 1945, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 99.

by the political leaders. The new historians were translating the new guidelines regarding the historical writing so that they could be understood by the masses. Nicolae Titulescu could not find a place in this new type of historiography. For several years, 1948-1956, the Romanian historiography was limited to the well-known *Romania's Histories (Istoria ale României)*, subsequently *The History of the PRR (Istoria R.P.R.)*, where Nicolae Titulescu's name was barely mentioned and only in negative contexts. The Romanian historians adopted ad litteram the harsh Soviet concept on Romania's inter-war foreign politics. According to this concept, the entire Romanian diplomacy was "*anti-Soviet, governments sheltered all anti-Soviet adventures turning the country into an anti-Soviet pawn*"<sup>4</sup>. The setting up of the League of Nations was seen, in agreement with the point of view of the Soviet historiography, as an act of the "Western imperialists" against the Soviets. And this represented the main reason why the political system conceived by the League of Nations had failed. Moreover, the League of Nations was nothing but a tool in the hands of the United States, Great Britain and France to dominate the world. Since Nicolae Titulescu was one of the artisans of the League of Nations as well as its president in 1930 and 1931, it is easy to understand why he could not be accepted by the new historiography. On the other hand, the same *The History of the PRR (Istoria RPR)*, signed by Mihail Roller as coordinator, considered that the politics led by "*the bourgeois-landlord governments was anti-Soviet and helped to prepare the anti-Soviet war*"<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the governments that led the country during the two World Wars "*continued the same hostile politics against the USSR, even if the Soviet government constantly led a politics of peace with the Romanian state*"<sup>6</sup>. Nicolae Titulescu, who was a member in several inter-war governments, could not be reconsidered in this context either. The content of the negotiations between Nicolae Titulescu and Maxim Litvinov from the '30s was barely mentioned, these negotiations failed "*exclusively due to the Romanian government's anti-Soviet position*"<sup>7</sup>.

Stalin's death, followed by the refining of Romania's internal politics, led to several changes in historiography. Under these circumstances, Nicolae Titulescu began to be re-evaluated. Modestly at the beginning, more evidently later. This process had to be initiated by one of the regime's official ideologists. This ideologist was Petre Constantinescu Iași who, in an article from 1961, debated upon Nicolae Titulescu's personality<sup>8</sup>. The event took place on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the birth of this great diplomat. The article was signed by Petre Constantinescu Iași

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<sup>4</sup> Mihail Roller (coord.), *Istoria R.P.R. manual pentru învățământul mediu*, București, Edit. de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică, 1952, p. 523

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 580.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 581.

<sup>8</sup> Petre Constantinescu Iași, I.M.Oprea, *O importantă figură a diplomației europene – Nicolae Titulescu*, „Studii. Revistă de Istorie”, nr. 6, 1961, p. 1411-1432.

and by a younger researcher, I.M. Oprea. I.M. Oprea's name next to that of Petre Constantinescu Iași meant both that Titulescu received the official approval of being revised and that I.M. Oprea was the one assigned to do this. The following years consecrated I.M. Oprea in this direction. He elaborated several papers, now reference papers, where Nicolae Titulescu was only described to a certain extent since he was still a *bourgeois* statesman, and this time using a different tone, not negative. This gesture of reinstatement was not accidental since the early '60s marked a growing disagreement in the Romanian-Soviet political relationships in the context of the Valev Plan and of the Chinese-Soviet disputes regarding the path of communism. Romania joined the Chinese point of view according to which each communist country had the right to choose its own path of building communism.

The tone of the above mentioned article does not differ very much from the tone used to describe Romania's inter-war foreign politics that is found in the textbooks coordinated by Mihail Roller. However, the authors could detect the first bright point of Romania's inter-war diplomacy in the person of Nicolae Titulescu who was "*one of the few statesmen of the bourgeois-landlord Romania who promoted a politics of holding back the international Fascism*"<sup>9</sup>. This was an evident untruth since Romania's inter-war foreign politics was loyal to the alliances with France and Great Britain till the spring of 1940 when France was invaded by Germany. Redrawing Nicolae Titulescu's personality at one stroke of the pen became very interesting and, according to a more frequently used pattern, the image of the re-evaluated personality could not be exclusively positive. Firstly, historians pointed out Titulescu's limits as a bourgeois politician who did not embrace the socialist ideals. However, the positive side of his personality was highlighted, meaning by this that Titulescu was the artisan of Romania's closeness to the USSR, thus he was animated by patriotic feelings showing concern for the fate of our national independence. He was released from his position in August 1936, when Romania formed an alliance with the Nazi Germany<sup>10</sup>. Practically, the article marked the beginning of Nicolae Titulescu's reinstatement as a politician especially on the parts that condemned the Fascist aggression and revisionism.

An ampler revision of Nicolae Titulescu was performed on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary since his death, in 1966. In 1966, as well as in the years that followed, numerous articles, studies, documents and evocations of the great politician were published. Maybe the most complex work in this respect was the one signed by the already mentioned I.M. Oprea, entitled *Nicolae Titulescu*<sup>11</sup>. The historian received the officials' approval to redraw Nicolae Titulescu's profile according to the new canons of the communist age, a period when, due to a detachment from Moscow,

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1411.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1431.

