“My wish is, first of all, the fulfilment of the promises made to the Romanian nation...”  
(Avram Iancu)

Avram Iancu, Alias “Decebalus Redivivus”

The first consistent analysis, based on original archival sources, of the question of Emperor Franz Joseph I’s decoration of Avram Iancu and the other Romanian heroes who showed dynastic loyalty during the Revolution of 1848–1849, fighting fiercely against the Hungarian troops, was carried out in the interwar period by the academic Ion I. Nistor. The results of this painstaking research were published in Bucharest in 1931, and the data provided on that occa-

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sion help us better understand a controversial episode of the post-revolutionary period.

Even in more recent times, due to ignorance of the main sources of the period, this episode often leads to truncated evaluations in Romanian historiography. There are still many who seek to find out “the reasons why the Imperial Court in Vienna did not recognize Avram Iancu as a hero and defender of Austrian interests in Transylvania, without finding any logical historical explanation for the deplorable and ungrateful behavior of the Austrians towards Avram Iancu,” the man who, during the events of 1848–1849, was the only one in Transylvania who defended the interests of the Habsburg Crown against the Hungarian Revolution, in addition to the national rights of the Romanians. Another question relates to why the Austrians so deeply detested Avram Iancu, the “Wounded Eagle” of the Revolution.

The reasons for this antipathy on the part of Emperor Franz Joseph I towards Avram Iancu and his comrades-in-arms have been attributed by recent critics to the fact that the hero had been recognized as a general and “King of the Romanians” by Tsarist General Alexander von Lüders, who had invaded Transylvania following the Warsaw agreement between the Russians and the Austrians. In addition, Avram Iancu and Axente Sever had written a memorandum to General Lüders asking the Russian tsar to intercede with Emperor Franz Joseph I on behalf of the Romanians. Of course, there is a lot of truth in these opinions, but the reality under discussion is more complex and requires a deeper assessment.

The first step in the matter of Avram Iancu being honored by the Court of Vienna for his heroism was taken by Bishop Andrei Șaguna himself. On 3 July 1849, he proposed to the Minister of the Interior Alexander von Bach that Avram Iancu be promoted to the rank of captain in the Imperial Army. The proposal was for Iancu and his soldiers to form a volunteer corps to defend the inhabitants of the province from the rest of the Hungarian troops who were plundering the population of Transylvania, organized in roving bands. This request was based not only on the need for security in a province still marked by revolutionary tensions, but also on the dynastic loyalty that Avram Iancu and his comrades-in-arms had shown so often during the resistance in the Apuseni Mountains, at the time of the civil war. It had come at a high price: around 40,000 human casualties (the Transylvanian Romanians numbered 1,600,000, so they lost 40 per cent of their total population), but also material damage amounting to 29,260,000 silver florins.

As a result of this more than convincing plea, which was supported by the testimonies of the soldiers who had fought in the province, Alexander von Bach decided in the Council of Ministers, on 18 August 1849, to decorate Avram
Two days later, the minister of the Interior reiterated the merits of Iancu and his fighters, and proposed that Iancu be given high honors, i.e., that he be accepted in the Imperial Army with the rank of captain, as had been done in 1848 with Đorđe Stratimirovich, commander of the Serbian army, at the insistence of the Croatian General Josip Jelačić.

The proposal for the decoration of Avram Iancu and his admission to the Imperial Army reached Emperor Franz Joseph I on 12 September 1849. The idea of promoting him to captain was not accepted, but the prospect of the decoration itself remained. The refusal was due to the fact that the Court of Vienna had adopted a reticent attitude towards the Romanians, despite the dynastic loyalty they had shown during the revolution. In effect, an “invisible war” began against the Romanians, especially as biased information was sent to Vienna because of their political and national claims.

This information came from the Transylvanian Saxons, according to an “old tradition”: on 14 April 1849, when the Diet of Debrecen dethroned the House of Habsburg and proclaimed the republic, the Saxon magistrates of Brașov (Kronstadt, Brassó) and Sighișoara (Schäßburg, Segesvár) welcomed the decision, portraits of the rulers were thrown away, Saxon officers and soldiers fought in Hungarian battalions, and the Romanians were criticized for speaking out in favor of the deposed despots and defending the emperor’s cause.

The Saxons saw in Avram Iancu a “Decebalus Redivivus,” and in his battles for the House of Austria a “new Dacian impetus that could turn Transylvania into Wallachia.” The contempt for the Romanians also appeared in the Viennese press, which wrote: “A Dacian-Roman metropolitanate in Transylvania and then the East is lost for Austria.”

