

**JACQUES-PIERRE BRISSOT
AND THE TRANSYLVANIAN ROMANIANS IN 1784**

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In the mid-18th century the European society entered a new stage of evolution. The Old Regime of Western Europe was experiencing a deep crisis in those historic ages, which culminated in the French Revolution of 1789 whose echoes and consequences reverberated throughout the continent. New social-political and cultural-ideological phenomena anticipated the deep metamorphoses that were to come with the end of a century called the Century of Enlightenment and Reason, after all preparing in their turn the aforementioned social changes. The entire 18th century was an age of transition, of mutations from old to modern mentalities, from Small to Great Europe, at that time incorporating new geographical-political areas, including the Romanian Countries. The European space expansion could be distinguished not only in the cosmopolitan trend of the century, but also in the growing circulation of people and merchandise following the improvement of the ways and means of transportation. Progressive ideas circulated more quickly – now spread by the press –, and they were increasingly antagonistic to aristocratic practices which the representatives and supporters of European monarchies strove to preserve in the respective kingdoms and empires. The enlightened spirits gathered around the *Encyclopaedia* preached new political concepts and aims, liable to lead to social happiness, expressed by an increase in wealth, trade, craftsmanship, industry or thought and science.

Such evolutions took place against the background of a demographic boom, so that the European population became two times more numerous, with growing needs and demands.

The Enlightenment Europe incorporated not only a wider geographical area, but also a denser demographic landscape, which they strove to improve through culture, elementary education above all, thus becoming at the same time a Europe of ideas¹. France held a leading place in the dissemination of new ideas, so that one

¹ See in detail Pierre Chaunu, *Civilizația Europei în Secolul Luminilor*, 1–2, București, 1986.

may speak of a true French hegemony in the spiritual life of the 18th century Europe. The phenomenon can be discerned in the case of the Romanian Countries as well, even though French influences reached these lands through intermediaries.

The new ideas of the Century were expressed in philosophical, political and literary works, whose printed copies were spread everywhere². The press, become daily in the case of great newspaper in the Western and Central of Europe, also militated for the new ideas through comments made upon main social-political or military events of the epoch. On the other hand, the 18th century was full of the so-called fictitious “letters” (*lettres*) in which political, philosophical, literary or army personalities approached topical issues of the European society or in various states. Some of these “letters”, chiefly written in French (also in Italian or English) were fictional elaborates as far as the case in point was concerned, but they bore the name of their true author. Other “letters” of the period were addressed to a European sovereign, as a rule, or to other political personality. The latter were more detailed, under the form of printed pamphlets, which increased their “open” character, but for fear of a negative reaction or even persecution the author did not state his name, calling himself just “a defender of the people”. Thus, in 1885, the French thinker Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754–1793) published two pamphlets entitled: *Un défenseur du peuple à l’empereur Joseph II sur son règlement concernant l’émigration, ses diverses réformes, etc.* (51 p.) and *Seconde lettre d’un défenseur du peuple à l’empereur Joseph II, sur son règlement concernant l’émigration, et principalement sur la révolte des Valaques; où l’on discute à fond le droit de révolte du peuple* (98 p.), without any further reference to their author³. The topographic note on the title page – Dublin, in both writings and editions – indicating the place where it had been printed was fictitious. The author wished to dispel any suspicion of the French Royal Court, as they could have put him under surveillance because the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, was sister to the emperor of Vienna to whom the critical open letters were addressed.

The latter situation was not accidental at all. Confronted with the respective social evolutions, several European sovereigns attempted at imposing certain reformist measures in order to alleviate the crisis of the regimes in their empires. This was the case with Frederic II in Prussia, Catherine II in Russia, and chiefly Joseph II in Austria. The behavior of the Habsburg emperor had been quite shocking with this respect; he had traveled in Western Europe under a false name, acting like a mere citizen and initiating open debates with most variegated interlocutors. In 1765, after he became a regent upon his father’s death, he paid informal visits to his states, among which Hungary, the Banat and Transylvania. For the first time in their lives, the people in the eastern provinces of the vast

² Paul Hazard, *Gândirea europeană în secolul al XVIII-lea de la Montesquieu la Lessing*, București, 1981.

³ Nicolae Edroiu, *Horea’s Uprising European Echoes*, București, 1984, pp. 132–144.

Habsburg Empire met a flesh and blood emperor who was willing to listen to their complaints, receive their petitions, even those forwarded by peasants, and addressed them a few words in their native tongue. In 1780, after the death of his mother, Empress Maria Theresia, who had been also concerned in initiating social-political reforms, Joseph II rose to the Habsburg throne and continued his visits to the provinces of his Empire, trying to initiate new reforms and implement the previous ones. His target was to centralize and level the Empire's structures, to acquire more wealth with the view to increase the income of the imperial exchequer, to establish order in the provinces, to strengthen the absolutist monarchy, to increase state involvement in the life of the body social⁴.

Among the reforms initiated by the "enlightened emperor", as Joseph II was also called, there were several concerning the administrative structures. In Transylvania – raised to the rank of High Principality in 1765 – they established a new administrative-territorial division in 1783–1784, which put an end to the old medieval autonomies of the Hungarian noblemen, the Szekler leaders and the Saxon patricians, fiercely defended by all those concerned. The establishment of concivility in the Crown Land in 1781–1782 alleviated the discontent of the Romanian communities up to then depending on the Saxon ones. From that time on the towns became state-controlled, and the rural administration was removed from the jurisdiction of the estate owners.

Emperor Joseph II also attempted at regulating the denominational situation in the Empire. In the Great Principality of Transylvania things were quite complicated after the religious Reformation in the 14th century and the establishment of the Calvinist Principality, as well as after part of the Orthodox Romanians in the province joined the Roman Church, and the Catholic Restoration occurred in 1715. The *Edict of Tolerance* of 1781 forbade persecution on religious grounds, the confessional communities receiving permission to build churches, and to have their own priests and teachers. Joseph II's reform also concerned the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Romanians, with significant consequences for the latter. An imperial decree issued at the beginning of 1782 made it very difficult to pass from one denomination to another, and the *Unification Decree*, issued in the summer of the same year, forbade religious proselytism⁵.

The Court of Vienna also tried to interfere in the relation between the enslaved peasants (serfs) and their lords (Hungarian noblemen). Regulations in the field had already been initiated in the time of Empress Maria Theresia, who had set the quantum of the weekly toil obligation of the serfs and bondsmen through the urbarial law of 1769 called *Certa puncta*. The aristocracy had put up a fierce resistance to the law and misinterpreted its content, which worsened the serfs'

⁴ *Istoria românilor*, VI, București, 2002, pp. 540–542.

⁵ *Ibidem, passim*; Angelika Schaser, *Reformele iosefine în Transilvania și urmările lor în viața socială*, Sibiu, 2000.

situation. During his journeys in Transylvania in 1773 and 1783 Joseph II found intolerable cases, and consequently he decided the immediate implementation of the urbarial law and the abolition of serfdom in this province of his Empire too⁶. In this way, Joseph II's social reform abolished the enslaved peasants' interdiction to leave their lords' estates and granted them free circulation from one estate to another. The Transylvanian aristocracy took a firm stand against the regulation, arguing their protest with obsolete articles from Verböczi's *Tripartitum* of 1514⁷. The abolition of hereditary slavery – the Hungarian aristocracy argued – would deprive their estates of labor force and result in the massive emigration of the Transylvanian Romanian peasants in the principalities south and east of the Carpathians, where they had anyway been taking refuge up to then.

Against this intricate social background, Emperor Joseph II attempted at strengthening the military border along the Eastern and Southern Carpathians by issuing an imperial order for military conscription on January 31, 1784, which stipulated the voluntary enlistment in the border guards of the people who lived along the borders of the Transylvanian Principality. At the same time, he regulated his subjects' emigration by the imperial decree of August 10, the same year, actually forbidding it. The measure had a definite physiocratic mercantilist character, according to which the greater the labor force the richer the state, thus ensuring increasing incomes for its exchequer.

The emigration decree would be criticized by J.-P. Brissot in an "open letter" addressed to Emperor Joseph II at the beginning of 1785 under the form of a printed pamphlet. The obstacles set against Joseph II's social reforms by the Transylvanian Hungarian aristocracy accelerated the outburst of the Romanian serfs' uprising in the fall of 1784, which provided the French thinker with the topic of his "second letter of a defender of the people to Joseph II", printed in the spring of 1785. In its content the author argued the right to revolt of the peoples in a contractual society on the basis of the theory of natural law, warmly pleading for the popular uprising in Transylvania.

Joseph II's reforms, the reiterated imperial decrees that explained the stipulated items and insisted on their implementation in the spirit of the ideas of the Viennese Court, as well as their postponement, and even annulment, revealed the complexity of the state-of-facts in the Great Principality of Transylvania. The will of the aristocracy prevailed there, and this social stratum was obstinately defending its privileges, feudal estates and county organizations, constantly blocking Vienna's reforms. The conflict between aristocracy and serfs grew deeper, the

⁶ D. Prodan, *Desființarea șerbiei în Transilvania*, in "Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medic" (București), 7, 1974, pp. 9–68 and in extenso in the same author, *Problema iobăgiei în Transilvania. 1700–1848*, București, 1989.

⁷ See D. Prodan, *Răscoala lui Horea*, 1–2, Bucharest, 1984; *Izvoarele răscoalei lui Horea. Seria A. Diplomataria*, 1–9, București, 1982–2004; *Seria B. Izvoare narative*, 1–3, București, 1983–1984.

peasantry becoming aware of the clash between the “enlightened” emperor of Vienna and the representatives of the Transylvanian aristocracy, opposed to any reform, any new and modernizing measure which naturally touched its old privileges. Consequently, the situation of the enslaved peasantry in the Principality grew worse and worse during the century – as compared to the situation in other parts of Europe where reforms were implemented – stirring more and more discontent and eventually the 1784 uprising of the Transylvanian peasantry⁸.



The quite complex social-legal, ethnic-political and confessional structures in the Great Principality of Transylvania, endowed with features that could not be found in other provinces of the Habsburg Empire or European states, were the outcome of a century-long specific evolution of the society in the intra-Carpathian area. In the 18th century, political, social-legal, legislative and confessional decisions led to an extreme polarization of the society and to social, ethnic, and denominational contradictions that deeply separated various social categories.

