

GREAT UNIFICATION MONUMENTS

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Few years after Great Romania was set up, when Nicolae Iorga participated in the unveiling of some monuments dedicated to the historic event from 1st of December 1918, he appreciated that “the monuments and memorial sites represent the vivid history of the country and its people”. By this heartfelt and brief statement, the Romanian scientist expressed a concluding truth because, basically, that historic monuments, no matter what they look like – imposing and beautiful, or simple and modest – have the purpose to evoke reference pages regarding the Romanian Homeland and Nation’s history, the manhood and sacrifice spirit of the past generations in their fights to protect the ancient legacy, our state’s independency and unity. Consequently, the thousands of monuments and memorial sites over the entire Romanian territory – from Tisa to Nostrum, and from the Black Sea to beyond the secular forests of our sweet Bucovina, constitute a part of the spiritual wealth of inestimable value of the Romanian people, their existence being an acknowledgement of the Country’s history for our citizens’ national-patriotic education. A great number of historically interesting monuments on the Romanian land evoke and glorify the crucial event which took place 90 years ago, i.e., Great Romania’s coming into being, and all the heroes’ fights and sacrifices for this high ideal, desired by our people for centuries. As regards our investigations, inclusively on land, on Romania territory and also Basarabia, North Bucovina and the Quadrilateral, as in the entire area of Romanian life, there are, as spots of our national history, heroism and sacrificed country’s

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sons, about 11,000 monuments and memorial sites (mausoleums, statues and statuary groups, obelisks, monumental busts, memorial crosses and crucifixes, etc.). A representative number of monuments, dedicated to World War I heroes and to the Great Unification, are splendidly built, also beyond the country's border, especially in France, Italy, Germany and Bulgaria. Their history and significance can be read in the work entitled "Romanians in Europe and worldwide. Confessions for eternity," signed by General Floriean Tucă, PhD and Colonel Gheorghe Cristache.

Over one third of them, about 4,000 are dedicated to significant personalities and heroes from World War I or, better stated, heroes from the War of the Nation's Reunification, a wide military action being closed, happily, on 1st of December 1918, with the accomplishment of Great Romania. The majority were built, unveiled and sanctified in the first two decades after the Great Unification accomplishment. The blood shed by our people's sons and the extremely great number of casualties was registered in Romania during the world conflagration, when Romania entered with the declared goal to free their brothers for centuries under the harsh foreign power. The casualties reached about one million combatants (dead, wounded and lost in action); this gave way in the country to an exceptional and unprecedented trend of building monuments and memorial sites, commemorative war works, to honour those who had disappeared in different war situations for the highest goal of reunification of our country. There was almost no town or county in Romania without a monument built in honour of the soldiers, many giving their supreme sacrifice, to build Great Romania. Regarding this fact, in the pages of *Our Heroes Cult* magazine, the September 1922 issue, was written among other things: "*Everywhere, from Nostrum to Tisa, are built memorials, crosses, crucifixes or monuments, some expensive costing hundreds of thousand lei, other modest and short that are hardly seen over peoples' heads to their unveiling. There is no Sunday or celebration without a monument, a commemorative cross unveiling in memory of the natives dead for the country ... for the Great Romania fulfilment*".

A special role in the action of building monuments and memorial sites dedicated to our heroes of the War of the Nation's Reunification and all their struggle in different and multiple ways to accomplish Great Romania was played, in their honour, by our great historian Nicolae Iorga along with the representative members of "The Heroes' Cult" Society, set up after the Great Unification fulfilment on 1st of December 1918. The scientist and the society leaders considered a duty of honour, for every locality leaders all over the country, to honour their heroes of the War of the Nation's Reunification by building monuments and memorial sites.

The historian Nicolae Iorga attended the laying of the foundation stone of all the representative monuments dedicated to the Great Unification. Moreover, he personally edited texts or inscriptions for the most representative monuments. Upon these events, he would make a speech to evoke, in distinguished words, the significance of Great Romania and the blood sacrifices of the Romanian Army in the War of Nation's Reunification, to accomplish the Great Union on 1st of December 1918 and to remind about all the soldiers contributing to this epochal historical moment. On every monument is written the historical event it evokes and everyone is individualized in words. Usually, these inscriptions are heartfelt and warm, charged with a real national-patriotic emotion.