<sup>11</sup> I.M. Oprea, *Nicolae Titulescu*, București, Edit. Științifică, 1966.

certain segments of our national history that served the current interests of the communist regime were being rehabilitated, including the mostly blamed inter-war period. Nicolae Titulescu was part of this project and his inter-war diplomatic activity was exceptional. Thanks to his activity, Romania played an important part at the League of Nations. But most of all, he negotiated from equal grounds with Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, on issues regarding Bessarabia. This was the type of diplomacy that Nicolae Ceaușescu was also trying to impose. Maybe that is why Nicolae Ceaușescu's substantial rehabilitation began shortly after his coming into power in 1965. Nicolae Ceaușescu, following Titulescu's example in Romania's foreign politics, tried to play an important part in the international relationships and to negotiate from equal grounds with the Soviet Union, even implying an alleged independence in Romania's relationships with the Big Brother in the East.

In a wooden language specific to that period, the book presented Nicolae Titulescu's life and activity as it had never been done before. The first four chapters presented his childhood, his studies from France, his teaching activity as a professor of civil law at Iași and Bucharest and as deputy and minister of finances. The other chapters referred to his diplomatic activity beginning with the setting up of the Romanian National Council in Paris where he was an active member and with his being appointed Romania's prime delegate at the Paris Peace Conference<sup>12</sup>. The book also contains several data regarding his being elected president of the League of Nations as well as aspects referring to the Hungarian Optants and to the discussions with the Hungarian delegation. The volume brought forward segments of the Romanian history that had been hidden or ignored by the historiography of the '50s. It presented Titulescu's conferences held at the League of Nations, his being elected the League's president for two times in a row, his activity within the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact. None of these aspects of the Romanian inter-war diplomacy had been presented after World War II.

The volume also presented several issues regarding the diplomatic relationships between Romania and the USSR that had been re-established thanks to Nicolae Titulescu's efforts. A new dimension of the Romanian statesman was then discovered, that of having played a decisive role in the achievement of "*a productive and harmonious relationship that brought the two states closer*"<sup>13</sup>. Thanks to this, Nicolae Titulescu could now belong to that category of politicians called *progressists* by the historical literature of that period. This category included those personalities that were open to the left movements. However, since they were bourgeois politicians, they presented certain limitations in understanding the progress of our society on the path of communism. The entire 10<sup>th</sup> chapter is dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu's activity of re-establishing the inter-war diplomatic relationships between Romania and the USSR, emphasising his negotiations with Maxim Litvinov from

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 207.

Montreaux, in 1936 that ended with the signing of an agreement on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1936. Nicolae Titulescu's release from the position of minister of foreign affairs on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936 was interpreted as being caused by the fact that Gheorghe Tătărescu's government was unable to understand Titulescu's opening towards the Soviet Union<sup>14</sup>. This idea also appeared in several studies that were published later. Eliza Campus, who also had the officials' approval on this topic, underlined that "on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936 most of the leading bourgeois political circles abandoned the idea of supporting Romania's security by forming an alliance with the Soviet Union"<sup>15</sup> as if the immediate danger for Romania's integration was not coming from Moscow as well, as proved by the events of June, 1940. In 1966 other aspects of Nicolae Titulescu's personality, all positive, were presented to the public on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary since his death. The magazine *The 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Secolul XX)* published these contributions. Some of the articles were signed by his former friends such as Savel Rădulescu. In an article, suggestively entitled *Portrait (Portret)*<sup>16</sup>, Rădulescu recalled an event from 1936 when an English newspaper published a picture of Nicolae Titulescu followed by the text "this man did well" immediately after his being released from the head of Romania's diplomacy. Savel Rădulescu emphasised on one hand, Titulescu's very good image in the West which meant a huge step forward under the circumstances where the Easterns' opinions were ignored, and on the other hand, in agreement with the position of the official historiography, the mistake of his being released from the position of minister of foreign affairs. Savel Rădulescu's opinion according to which "the decadent West" understood better than the Romanian political regime Nicolae Titulescu's importance for the European politics and his role in detensioning the relationships with the Soviet Union was interesting and brave at the same time. George Potra's contribution entitled *A Great Dialectician of the Peace (Un mare dialectician al păcii)*<sup>17</sup> preserved the same tone. The article was published in the same edition of the magazine that was dedicated to Titulescu in order to praise his contribution to the peace.

The magazine *The World (Lumea)* also made a portrait of the great statesman as seen by his former collaborators from Romania as well as from abroad. Three of his best friends, A.F. Frangulias, Charles Henry and Horia Liman recalled moments of Nicolae Titulescu's life. For A.F. Frangulias, Nicolae Titulescu represented the greatest statesman of his time<sup>18</sup>. For Charles Henry, Titulescu was placed in a gallery with the greatest personalities of the time such as Einstein, Paul Valery or Marie Curie<sup>19</sup>. The same magazine continued Nicolae Titulescu's

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 341-365.

<sup>15</sup> Eliza Campus, *Nicolae Titulescu și politica pentru menținerea integrității teritoriale a României*, „Studii. Revistă de istorie”, nr. 2, 1966, p. 249.