Thus, in the documents prepared by the imperial court on the eve of Joseph II's first journey to Transylvania (1773) they recorded the tax-free aristocracy, whose numbers amounted to 135,370 people, its ratio in the body social of the province being of 6%, one of the highest in Europe. The average in the Western states was much lower, in France, for instance, representing 1.3% of the total population, that is five times lower⁹. The social behavior of the Transylvanian aristocracy towards its subjects had passed beyond any limit of endurance, constantly kindling tensions which led to manifold forms of social protest, from individual or group discontent to local uprisings and finally to the peasants' great uprising at the end of 1784. In his “second letter”, J.-P. Brissot himself noted that a press account from “Hungary” on the uprising in Transylvania “substantiates his conclusion concerning the Romanians; the state of barbarism and ignorance I am about to describe is for certain their picture.

For countless centuries subject to a more or less stern despotism, according to the nature of its principles, whose yoke they were bearing, this people has for ever lingered in misery and ignorance. The feudal regime, whose despicable features have been erased from the face of almost the entire earth, still keeps its strictures within this miserable corner of country. Here one can find those English barons, those French earls who, locked in their small fortresses, regard their serfs as pieces of furniture which they can use as they please, they can play with, sell, take away their freedom, their work and even life”¹⁰.

⁸ *Istoria României. Transilvania*, I, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, chapter. *Politica socială a Curții din Viena în secolul al XVIII-lea. Răscoala lui Horea (1784)*, pp. 701–707.

⁹ *Istoria românilor*, VI, București, 2002, p. 83.

¹⁰ *Seconde lettre d'un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II*, Dublin [sic!], 1785, pp. 67–68.

The fact that the Transylvanian voivodat was included in the Hungarian kingdom in the 12th–16th centuries, which brought about the settlement of Hungarian population from Pannonia in the intra-Carpathian area and royal donations of landed property, led to the rise of a Hungarian source aristocracy that enslaved native Romanian rural communities. On the eve of the 1773 journey to Transylvania of co-regent Joseph II, the general-commander of the province, J. Fr. Preiss, presented him with a list of the Principality's ethnic structure in full figures, which revealed that there were 63.54% Romanians, 21.18% Hungarians, and 12.27 Saxons¹¹. The wide majority of the Romanian population was rural and enslaved, subject to the estate owners. So the social-economic contradictions were accompanied by ethnic disparity, which deepened the gap between the two social strata.

The same fact led to denominational distinctions; the Apostolic Kingdom of Hungary imposed Catholicism in Transylvania, whereas the native Romanian population belonged to the Orthodox Church. Whether the Transylvanian Romanian communities enjoyed or not the right to practice the Orthodox religion was up to the lord, the Catholic Hungarian nobleman. They also hindered the setting up of an Orthodox hierarchy of episcopal and metropolitan rank in the Transylvanian Voivodat and then Principality. The 16th century religious Reformation, due to the newly born confessional identities, deepened even more the gap between the social and ethnic categories in the Principality. Thus, Transylvanian Hungarians embraced Calvinism, most of the Szeklers, Unitarianism, and the Saxons, Lutheranism; the new Protestant denominations circumscribing even more the so-called constitutional estates of the province: the Hungarian aristocrats, the Szekler leaders and the Saxon patricians, who became the constitutional nations of the Transylvanian Principality in the 17th–18th centuries. Romanians were just "tolerated" in the Transylvanian society and only for the public welfare, for their work to the benefit of the country, but they were serfs (bondsmen) without any political or civil rights. Their Orthodox faith was also tolerated in the Principality, not received like the others' denominations – Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian –, and was not officially acknowledged but subordinated to the Calvinist superintendent. After the inauguration of the Habsburg regime in the province they tried to unite the Orthodox with the Church of Rome, the so-called "Uniate" belonging from then on to the Greek-Catholic Church of Transylvania¹². But the social-economic, political-legal and cultural emancipation promised to the Orthodox priests and Romanian communities that had passed to the Uniate Church was delayed and the situation of those who

¹¹ C. Sassu, *România și ungurii*, București, 1940, Annex VI.

¹² According to the statistic of confessions drafted by Auersperg in 1772, the number of Orthodox in the Principality was of 1,043,117 faithful and there were 222,856 Greek-Catholic believers, Transylvania's population being of about 2,010,000 inhabitants. Cf. *Istoria românilor*, VI, București, 2002, p. 89.

remained Orthodox worsened, so that during great social movements – like Horea's Uprising – Romanian peasants fought together irrespective of denomination. The gap was only between Romanians, Orthodox or Greek Catholic, and the others, Catholic or Protestant of other ethnic and social affiliation. The Transylvanian Romanians, serf peasants of Orthodox or Greek-Catholic persuasion, were subject to the Hungarian aristocracy, Catholic or Reformed. Thus, social, ethnic, and confessional disparity generated a deeper gap between the two great population entities in the Transylvanian Principality in the second half of the 18th century.

The Transylvanian social structures would give birth to quite peculiar events during Horea's Uprising, which did not take place during other peasant movements and hard to understand in Western Europe even by those who were sympathetic to the peasants' revolt in the Transylvanian Principality. Among those particular phenomena we should note the forced marriages between Romanian peasants and the daughters of Hungarian noblemen, who thus saved their lives. In the whirlwind of the uprising such deeds should be understood in the light of the peasants' ideas of social leveling. In this way they attempted to bring down the barriers between the two great social-demographic and ethnic-confessional strata in the province. J.-P. Brissot recorded – based on to the data available to him – the case of marriages forcibly imposed by the rebels to Catholic monks, who were married to old women or gypsies. In this way they tried to break down identity barriers between Orthodox or Greek Catholic Romanian peasants (serfs) and Catholic or Reformed Hungarian noblemen (estate owners) and their instruments, namely Catholic abbeys that maintained the gap between the two social-demographic entities in Transylvania. By these means, in a simple and concrete manner, the rebellious peasantry tried to annihilate the differences and establish the society of the future on a new basis.

Seen in this light, Joseph II's reformatory activity in the Transylvanian area was quite rational, the adverse response of a nobility heavy with aristocratic titles and privileges quite predictable, and the emperor's insistence by successive reiterations of the same measure over and over again and his political oscillations quite justified. The 1781 *Edict of Tolerance* – which J.-P. Brissot appreciated as a positive evolution – fell on a truly complex denominational soil in the Transylvanian Principality, several imperial reiterations being necessary for its implementation. The 1784 imperial decree for the conscription on a voluntary basis stirred unpredictable reactions, the enslaved peasantry rushed *in corpore* to the conscription centers, as they understood that the position of border guard would save them from their bondage. What was a burden in other social structures was here a relief, a true solution for the enslaved peasantry, a way to freedom. The turmoil generated by the conscription in the spring and summer of 1784 stirred the protest of the Transylvanian aristocracy, and its intervention to the Gubernium authorities in the province and empire eventually determined Joseph II to cancel the respective measure. Thus, the spark that ignited the peasants' great uprising in

the fall of the same year burst out against the background of the movements related to the conscription¹³.

The social reform of the imperial court, the attempt to interfere in the relationship between aristocracy and enslaved peasantry met with the greatest obstacles. The measure of abolishing serfdom, taken for several times by emperor Joseph II, was sternly rejected by the aristocracy, antagonistic to any change in the state-of-facts in the Principality, to any tendency towards modernization. Through the provincial Gubernium and country organization they constantly rejected the reforms envisaged by the Vienna Court. Year after year, peasant delegations, chiefly from the Apuseni Mountains area (established as imperial estate because of its subsoil wealth), took the road to Vienna in order to demand imperial intervention to solve the conflict. A leading personality in these delegations was Horea himself. Joseph II's reformatory activity and his demophilia led to the popular belief in the "good emperor", which determined the peasants to insist with their petitions. The Hungarian aristocracy blamed the Habsburg sovereign for his attitude, who believed that the 1784 uprising was the result of the failure of his reforms, and this line of aristocratic thinking is still followed by the historical writing of the neighboring Western country¹⁴. Historical research proved quite the opposite: the uprising burst out or was accelerated by the opposition of the Transylvanian aristocracy to the reforms of the Viennese Court. Only after it had been put down and as its consequence Joseph II implemented the imperial decree concerning serfdom abolition published on August 22, 1785, which granted the former serf turned into colonist freedom of movement, the right to get married without the consent of the lord, the right to move to other estates, in other villages; moreover, he enjoyed the right to education, to learn trades, to bequeath the assets gathered after a life time of hard labor¹⁵. It alleviated the effects of the imperial decree concerning emigration issued the previous year, which was debated upon in the two letters addressed to emperor Joseph II by J.-P. Brissot.

Horea's uprising had a strong impact in Europe, like no other Romanian social-political or military event since the saga of Michael the Brave. But at that time the sources of information and means of influencing the public opinion were quite different. The press had become daily and many newspapers appeared in various towns from Central and Western Europe in German, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish and, closer to the area of the Transylvanian

¹³ D. Prodan, *Răscoala lui Horea*, I-II, București, 1984.

¹⁴ *Erdély Története*, II, Budapest, 1986, pp. 1193-1195 and the English edition *History of Transylvania*, II, pp. 707-719; see also Nicolae Edroiu, *Istoricul cercetărilor privind Răscoala lui Horea (1784-1785)*, in "Memoriile Secției de Istorie și Arheologie a Academiei", 2004-2005, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2006.

¹⁵ See D. Prodan, *Desființarea șerbicii în Transilvania*, in "Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medic" (București), 1974, 7, pp. 9-68.

peasant uprising, in Hungarian, Slovak, Polish. In November–December 1785 and January–April 1785, all European newspapers provided pieces of information concerning the outburst and development of the uprising, its putting down, the capture and execution of the main leaders and chiefly published press comments on the aims of the peasants' movement in Transylvania. The news on the uprising was issued and drafted according to the preferences of the respective newspapers: on a reserved tone in the official publications of the royal and imperial courts and with critical accents against the state-of-facts in the Transylvanian Principality and the Habsburg Empire in most of the German, French and Dutch newspapers.

The most significant news in 1784 was then collected in year books issued by the great Western newspapers, among which the data concerning Horea's Uprising, thus acknowledging the importance of the event, the European character acquired by the Transylvanian revolt¹⁶.