The creation of a metropolitanate for all Romanians in the Habsburg Empire was the great ideal of the hierarch Andrei Șaguna. Such an idea of a Romanian metropolitanate could take shape in a period of great turmoil such as that between 1849 and 1870. The metropolitanate had to include all the Romanians of the Habsburg Empire, since they could only survive as a national entity in the form of an autonomous duchy in a federal empire. This was also the reason why the hierarch spoke with great conviction in favor of the autonomy of the Church, convinced that the State should provide the Church with material support, while respecting the autonomy of institutions and the freedom of conscience of the faithful. In return for autonomy and material support, Șaguna promised the authorities a devoted clergy who could use their influence over the peasant masses.

The idea of ecclesiastical autonomy for the Romanians, with which the Saxons sought to increase the antipathy of the Viennese Court towards the Romanians, was an “effective weapon” that was known to provoke hostility from the
central authorities. The events of the previous year in the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, where in 1849, under the impetus of the Freemason Bishop of Csanád, Mihály Horváth, an attempt had been made to create an independent Hungarian national Church, separate from the Holy See, on the model of the Anglican Church under Henry VIII,18 had created unexpected tensions. This idea, combined with Hungary’s Declaration of Independence from the House of Austria, proclaimed in Debrecen on 14 April 1849, could not be viewed favorably by the Viennese authorities.

Saxon antipathy towards the Romanians increased in 1850, when Avram Iancu continued to be vilified in the Viennese press. There he was described as “a thief and a peasant who does not give up his trade even after the war,”19 despite the fact that Iancu had obeyed the demobilization order of 2 September 1849, and on 22 October 1849 he and his Motzen had voluntarily laid down their arms, handing over seven cannons and several shells to the Gubernium.20 This antipathy of the Transylvanian Saxons towards the Romanians and their political elite gained momentum especially after the defeat of the Revolution of 1848–1849.

Before that, however, the Saxons and the Romanians had been on the same side of the fence. When the Hungarians realized that they did not have a demographic majority on the territory of historical Hungary, they decided to put the national program of the union of Transylvania with Hungary first, namely, the imposition of the Hungarian language as the official language of the administration of the principality. It was also the reason why the Saxon University (Sächsische Nationsuniversität, Universitas Saxonom) allied itself with the Romanians, who were in the process of building their nation, and took part in joint actions.21 Moreover, at the beginning of the Revolution of 1848, as already mentioned, Romanians and Saxons showed dynastic loyalty to the House of Habsburg, and on 3 April 1848 the Saxon University recognized the Romanians of the Royal Land (Saxon Land, Königsboden, Fundus Regius) as equal to the Saxons.22

The situation worsened after the end of revolutionary hostilities. The Romanians in Transylvania then continued their active campaign for national rights, but the Court in Vienna could not look favorably on movements demanding rights that entailed a framework of equality, and instead promoted the Germanization of the imperial provinces. The Transylvanian Saxons also fought for their own political ends, lobbying the Viennese Court through their own delegates in 1848–1849.23 They attracted high imperial officials to their side, such as Eduard von Bach, who also became an “advocate” for the Saxons.24 After the end of the Revolution, they realized that both the non-unitary geographical-territorial configuration of the Silesian region and the Romanian majority population were in fact obstacles to their own national aspirations.25
The Romanians, for their part, although they had showed loyalty to the sovereign during the 1848 Revolution, never gave up their own national aspirations, without having enough trained cadres to ensure sufficient weight in the new administration. Local control passed to the Saxons, who were better educated, spoke German and thus became the “favorites” of the Austrians. The Saxon elite thus became the basis of the new post-revolutionary administration of the province, and the new decrees of the imperial court did not affect the Saxon Land. Here, the old administrative division into districts and seats was preserved, as was the old legal organization.\(^{26}\) The Saxon vilification of the Romanian majority was aimed precisely at keeping them out of key positions in the provincial administration and the army; in other words, through such methods the Saxons sought to preserve their own advantages and privileges, thus blocking the rise of the “competition,” the Romanian elites, to senior positions in the provincial administration as well as in the army.