<sup>16</sup> Savel Rădulescu, *Portret*, „Secolul XX”, nr. 3, 1966, p. 118-124.

<sup>17</sup> George G. Potra, *Un mare dialectician al păcii*, „Secolul XX”, nr. 3, 1966, p. 124-132.

<sup>18</sup> A.F. Frangulias, *A fost, poete, cel mai mare diplomat al timpului său*, „Lumea”, nr. 11, 10 martie, 1966, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Henry, *Un om politic clarvăzător*, „Lumea”, nr. 11, 10 mai 1966, p. 23.

revision presenting his positive features. In the magazine's following number, *Lumea*, no. 12/1966, George Macovescu presented other aspects of Titulescu's life and activity<sup>20</sup> and Radu Varia published this discussion with journalist Genevieve Tabois who had met Titulescu personally and whom he considered an exceptional diplomat "with a perfect judgement on the future"<sup>21</sup>.

In 1967, two volumes, one of documents, coordinated by George Macovescu<sup>22</sup>, and one of Nicolae Titulescu's conferences, coordinated by Robert Deutsch<sup>23</sup>, were published. They both cast a positive light on Titulescu. His rehabilitation still continued.

Several positive articles were published in the years that followed. In 1968, the magazine *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)* evoked through the voice of one of Titulescu's friends, Thanassios Aghnides, his diplomatic dimension<sup>24</sup>, and in 1969, George Potra made an analysis of the event of August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936 when Nicolae Titulescu was released from the position of minister of foreign affairs. Interestingly, the diplomat's dismissal from the government was seen under a more complex light, the position of the inter-war political class as well as the directions coming from Germany were considered as fundamental by the author<sup>25</sup>.

The '60s ended with a fundamental paper dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu that was signed by a contemporary, Vasile Netea<sup>26</sup>. The book was specially written for the abroad, being translated into several languages: German, English, French, but also into Russian. The dictionary entitled *Brilliant Statesmen (Diplomați iluștrii)* where Nicolae Titulescu was offered a special place was also published in 1969<sup>27</sup>.

All these papers, larger or smaller, dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu represented, according to us, the regime's directly interested efforts in the rehabilitation of Nicolae Titulescu. Nicolae Titulescu was brought back before the public opinion in an interesting political moment when Romania, at the beginning of Ceaușescu's regime, was trying to shape its foreign politics that was clearly moving away from Moscow. The rehabilitation of Romania's inter as well as pre-war foreign politics was helpful from this point of view. And Nicolae Titulescu

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<sup>20</sup> George Macovescu, *Nicolae Titulescu, diplomat de prestigiu internațional*, „Lumea”, nr. 12, 17 martie, 1966, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Radu Varia, *Genevieve Tabois despre Nicolae Titulescu*, „Lumea”, nr. 12, 17 martie 1966, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> George Macovescu (ed.), *Nicolae Titulescu. Documente diplomatice*, București, Edit. Politică, 1967.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Deutsch (ed.), *Nicolae Titulescu. Discursuri*, București, Edit. Științifică, 1967.

<sup>24</sup> Thanassios Aghnides, *Nicolae Titulescu, așa cum l-am cunoscut*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 4, 1968, p. 76-78.

<sup>25</sup> George G. Potra, *28-29 august 1936. În culisele cazului Titulescu*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 9, 1969, p. 50-54.

<sup>26</sup> Vasile Netea, *Nicolae Titulescu*, București, Edit. Meridiane, 1969.

<sup>27</sup> Mircea Malița, *Diplomatul în istorie*, în *Diplomați iluștrii*, București, Edit. Politică, 1969, p. 11; Savel Rădulescu, *Nicolae Titulescu – diplomat*, în *Diplomați iluștrii*, București, Edit. Politică, 1969, p. 373-429.

perfectly served this goal. The first after-war materials dedicated to Titulescu insisted on his “human side” in a political sense, his firm anti-Fascist opinions expressed at the stand of the League of Nations, justifying thus his rehabilitation. Titulescu’s diplomatic actions were discussed only later, emphasising his relationship with Maxim Litvinov. All these actions had a double goal. The first goal was in direct correlation with building Romania’s image as an “independent” country within the Soviet Block. The second goal was strongly connected to the suggestions on bringing the issue of Bessarabia into discussion, on a historiographical level at first. For the second goal, Titulescu fit perfectly since he had already discussed this issue with Litvinov in the ‘30s.

But things did not stop here for Nicolae Titulescu. After a period when he had completely disappeared from the public agenda and from the historians’ preoccupations, preoccupations that were dictated and supervised by the political regime, Titulescu entered the visible and the invisible spectrum according to the situation in the Romanian politics and to its relationships with the USSR.

