

**DOCUMENTING THE PAST.  
A NEW RETROSPECTIVE ON POLITICAL LIFE IN HABSBURG  
BUKOVINA (1848–1861)\***

**Marian OLARU** ,

Bucovina Institute of the Romanian Academy (Rădăuți, Romania)

E-mail: olmary55@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Autonomy in the Habsburg Empire has a long and complex history. Some saw it as a central goal for the people of the provinces, while others considered it a more or less functional political exercise. The book that two authors from Iasi propose to readers makes a timely and significant contribution to the knowledge of the history of Bukovina. Based on a series of documents discovered in the Romanian archives, the study offers a retrospective of the struggle for autonomy in Bukovina, highlighting crucial moments and remarkable personalities. Identifying the approaches of the existing historical literature, the authors enrich the documentary framework necessary to understand the historical itinerary covered by the imperial province, insisting on the struggle for autonomy as a process indispensable for the preservation of an unassimilated identity within the Habsburg Monarchy.*

**Keywords:** *Sources, Provincial Autonomy, Administration, Territorial structure, Identity, Petition.*

**Rezumat:** *În Imperiul Habsburgic, "autonomia" are o istorie lungă și complexă. Unii au văzut-o ca pe un obiectiv central pentru locuitorii provinciilor, iar alții au considerat-o un exercițiu politic, mai mult sau mai puțin funcțional. Cartea pe care doi autori ieșeni o propun cititorilor aduce o contribuție oportună și semnificativă la cunoașterea istoriei Bucovinei. Pe baza unei serii de documente descoperite în arhivele românești, studiul oferă o retrospectivă a luptei pentru autonomie în Bucovina, evidențind momente cruciale și*

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\* Review on: Mihai-Ștefan Ceaușu, Ion Lihaciu, *Autonomia Bucovinei (1848-1861). Studiu și documente* [Autonomy of Bukovina (1848-1861). Study and documents], Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2021, 374 p.

*personalități remarcabile. Identificând abordările literaturii istorice existente, autorii îmbogățesc cadrul documentar necesar înțelegerii itinerariului istoric parcurs de provincia imperială, insistând asupra luptei pentru autonomie ca proces indispensabil pentru păstrarea unei identități neasimilate în interiorul monarhiei habsburgice.*

Despite a “relative abundance” of writings on the history of Bukovina, only a few used a “rich documentary base” or have brought new archival documents into the historiographical field. In this regard, we can mention the Romanian, German, Austrian, Ukrainian contributions or those belonging to Jewish authors or from cultural spaces interested in the history of Bukovina. A list of these works can be found in the five volumes of Erich Beck, entitled *Bibliographie zur Landeskunde der Bukowina*, published in Harrassowitz Verlag.<sup>1</sup>

One of the authors, Mihai-Ștefan Ceașu, is well-known in the World of Clio’s Servants for the publication of numerous studies and articles dedicated to the History of Bukovina (in Romanian, German, and English), as well as for his collaborations on volumes of the history of the Habsburg or Austrian Monarchy, especially concerning the eastern part of this empire. His name also appears in the numerous scientific projects coordinated as Head of Department at the Institute “A. D. Xenopol” from Iași or as a collaborator to prestigious institutes and universities in Romania and abroad. The second author, Ion Lihaciu, is an Associate Professor, a member of numerous national and international scientific projects, author, co-author and editor of relevant studies in history, history of culture, linguistics, and a very active presence in several European cultural journals. The combination of the two authors’ efforts resulted in an important volume for understanding the history of Bukovina. The book has the following content: I. Foreword; II. The provincial autonomy of Bukovina between desideratum and achievement. Case study; III. Documents; Annexes; and Index of Names.

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<sup>1</sup> Erich Beck, *Bibliographie zur Landeskunde der Bukowina: Literatur bis zum Jahre 1965*, München, Verlag des Südostdeutschen Kulturwerkes, 1966, 378 p.; Idem, *Bibliographie zur Kultur und Landeskunde der Bukowina: Literatur aus den Jahren 1966-1975*, Dortmund, Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 1985, 534 p.; Idem, *Bibliographie zur Kultur und Landeskunde der Bukowina 1976-1990*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999, 843 p.; Idem, *Bibliographie zur Kultur- und Landeskunde der Bukowina, 1991-1995*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006, 895 p.; Idem, *Bibliographie zur Kultur und Landeskunde der Bukowina, 1996-1999*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, 858 p.