In addition, the idea of Daco-Romanianism, of the unity of all Romanians in a strong state, which was consolidated by the generation of the 1848 Revolution and which the Saxon press used precisely to increase the antipathy of the Court of Vienna towards the Romanians, also managed to create a furore at the time. The negative image was cemented in the collective consciousness and became the basis on which political and cultural-educational actions were crystallized in the general action for the affirmation of the Romanians within the Habsburg Monarchy.\(^{27}\)

One of these forms of political and cultural affirmation of the Romanians, the recognition of their important role within the Habsburg Monarchy, was the strong lobbying carried out in favor of the Romanian elite in 1848–1849. They were to be rewarded for their dynastic loyalty in the same way as the other leaders of the peoples of the empire. Among those who contributed to this lobby were not only Romanians, but also Austrian soldiers, who, knowing the merits of Avram Iancu and his comrades in the hard battles of the revolution, pleaded for them to be duly rewarded. This was the case with Colonel Karl von Urban, Major Alberti, Captain Gratze, and lieutenants Manzat, Ivanovics, and Novak. They wrote very favorable reports about Avram Iancu and the other ex-combatants.\(^{28}\)

The Transylvanian Governor Ludwig von Wohlgemuth, after collecting all the information received, drew up his own very favorable report, which he sent to the Minister Alexander von Bach, in July 1850. The latter drew up another report, which was sent to the Council of Ministers on 4 July 1850, and then to the emperor. According to this detailed report, the orders and persons proposed for decoration were as follows:
• Commander Cross of the Order of Leopold for three persons (Franz Josef von Salmen, Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church Andrei Șaguna, Josef Bedeus von Scharberg); 29
• Knight’s Cross of the Order of Leopold for five persons (Count József Kemény of Magyargyergyomostor, the Superintendent of the Evangelical Church from Transylvania Georg Paul Binder, Josef Florian Glanz, minister councilor, and Johann Daniel Ziegler, mayor of Sibiu); 30
• Iron Crown 2nd class for Count József Bánffy, chamberlain and government councilor; 31
• Iron Crown 3rd class for Honnamon, Axente Sever, Avram Iancu, and Simion Balint (the emperor erased and mentioned the Golden Cross of Merit with Crown, so he denied the title of nobility to the Romanians); 32
• Knight’s Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph for eight persons (Kirchner, Wächter—who was removed by the hand of the emperor, Schlauff, Schmied, Lange, Dindal, Müller); 33
• Golden Cross of Merit with Crown for 30 persons (nominated: Friedrich von Sachsenheim, Petru Popescu, Jakob Rannicher, Iosif Ighian, Josef Marlin, Aibin [?], Vasile Fodor, Gottfried Marzloff, Professor [Simion] Bárnuțiu, G. Filkeny, Kaspar von Ugron, Josef Schutz, J. Raymund, [Priest Sava] Popovici [Barcianu from Râșinari/Städterdorf, Rsinân], Friedrich Wagner, [Daniel Gräser], Nicolae [Corcheș], M. Kräger, [Vasile Papp], Adolf [?] Dietrich, Kaylich [?], Simion Groza, Ambrosius Horniat [?], Nicolae Vlăduțiu, Ludwig Salkay, Ludwig Bodnar, K. Leitzken, Mihaic Andreica, [Clemente Adiudeanu], I. Ludwig; deleted by the emperor’s hand: Friedrich von Sachsenheim, Rannicher, Fodor, Papp, Andreica, Adiudeanu; added by the emperor’s hand: Axente Sever, Iancu, Balint and Wächter); 34
• Silver Cross of Merit with Crown for 16 persons (David Nicolai, Alexandru Ilazia Popea, Amos Frâncu, Toader Iulian, George Matei, Dumitruc Corvin, Ion Daniil, Partenie Rațiu, Ion Balint, Vasile Balint, Samuil Simonis, Macarie Moldovan, Ion Bătțeanu [?], Vasile Rasu, Ioachim Olteanu, Pinciu);
• Silver Cross of Merit without Crown for 35 persons (Gross, Lang, Schuner [?], Theil, Lipphardt, Schmidt, Hann, Schieb, Kiesch [?], Steiner, Hartmann,
Minister Bach had to take into account the emperor’s interventions, and so a new list had to be drawn up for the recipients, which was shorter than the one originally proposed, i.e., 135 people. The original list included 137 people, of whom 65 were Romanians, 60 Saxons, 11 Hungarians, and one Armenian. The new version of the list of honors was signed by the emperor in Bad Ischl on 21 August 1850. A certain Blatter, head of the Imperial Chancellery, sent the new version of the list to the Minister of the Interior immediately after the sovereign’s approval. This version contained the name of the decorated person, his place of residence, the proposed medal and the merits he had acquired.