This is how we can understand Nicolae Titulescu’s appearance and disappearance from the specialized literature. He appeared in “well-defined” moments just to disappear when he was no longer useful. Thus, Titulescu was again taken notice of in 1974-1975, right in the middle of the Romanian-Soviet historiographical disputes generated by Artiom Lazarev’s famous work on Moldavia’s history. In his well-known work, *Moldovskaia sovetskaia gosudarstvennost’ i bessarabskii vopros*<sup>28</sup>, Artiom Lazarev laid the foundations of a new theory, still in fashion, that refers to the existence of a single Moldavian nation and language in the Moldavia from across the Prut, different from Romanian one since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The reaction of the Romanian officials followed the well-known pattern. Through his speeches, Nicolae Ceaușescu set the tone and then several historians from the political circle grabbed the theme following the indications and establishing the limits of the discussion. On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1975 Nicolae Ceaușescu severely criticized in one of his speeches the interpretations from Lazarev’s<sup>29</sup> *History (Istoria)*, stating that the book answered several current political-historical demands since it presented the arbitrary separation of the nations as natural processes of forming new distinct nations. His speech was immediately followed by a series of reactions coming from some of the regime’s historians such as Ștefan Ștefănescu, Florin Constantiniu or Dan Berindei. The last two reviewed in harsh words Lazarev’s book which remained just a manuscript<sup>30</sup> without being published due to the virulence it had been written with. The reactions to Lazarev’s book were

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<sup>28</sup> A. Lazarev, *Moldovskaia sovetskaia gosudarstvennost’ i bessarabskii vopros*, Chișinău, Edit. Cartea Moldovenească, 1974.

<sup>29</sup> Robert R. King, *The Escalation of Romanian Soviet Historical Polemics over Bessarabia*, „Radio Free Europe Research. Background Report Romania”, nr. 28, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.



ample, even abroad. In 1976, Petre Moldoveanu published in Milan, at Nagard, Iosif Constantin Drăgan's publishing house, a brochure entitled *How to forge History (Cum se falsifică istoria)*<sup>31</sup> which simply annihilated Lazarev's theories. But who was this Petre Moldoveanu? He was no one else but the famous historian Constantin C. Giurescu who wrote that brochure, according to W.P. van Meurs, at Cornel Burtică's request. The latter was then a member of the CC of the RCP and he was also in charge with the brochure's publication in Milan<sup>32</sup>.

This was the context that brought back into discussion Nicolae Titulescu's name. The magazine *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)*, a propaganda tribune combined with rather good scientific achievements, hosted significant standpoints in the '70s-'80s on the Soviet historiography as well as on the Hungarian one in the '80s. In 1974-1975, Nicolae Titulescu was revalued within the pages of this magazine. We believe that his being brought back into discussion was also an answer to the problems generated by Artiom Lazarev's book. Titulescu represented a serious antidote to moldovenism and to the imperialist Soviet demands that proved useful to the Romanian diplomacy both in the '30s and in the '70s.

In the article entitled *A bright Trajectory on the Sky of Geneva (O traieorie luminoasă pe cerul Genevei)*, Gheorghe Matei, one of the editors of *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)*, insisted on Nicolae Titulescu's remarkable personality since he had been elected president of the League of Nations twice in a row<sup>33</sup>. The same number of the magazine published three other materials dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu, insisting on aspects of his activity that made serious references to the USSR and even to Bessarabia. I.G. Legrel insisted on the working methods of the minister of foreign affairs, some of which extremely efficient in the inter-war period<sup>34</sup>. Octav Livezeanu analyzed Nicolae Titulescu's anti-Legionary opinions<sup>35</sup>. The last article was signed by Nicolae Titulescu himself. In fact, it was a fragment from one of his inter-war speeches where his anti-Soviet suggestions were more than obvious<sup>36</sup>. Constantin Xenii's study *Political Portraits from the Inter-war Years (Portrete politice din anii interbelici)*<sup>37</sup> that was published by the same magazine at the beginning of 1975 when the Romanian-Soviet historiographical dialogue on the issue of moldovenism was still going on can also be interpreted in the same context. One of the portraits described by Constantin Xenii was that of Nicolae Titulescu.

<sup>31</sup> P. Moldoveanu, *Cum se falsifică istoria*, Milano, Edit. Nagard, 1976.

<sup>32</sup> W.P. van Meurs, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>33</sup> Gheorghe Matei, *O traieorie luminoasă pe cerul Genevei*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 2, 1974, p. 54.

<sup>34</sup> I.G. Legrel, *Cum lucra Nicolae Titulescu*, în Idem, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> Octav Livezeanu, *Marele diplomat împotriva dezmățului legionar*, în Idem, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> Nicolae Titulescu, *Nu cer lumii decât să mă lase să o iubesc și să o servesc*, în Idem, p. 60-61.

<sup>37</sup> Constantin Xenii, *Portrete politice din anii interbelici*, în Idem, nr. 3, 1975, p. 54.

Another historical personality who was connected to the history of Bessarabia was also rehabilitated in those years. He was no one else but Marshal Ion Antonescu, the one who had set Bessarabia free from the Soviet administration in 1941 and annexed it to the Romanian state. Redefined and presented under a positive light firstly by the writer Marin Preda in the first edition of his novel *The Delirium (Delirul)*<sup>38</sup>, Ion Antonescu went under a very complex process of rehabilitation done by the historian Aurică Simion in his excellent work *The Political and Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Romanian Insurrection from August, 1944 (Preliminarii politico-diplomatice ale insurecției române din August 1944)*, published in 1979. Antonescu's rehabilitation was done only on issues that concerned Bessarabia, his other negative aspects of his personality still remained since they were not useful for the regime. Ion Antonescu's rehabilitation followed almost the same pattern as in Titulescu's case, the latter having priority over the first.