From the European, English, Spanish and Portuguese newspapers the news concerning the rebellion of the Transylvanian Romanians was taken by the American press¹⁷, and in this way quite significant data concerning the events in the Apuseni Mountains area in Transylvania were carried across the Ocean. The press abolished the distance between people, the lettered circles could be informed in what concerned most important events taking place in relatively distant areas. The fact that the Romanian area had entered the continental informational circuit meant that it gradually returned to its European affiliation.

Horea's Uprising stirred the Westerner's interest and he was then offered most variegated printed "products". For illiterate "readers" they printed leaflets sold in towns and boroughs, which resorted to visual aids: drawings, engravings with episodes of the uprising, concerning the capture of the main leaders, chiefly their execution, with a brief explicatory note, were spread in Central and Western Europe at the end of 1784 and the beginning of the next year. "Silhouettes", drawings picturing the heads of the rebellious peasants, were very popular.

The European public opinion – represented by its cultivated elements – was then widely informed on Horea's Uprising through many pamphlets requested by its growing interest in such evolutions in an area that draw their attention more and more. It was also about human curiosity, so natural in the case of such events. In a German pamphlet printed as early as the end of 1784, entitled *Umständlicher Bericht von den in Siebenbürgen entstandenen Unruhen, aus wahrhaften Nachrichten* (15 pp.), they explained its printing as such: "Because the notoriety of the turmoil stirred now in the Great Principality of Transylvania arose everyone's curiosity, we believe that we do a not unpleasant service to the public by presenting a collection

¹⁶ See Nicolae Edroiu, *Răsunetul european al Răscoalei lui Horea (1784–1785)*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1976, 231 p.

¹⁷ Nicolae Edroiu, Vasile Pușcaș, *Răscoala lui Horea în presa americană*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie", Cluj-Napoca, XXVI, 1983–1984, pp. 401–407.

of various accounts, which could somehow satisfy its curiosity and shed a certain light on these events.”¹⁸ Another German pamphlet was published in Vienna in March 1785, describing the torture Horea and Cloșca were subject to on February 28, 1785; when trying to explain the peasants’ movement, the author of the brief account maintains a reserved tone, presenting the Romanians’ uprising as contrary to the legal framework, to Joseph II’s reformatory spirit. Thus, Horea and Cloșca “tried...to rebel...against the wisest orders elaborated to the benefit of the subject, to stir the people.”¹⁹ The anonymous author ended the pamphlet with an edifying invocation related to his outlook: “Oh! Cursed be the thought, if a wrong education, a life full of excess and defiance of the laws had to remind of the rebellion in the homeland!”²⁰

A positive piece of information on the uprising was recorded in other similar writings in the German area, such as *Zuwelässigkeit und vollständigste Erzählung des Aufruhrs der Wallachen, sammt der Porträts ihrer zwey Anführer des Hora und Klotschka*: Horea was presented as the undeniable leader of the Romanian rebels from Transylvania, a man full of resentment towards the noblemen, who had traveled for several times to Vienna to personally inform the emperor on the dramatic situation of the peasantry and the aristocracy’s abuses. The author of the pamphlet noted the attitude of the provincial and imperial authorities, which had a more favorable opinion about those who produce, namely the Romanian peasants, even though they rebelled, than those who consume, namely the noblemen whose rise to arms they disapproved of²¹.

In 1785, at the very beginning of the year, A.R. Nonne edited in Erfurt the pamphlet *Wallachen Aufstand in Siebenbürgen*, by putting together the news concerning the uprising published in the local newspaper.

The most popular and detailed German pamphlet dedicated to Horea’s Uprising was *Horja und Klotska, Oberhaupt und Ratgeber der Aufrührer in Siebenbürgen*, without signature, whose author was identified by further research as Adam Friederic Geisler, a German journalist interested in history. The writing aimed at being “A physiognomic sketch treated in a historical and psychological manner, together with the history of this uprising”, as revealed by the longer subtitle of the pamphlet. It was a new way of dealing with the actions of leading

¹⁸ *Umständlicher Bericht von den in Siebenbürgen entstandenen Unruhen aus wahrhaften Nachrichten* gesammelt von G.M., Vienna, 1784, *Vorerinnerung*; Romanian edition in *Izvoarele Răscoalei lui Horea. Seria B. Izvoare narative. Vol. III. Presă, Broșuri. 1784–1785*, Editura Academici, București, 1984, p. 346.

¹⁹ *Todesurtheil und Wohlverdiente Strasse, so an den zween Haupt Rebellen Hora und Kloczka, den 28-ten Hornung 1785, zu Karlsburg im Grossfürstenthume Siebenbürgen Wollführet worden*, Vienna, 1785, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

²¹ *Zuwelässigkeit und vollständigste Erzählung des Aufruhrs der Wallachen*, <Vienna?>, 1785, pp. 3–26.

politicians, and A.Fr. Geisler did the same with emperor Joseph II²². Besides the controversial character of the manner in which he presented his topic, deemed by the author as “an addition to the knowledge of the 18th century people in the year 1784”, the writing strove to give a more comprehensive picture of the history of the uprising by portraying the chief leaders as worthy of being ranged with the gallery of the most remarkable personalities in European history in the respective century.

The author of the German pamphlet widely used the data concerning Horea's Uprising provided by the German press and chiefly “*Politisches Journal*” of Hamburg, but also by the Dutch and English press. A.Fr. Geisler mentioned from the very beginning that he decided to first present to the reader the people whom Horea and Cloșca belonged to, “because I have no doubt that there are many who do not know the Romanians according to their true origin and nationality”. For this shortcoming he blamed “most of Germany's newspapers; chiefly wrong about this are the English and Dutch newspapers, which seems that cannot figure out anything about the Romanians of Transylvania. One could always hear them mentioning a great and dangerous rebellion in the Romanian country (in der Wallachey), moreover, and this is unforgivable, about a piece of land the emperor owns in this country”²³. Consequently, the first part of the pamphlet was entitled *Who and What the Romanians Were and What Are They Today*, where he provided the reader with data concerning the Latin origin of the Romanian people, its language, its condition before the uprising. The Romanians, the author went on, were “descendants of the Roman colonists in Dacia..., they are of Greek <Orthodox> persuasion and represent the greatest part of the inhabitants of the Great Principality of Transylvania”. They lived not only in Transylvania, but also in Hungary, Croatia and other provinces of the Habsburg Empire, they spoke the same language as the Romanians of Wallachia, Moldavia and Bukovina, they were a diligent people, with handsome men, longing for freedom, who “can hardly hide the burning blood of their ancestors. Their thirst for freedom is unquenchable, and the longing for the ancestral glory shines plainly in their eyes, even under the cruel yoke of the feudal system and beneath the veil of ignorance and coarseness which result from this system” – the text concluded²⁴. These lines sketched the origins of the Romanians' behavioral features and the reader was thus explained the reasons of the uprising in Transylvania, depicted in the second part of the German pamphlet.

The uprising was reconstructed starting with the Transylvanian Romanians' movements in the summer of 1784, in the wake of the conscription ordered by the

²² A.Fr. Geisler, *Skizzen aus dem Charakter und Handlung Josephs des Zweiten*, VI, Halle, 1786, where he included the text of the pamphlet *Horja und Klotska, Oberhaupt und Ratgeber der Aufrührer in Siebenbürgen*, printed in the previous year (pp. 124–169), which led to the conclusion that it was written by the same author.

²³ A.Fr. Geisler, *Horja und Klotska...*, Al. Papiu-Illarian edition, *Tezaur de monumente istorice*, III, pp. 304–304 bis, where the pamphlet is translated into Romanian.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 304 bis–305.

emperor, and ending with the capture of the main leaders, Horea and Cloșca. The author accounted the main episodes in the development of the uprising, namely the peasants' attacks against aristocratic courts; then the negotiations between the provincial and imperial military authorities and the rebels, their attack against Deva town, in which context he noted the items of the ultimatum addressed on Horea's behalf to the noblemen who had taken refuge in the town²⁵. This was very important for informing the German public opinion on the meaning of the Transylvanian uprising as the ultimatum was the very program of the 1784 movement.

In the third part of the pamphlet the author tried to offer a "physiognomic and character description" of Horea, Cloșca and Crișan, the only attempt with this respect known up to now in the contemporary texts concerning the uprising. It was based on the leaflets including the physical *Description* of Horea, together with Cloșca's, dated "Hălmagiu, December 24, 1784" and signed by the imperial general Sturm, issued in order to enable the capture of the two if they headed for Hungary and Austria through the Negreni pass²⁶, as well as their silhouettes²⁷. On these grounds, Geisler concluded that "Horea seems to have been born to rule; in truth, during the time he had played his part, he proved he was worthy of such role. His natural hatred towards the noblemen's acts of violence and his longing for freedom and property for him and his countrymen and coreligionists seems to have urged him to act..."²⁸

The end of A.Fr. Geisler's writing was in fact an annex concerning the questioning of Horea and Cloșca, when they "denied everything", the sentence of the imperial commissioner and the execution on February 28, 1785 in Alba Iulia; depicted in vivid colors, the later showed once more Horea's bravery in the last and extremely hard moments of his life. Perhaps the pamphlet had been prepared for printing between the moment when the German press published the news on the capture of the main leaders and the moment when the press provided information on their martyrdom because at the end of the text the author gave the freshest details that confirmed his "physiognomic and character descriptions" presented above.

Today we do know that A.Fr. Geisler's pamphlet had a wide circulation in Europe shortly after the uprising in Transylvania had been put down, at the same time being the most comprehensive German printed text dedicated to the event. Due to public demand, a new edition was published (Dessau, 1786), thus increasing the number of copies spread in Europe, which explained its presence in many libraries of the Continent, contrary to what happened with other such texts

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 306–319.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 404–405. (*Beschreibung des Radelführer Hora, welcher mit einem seiner Anhänger Namens Kloska luon durch den Pass Fekete-Tóo aus Siebenbürgen nach Ungarn entwichen senn solle*).