Using the 27 documents reproduced in the third chapter, the authors briefly review the key moments that marked the province's history after the surrender of the north-western part of Moldova, later called Bukovina. The new Habsburg land was legally founded by the Convention of May 7, 1775, and resumed in the Convention on Borders of July 2, 1776, concluded between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire. After "taking possession" of the territories, the imperial authorities endeavoured to keep the new "acquisition" separate from the rest of the Monarchy, preserving its "political individuality." That is why the new province was directly subordinated to the central institutions, creating an inexpensive and supple Military Administration of Bukovina meant to solve current administrative, legal or other problems. This state of affairs lasted until 1786, when the first administrator, Baron Gabriel von Spleny, was appointed. He remained in office until April 6, 1778, when Baron Karl von Enzenberg replaced him. The two generals "will prove to be good and capable administrators, using their talent and competence to promote the policy of the Vienna Court" (p. 15). The state tradition and nobility of the Romanians in Bukovina determined the imperial authorities to recognise their status as a "political nation" from the beginning of Austrian rule (p. 16). Even divided into the great and the minor nobles, this nobility formed the society's elite in Bukovina. However, according to Josephine principles, it was rejected from the governing act due to distrust of local elites and "especially for fear that driven by its interests, the group, it could have hindered or even prevented the application in Bukovina. of structural reforms" (p. 19). To these considerations, the authors add the low level of information and skills acquired through education and instruction and the lack of knowledge of the German language. That explains why the Austrian officers replaced the Moldovan governors.

The notable merit of the authors is to present the numerous reforming or ameliorating measures concerning the administration of Bukovina, applied by both Baron von Spleny and Baron von Enzenberg. When the socio-political situation was tenuous in the province - the authors point out this idea - the administrators of Bukovina at the local level and those in Vienna made some concessions to the requests from the local inhabitants. Such tensions arose when several ideas of organising the province - the complete annexation or division between Transylvania and Galicia - were circulated. In these circumstances, the representative of all the social categories in Bukovina, Vasile Balș, submitted a memorandum presenting the crucial demands of the Bukovinians. It was "the first important political manifestation of the Romanians in Bukovina after 1775" (p. 27). Despite all the support from Count Hadik, who warmly recommended the adoption of the claims in the memorandum, Joseph II continued to prepare for the

annexation of Bukovina to Galicia. Following these initiatives added to other factors, the emperor changed his decision on May 20, 1781, keeping Bukovina under the administration of the Aulic War Council. After the 1783 voyage, Emperor Joseph II retained his position. However, his desire to centralise and reduce the number of state officials created the preconditions for the future loss of the political-administrative individuality of Bukovina (p. 29). Following the monarch's visit to Bukovina and Galicia in July-August 1786, he finally abandoned the idea of turning the province into a military border area, choosing to introduce the civilian administration. The decision to annex Bukovina to Galicia provoked the opposition of the Romanian elite, which fought (until 1849, then until 1861) for regaining autonomy.

A brief overview of the main events with historical significance, up to 1848, can be listed: the abolition of the old titles of Moldavian nobility (mazil, boyar) and the introduction of those of knight, baron, count etc., on March 14, 1787; the memorandum of the spring of 1790, by which the people of Bukovina demanded from the emperor Leopold II, with arguments, the provincial autonomy; the imperial patent of September 12, 1790, published in Lemberg, by which the removal of the Bukovina nobility from the Galician ranks and the right to a diet of its own (p. 33) - never fully applied - announced the transformation of Bukovina into an independent province (fact considered by the authors of the book as a "milestone in the separation from Galicia, which appeals to the argumentation of the petitions of the Bukovinians from 1848-1849 and, later, in 1860-1861" (p. 34); the appointment of Vasile Balș to the highest political-administrative position, that of district captain; at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, respectively on April 13, 1817, the annulment of the separation of Bukovina from Galicia, by the decision of Emperor Franz I, and the return to political-administrative subordination, according to the 1787 patent.