The settling of the Romanian-Soviet disputes on the issue of moldovenism in 1976-1980, after the Romanian leader had been set straight by Khrushchev, made the Titulescu issue fall on a second place. Titulescu was brought back into discussion four years later in the context of a new deterioration of the Romanian-Soviet relationships, deterioration that was evident even at the Moscow Olympics (July 19<sup>th</sup> – August 3<sup>rd</sup>) when the great Romanian gymnast Nadia Comăneci met in the competition the rigours of the political implication when she was deprived of a well-deserved medal<sup>39</sup>. Probably not accidentally, but the September number of *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)* from 1980 published after the Olympic Games of Moscow, an article signed by Grigore Geamănu, former high dignitary of the communist regime<sup>40</sup>, on *Nicolae Titulescu's Political Will (Testamentul politic al lui Nicolae Titulescu)*<sup>41</sup>. The article perfectly illustrates our purpose. It contained an extremely eloquent fragment from Titulescu's texts. "As far as I am concerned, I have always considered myself a soldier of the territories annexed to Romania in 1918-1920"<sup>42</sup>, said Nicolae Titulescu, thus a

<sup>38</sup> The novel *The Delirium (Delirul)* described several events from World War II where Marshal Antonescu was presented under a positive light. The approach was clearly anti-Soviet since the action of a part of the novel is placed on the eastern front where Antonescu's Romania was fighting for Bessarabia's liberation from the Soviets. The first edition of the novel published in 35,000 copies was extremely audacious in what concerned the leader of the Romanian state, consequently, the official press did not announce the publication of the novel and waited for the Soviets' reaction. Since the Soviets' reaction was extremely negative, a second edition, this time a censored one, was published in the autumn of the same year in 100,000 copies where Ion Antonescu's personality was considerably suppressed.

<sup>39</sup> Adrian Epure, *Nadia și „marea jecmăneală” de la Moscova*, „Historia”, 12 mai, 2010, p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> Grigore Geamănu, *Testamentul politic al lui Nicolae Titulescu*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 9, 1980, p. 60-63.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 61.

soldier of Bessarabia as well. His statement cast no doubt on the content of his words and on their anti-Soviet meanings. The author of the study, Grigore Geamănu even launched the idea of repatriating Nicolae Titulescu's bones in 1982, on the anniversary of a century since his birth. Shortly after, Ion Grecescu also published an article, *Nicolae Titulescu's Last Wish (Ultima dorință a lui Nicolae Titulescu)*, based on a new document that contained Nicolae Titulescu's last wish of being buried in Brașov<sup>43</sup>.

A new book on Nicolae Titulescu signed by Ion Grecescu was published in 1980. The book was entitled *Nicolae Titulescu. Political Thinking and Action (Nicolae Titulescu. Gândire și acțiune politică)*<sup>44</sup>. Benign from the point of view of its references to the Soviet Union, the book tried to define the features of Romania's great statesman's intellectual formation. However, suggestions on this respect were not completely absent, especially in the author's conclusions where Titulescu's inter-war political options were considered current, including those on Bessarabia<sup>45</sup>.

The anniversary of a century since Nicolae Titulescu's death in 1982 was marked by an avalanche of events dedicated to the Romanian statesman and by the deterioration of the Romanian-Soviet relationships. 1982 was the year when the Titulescu issue became international. The anthology *Titulescu our Contemporary (Titulescu notre contemporain)*<sup>46</sup>, was firstly meant for the international public opinion. The anthology was coordinated by Valentin Lipatti, George G. Potra, Constantin I. Turcu and was politically assumed at the highest level since its foreword was signed by Ștefan Andrei, Romania's then minister of foreign affairs. The volume was meant to offer an accurate description of Nicolae Titulescu's intellectual, political and moral personality. So, the volume was an official one and presented Romania's point of view on the topic.

Besides this book, several other studies completed Nicolae Titulescu's image and, where possible, the studies contained references, either subtle or direct, to the Soviet Union or to Hungary, the latter becoming more concerned with the fate of the Hungarian minority from Romania. One can also identify in these studies samples of the cult of personality that was already degenerating in the '80s. Nicolae Ceaușescu saw in Nicolae Titulescu, as he did in other personalities with whom he was identifying himself, a forerunner on whom he could create a good self-image.

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<sup>43</sup> Ion Grecescu, *Ultima dorință a lui Nicolae Titulescu*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 3, 1981, p. 45-46.

<sup>44</sup> Idem, *Nicolae Titulescu. Gândire și acțiune politică*, București, Edit. Politică, 1980, 236 p.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 232.

<sup>46</sup> *Titulescu notre contemporain*, édition soignée par Valentin Lipatti, George G. Potra, Constantin I. Turcu, avant-propos de Ștefan Andrei, ministre des Affaires Etrangères), Les Editions Nagel, Paris, 1982, 222 p.+31 illustrations.