²⁷ Nicolae Edroiu, *Răsunetul european al Răscoalei lui Horea (1784–1785)*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1976, p. 128.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

printed between 1784–1786. The pamphlet was also translated into Swedish at the end of 1785, printed in Lund in 1786, and was the only printed text dedicated to the uprising that circulated in the Scandinavian countries at that time. The preface of the Swedish editor – dated “Lund, January 10, 1786” – stated from the very beginning that “Horea and Cloșca, friends during the time of their daring actions, should not be separated after their death, in order to preserve their memory in the Book of Time, as they were during their lifetime, together. In what follows, my reader, you may see part of the events in which they were involved...”²⁹

The thirst for knowledge concerning Horea’s Uprising, displayed by the readers of Western Europe, led to the printing of other pamphlets, such as the one published in Strasbourg in 1785, under the title *Kurze Geschichte der Rebellion in Siebenbürgen*³⁰. In the *Preface*, its author, remained anonymous, noted the strengthening of the revolutionary process in Europe in the 9th decade of the 18th century: “We are living in an age in which the turmoil within the state is not something rare...Europe looks forward to the great changes, which are still smoldering under the ashes...It is always useful to investigate the origins of such turmoil and note its development; our entire research enables us to come to the same conclusion that moral decadence, softness and luxury gradually undermine the basis of the state like an underground river, they cause turmoil and in the end lead to the collapse of the whole.”³¹

In general, the pamphlets published in the German area in 1784–1785 had a stressed informational character; they used press news arrived from Transylvania – directly or through the agency of the press of the Habsburg Empire. This was important for revealing the process of edifying the public opinion in the German states not only on the state-of-facts in Transylvania and the situation of the Romanians, the old inhabitants of the province. As compared to those pamphlets, J.-P. Brissot’s letters, published in France, were debates on ideas, they expressed strong convictions and attitudes concerning the questions related to the Romanians of Transylvania.

The “second open letter” addressed by Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville – under the form of a printed pamphlet spread in the European cultural milieus – to emperor Joseph II, dealing with the question of the imperial regulation concerning emigration, various reforms and chiefly the uprising of the Romanian peasants led by Horea, represented the warmest defense of the Transylvanian rebels. It expressed the most advanced opinions of the age; in the name of the natural right

²⁹ *Izvoare istorice suedeze privind Răscoala lui Horea (1784–1785)*. Edited by George Cristea and Nicolae Edroiu. Preliminary study by Nicolae Edroiu, Centru de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 212.

³⁰ Reedited in the collection *Izvoarele Răscoalei lui Horea. Seria B. Izvoare narative*. Vol. III, *Presă, Broșuri, 1784–1785*, Editura Academiei, București, 1984, pp. 376–390.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 376–377; Romanian translation in Nicolae Edroiu, *Răsunele europene al Răscoalei lui Horea (1784–1785)*, pp. 130–131.

of the peoples to rebel it fully justified the actions of the rebelled peasants and their leaders. The revolutionary accents pervading the letter, the most progressive in its time, could come but from France before the bourgeois revolution of 1789, and it prepared the ideological grounds for its future actions. Of all that had been written in Europe during the uprising and long after, of all the opinions expressed at that time, the pamphlet *Seconde lettre d'un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II* written by J.-P. Brissot, distinguished itself by its open theoretical debate on the natural right of the peoples to rebel. It expressed the fully progressive attitude of the representatives of social categories struggling against the supporters of the Old, monarchic Regime, frozen in their obsolete prerogatives and feudal aristocratic privileges. It was written in the light of the new ideas of the 18th century, pervaded by deep enlightened accents, expressing the determined protest of the new bourgeois elements fighting to take over the political power in France.



The author of the “two letters” addressed to emperor Joseph II placed himself in the position of a “defender of the people”, and did not write down his name on the title page of the pamphlets, his identity remaining a controversial historical issue for a century and a half. They were first ascribed to various politicians, legal experts or philosophers of the epoch. First they referred in general to a “French philosopher”, fierce supporter of John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), whose writings were often mentioned in the two pamphlets. Some dictionaries of anonymous works indicated as author the politician H.G.R. Mirabeau³² (1749–1791), others the revolutionary Jacques-Pierre Brissot (1754–1793). The former, namely Mirabeau, was more popular in the French milieu, and his name was indicated by Brunet. Consequently it was preserved as such in the old catalogue of the National Library of France in Paris for a long time, and from there it was taken by the bibliographies drafted by A. and G. Rally³³ and A. Cioranescu³⁴.

It was the merit of the historian Michael Auner to have brought for the first time in 1935 arguments in favor of J.-P. Brissot's, the future Girondin, paternity³⁵. Nowadays, the Catalogues of the French National Library in Paris mention the two letters signed *Un défenseur du peuple*, both the first edition of 1785 and the new edition of 1788, when they were bound together, as belonging to Jacques-Pierre

³² Thus, J.M. Quérard, *La France Littéraire*, Tome VI, Paris, 1834, p. 155; Barbier, *Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes*, Troisième édition, Tome IV, Paris, 1877, col. 450.

³³ A. and G. Rally, *Bibliographie franco-roumaine*, II, Paris, 1930, p. 144.

³⁴ A. Cioranescu, *La Roumanie vue par les étrangers*, București, 1944, p. 85.

³⁵ M. Auner, *Zur Geschichte des rumänischen Bauernausstandes in Siebenbürgen. 1784*, Sibiu, 1935, p. 38.

Brissot de Warville, thus acknowledging the paternity established following the researches done in the previous century.



As concerns the place of their publication, indicated as Dublin, it turned out to be fictitious, thus trying to conceal the printing house from the royal authority. The consequence was that it was impossible to identify the place where the two letters had been published. Most researchers indicated a printing house in Paris or other French town, the note on the title page aiming at diverting the authorities' attention. It might be possible that the text of the two pamphlets had been printed in Switzerland, in Neuchâtel, where, in about the same period, they printed *Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur, du politique et du jurisconsulte*, collection whose title page indicated Berlin; as J.-P. Brissot himself confessed in his memoirs, the editions of *Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur* were smuggled from the France of the Old Regime to the Swiss town.

Brissot's "letters" appeared in two editions, the first in 1785, as mentioned on the title pages: the author had no interest in changing the date of their printing. The "first letter" mentioned (p. 13) a press note published in *Gazette de France* on November 12, 1784, so its printing under the form of a pamphlet could have been done at the very beginning of the next year. As concerns the "second letter", we may also estimate a *post quem* date, namely April 1785, because it mentioned the execution of Horea and Cloșca, which happened on February 28, the same year, information that appeared in the European newspapers, including the French ones, in the month of March 1785.

Controversial was the date when the two "letters" were reprinted: one, two, three years after the first edition. It seemed that they were reprinted together and they were bound together as well, which explained the edition now in the "Albert I" Royal Library of Brussels. A hypothesis forwarded in the Romanian historical writing suggested the year 1788 on the basis of the version in the "Szecheny" Library of Budapest; the edition we have seen 35 years ago in the Brussels Library had a manuscript addition concerning the date of their editing, namely the date printed on the title page of the first letter was changed from M.DCC.LXXXV to M.DCC.LXXXV<II>.

The bound copy of Brissot's two pamphlets in the new edition, kept in the National Library of France in Paris, showed that 1788 was the year of their reprinting, which was relevant for the part they played in the anti-monarchic struggle led by the author on the very eve of the 1789 French Revolution.

The subsequent reprinting preserved the content and page distribution of the first edition (1785) as such. The reediting of the two texts in the epoch was highly significant in itself, revealing the fact that their content had preserved its "actuality" in the years after the events occurred in the Habsburg Empire, in Transylvania.

We are not able to evaluate the circulation of the two pamphlets, as we do not have precise information. The number of copies might have been close to the number of issues of the main French newspapers and it is very likely that the first edition of the first “letter” was published in small numbers in order to test the audience. The “second letter” that synthesized the ideas of the first and presented the author’s conclusions concerning the debate upon the imperial decree on emigration, opening the discussion on Horea’s Uprising, had a greater circulation. The second edition was perhaps more comprehensive, aiming at stimulating the debate on the respective topics and keeping alive the public opinion’s interest in them, and in this way, the European echoes of the revolt of the Romanian peasants from Transylvania kept on reverberating until the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.



Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, identified as the author of the two pamphlets addressed to emperor Joseph II with respect to his reforms and the Romanians’ uprising in 1784, was born in France on January 15, 1754 in Ouarville (Eure-et-Loir county). In 1774, when he was 20 years old, he added to his patronymic the anglicized form of his birthplace *de Warville*, which he used to sign his writings and then his speeches delivered on the eve of the French Revolution, and less often in the General Assembly during the revolution. After his journey to America, he called himself “Le Philadelphien à Genève”³⁶, also using the nickname “Un Américain”, and two years latter, in 1785, “A Defender of the People” on the title pages of the two “Letters” addressed to Emperor Joseph II³⁷. Other pennames he used were: “Un républicain”, in 1787³⁸ and during the Revolution³⁹, when he also signed several speeches delivered in the General Assembly of France “J.-P. Brissot citoyen français”⁴⁰, or plainly “Citoyen Brissot”⁴¹. So, when he wrote his daring texts he was 30 years old. He was a young man from a modest family, who

³⁶ *Le Philadelphien à Genève, ou lettres d'un Américain sur la dernière révolution de Genève, sa constitution nouvelle, l'émigration en Irlande, etc..., pouvant servir de tableau politique de Genève jusqu'en 1784*, s.l., 1783.

³⁷ *Un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II; Seconde lettre d'un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II*, Dublin <sic!>, 1785; Nouvelle édition 1788.

³⁸ *Observations d'un républicain sur les différens systèmes d'administrations provinciales, particulièrement sur ceux de M.M. Turgot et Necker, et sur le bien qu'on peut espérer dans les gouvernemens monarchiques*, Paris, 1787.

³⁹ *Au peuple souverain. Sur le procès de Louis Seize. Par un républicain*, Paris, 1792.

⁴⁰ *Rome jugée, et l'autorité législative du pape anéantie; pour servir de réponse aux bulles, passées, nouvelles et futures, du pape, etc. Par J.-P. Brissot, citoyen français (4 May 1791)*, Paris, 1791.