In the case of Avram Iancu, the description highlighted the following aspects:

**Lawyer from Câmpeni [Topesdorf, Topánfalva]; decorated with the Golden Cross for Services to the Crown; very popular among the Romanians; used this popularity to encourage his countrymen to resist Hungarian tendencies and to adhere to Austria and its legitimate ruler; at the first Blaj [Blasendorf, Balázsfalva] Assembly in May 1848 he helped to encourage the people; after the second Blaj Assembly in September 1848, he organized the National Guard in the mountains; in November 1848, he led the 1st Regiment of Romanian Border Guards, many thousands of soldiers, to Aiud [Straßburg am Mieresch, Nagyenyed] an Turda [Thorenburg, Torda], and from there to Huedin [Heynod, Bánffyhunyad], where he joined the Czechoslovak army after the imperial troops had evacuated Cluj [Klausenburg, Kolozsvár]; at the end of December, Iancu retreated to the Apuseni Mountains, where, together with Balint and Sever, they held out for eight months, despite the lack of food and ammunition; the enemy, who advanced on 6 and 18 May, then on 11 June 1849 with cannons and large forces as far as Abrud [Großschlatten, Abrudbánia], was twice defeated and the third time, due to losses and the denial of access to supplies, was forced to retreat after a nine-day battle. There and at Alba Iulia [Karlsburg, Gyulafehérvár], the emperor’s authority was maintained, and Iancu’s popularity boosted the morale of the people and increased the resistance of those who fought hard without resources.**

Despite these guarantees, the image of Avram Iancu and his fighters at the Viennese Court did not improve. In addition to the negative lobbying of the Transylvanian Saxons, new vectors of influence appeared which, paradoxically, although not hostile to the Romanians, did not add any value to their national cause: General Alexander von Lüders and Tsar Nicholas I.
The “Invisible War” of Decorations between Petersburg and Vienna

The echoes of the bravery showed by Avram Iancu and the moți (Motzen) during the Revolution of 1848–1849 went far beyond the borders of the Habsburg Empire and were felt as far away as Tsar Nicholas I’s Russia. In 1858, Artur Adamovich Nepokoychitsky, chief of staff of the tsarist occupation troops in Moldavia and Wallachia, published in St. Petersburg (1866) a work entitled *Description of the Transylvanian War of 1849*.40 Among other things, he pointed out that the western part of Transylvania was held by the Wallachians, especially the mountainous and inaccessible areas, which allowed them to wage a defensive war against the Hungarians, under the leadership of Iancu, who was already well known.41

*Iancu, a man unfamiliar with anything to do with the military sphere, found it difficult to organize the militia, especially as his resources were totally inadequate. But what cannot be overcome by willpower?*

*Iancu—the soul of the Wallachian Uprising—enjoyed the trust and love of the people. Wherever he went, he was greeted with great enthusiasm and all attention was focused on him. The Wallachians saw in him their patron.*43

Thus, eight years after the end of the 1848 Revolution, Avram Iancu’s reputation was still high, especially in the high military circles of the Tsarist Empire. General Lüders himself played an important role in spreading this heroic image of Avram Iancu. Beyond words and praise, he turned to deeds, deciding to give the hero all the honors due to a great military personality. He summoned Iancu to Sibiu, thanked him for his bravery and promised him decorations.44 According to the sources, he also gave 3,000 gold coins to Iancu and 300 gold coins to Axente Sever.45

The latter was also said to have received a sword of honor from Alexander von Lüders. In Petersburg, the tsar, having been informed of the military exploits of the Transylvanian Romanians, sent Avram Iancu, Axente Sever, and Simion Balint the Order of Saint Anne, 2nd class, but the Austrian authorities delayed the transmission of these decorations. Nicolae Bălcescu, on the other hand, indicates that for Avram Iancu it was the Order of Saint Stanislaus, 2nd class, and for Axente Sever and Simion Balint it was the Order of Saint Anne.46

Alexander von Lüders also found out about the political and national demands of the Romanians, which he sent to Tsar Nicholas I in the form of a memorandum. The reply from Saint Petersburg came soon after. The tsar ex-
pressed his sympathy for the Romanians, but as he could not directly intervene in an internal matter of the Habsburg Empire, he decided to send the memorandum to the Court in Vienna. This approach, however, only worsened the image of the Romanians at the imperial court.