Most of the contributions were signed by the communist regime's people or by Titulescu's contemporaries. Olimpiu Matichescu's article published in the magazine *Studies (Studii)* illustrates this point of view. Olimpiu Matichescu was in charge with the writing of Nicolae Ceaușescu's official biography<sup>47</sup>. His article represents an exciting and courageous study with connotations on a Titulescu perceived as a fighter for the defence of our national independence and sovereignty<sup>48</sup> in a time when the cultivation of the personality cult of the Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party was concentrating on the consolidation of his position as world leader. Nicolae Titulescu proved to be a pioneer useful to Nicolae Ceaușescu. The title of the study *Nicolae Titulescu – Statesman, Patriot, Fighter against Fascism for the Defence of our National Independence and Sovereignty (Nicolae Titulescu – diplomat, patriot, luptător împotriva fascismului, pentru apărarea independenței și suveranității naționale)* was extremely current and followed exactly the defining imagological references that were assigned to Nicolae Ceaușescu. Under the circumstances, the replacing of Titulescu's name with that of Ceaușescu's could offer the perfect attributes to describe Nicolae Ceaușescu as *a statesman, patriot, fighter against Fascism for the defence of our national independence and sovereignty*, attributes that had been already assigned to Titulescu. Moreover, the study published the position of several foreign publications of the time on Nicolae Titulescu, all of them praising the Romanian statesman. His "descendent", Nicolae Ceaușescu, was looking for the same appreciations.

The same number of the magazine *Studies (Studii)* published a material dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu signed by I.M. Oprea on Nicolae Titulescu's apprehension of the Latin American states since this continent would play an important part in the international life<sup>49</sup>. This approach was meant to illustrate Ceaușescu's attempt of the '80s in setting up a dialogue between Romania and the Latin American states in a period when the European and North-American chancelleries were refusing any contact with the Romanian president. At the time, Nicolae Ceaușescu was considering himself a leader of the so-called Third World and of the Non-Aligned Movement. We can similarly interpret Ioan Isaiu's study published in the magazine *The Family (Familia)* entitled *Nicolae Titulescu. Romania has paid a high price for its right to life to ever give it up (Nicolae Titulescu. România și-a câștigat prea scump dreptul la viață ca să renunțe vreodată la el)*<sup>50</sup>. Contemporary with Nicolae Titulescu, Ioan Isaiu did a big favour

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<sup>47</sup> Olimpiu Matichescu, *Tinerețea revoluționară a tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu*, București, Edit. Politică, 1981.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, *Nicolae Titulescu – diplomat, patriot, luptător împotriva fascismului, pentru apărarea independenței și suveranității naționale*, „Studii. Revistă de istorie”, nr. 3, 1982, p. 421-432.

<sup>49</sup> Ion M. Oprea, *Gândirea diplomatică a lui Nicolae Titulescu pe cele două continente*, „Studii. Revistă de istorie”, no. 3, 1982, p. 450.

<sup>50</sup> Ioan Isaiu, *Nicolae Titulescu. România și-a câștigat prea scump dreptul la viață ca să renunțe vreodată la el*, „Familia”, no. 2, 1982, p. 10.

to the Romanian statesman. One must admit that Ioan Isaiu was also helping, maybe accidentally but willingly, the Romanian president who was confining Romania even within the Soviet Bloc. In the context where all the states from the Communist Bloc were taking decisions that would later lead to the fall of communism, Nicolae Ceaușescu was still marching on Romania's historical efforts in reaching the socialist goals, efforts that could not be overlooked since the liberalization of the other communist regimes in the '80s was seen by Ceaușescu as a sign of giving up on the socialist principles on which Romania would not give up. Even if from an economical point of view this generalization was just a cunning formula of motivating his own seclusion, the obstruction of a necessary liberalization was only meant to help Ceaușescu stay in power. Nicolae Titulescu's statement "*we shall answer those who will question our right to live that Romania has paid a high price for its right to life to ever give it up*"<sup>51</sup> perfectly described Romania's foreign politics in the Soviet Bloc, and not only, in a context where more and more voices were raising against Ceaușescu's rigorous regime.

Nicolae Titulescu's centenary represented the perfect occasion for the publication of many articles about his personality viewed from several points of view. Unlike the other historiographical outbreaks on Titulescu, this one had a fair national coverage, especially in the most important university centres. In 1982, *The Tribune (Tribuna)* from Cluj dedicated an edition almost entirely to Nicolae Titulescu, presenting less known aspects such as the fiscal reform initiated by Titulescu in 1921, still a limited reform even if it was the work of the "*most advanced bourgeois conception on this issue*"<sup>52</sup>. One can notice that even when the communist historiography resorted to Nicolae Titulescu in positive terms, he continued to carry the "guilt" of being "a bourgeois". An article from the review that was signed by Ion Ivănescu brought the local perfume of the inter-war period, namely that when Nicolae Titulescu accepted to become honorary citizen of Crasna while being in Geneva from where he sent a thanking message for the monument that had been erected in his honour in the centre of the commune. The text is interesting, carrying the hidden meaning due to the period the article appeared: "*Romania's current borders are the result of the evolution of a century long idea of justice. The process of establishing these borders is now completed, closed to any attempt of reopening it. In the name of the entire Romanian people I say: No! Not ever!!!*"<sup>53</sup>. The text contains anti-Hungarian connotations, emphasized towards the end, that paraphrased the words of the Hungarian members of the parliament *Nem Nem soha – No, not ever* on August, 1920, when they did not recognize the Union of Transylvania to Romania on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918, but also the title of a well-known poem written by the Hungarian revisionist poet Jozsef Atilla, also