⁴¹ *Discours du citoyen Brissot, à la Convention Nationale, concernant la République de Genève*. Extrait du “Moniteur” du 22 novembre 1792, Paris, 1792.

managed to attend the law school, which enabled him to acquire the legal education and background necessary in the debates concerning the Old Regime, the main European monarchies, the reforms suggested by some of them. He became a journalist, deeming that the press had turned into an effective means of molding and educating the public opinion, and collaborated to several French newspapers in the 8th–9th decades of the 18th century. He was a collaborator to the English periodical “*Courrier de l’Europe*”, which synthesized the main data concerning notable events on the continent and which he reprinted, beginning with 1779, at Boulogne-sur-Mer⁴². It was the periodical that would publish much information concerning the peasants’ uprising in Transylvania during its development, the data contained in its pages being used by Brissot in his writing.

J.-P. Brissot was also the author of much read and appreciated legal works, among which we should mention *Théorie des lois criminelles* (2 volumes published in Paris in 1781), whose manuscript was commended by Voltaire too, and *Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur, du politique et du jurisconsulte* (in 10 volumes), a very popular textbook in the epoch, much appreciated by lawmakers, legal experts, politicians, philosophers and journalists. The works were the outcome of his own research in the field and proved the author’s proficiency; this may also explain Brissot’s “easiness” and professionalism in carrying on the debate on the question of Joseph II’s reforms and Horea’s Uprising displayed in the two “letters” addressed to Emperor Joseph II.

J.-P. Brissot traveled to Switzerland in 1782, and he first stopped in Lyon, where the memory of Joseph II’s passing through town “incognito” was still alive. There he found out about the events in Geneva, the rebellion of the townspeople, “those republicans who dared challenge the three powers”, as he wrote down in his *Memoirs*⁴³. The revolt stirred his admiration as revealed by the writing dedicated to the events in 1783, entitled *Le Philadelphien à Genève*, as well as by the text of the pamphlets addressed to the Vienna emperor concerning his reforms and chiefly Horea’s Uprising.

After returning to France – to Paris and then Boulogne – Brissot would leave for England, where he found the newspaper “*Courrier de l’Europe*”, in whose publication he was also involved, in a quite difficult financial situation. He returned to France in 1784 and tried to pursue there his journalistic aims⁴⁴. He wrote and published stinging pamphlets against the monarchy, and even against queen Marie Antoinette, the pamphlet *Le Diable dans un bénitier*. For his activity he was put under surveillance by Louis XVI’s police, arrested and imprisoned in the Bastille. From prison he sent a stern protest against the abuse that violated his freedom of expression, and after four months, due to his wife’s intervention, he was be

⁴² Cf. *Mémoires de Brissot*, II, Bruxelles, L. Haumann, 1830, pp. 30–31.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 232.

⁴⁴ A. Mathieu, *La révolution française*, Vth edition, I, Paris, 1933, p. 185.

released. He did not abandon his previous stand and activities, and shortly after his release he published the pamphlet addressed to the Vienna emperor, Joseph II, brother to the queen of France, entitled *Un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II sur son règlement concernant l'émigration, ses diverses réformes*, in which he criticized the respective imperial decree. Shortly after, he published the "second open letter" addressed to the same emperor *Seconde lettre d'un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II, sur son règlement concernant l'émigration, et principalement sur la révolte des Valaques*, banned in France after its publication, most certainly due to queen Marie Antoinette's intervention⁴⁵.

In order to be able to pursue his writing activities, in 1785, J.-P. Brissot took a job at the House of Orléans Chancellery, though he was poorly paid; for a while he thus managed to avoid the attacks against him. In 1786, he succeeded in publishing the book *Examen du voyage de Marquis de Castellux*, and in 1787, a work entitled *De la France et des Etats-Unis*, where he overtly praised the new American bourgeois democracy⁴⁶.

In France he set up *Société des Amis des Noirs*, edifying gesture for his tendency, first expressed in his published writings, to defend black people, at that time deprived of basic rights, chiefly those in the colonies. In the Society's session of February 9, 1789, Brissot read his *Memorandum on the Black People in North America*, which he would soon publish⁴⁷. After the outbreak of the French Revolution, as a representative in the Convention and the National Assembly, on behalf of the Society, he militated for the abolition of the black people's slavery⁴⁸ and replied to *Louis Marthe Gouy's First and Last Letter*, who was against the respective measure⁴⁹.

The year 1789 found Brissot engaged in the struggle for the freedom of expression of the press. He addressed the general Estates in Paris a memorandum on the necessity to reinstate the freedom of the press immediately, chiefly of

⁴⁵ Leonore Loft, *The Transylvanian Peasant Uprising of 1784, Brissot and the Right to Revolt: A Research Note*, in "French Historical Studies", 17, no. 1, Spring 1991, pp. 209–218; Eadem, *Passion, Politics and Philosophy: Rediscovering J.-P. Brissot*, Westport, Conn, and London, Greenwood Press, 2002, XXII+304 pp.

⁴⁶ Lucy M. Gidney, *L'influence des Etats-Unis d'Amérique sur Brissot, Condorcet et Madame Roland*, Paris, 1930; R. C. Darton, *The Grub Street Style of Revolution: J.-P. Brissot Police Spy*, in "The Journal of Modern History", 40, 1968, pp. 301–327; Idem, *The Brissot Dossier*, in "French Historical Studies", 1991, pp. 200–218; Frederick A. de Luna, *The Dean Street Style of Revolution: J.-P. Brissot jeune philosophe*, in "French Historical studies", 1991, pp. 159–199.

⁴⁷ J.-P. Brissot de Warville, *Mémoire sur les noirs de l'Amérique septentrionale, lu à l'assemblée de la "Société des amis de noirs", le 9 février 1798, par....*, Paris, 1789.

⁴⁸ Société des Amis de Noirs (France, *Adresse à L'Assemblée Nationale pour l'abolition de la traite des Noirs – 1791*, BNF, 1995 (Electronic document).

⁴⁹ *Réplique de J.-P. Brissot à la "Première et dernière Lettre de Louis-Marthe Gouy", défenseur de la traite des noirs et de l'esclavage*, Paris, 1791.

political newspapers hindered to criticize the shortcomings of the Old Regime⁵⁰. Even before the fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789), he set up the periodical "Le Patriote français" on May 6, 1789, where he published most stinging articles against the Old Regime and the French monarchy; Brissot addressed the subscribers to the new Parisian journal in a "Letter" on May 12, 1789⁵¹. He supervised its publication until the insurrection of May–July 1793⁵², disseminating in its pages his own ideas on the development of the Revolution in which he found himself engaged in the first four years. He was compelled to intercede for the freedom of the press during the revolutionary period of his life as well, defending his old beliefs against opposite attitudes⁵³.

After the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, the jurist, journalist and pamphleteer J.-P. Brissot turned into a politician, becoming the leader of the Girondins, also called Brissotins. He was the representative of Eure-et-Loir, his native place, in the National Convention. His speeches delivered in the Convention and his leading press articles between 1789–1793 were published separately – under the form of extracts, pamphlets, which he had gotten used to in the previous years, the Catalogues of the National Library of France in Paris recording several titles of these issues preserved in its deposits. He was involved in the great political-institutional debates of the revolutionary epoch: chiefly those concerning the relations between France and the great European powers, mainly England and Austria, with which they would eventually had an open military confrontation; then in the negotiations with Geneva, Switzerland, and finally in king Louis XVI's trial. On July 10, 1791, he delivered the "Speech on the question to know whether the king can be judged"⁵⁴ in the session of the Friends of the Constitution, equally popular becoming then the speech delivered on the same topic in the National Convention on January 1, 1793⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ J.-P. Brissot de Warville, *Mémoire aux États-Généraux sur la nécessité de rendre, dès ce moment, la presse libre, et surtout pour les journaux politiques*, Paris, 1789. Reedited by F. Dethier de l'Ourthe a decade later, after the author's death: No. 1. *L'Ombre de J.-P. Brissot aux législateurs français, sur liberté de la presse, ou Extrait fidèle d'un imprimé ayant pour titre: "Mémoire aux États-Généraux sur la nécessité de rendre dès ce moment la presse libre...par J. P. Brissot de Warville"*, Paris, 1789 and as Electronic document in 1995, National Library of France, Paris.

⁵¹ *Lettre de M. Brissot de Warville aux souscripteurs du journal intitulé "Le Patriote français" (12 mai 1789)*, Paris, 1789.

⁵² *"Le Patriote français", journal libre, impartial et national, par une société des citoyens, et dirigé par J.-P. Brissot de Warville (28 juillet 1789–2 juin 1793)*, Paris, 1789–1793.

⁵³ *Liberté de la presse. Précis pour J.-P. Brissot contre M. Bexon, se disant représentant de la municipalité de Remiremont*, Paris, 1790.

⁵⁴ *Discours sur la question de savoir si le roi peut être juge*, prononcé à l'assemblée des Amis de la Constitution dans la séance du 10 juillet 1791, par J.-P. Brissot. Imprimé par ordre de la société, Paris, 1791.

⁵⁵ *Discours sur le procès de Louis*, prononcé à la Convention Nationale le 1^{er} janvier 1793 par J.-P. Brissot, Paris, 1793.

Following the Parisian insurrection of May 31–June 2, 1793, J.-P. Brissot and his friends were removed from the leadership of the movement, and he was arrested and guillotined in Paris on October 31, 1793; he was 39 years old. His wife would later on receive a pension of 2,000 pounds; one of his three sons, student at the Polytechnic School during the Empire, refused to pledge allegiance to Napoleon, declaring himself republican⁵⁶. Another son, Anacharsis, a hussar officer with literary aspirations, would publish in 1830–1832, in Brussels, the *Memoirs* left by his father⁵⁷.



The first “Open Letter” J.-P. Brissot – who called himself simply *A defender of the people* – addressed to emperor Joseph II was occasioned by the imperial regulation concerning the emigration of the Habsburg subjects. The imperial decree of August 10, 1784 established the exceptional rules according to which the inhabitants of the Empire’s provinces were allowed to emigrate, actually forbidding emigration. The measure was taken after the Court of Vienna had noticed an increasing emigration of the subjects from its lands: those from the Western provinces went to England and chiefly to the new continent, to the United States of America, which had gained their independence a few years ago and offered remarkable opportunities for various activities. The inhabitants from the eastern provinces of the Empire, especially from the Great Principality of Transylvania, the Romanians, emigrated to the principalities south and east of the Carpathians. The concern of the imperial Gubernium and military authorities led to additional measures taken within the state, and chiefly at the borders, in order to stop the wave of Transylvanian emigration⁵⁸. The Transylvanian Romanians’ emigration over the Mountains to Moldavia and Wallachia increased to such a rate that in a memorandum addressed by the Uniate clergy of Transylvania to Empress Maria Theresia in 1773 they noted the surprise of the inhabitants of the two extra-Carpathian Romanian countries when confronted with the phenomenon, concentrated in the phrase: “The entire Transylvania comes to us!” (*Tota Transilvania ad nos*

⁵⁶ Cf. F. de Montrol’s Preface to *Mémoires de Brissot*, I, Bruxelles, 1830, pp. XVI–XVII.