Numerous and profound changes, generated and accelerated by the emergence and affirmation of the regional identity consciousness, simultaneously with the national one, marked the evolution from the decades until the revolution of 1848-1849 (p. 35-36). The local elite focused on obtaining provincial autonomy, the Romanians believing that will more easily achieve their goals in a Bukovina separated from Galicia. The favourable political climate, created after the removal of Metternich, and the participation of some young Bukovinians in the revolutionary actions in Vienna (i. e., Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki), strengthened the initiatives and revolutionary ideas in Bukovina. The Orthodox clergy, the great landowners, and the "intelligence" (supported by the masses, especially the peasants who wanted to be relieved of their duties) were at the forefront of the

revolutionary movement. On March 18, 1848, after Lemberg, the city of Czernowitz was engulfed in revolutionary unrest. Here, as in other localities of the empire, a Civic Guard and an Academic Legion were formed, which perished day and night on the streets to guarantee the peace of the inhabitants (p. 41). Under the influence of the events in Vienna, in Czernowitz and the province, numerous tensions broke out. Against the background of the changes caused by the removal of all forms of absolutism, on May 16/28, 1848, a large gathering of Orthodox priests from the Diocese of Bukovina took place, calling for a better administration of the Orthodox Religious Fund of Bukovina, removal of compromised officials, cancellation of the dismissal of Prof. Ion Calinciuc etc. The series of claims of the Bukovinians included the oldest desideratum: the administrative autonomy of the province and the separation from Galicia. In late May and early June 1848, the local elite sent the emperor a memorandum. This document contains the main political, cultural, spiritual, and economic demands known as the *Petition of the Land of Bukovina*. Gheorghe Hurmuzaki, Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki, and Johann Karl Umlauf von Frankwell significantly contributed to its preparation. In addition to the "Diet" and "Autonomy", other demands included: the recognition of political and religious equality of all denominations, the election of the Bishop of Bukovina by a national synod of laypeople and clergy, the establishment of a committee of secular and clerical representatives to administer the Church Fund (under the control of the Bukovina Diet), the establishment of a department of Romanian language and literature in Czernowitz etc. All these requests came to the attention of the Constituent Assembly in Vienna, which debated them, responding favourably to some of them.

With remarkable meticulousness, the authors present the elections based on the law of June 1, 1848, which took place between June 13 and 26, 1848. In addition, they analyse the pro-Galician position manifested by several peasant deputies of Romanian origin (pp. 49-54) and the pro-autonomist activity of Miron Ciupercovici, Mihai Bodnar, and Anton Kral (pp. 55-61). Following the change in the relationship between the autonomists and pro-Galicians, after Ciupercovici's resignation, deputies Ion Dolenciuc, Vasile Murgoci, Vasile Cârste and Gheorghe Timiș sent to the Imperial Diet, on December 15, 1848, a memorandum requesting the maintenance of "union" with Galicia, which was in contradiction with the *Petition of the Land of Bukovina*. In response, on January 20, 1849, the Autonomist Deputation presented Franz Joseph with an address in German and Romanian. The emperor assured that it would be resolved positively, according to the principle of "equal right" of all nations of the Monarchy. In the wake of the transformations produced by the revolution, the project of a five-part federal state

(Polish Austria, Czech Austria, Slovenian Austria, Italian Austria and German Austria) emerged. It jeopardised the autonomy of Bukovina, which would join Galicia and the Polish part of Austria. Therefore, on February 9, 1849, the Bukovinian Deputation submitted a *Memorandum to the Petition of the Land* to the Constituent Assembly meeting in Kremsier (p. 63). Numerous efforts by the autonomous deputies convinced the Imperial Diet of Kremsier to decide on the status of Bukovina. They were based on the arguments found in the four pro-autonomy and four anti-autonomy memoranda, recommending to the Constituent Assembly plenary to accept "Bukovina's inclusion in the draft of the Constitution as one of the 14 constituent provinces of the Austrian Empire" (p. 68). The seven Bukovinians deputies were also consulted: Anton Kral, Mihai Bodnar and Miron Ciupercovici spoke in favour of autonomy and Ion Dolenciuc, Vasile Murgoci, Vasile Cârste and Gheorghe Timiș against it. The latter subscribed to a subsequent protest by pointing the finger, which was against the establishment of Bukovina as an autonomous province (Kronland). The Constitution of March 4, 1849, proclaimed the province's autonomy.