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> Ilie Râmniceanu, *Finanțele publice*, „Tribuna”, nr. 11, 18 martie, 1982, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Ion Ivănescu, *Cetățean de onoare al Crasnei*, în *Idem*, p. 4.

entitled *Nem, nem soha* with the same anti-Trianon allusions. The '80s were marked by more and more evident tensions between Romania and Hungary that were firstly generated by the more and more evident importunities coming from Hungary in order to discuss the situation of the Hungarian community from Romania suggesting even a revision of the Romanian-Hungarian borders. Consequently, we can interpret Titulescu's text, without being mistaken, as one used by the communist regime in the '80s in the context of the above-mentioned Romanian-Hungarian relationships. Resorting to history proved once again useful to the communist regime.

The magazine *Historical Journal (Magazin Istoric)* also commemorated the centenary of Nicolae Titulescu's birth through an article dedicated to the inter-war statesmen that was signed by specialists as well as by politicians who dedicated Titulescu's diplomatic achievements to the communist regime since one of the authors was Ștefan Andrei, Romania's minister of foreign affairs. In case of any doubt regarding the significance of Titulescu's rehabilitation, Ștefan Andrei's study confiscated for the use of the regime all the aspects from Nicolae Titulescu's activity that were valid and current. The article's title itself was suggestive from this point of view: *Titulescu in the Contemporary Period (Titulescu in contemporaneitate)*<sup>54</sup>. Ștefan Andrei made a parallel between Romania's foreign politics under Titulescu and Romania's foreign politics under the RCP that "incorporates the high principles and goals of Nicolae Titulescu's thought and deed"<sup>55</sup>. There is no doubt that the article was approved both politically and ideologically. This was mainly because it clearly presented the dialogue from equal grounds between Romania and the USSR in the '30s, dialogue that repeated under the same terms in the '60s, when Dej's and later Ceaușescu's Romania was looking for its own path, independent from Moscow. The parallels were brave, explicitly presented and eloquent from the point of view of the Romanian-Soviet relationships of the '80s and from the point of view of the causes for which Nicolae Titulescu was so intensely courted by the communist regime from Bucharest.

Besides Ștefan Andrei, some of Titulescu's contemporaries also signed articles in *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)*. These were Valentin Lipatti who drew a positive political portrait of Titulescu through the eyes of his western contemporaries<sup>56</sup>, and Valter Roman who also drew a positive profile of Titulescu through the eyes of some Soviet statesmen such as Dmitri Manuilski and Maxim Litvinov<sup>57</sup>, probably as a sign of courtesy addressed to the Big Brother in the East. The study *Titulescu in London (Titulescu la Londra)* signed by Cristian Popișteanu,

<sup>54</sup> Ștefan Andrei, *Titulescu în contemporaneitate*, „Magazin istoric“, nr. 3, 1982, p. 7-9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Valentin Lipatti, *Titulescu văzut de contemporani*, „Magazin istoric“, nr. 4, 1982, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Valter Roman, *Dmitri Manuilski și Maksim Litvinov despre Nicolae Ceaușescu*, „Magazin istoric“, nr. 9, 1982, p. 49.

director of *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)* and one of the historians approved by the regime, was also full of meanings. The article insisted on a speech delivered by Titulescu at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in 1939 where he underlined the idea of equality between small and big states in international relationships<sup>58</sup>. The article was written in a period when Nicolae Ceaușescu's more visible international recognition of was in full process, emphasizing the necessity of equality between small states and big states. The same connotations appeared in the study signed by Ion Popescu Puțuri, president of the Institute of the History of the Romanian Communist Party who was also involved in the clandestine communist movement<sup>59</sup>. The study was entitled *Nicolae Titulescu and His Age (Nicolae Titulescu și epoca sa)*<sup>60</sup> and presented Titulescu's foreign politics on defending Romania's borders as they had been decided at the Peace Conference after World War I, including those of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina that were annexed to the USSR after World War II.