⁵⁷ Entitled *Mémoires de Brissot...sur ses contemporains et la révolution française*, they were published in two volumes: I, 1754–1784 and II, 1784–1793, with a new edition in 1877 and one electronic in 1995.

⁵⁸ I. Nistor, *Emigrările de peste Munți*, in “Analele Academiei Române”, 2nd series, tome XXXVII, 1914–1915, pp. 815–865; I. Conca, “*Tota Transilvania ad nos venit*”, in “Geopolitica și Geoistoria”, II, 1942, pp. 11–23; D. Prodan, *Teoria imigrației românilor din Principatele Române în Transilvania în veacul al XVIII-lea. Studiu critic*, Tip. “Cartea Românească din Cluj”, Sibiu, 1944, 172 pp.; Șt. Meș, *Emigrări românești din Transilvania în secolele XIII–XX*. The second revised edition, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1977, pp. 97–179.

venit)⁵⁹. Following his journey to Transylvania in the same year, 1773, Joseph II himself, co-regent at that time, would note, not without sadness, the state-of-facts in the Principality, the very roots of the Romanian emigration: “these poor Romanian subjects, who are undoubtedly the oldest and more numerous inhabitants of Transylvania, these people are oppressed by everybody, Hungarians or Saxons, overwhelmed with injustice, so that their fate, when one looks closer, is worthy of all the pity in the world, and it is surprising that there are still so many of these people and that they haven’t all run away <from Transylvania>.”⁶⁰ In the other two Romanian countries located without the Carpathian Mountains the tax regime of the state and the feudal lords was less burdening than in Transylvania, consequently the Transylvanians’ tendency to run away, to emigrate over the Mountains, in the hope of finding better living conditions⁶¹.

On the other hand, in the eastern provinces of the Empire – Bohemia, Hungary, Transylvania – there was a peculiar situation related to the local development of peasant serfdom. The abolition of feudal relations and bondage in certain countries from Central and Eastern Europe occurred rather late, the opposition of the aristocracy that was fiercely defending its old feudal privileges had led to the survival of the medieval legal framework.

In Bohemia, the abolition of serfdom had been decided by the emperor in the previous years, following the 1775 peasant revolt in the Czeck countries, led by Anton Seidl and Antonin Nywelt. But its implementation was delayed here as well, and Emperor Joseph II decreed the abolition of serfdom in Czekia, Moravia and Silezia only in 1781. Even in the Crown Lands, Styria, Carinthia, Lower Austria, he took this measure only in 1782⁶². He imposed the urbarial regulation in the Banat in 1780⁶³, when he gave up the province as imperial possession. As concerned Transylvania, Emperor Joseph II tried to abolish serfdom, which had taken serious forms here, during his visit in the province in 1783, but he gave up when confronted with the Hungarian aristocracy’s opposition. After Horea’s Uprising the imperial decree of August 22, 1785, abolished the serf’s personal bondage, thus reintroducing his right to free circulation⁶⁴. The measure was then extended to Hungary too⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ A. Bunea, *Episcopii Petru Pavel Aron și Dionisie Novacovici*, Blaj, 1902, p. 259.

⁶⁰ Șt. Meteș, *Emigrările românești din Transilvania*, p. 143.

⁶¹ See D. Prodan’s demonstration in *Teoria imigrației românilor din Principatele Române în Transilvania în veacul al XVIII-lea. Studiu critic*, Sibiu, 1944, 173 pp

⁶² Erich Zöllner, *Istoria Austriei*, I, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1997, p. 402.

⁶³ D. Prodan, *Reglementarea urbarială din Banat de la 1780*, in “Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj”, 1969, 12, pp. 295–322.

⁶⁴ Idem, *Desființarea șerbiei în Transilvania*, in “Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medic”, 1974, VII, pp. 9–68.

⁶⁵ Idem, *Răscoala lui Horea*, vol. II, New revised edition, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984, pp. 594–597.

The imperial measures concerning emigration had been taken by the Court of Vienna for political reasons as well, in agreement with its economic and demographic-fiscal policy. Based on state centrality and physiocracy, Joseph II's enlightened absolutism aimed at increasing the number of taxpayers able to enrich the Empire's exchequer, to contribute to the general economic growth – to agriculture and industry – which would increase the state income. On the contrary, the emigration of the subjects from the provinces of the Habsburg Empire weakened the productive labor force, the very economic-financial power of the state. Facing the emigration phenomenon, chiefly the clandestine one, which had been increasing in the previous decade, Emperor Joseph II issued the imperial decree of August 10, 1784 in order to put an end to the phenomenon, to control it through the imperial and province authorities. The European press published the text of the imperial decree for stopping the emigration of the Habsburg Empire subjects. “*Courrier de l'Europe*” (“*Gazette anglo-française*”), printed in London and, since 1780 in Boulogne, published the text in a French translation in six of its issues between October 22 – November 23, 1784⁶⁶. This was the periodical consulted by J.-P. Brissot, then settled in Boulogne, where he was editing the respective journal in French, the French text serving as a starting point for his debate with Joseph II concerning the respective measure. Thus, the “first letter” could have been drafted in parallel, and printed at the very beginning of 1785⁶⁷. The measure to stop the emigration of the subjects from the provinces offered J.-P. Brissot the opportunity to evaluate the entire reform activity carried on by Joseph II in the first five years of his reign. Consequently, his first pamphlet was entitled *Un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II sur son règlement concernant l'émigration, ses diverses réformes etc.*, its texts starting with a quite positive general appreciation of Joseph II: “The entire Europe has up to now admired the perseverance with which you have uprooted religious fanaticism and the superstitions of the old politics in your states. They have been glad to see you tearing apart the bonds that overburdened reason and industry. They wished that your behavior found enlightened imitators on other thrones.”⁶⁸ But the recent regulation concerning emigration was deemed to be in contrast with the reformist measures up to then, and Brissot labeled the *decree against emigration a decree for slavery*: “it is not made for people, it should not appear in the 18th century, it shouldn't bear the name of a prince who has up to now appeared or wished to appear as a defensor of the people.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “*Courrier de l'Europe*”, 1784, vol. 16, no. 33 of October 22, 1784, pp. 257–258; no. 36, 37, 38, 41 and 42 of November 2, 5, 9, 19 and 23, 1784, pp. 281–282, 289–290, 297–298, 321–322.

⁶⁷ Nicolae Edroiu, *Răsunetul european al Răscoalei lui Horea (1784–1785)*, pp. 170, 137.

⁶⁸ <J.-P. Brissot>, *Un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II sur son règlement concernant l'émigration, ses diverses réformes etc.*, Dublin <sic!>, 1785, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, pp.1–2.

From this point on, throughout the pamphlet – 51 pages – there follows a keen debate on the rights and equality of the individual, on the rights of man grounded on the natural right of man and peoples with the view to demolish Joseph II's decree concerning emigration from a theoretical-philosophical, legal and political perspective. The French jurist's attacks were equally aimed at the emperor's advisors – legal experts and philosophers – who covered up the true state-of-facts and ill-advised him. The decree for stopping the emigration of the subjects would have most noxious consequences, Brissot noted, because it would not stop the miserable slaves to run away, and it would become a model for other sovereigns: "The chain you are making will bind all Europe."⁷⁰

This was the reason why the French thinker started the debate on behalf of the rights of men and peoples and noted that "the great problem concerning emigration" hadn't been approached up to then theoretically, legally and philosophically. In the Old Regime, there was a *de glebe* submission of the Vassal to his Lord, originating in the legal status of the individual at birth. On the grounds of the new concepts of Natural Law man is born free, his subsequent obligations being of contractual nature. Within the Social Contract each side has both duties and rights: but the ultimate goal is everybody's happiness and welfare. Man is born free and thus he can choose the country he wishes to live in, the administration under which he wishes to carry on his activities, the religion he wants to adopt. With this view Brissot confronts Joseph II with the basic political truth according to which the "*citizen is not attached to his homeland but through the natural bond of happiness. If it is broken, his civic allegiance is broken as well, he is countriless.*"⁷¹ So he may emigrate anywhere he wants, and the many examples in history of mass movement substantiates his assertion. The fact that there are old laws in many countries that forbid emigration cannot be an argument for its survival and decreeing in modern ages, when the universality and antiquity of this error should be acknowledged and people should get rid of it. Breaking the chains of bondage is an elementary right of each individual, and the Europeans' massive emigration to America at that time is the best evidence – Brissot notes⁷².

The imperial argument according to which the emigration prohibition is meant to ensure the welfare of the state, as Joseph II thought when he decided to issue his decree, cannot be sustained: in this case the state's wealth is the result of the impoverishment of the many, of its men and peoples, who may consequently look for happiness somewhere else. "Unhappy or even happy, single or married, father or without family, man has the right to go everywhere, to settle where he wishes. He has the right to carry his children, even his wealth with him", Brissot concludes. The debate in the pamphlet goes on with arguing the individual's right to take his children

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

and personal property gained from his labor in another more convenient place. The family cannot be separated, it is inhuman to separate children from parents, and the individual's deprivation of his property is an arbitrary practice⁷³.

Anyway, we have to admit that such aspects related to the rights of man are still topical nowadays, generating most variegated practices.

J.-P. Brissot deconstructs the opposite demonstration by making use of its own arguments: when wealth is taken out of the country it creates a consumption void that requires to be filled. Neither the money taken out of the country causes impoverishment, because a high amount of currency burdens the masses, the decrease in currency does not impoverish the state, but the decrease of its productivity, industry and inhabitants. Returning to the debate on the population, the French author notes the sovereigns' tendency towards increasing the population out of the belief that this is the foundation of their power: it is a source of laborers, taxpayers, soldiers, etc. From an evolutionist perspective, the survival of slavery results in stagnation, decrease in productiveness, general involution, tensions between individuals and social groups. The state of freedom, the free circulation of individuals and goods generates welfare, consequently the increase in the state income.