We reproduce, as follows, some inscriptions written on some monuments of our country, some of them in verse:

*"Heroes never leave us,
Their steps are heard profound through the century,
We all pass but they remain vibrating
Always contemporary with all their ancestors.
History is written silently and restlessly,
With unnumbered dead and their captains,
In every fight there's an immortality thought,*

And in all our present, everybody's pain ..."(inscription from the heroes' monument from Alba Iulia, the town of the 1918 Great Unification).

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Built in memory of the heroes who died for the People's unification during the 1916/1918 campaign. With our blood was made the Union of all the Romanians /// For the people and country we shed our lives ... Passenger, don't pass without reading the names of the ones who gave their blood Great Romania's accomplishment ... – reading from the grave built in Albești, Argeș County.

We bow in front of the fighters for people's reunification and their holy sacrifice we honour and appreciate. (inscription from the heroes' crucifix from Azuga, Prahova County).

*Whoever masters the land, masters the Country.
Romanians from the four angles, now or never, unite your souls...
One people's existence is never discussed, but is asserted*
(inscription from the heroes' monument built in Bania, Caraș-Severin County).

*The holy places to confess,
And also the rows of crosses
Safeguarding the graves,
Where sleep the heroes,
Compounding the ground
With their own blood's sacrifice.
Reuniting the land. (Inscription from the heroes' sanctuary in Bucharest, Ghencea military cemetery).*

Tell the future generations that we shed our supreme sacrifice on the battle field to reunite the people (inscription from the Engineers' monument, "The Lion", Bucharest).

In this place, on 8th of November 1918, were burnt at the stake, upon the order of our peoples' enemies, 45 Romanians.

Let Romania for all Romanians be created from their ashes.
(inscription from the heroes' crucifix from Beliș, Cluj County).

This temple of ancestors' virtues was built for you, heroes from Romanați, and to you goes our respectful thought of today and tomorrow's people; to you, we should thank for a reunited people, accomplishing the whole Romania reunification (inscription from the heroes' monument from Caracal, Olt County).

Traveller, tell your successors that we, the braves from Ciupelnița village, perished in battles to fulfil Great Romania. (inscription on the monument from Ciupelnița village, Dumbrava, Prahova County).

*Don't forget the ones keeping the country's faith,
Fighting for the country's rising,
We built a Great Romania.* (inscription on the obelisk from Floresti, Prahova County).

1916-1918, for the Heroes from the 2nd Chivalry Division. The 2nd Chivalry Division in respect for the people's sacrificing for the country in the war to reunite the people (inscription from the heroes' monument in Iași, Iași County).

*Lay over their graves
The laurel leaves of victory,
For heroes to have
A better sleep* (inscription from the heroes' monument situated in Ilia, Hunedoara County).

*Dear heroes of Romania,
You made by your deaths,
A symbol of braveness.
Glory, the Country shouts to you,*

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*For the shed blood,
Glory, shouts the village,
Nobody forgot you.
You live by our death,
And in the mother icon,
You live in the children,
That still call for you.* (Inscription on the heroes' monument from Povorinca, Covasna County).

*Year by year, the entire century will pass,
And all your friends will also perish,
But, to your grave successors will come to bow,
With memories vivid in the soul.* (Inscription from the heroes' monument in Rădăuți, Suceava County).

Here rest the soldiers who died in these places in the 1916-1918 war...

*The soldiers fell for the country,
Brave men of the faith, fighters,
Wherever you lie in your graves,
May you ever rest in peace.* (inscription from the mausoleum from Soveja, Vrancea County).

*Romanians from the fourth angles, now or never united in thought,
united in senses ... Don't shed tears on the heroes' graves, but rather
honour them in songs, as for the fame of their names to remain an echo by
centuries' legend ...*

*Happy is the one stepping over the ground,
Seeing in its country the freedom reborn,
Happy and great is the one under the sun,
Who dies for Romania, gaining immortality* (inscription on the heroes' monument from Sescova, Braşov County).

We dearly sacrificed our lives to the most beautiful ideal: the unification of all Romanians and this is to serve as an example of how to keep the country's holy ground shed with our blood (inscription from the heroes' monument in Târgu Lăpus, Maramureş County).

Heroes soldiers from the old kingdom! Blessed was the moment when you stepped in our brothers' Ardeal, releasing them by your sacrifice. Everybody's recognition laid you in this honourable place for eternal rest as unforgettable examples of patriotism and love for the country, today and always. Ardeal bows to you! (inscription from the Monument-mausoleum from the Gura Secului, Topliţa, Harghita County).