The visit of Avram Iancu and Simion Balint to Emperor Franz Joseph I on 8 March 1850 was not as successful as expected. The emperor was reluctant to accept the claims of the Romanians. Simion Bărnuțiu, in a conversation with Prince Karl Borromäus von Schwarzenberg, was astonished to learn that the Romanian intellectuals were considered dangerous, so much so that on 27 January 1851 Emperor Franz Joseph I himself declared that there were dangerous people among the Romanians. Caught between the reluctance of Vienna and the diplomatic “offensive” of the Russian officials, hit hard by the intrigues and the slanderous campaign of the Transylvanian Saxons, the recognition of the merits and national claims of Romanians experienced a setback. Their dynastic loyalty was stifled by the nationalism of the “people of masters,” felt by Austrians and Hungarians alike.

**Dynastic Loyalism vs. “People of the Masters” Nationalism**

The report on the merits and decorations proposed for the Romanians, as already mentioned, reached the Ministry of the Interior in the autumn of 1850, from where it was sent to the local authorities in Transylvania. Avram Iancu did not receive the news of his decoration until January 1851, when he was invited to collect it from the sovereign. Although he was invited, he refused to go, because he was offended that the emperor had not accepted the Romanian claims and had not awarded him the medal proposed by General Wohlgemuth, which would have given him the title of peer.

On December 1849, he was arrested “by mistake” at the Hălmagiu (Nagyhalmágy) fair by a Austrian patrol. The local people grabbed fence posts and went to free him. The militia captain at the scene of the arrest asked Iancu to calm the angry crowd. He made a speech, asking the crowd to remain calm as they were in no danger.

Axente Sever was also arrested and then released, an unpleasant situation described in the report of 7 November 1849. The arrest took place on 1 November 1849. Axente Sever was taken between bayonets to the barracks in Sibiu, although he had asked not to be treated as a criminal, especially as he had de-
cided to appear in person before the military tribunal. He was also deprived of the sword of honor given to him by the Russians, for fear of committing suicide. His arrest was extended, and on 24 November he was still being held in the Sibiu garrison, but he was released following the intervention of Andrei Șaguna. The real reason for his arrest was never established, but both Iancu’s and Sever’s arrests greatly outraged the Romanians in Transylvania and increased tensions there.

Behind it all was the unseen struggle between the dynastic loyalty of the Transylvanian Romanians and the nationalism of the “people of the masters,” which had been strengthened among the Austrians especially after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution that had shaken the Habsburg Empire to its foundations. A number of leading members of the Austrian political elite of the time concluded that the survival of such a diverse empire depended on how it was reorganized. This elite emphasized the need for reforms to prevent possible centrifugal movements of the peoples of the monarchy. The basis for such reforms was Austrian nationalism itself, which promoted a political and cultural unity centered on the Catholic religious identity.

The Austrian elite soon realized that they could not economically and militarily sustain for long a medieval dynastic empire with disparate territories, and so they gradually sought to regroup the empire’s forces in the Danube region. Gradually, Austria’s cultural identity began to be permanently associated with the southeastern European region, where ethnic diversity continued to cause instability. In this area, the German culture of the Austrian state, perceived as the superior culture “of the people of the masters,” became a guarantee of progress and stability.

This guarantee was also relied upon by the post–1848 Romanian political elite in Transylvania, led by Avram Iancu. However, the sad outcome of the action to honor the Transylvanian heroes of the 1848 Revolution was a confirmation of the fact that historical reality had weakened the intensity of the political myth of the “good emperor,” which had previously had a “therapeutic value” for the Transylvanian Romanians. It revealed a mental structure shaped by the Habsburg emperors, whose reformist policies responded to the messianic expectations of the Romanian population. For the Transylvanian Romanians, such a regrettable episode as the decoration was a signal that the time had come to rethink their position in their relations with the Austrian authorities, but also to make a new start.
Notes