Until the establishment of the neo-absolutist regime, the head of the administration of Bukovina, Eduard Bach, proposed another administrative and political division of the province, naming the new units according to some constituencies. Starting from the provisions of the Imperial Constitution, a version of the Provincial Constitution was drafted (p. 71), which specified the areas of competence of the Bukovina Diet and how it works. The city of Czernowitz was designated as the capital. The provincial constitution, the electoral law and the administrative-territorial division were approved by the Council of Ministers and sanctioned by the emperor on September 29, 1850. According to the final form, the six districts or prefectures (Czernowitz, Kotzman, Wiznitz, Radautz, Kimpolung and Suczawa) were to be led by a district captain or prefect, assisted by commissioners and a secretary. The authors point out that, despite the annulment of many of the rights gained by the revolution, the political and administrative autonomy of Bukovina has been preserved and strengthened (p. 73). In the following years, the institutional organisation of the Government of Bukovina became more significant. In 1854, a new administrative organisation divided Bukovina into 15 districts and the municipality of Czernowitz, which had its legal status. In the same period, the Country Tribunal was established in Czernowitz, having responsibilities in legal matters, trade, industry and mining.

Notable are the aspects that Mihai-Ștefan Ceaușu and Ion Lihaciu deal with on several pages (pp. 77-85), regarding the Country Diet, the Provincial Constitution draft, the election of deputies and the composition of constituencies,

the norm of representation, the right to vote and its exercise, the duration of the mandate, the role of the Country Committee, the coat of arms of Bukovina. The authors also insist on the efforts of Goluchowski, who became Minister of the Interior, to form a "Great Galicia" – dominated by the Poles – which would include Bukovina, along with the Duchy of Krakow. Due to the international political situation, the great financial crisis affecting the empire and the desire to gain the trust of financial circles, the Government of Bukovina was dissolved on April 26, 1860, and the province became part of the Kingdom of Galicia as a simple administrative district. The reaction of the Bukovinian elite as well as of the ordinary people proved to be of vehement dissatisfaction. A memorandum was addressed to the emperor, at the end of March 1860, among the signatories being Leon and Dumitru de Capri, Nicolae von Buchental, Ioan von Miculi, Dumitru von Perjul, Anton Lukasiewicz, archpriest Vasile Drabişca. The opposition of the Romanian elite in Bukovina could be easily understood, especially since during the period of autonomy when the Bukovinian society experienced a period of flourishing, materialised in the development of trade, the increase of the number of trivial and primary schools, the opening of the Gymnasiums in Czernowitz and Suczawa, the creation of the Land's Library, the establishment of a museum, the existence of a pedagogical school and a music school in Czernowitz. At the beginning of the summer of 1860, on the occasion of the meeting of the enlarged Imperial Council, the Bukovinians' requests were ignored by Alexandru Nicolae von Petrino, their representative in them mentioned political body. Even so, they asked for help from the other two Romanian deputies – Andrei Şaguna and Alexandru von Mocioni – who verbally presented the situation in Bukovina.

In September 1860, during the discussions on the political status of Bukovina, Alexandru von Mocioni pleaded in the Imperial Council in favour of the autonomy of the province, while Alexandru Nicolae von Petrino took an opposite position. As a result, the Federalist Constitution of October 20, 1860, based on historical law, did not provide for the organisation of the Duchy of Bukovina as a state (p.93). Proponents of the autonomist idea faced difficulties generated mainly by the initiatives of Goluchowski, such as censorship of correspondence, surveillance or detention for various reasons. The Bukovinians compiled a new and extensive petition, on November 10, 1860, signed by dozens of personalities, including Eudoxiu von Hurmuzaki, Wilhelm von Alth, Joseph Lepszey, Ion Calinciuc, Iordaki von Vasilco, Ioan von Costin, Gustav Marin, Gheorghe von Hurmuzaki. Instead of the dismissed Rechberg-Goluchowski federalist cabinet, a government led by the leader of the German Liberals, Anton von Schmerling, was installed, boosting the efforts of the autonomists. After numerous other petitions