This is in remembrance over the centuries of the ones who died for the people's reunification. In front of this temple of national glory, lower your head and bow (inscription from the heroes' monument from Vaslui, Vaslui County).

*To remember the heroes from Zalha, dead in the great war;
Nothing in the world is more holy,
And more beautiful on this Earth,
Than dying as a fighter,
Wrapped in the colours* (inscription on the heroes' monument situated in Zalha locality, Sălaj County).

By the multitude of monuments and memorial sites of the 1st December 1918, the Great Unification is evoked and glorified; fighters and heroes' names from the great and epoch-making, strategic event are engraved there. Many of the monuments, by their location, by their appearance, architectural and artistic value and the messages they convey are not only places of local interest, but also of a national one. In front of them, on Romania's National Holiday, the Armed Forces' Day or in other circumstances, there are military, popular and religious ceremonies; during them the peoples' heroes are evoked solemnly and wreaths are laid or

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flower bunches in memory and for the glory of the ones being honoured by the respective monuments of national interest.

In this memorials category are listed, among others: the complex of monumental busts of the brave fighters for the Great Unification fulfilment, situated in front of the “Unification” Museum building in the historic town Alba Iulia, the Unknown Warrior’s Grave, from Carol Park in Bucharest; the heroes’ mausoleums from Buzău, Braşov, Giurgiu, Focşani, Mateiaş, Mărăşti, Mărăşeşti, Soveja, Târgu Ocna and Topliţa; the monument up the Caraiman Mount; the heroes’ monument from Prunaru; the statuary (sculptural) complex from Târgu Jiu, the exceptional work of Constantin Brâncuşi, made up of the Kiss Gate, the Silence Table and the Endless Column or Infinite Column; the Arch of Triumph from Bucharest, etc. Very important, interesting and useful information regarding these memorials, as many others dedicated to the Great Unification are comprised in many works which also formed the background for our documentation in order to produce this article. We speak about the following volumes: Alma, Dumitru, *Heroes were, heroes still exist*; Tucă Florian, Argeşanu T., *Ucrain Constantin, The Triptych of the Romanian braveness 1877-1878, 1916-1919, 1944-1945*; Bălescu Valeria, *The mausoleum from Mărăşeşti*; Colonel (rez.) Cucu Mihai, *Romanian battalions Cross the Carpathians*; Colonel (rez.) dr. Gheorghe Cristache and Iosif Ion Batali, *The monumental ensemble from Valea Mare – Mateiaşi*; Nicolae Iorga, *Our war in daily notes. 1916-1917*; Kirişescu Constantin, *The war history for Romania’s reunification. 1916-1918*; Pascu Ştefan, Member of the Romanian Academy, *The Romanian state building. 1918*; Scurtu Ioan, *Lay over their graves the laurel leaves*, Colonel dr. Tucă Floriean, Cociu Mircea, *Monuments of the years of fight and sacrifice*; dr. Tucă Floriean dr. Costache Gheorghe, *The altars of the people’s heroes. Monuments and memorial sites in the area of Romania. A Short Dictionary*; Dr. Tucă Floriean, Dr. Scriciu Liviu, Constantin Brâncuşi, the Lucifer of the Romanian and world sculpture; Brigadier General (rez.) Dr. Tucă Florian, Brigadier General Dr. Zisu Cătălin, *Monuments and memorial sites from Prahova County. Encyclopaedic Dictionary in two volumes*; prof. Ionescu

Nicolae, The fire triangle from Mărășești, Oituz; Dr. Tucă Floriean, Prof. Ionescu Nicolae, Prof. Raicu Romulus, *The saga of the 1916-1918 years. The war for Great Romania's fulfilment; Heroic Romania magazine, new series (issues for 1997-2008 years)*. It would be praiseworthy if NGO or GO granted some funds to manufacture 1,460 crosses for the Heroes of Mărăști and another 3,000 for the other two battlefields from Mărășești and Oituz, following the French example (they already have tens of thousands of crosses aligned as in a parade, to honour their heroes). We should do the same with our nation's heroes.

Into the closing part, we will quote some verses from the immortal Heroes' Hymn, exceptionally created after the Great Unification:

*Scatter on their graves
Laurel leaves,
For the happy heroes to have
Sweeter rest.
Raise their fame
On the immortality pyramid.
Write down in the golden books,
Their immortal song.*