But the latter word, the *state*, – Brissot stresses out – designates or should designate something else, namely the society, the mass of individuals that make up the body of the state with laws according to the general welfare, and not a group instrument. This is the starting point of the debate on *homeland* – the country, state where one is born – and *patriotism*, the feelings of love and appreciation towards the respective place and country, which should not mean the worship of the bondage chain to the lord of the land and the sovereign ruling the state where one is born.

The French writer's conclusion on the emigration phenomenon is that "any emigration implies an unhappy country, abuses, a despotic government"⁷⁴, and the princes must pursue and punish those who oppose it, not decree its prohibition themselves. Enterprising people should not be hindered to move freely, because "trade, arts, have no other homeland but the universe"⁷⁵. This is how Venetia has prospered, and in his time the American states. Emigration is far from being a crime, but its prohibition is, because emigration is in essence a means to reinstate man's dignity and right.

But in the debate the author has to admit that immigrants meet with many obstacles in the new places, because neither modern administrations are so advanced as to stop making the noxious distinction between *natives* and *aliens/emigrants*⁷⁶.

In the end J.-P. Brissot expresses the opinion according to which emigration will stop "when the same degree of happiness rules everywhere" and the differences between

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 45–46.

nations and peoples in what concerns the quality of life are wiped out everywhere. Maybe this is wishful thinking – the author notes; until then we need a new science, that of *people exchange*, which should regulate emigration, because this phenomenon cannot be stopped. Emperor Joseph II has made the fatal mistake of believing that he could put an end to emigration, thus stirring new discontent. The author promises a future letter in which, after the general analysis done in the present, he will investigate in detail each item of the emigration regulation: “perhaps I shall even examine your new regulations that challenge the aforementioned principles”⁷⁷, Brissot ends.

The debate on the imperial edict on emigration was developing, other reform measures taken by Joseph II were to be considered by the French philosopher, so that he felt that the text of this pamphlet had to be finished and launched to test the pulse of the public opinion. A new “open letter” was to kindle the contestatory anti-monarchic spirit in Western Europe. The newspaper were already publishing news on the Romanians’ uprising in the eastern imperial province, which was deemed to be a most favorable opportunity to deepen the debate and pass from the discussion on the natural rights of man to those of the peoples, which also included the right to revolt.

Thus he wrote the *Second Letter of a Defensor of the People to Emperor Joseph II on His Regulation Concerning Emigration and Chiefly on the Romanians’ Uprising, Where There Is a Keen debate on the People’s Right to Revolt*⁷⁸. It opens with a *motto*, placed on the title page, which is nothing else but Article 4 from the Constitution of the State of Maryland in North America and stipulates the people’s right to change an arbitrary government: “Every time one distances himself from the aims of governing and public freedom is in danger and other means of salvation are ineffective, the people may and has the right to change the old government and establish a new one. The doctrine of non-resistance against the arbitrary government is absurd, slavish and destructive for the welfare and happiness of the human kind.” Whereas in his “first letter” Brissot has carried on a theoretical debate on the rights of man resorting to quotations and conclusions from Blackstone, Sydney, Milton, Abbey Raynal, John Elliot, Prost de Royer, Pascal, D’Alembert etc., at the beginning of his present letter he places a constitutional precept, a philosophical-political dicton implemented in a modern state: it concerns the right of the peoples to revolt in order to remove an arbitrary government. Starting from this legal-philosophical and constitutional-political basis, the French thinker speaks in favor of the Romanian rebels led by Horea shortly after their uprising has been put down.

The “second letter” that J.-P. Brissot addresses to Emperor Joseph II has three distinct parts: the first continues and concludes the debate on the imperial decree concerning emigration (pp. 5–13), the second refers to the natural right to

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

⁷⁸ *Seconde lettre d’un défenseur du peuple à l’empereur Joseph II, sur son règlement concernant l’émigration, et principalement sur la révolte des Valaques; ou l’on discute à fond le droit de révolte du peuple*, Dublin <sic!>, 1785, 98 p.

resistance/revolt that every people enjoys (pp. 13–63) and the last pages, 63–90, are dedicated to Horea's Uprising. It is a logical approach that deals with human rights, including the right to emigration, then passes to the theoretical exposition of the collective right of the peoples to rebel against an arbitrary government that violates their rights and, from this philosophical-legal basis, it ends with defending the Romanian rebels in Transylvania. Although they may seem independent parts of the pamphlet – form the standpoint of the topics they deal with – they flow in a natural manner, deriving from the debate on Joseph II's reforms, from the state-of-fact in the provinces of the Habsburg Empire, from the new requirements of the modern age expressed in the most advanced philosophical-legal and constitutional-political writings of the age.

Whereas the first part of the “second letter” might have been drafted in the months of January–February 1784, continuing the debate on the imperial decree concerning emigration within a new context resulted from Joseph II's attempt to change it, the debate on the peoples' right to resistance against arbitrary regimes and the last part concerning Horea's Uprising were written after March–April, the same year, when the European press published the news on the execution of Horea and Cloșca, which Brissot vehemently condemned. It was a *posthumous plea, a plea for freedom*, rooted in philosophical-political and legal ideas, in the great case that the French thinker J.-P. Brissot had built against the monarchic regimes of Europe. What happened to Horea and his followers was an example in point, serving as factual argumentation in the open public debate that was carried on in those ages⁷⁹.

Learning that the decree concerning emigration had been modified Brissot resorted to the artifice of praising the Habsburg monarch for having listened to the voice of the philosopher from the previous letter. But this was quite doubtful, as Joseph II also changed his other measures, either under the pressure of certain aristocratic groups like the Transylvanian nobility, or in order to make them work under the so variegated circumstances in the provinces of his Empire. Brissot would have liked him to replace his “decree on emigration with Article 15 from the Constitution of Pennsylvania”, which he quoted as such: “It is decided that all the people enjoy the right inherent to their nature to emigrate from one state to another or establish a new state in vacant places or on a conquered territory each time they think that this will enhance their happiness.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ I. Fruma, *Horea. Procesul și martiriul său*, Sibiu, 1947, pp. 225–240 (chapter entitled *O pledoarie postumă*); A. C. Gorgan, *J.-P. Brissot et les roumains de Transylvanie*, in “Revue des Études Roumaines”, I, Paris, 1952, pp. 161–175 (Institut Universitaire Roumain Charles I^{er}), Excerpt, 15 p.; D. Almaș, *Pledoarie pentru libertate*, in “Magazin Istoric”, IV, 1970, no. 11, pp. 61–64; Nicolae Edroiu, *Răsunetul european al Răscoalei lui Horea (1784–1785)*. Preface by Acad. Ștefan Pascu, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1976, pp. 133–153 (subchapter *J.-P. Brissot și Răscoala lui Horea*); Cornelia Bodea, *1848 la români. O istorie în date și mărturii*. Vol. I, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1982, pp. 6–31; Nicolae Edroiu, *Jacques-Pierre Brissot, “România au avut dreptate”*, in “Manuscriptum”, (București), XV, 1984, no. 4, pp. 76–90.

⁸⁰ *Seconde lettre d'un défenseur du peuple*, p. 4.

Obviously, the stipulation in the constitution of the north American state resulted from the opportunities of establishing a new political-state entity in the process of conquering and organizing the wide available territory, which was quite difficult in the Old World, where old state entities could be improved only by reforms and changed only by revolutions. Neither in Joseph II's empire nor in the kingdoms of France or Great Britain such constitutional stipulations were possible, Brissot seeing through the lenses of an advanced future modernity. Consequently, he shed a critical light on each article in the imperial decree on emigration, deemed to be a crime as the subjects were forced to live and die in the state where they had been born. People's voyages were permitted only with special licenses, which had to be obtained from an administrative-bureaucratic hierarchy, from local and imperial court authorities. Merchants, whose circulation without the state was the very essence of their occupation, were subject to the same measure. Neither craftsmen could travel to improve their skills⁸¹.

"So it is very bad to force the citizens to ask for a travel permit"⁸², Brissot concluded. He believed that the stipulation in the decree according to which the authorities in charge in the imperial provinces should see that their subjects enjoy the necessary means of subsistence in order to stop emigration was utopical. Neither beggary could be uprooted, its presence being a proof of a flawed administration.

Closing the debate on the decree concerning emigration, Brissot offered the Emperor of Vienna the only possible solution: "Regulation item <on emigration>: full freedom of going, coming, settling, leaving, moving, without having to give account to anyone; equal rights for aliens and natives."⁸³

From this point on Brissot's "second letter" passed to "another question, even more important than the previous: namely the questions raised by the famous uprising of the Romanians, whose head, Horea, had caused so much rumor in the press."⁸⁴ At that time, the Transylvanian rebellion had been put down, its leaders tortured and executed, and Brissot wondered if their punishment was right. Before clearing up this aspect, the author asked another question: "What is a rebellion?", and in the next pages (13–63) he theoretically elaborated in detail on this matter.

The peoples' right to revolt derives from the Social Contract – Brissot points out – rebellion as such being legitimate where authority is vicious and criminal. In monarchic states, in dictatorships, the revolt is welcome, bringing about the removal of evil governments. In the democratic republic it is sternly sanctioned, but it is accepted here as well if the state officials fall easily prey to abuses: it is the case of the Geneva magistrates, the people's response manifesting itself in the townspeople's movements in 1738, 1768 and the 1782 insurrection. "In such cases

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

the rebels are not citizens who take a stand against the authorities, the public servants who had violated the laws...expression of a general will.” And next: “The opposition against the usurped authority, having no other aim but to regain those inalienable rights inherent to man, is something natural and consequently far from being criminal it is quite a virtue.”⁸⁵

By defining revolt as an opposition against authority – like J. Locke in his turn – Brissot distinguishes its degrees: it becomes *rebellion*, *insurrection*, *uprising* if it relies on force, it is *faction* when the opposition concerns just a party, namely *mutiny* if it is partial and transitory⁸⁶. Any form of development it might take, the revolt represents an opposition against the government and is legitimate if the government is flawed.