1. Academician Ion I. Nistor (16 August 1876, Bivolărie/Suceava–11 November 1962, Bucharest) was a brilliant historian and a militant unionist from Bukovina, a member of the organizing committee of the National Assembly in Cernăuți that decided on the union of Austro-Hungarian Bukovina with Romania, a committee in which he drafted the Act of union. He was professor at the universities of Vienna and Cernăuți, then rector of the University of Cernăuți, university professor in Bucharest, member of the board of the Society for Romanian Culture and Literature in Bukovina (1913), president of the Committee for Bukovinian Refugees, director of the Library of the Romanian Academy, leader of the National Liberal Party, former minister of state, representing Bukovina, minister of Public Works, minister of Labor, minister for Religious Affairs and the Arts, and a member of the Romanian Academy. On the occasion of his acceptance as a full member of the Romanian Academy, he recalled a chapter in the cultural life of the Romanians of Bukovina and received a response from Nicolae Iorga. In 1916 he published *The History of the Church in Bukovina and Its National-Cultural Role in the Life of the Bukovinian Romanians*. He edited the volume *Diplomatic Correspondence and Austrian Consular Reports* (1922, 1938) in the Hurmuzachi Collection, the literary magazine *Junimea literară* (Literary youth), *Histoire de Bessarabie* (1923), and he also supported the journal *Codrul Cosminului* (Cosmin’s Forest) of the Institute of History and Language at the University of Cernăuți. His reference work remains *The Ukrainian Problem in the Light of History* (1934). Before his death in November 1962, he wrote the *History of Bukovina*, which remained in manuscript until 1991, and completed the synthesis of the *History of the Romanians* (2 vols., 2002–2003). He was arrested by the communist authorities on 5 May 1950 and interned in Sighet prison for 24 months. His sentence was later extended to 60 months. He was released on 5 July 1955. See Dorina N. Rusu, *Membrii Academiei Române 1866–1999: Dicţionar*, 2nd edition, rev. and enl., with a foreword by Acad. Eugen Simion, chairman of the Romanian Academy (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1999), 734–735.


5. See link above.

6. Baron Alexander von Bach (4 January 1813, Loosdorf, Lower Austria–12 November 1893, Schöngraben, Lower Austria), minister of the Interior of the Habsburg Empire, architect of neo-absolutism, but also of the 1855 Concordat with the Holy See, which gave the Roman Catholic Church control over education and family life.


10. Đorđe Stratimirovich (7 February 1822, Novi Sad–15 December 1908, Vienna) was the commander of the Serbian army in the Serbian insurrection of 1848–1849 and later a major general in the Austrian army.


15. *Siebenbürger Bote* (Sibiu) 59, 141 (1849); *Bucovina* 2, 40 (1849), apud Nistor, 289.


20. Ibid.


22. Gräf and Nägler, 322. See the Declaration of the Saxon National University, made in Sibiu on 3 April 1848, which decided to grant to the Romanians 1. electoral rights equal to those of the Saxons; 2. equal rights of admission to the guilds of Romanian apprentices and craftsmen; 3. equal canonical shares for Romanian Orthodox parishes or equal salaries for Romanian priests; 4. equal rights for Orthodox priests as the rights of the priests of the accepted religions. Ștefan Pascu and Victor Cheresteișcu, eds., *Revoluția de la 1848–1849 din Transilvania*, vol. 1, 2 martie–12 aprilie 1848 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1977), doc. 171, pp. 264–267.


25. Mádly, 290.

34. Nistor, 17–19.
40. Cosma, 482.
41. Cosma, 421.
42. Cosma, 426.
43. Cosma, 431.
48. Karl Philipp Borromäus Prince of Schwarzenberg (21 January 1802, Vienna–25 June 1858, Vienna) distinguished himself as governor of Transylvania between 1851
and 1858. He was the son of Field Marshal Karl Philipp Prince of Schwarzenberg, founder of the secondary line of the House of Schwarzenberg.


50. Bogdan-Duică, 212.


53. His refusal to accept the decoration was based on the fact that, above all, he wanted the emperor to decorate his nation by respecting the promises he had made: recognition of his nation and its language, then equality with the other nations of Transylvania. See Bogdan-Duică, 213.


**Abstract**

Between Dynastic Loyalty and the Nationalism of the “People of the Masters:” Avram Iancu and the “Invisible War” of Decorations

This study presents a very important and sensitive part of the life and activity of the Romanian national hero Avram Iancu, after the end of the Revolution of 1848–1849. Given their achievements during the revolutionary battles, he and his comrades-in-arms should have been decorated and rewarded accordingly. Despite the testimonies and recommendations of important personalities of his time, Avram Iancu did not receive the recognition and the distinctions due from the Emperor Franz Joseph I. Moreover, he and his comrades-in-arms were humiliated, falling victim to the intrigues of the Transylvanian Saxon elites in the high political spheres of Vienna. This analysis shows how the heroes of the Romanian nation from Transylvania of the first half of the 19th century, caught between dynastic loyalty, the intrigues of the Transylvanian Saxons and the nationalism of the “master people” of Austria, suffered disappointments and thus ended a difficult chapter of their modern history. It was a time of struggle for political and national rights.

**Keywords**

Avram Iancu, Transylvanian Revolution of 1848–1849, military decorations, ethnic relations