The climax of Nicolae Titulescu's seizure by the regime by means of historical writing took place, according to us, through the study signed by another historian approved by the communist power, Gheorghe I. Ioniță, dean of the Faculty of History from Bucharest. The study was entitled *The Romanian Communist Party, the Democratic and Anti-Fascist Labour Movement from Romania and Nicolae Titulescu (Partidul Comunist Român, mișcarea muncitorească democratică și antifascistă din România și Nicolae Titulescu)*<sup>61</sup>. The author's conclusions were completely amazing and led to the idea of Nicolae Titulescu's closeness to the communist movement, both from the country as well as from abroad, beginning with 1936. It was then that the communists proposed him to become honorary president of a structure, the Romanian Committee of the World Reunion for Peace that was under the control of the communists. The article does not say if he accepted the position or not, and this makes us think that Nicolae Titulescu was not aware of this approach. However, we keep in mind one of the author's statements on Nicolae Titulescu's closeness to the communist movement in a period that abounded in "guidelines and advice of the Comintern"<sup>62</sup> for the Romanian Communist Party. Besides the comparison of two facts, one false – Nicolae Titulescu's closeness to the communist movement – and the other one true – the Comintern guidelines- that may create an apparent truth or, better said half truth, the article makes subtle reference to the inter-war guidelines coming from the

<sup>58</sup> Cristian Popișteanu, *Titulescu la Londra*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 8, 1982, p. 22.

<sup>59</sup> Radu Constantinescu, *100 de istorioare cu istoricii Epocii de Aur*, Iași, FIDES, 1997, p. 154-155.

<sup>60</sup> Ion Popescu Puțuri, *Nicolae Titulescu și epoca sa*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 5, 1982, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Gheorghe I. Ioniță, *Partidul Comunist Român, mișcarea muncitorească democratică și antifascistă din România și Nicolae Titulescu*, „Anuarul Institutului «A.D. Xenopol» Iași, tom 21, 1984, p. 404-419.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 406.

Comintern, much hated by Ceaușescu, according to which the Romanian communists had assumed the position of the Comintern regarding the multinational character of the Romanian state and the right to self-determination of the “peoples” from Romania, that led to the banning of the Romanian Communist Party in 1924.

The mid ‘80s brought four important monographic contributions dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu, without very brave interpretations and statements on Titulescu’s rehabilitation. The volumes were signed by Ion Grecescu<sup>63</sup>, Vasile Malinschi<sup>64</sup>, Milan Vanku<sup>65</sup> and one was coordinated by de Gheorghe Buzatu<sup>66</sup>. They did not excel from this point of view and they were rather trying to offer the public a complete and complex image of the great Romanian statesman.

After a period of silence upon the subject, the year of 1987 marked the last publications of several studies dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu, three in 1987 and one in 1988. They were published at a moment when the Romanian-Soviet relationships were irremediably damaged after Mikhail Gorbachev’s last visit to Romania on May 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 1987<sup>67</sup>. George Potra analyzed in three consecutive numbers of *The Historical Journal (Magazin istoric)*, numbers 3, 4 and 5 from 1987<sup>68</sup>, Nicolae Titulescu’s fall into disgrace and the efforts of Carol II of Romania to make Titulescu leave the government due to certain foreign interventions. Was this meant as a parallel between Carol II’s efforts and those of Mikhail Gorbachev’s to convince Ceaușescu to step off in favour of a reformer? The last study on Nicolae Titulescu published before 1989 was that of Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu. Entitled *Testimonies on Nicolae Titulescu (Mărturii despre Nicolae Titulescu)*<sup>69</sup>, the study presented a series of documents on Titulescu from the American and German archives that demonstrated Titulescu’s exceptional international magnitude between the two World Wars. Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu was the one who insistently brought into discussion in 1988<sup>70</sup> the issue of Bessarabia and openly talked about the secret part of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact that referred to the loss of Bessarabia and of Northern Bukovina. This was a direct offence to Moscow.

<sup>63</sup> Ion Grecescu, *Nicolae Titulescu. Concepție juridică și diplomatică*, Craiova, Edit. Scrisul românesc, 1982.

<sup>64</sup> Vasile Malinschi, *Economia, dreptul și diplomația în viziunea lui Nicolae Titulescu*, București, Edit. Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1985.

<sup>65</sup> Milan Vanku, *Nicolae Titulescu, promotor al politicii de pace și colaborare în Balcani*, București, Edit. Politică, 1986.

<sup>66</sup> Gheorghe Buzatu (coord.), *Titulescu și strategia păcii*, Iași, Edit. Junimea, 1982.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Kunze, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. O biografie*, Bucharest, Edit. Vreamea, 2002, p. 424-429.

<sup>68</sup> George G. Potra, *Treptele dizgrației*, „Magazin istoric”, nr. 3, 1987, p. 23-28; no. 4, 1987, p. 22-26; no.5, 1987, p. 28-33.

<sup>69</sup> Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *Mărturii despre Nicolae Titulescu*, „Anuarul Institutului «A.D. Xenopol» Iași, tom 25, 1988, p. 383-389.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii 1945-1947*, București, Edit. Enciclopedică, 1988.



Nicolae Titulescu's case and his rehabilitation done by the Romanian historiography in the years of the communist regime represent a model of recycling the past according to the needs of the present. It has become a certainty that, if needed, history could be rewritten according to the current ideological imperatives. This is the teleological approach of the historical writing where the past is seen in terms of the present. Without passing judgements of absolute value on the above mentioned aspects, Nicolae Titulescu's presence in the main tensioned moments of the Romanian-Soviet relationships of the '60s-'80s, after having been a taboo for the previous two decades, makes us think that Titulescu was firstly instrumentalized for ideological and political purposes, and secondly for reasons that focused on finding out the historical truth.