and memoirs, the autonomist movement in Bukovina became visible both in the empire's ruling circles and in German publications in Vienna (p. 96). The Hurmuzaki boyars were at the forefront of the movement. Their efforts were successfully crowned by the Imperial Constitution of February 26, 1861, in which Bukovina obtained the status of an autonomous province with a representative in the Imperial Council of Vienna. The Diet became the most important political body in the province, consisting of 30 deputies, 29 of whom were elected from three major constituencies, thus gaining a six-year consecutive term. Any 30-year-old male, Austrian citizen, fully able to exercise his civil rights, could be elected to the Diet. The Duchy of Bukovina was ruled from the province's capital, Czernowitz, the Government of Bukovina acting effectively from April 22, 1861. On April 23, 1861, in Czernowitz, Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki and Iordaki Vasilco were honoured "as artisans of regaining the autonomy of Bukovina" (pp. 104-105). The authors' conclusion regarding this case study highlights how "the much-desired goal of the Romanian political elite in Bukovina, which also benefited from the support of other provincial nationalities, was transposed into political practice" (p. 105).

Chapter III, entitled *Documents*, contains 27 various texts illustrating the autonomy of Bukovina. These are collected from the archival funds at the Central National Historical Archives Service of Bucharest, the "Government of Bukovina" Fund, at the Ministry of Interior [of Austria] or the County Service of the National Archives Suceava, the "Documents" collection, which are photocopies of the German originals in Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien; the publications such as *Zur Begründung der Bukowinaer Landes-Petition*, Wien, Druck von Carl Gerold und Sohn, 1848 and *Emanzipationsruf der Bukowina, Durch eine Deputation unterstützt*, Wien, Druck von Carl Gerolds Sohn, 1861; the periodicals "Bucovina. Gazetă românească pentru politică, religie și literatură / Romanische Zeitung für Politik, Kirche und Literatur" [Bukovina. Romanian Gazette for Politics, Religion and Literature], Czernowitz, March 4/16, 1849, "Supliment la Gazeta românească/Supplement zur Romanischen Zeitung" [Supplement to the Romanian Gazette], no. 4, of 4/16 March 1849. Among the cited documents, the authors reproduce the *Petition of the Land of Bukovina, Memorandum to the "Petition of the Land", The Bukovinian Petition submitted to Emperor Franz Joseph*, signed by 250 inhabitants of all social classes, addresses such as the one issued by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Czernowitz for Anton von Schmerling, various notes from some Galician officials, reports. In German and Romanian, the texts are enriched with explanatory notes on their location, brief biographical data about some Bukovinians or Austrian officials, the meaning of words specific to the epoch, or the clarification of a historical or linguistic context.



The Annexes reproduce images of documents considered relevant by the authors for the subject in question. The paper ends with the Index of Names. Probably, from the perspective of making a complete working tool, a Toponymic Index would have been appropriate as well.

The challenging journey from idea to deed for obtaining the autonomy of Bukovina highlights the effort of several generations of Romanian boyars, politicians and ordinary people who capitalised on any favourable moment in the life of the province and the Habsburg Empire to preserve the individuality of Bukovina, an “acquisition” constantly threatened by the policy of colonisation of the imperial authorities. Among the well-known names involved in the materialisation of this cause are the boyars of the Hurmuzaki family, whose presence on the political and cultural scene of the province for almost a century has left deep traces. In this context, the Cernauca estate was the meeting place of many Romanian revolutionaries from Moldova and Transylvania. There, the ideas of “independence” and “unity” of Romanians were forged, inspiring *The Wishes of the National Party of Moldova*, a program published by Mihail Kogălniceanu, on August 15, 1848, in Czernowitz. He named the unification of Moldova and Wallachia “the key to the vault without which the entire national edifice would collapse.”<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting the seriousness of two leading specialists in the field of history, history of culture and philology – Mihai-Ștefan Ceașu and Ion Lihaciu – the book imposes itself by rigorously investigating historical sources, synthesising relevant scientific information, accurately translating documents from German into Romanian, and respecting the principle *sine ira et studio*. In other words, we are dealing with a significant contribution to the scientific dialogue between Romanian, Austro-German, Ukrainian and Russian historiographies on the history of Bukovina.

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