In order to counteract any opposing argument, Brissot elaborates in his writing on the nature of authority and its avatars. Starting from J. Locke’s principle stated in his treaty on Civil Government, according to which “the End of Government is the Good of Mankind”⁸⁷, the jurist-philosopher opens a relatively wide debate on authority. The true authority is the one that grants human freedom, man’s natural rights, the property of the inhabitants of the respective state, their free circulation. The authority must represent the society and the individual, to warrant his full rights. Their violation makes the authority illegitimate, criminal. The natural rights also stipulated in the *social contract* are thus abolished, as one side does not fulfill its contractual obligations, so that the other side, the people, has the duty to interfere in order to reinstate the social balance. The people’s revolt is thus fully legitimate, as the flawed authority is the criminal who must be sanctioned. The opposite doctrine supported by the legal experts, philosophers and politicians who praise the monarchic regimes, which seriously violate the natural rights of the people by stipulating that they are not born equal, should be abolished. Brissot also castigates religious doctrines, the attitude of the priests who preach the subjects’ obedience to the monarchs, the precept of praying for the one who persecutes you⁸⁸.

Consequently, a revolt should not be put down by force, because in this way the illegitimacy of the flawed authority is being perpetuated; the rebels and their leaders should not be subject to torture, which has become more and more sophisticated. They can be punished only as assassins, not as rebels, because, in general, the repressive force perpetrates much more gruesome and numerous crimes⁸⁹.

He gives the example of Pugaciov’s torture in Russia, which he believes to be fair, although he does not have enough data on the case. Until nowadays historians and theoreticians have been concerned with the comparative analysis of the

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 23–24.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 58–61.

uprisings of the Transylvanian Romanians and of the Russian peasants that took place a decade earlier, between Horea and Pugaciov. This is what the Italian historian Franco Venturi wrote two centuries after the events: "Even from the very first news on the Transylvanian uprising, it revealed itself as what it really was, a reply to Joseph II' program of reforms. The state intervention was equally feared and wanted. Conscription was rejected because it seemed to anticipate a subsequent political and military pressure. On the other hand, the fact that the border garrisons were recruiting new troops was seen as a sort of liberation because the emperor had promised the abolition of bondage for all those who passed in his service. Horea, the head of the rebels himself, had traveled for several times to Vienna to support the claims of the Romanian peasants. As it was impossible for him to see Joseph II in person, Horea took his place and proclaimed the principle of natural freedom which the sovereign had resorted to in his action against slavery in Bohemia, Moravia and other countries of his Empire, but not yet in the Banat and Transylvania. Not long ago Pugaciov had ranged himself with the reform movement proclaimed by Empress Catherine II. He also rebelled against her, impersonating Peter III. Horea and his revolt did not resort to a person, but to a principle, a right. Thus, the two popular movements that burst out one decade from one another revealed like a "negative" the deep differences between the situation and institutions in the two empires⁹⁰.

After the detailed theoretical exposition of the principles of the peoples' natural right to revolt, developed chiefly "because up to now they seem to be unknown to legal experts"⁹¹, Brissot applies the legal-philosophical and political conclusion he has reached in the previous pages to the events in Transylvania. From the very beginning he states that his writing wishes to argue the legitimacy of struggle of the Romanian peasants, who rebelled under Horea's leadership, and to prove the injustice of the main leaders' sentence and gruesome torture. In the light of the principles exposed above, he argues that if the Transylvanian Romanians have rebelled it means that they are right to rebel, as it has happened with the north American colonies. The causes of the 1784 peasant uprising consist in the miserable status of bondage the inhabitants of this imperial province have been subject to: "The feudal regime, whose despicable features have been eradicated almost all over the world, still keeps all its structures in this miserable land. Here one can find those old English earls, those French counts who, sitting in their small strongholds, regard their serfs as pieces of furniture which they can use as they please, which they can play with, sell, take away their freedom, their work and even their life."⁹² It is the most synthetic presentation of the state-of-fact in

⁹⁰ Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore. 4. La caduta dell'Antico Regime (1776-1789)*. Tomo secondo. *Il patriotismo repubblicano e gli imperi dell'Est*, Torino, 1984, p. 701.

⁹¹ *Seconde lettres d'un défenseur du peuple*, p. 62.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 67-68.

Transylvania during Horea's Uprising that has led to the outburst of the peasant movement included in a text as valuable as the one elaborated by J.-P. Brissot. In the following pages, the author is concerned in the development of the Transylvanian Romanians' revolt, the most important events being recorded in his work. Horea is pictured as a remarkable personality, who has always wanted to free his countrymen from the abuses of the noblemen who have pushed their subjects to rebel because of the way they have treated them. This fact only justified the Transylvanian Romanians' uprising. Moreover, Horea has delivered his people's grievances to the sovereign when he has traveled to Vienna and asked him to remove the evil. Far from being the attitude of a "barbarian" – Brissot notes –, it is the gesture of a good subject who, before resorting to the natural rights, tries to avoid the breach with the imperial authority and bloodshed. Joseph II should have taken urgent measures to solve the problem. "Horea did his duty, it was your turn to do it – Brissot tells the Emperor of Vienna. You couldn't do it, the oppression still lasted, namely a state of war that lasted from times of old, and the Romanians could endure no longer. The state of war placed them back in the natural order. They were tyrannized by monsters, so they were entitled to resist and their only fault was that they had waited for such a long time to avenge the offence against nature."⁹³

Although they were right to rebel in order to remove the evil from society, the peasants and their leaders were harshly punished, both by the aristocracy that took a brutal revenge and by the imperial military force. The newspapers of the epoch, which Brissot read carefully, did not mirror the events in Transylvania in the right perspective, and Emperor Joseph II was warned that "everyone who wrote about the Romanians' revolt seemed to have conspired against the unfortunate people, in order to encourage them to punish the leaders with terrible tortures, to put the people in chains"⁹⁴. The author of the letter was sorry that he did not have the documents of the trial against the main leaders sentenced to death, or more detailed data on the most significant events that took place in the area of the uprising.

Indeed, the data on the Transylvanian Romanians' revolt offered to the European public opinions, to the readers of the states in the Habsburg Empire and Germany, from France, England or the Scandinavian and the Iberian Peninsulas, were partial, dry, most of the newspapers blaming the movement. The press accounts reflected the aristocratic viewpoint on the events, the opinion of the opposite side; some others expressed the neutral position of the imperial officials and bureaucrats, who had eventually agreed with the repression. No peasant Romanian opinion was able to penetrate the editorial offices of the Western newspapers, so that the French philosopher, who was far from the stage of the conflict, had only "dry or dull or deceiving details provided by the journalists,

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

feeling lonely, almost without light” in what concerned the case. In his debate he used only a press account on the uprising in Transylvania included in a letter come from Hungary, whose text he quoted *in extenso* at the end of his pamphlet⁹⁵, inviting his readers to read it before the rest of the text⁹⁶. The “Letter from Hungary” had been published by several European newspaper of French expression, among which “Journal politique de Bruxelles” (issue no. 9 of February 26, 1785, pp. 152–159)⁹⁷ and “Journal politique ou Gazette des gazettes” of Bouillon (issue no. 6 of March 1785, pp. 9–15)⁹⁸. The relevance of the respective press account consisted in the fact that it recorded in broad lines the succession of the main events during the uprising until its putting down by the concerted action of the imperial troops within the Principality of Transylvania and those come from Hungary, when Horea dispersed his army and took refuge. It contained pieces of information on the actions of the two opposite sides, the Hungarian aristocracy and the Romanian rebels, and attempted at estimating the casualties in the confrontation, even though it was far from the truth as the recorded number of victims on both sides was much lower⁹⁹.

When commenting on the “Letter from Hungary”, Brissot noticed from its very beginning that “Horea’s aversion towards the aristocracy and the wish to free himself and his countrymen from the noblemen’s violence were the first reasons of his action”¹⁰⁰. Or, he could say on the spot, this phrase was enough to justify the Romanians’ revolt, to which he added the following: “the noblemen have pushed their subjects to rebellion due to their oppression”¹⁰¹. Moreover, Horea, the true leader of the uprising, had come in person to Vienna and was received by Emperor Joseph II, whom he presented with “his nation’s grievances”. A petition received by the Habsburg emperor during his journey to Transylvania from a Romanian peasant, whose content Brissot knew, revealed the burdening obligations of the bondsmen, who had to work four days a week for the estate owners, the fifth for

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 93–98.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

⁹⁷ According to the copy preserved in the National Library in Paris, the text was copied by Nicolae Bălcescu and was among his manuscripts, published by Al. Papiu Ilarian in *Tesaur de monumente istorice*, III, 1864, pp. 361–362.

⁹⁸ There is here a version of the “Letter from Hungary” from a correspondence come from Hamburg, dated February 24, 1785, which makes us think of the periodical “Politisches Journal” here. See Nicolae Edroiu, *Răsunetul european al Răscoalei lui Horea (1784–1785)*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1976, p. 138.

⁹⁹ Thus, the “Letter from Hungary” indicates about 300 victims among the aristocracy, 500–600 among the rebels and 60 soldiers and an imperial officer; historical research has established that there were 150 victims among the nobility and 450 among the peasants, and the army documents reveal that there were 11 deaths. See D. Prodan, *Răscoala lui Horea*, 2nd edition, vol. II, pp. 539–541.

¹⁰⁰ *Seconde lettre d’un défenseur du peuple*, p. 68.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

the priests, and the seventh was Sunday. Not even the black people in the islands were subject to such a regime. The abolition of slavery legitimated everything – the author concluded¹⁰². Even the gruesome deeds of the rebels were justified and Brissot excused himself because, being far from the stage of the events, he could not check the data and establish the truth but on the basis of the aforementioned axioms. But he was quite certain that a people who had been so gentle up to now could not turn into a gang of assassins all of a sudden, they must have been incited to violence by the treatment they were subject to at the hands of the aristocracy¹⁰³.

Brissot's writing is fully pervaded with the rationalism of the 18th century philosophy, the precepts of the Enlightenment and the Reformism of the epoch. Human thought must emancipate itself from the theological outlook, claims the French legal expert, philosophers must replace the priests who preach obedience to the existing authority, to the sovereigns. The critical attitude towards the Church institution is in agreement to the philosophical trend of the century. Investigating the outcome of the spreading of enlightenment ideas, the thinker notices that many "have abjured the priests' despicable and dangerous doctrine", who severely castigated the people's right to revolt. The priests – the author notes – do nothing but quote excerpts from the Apostles, forged or interpolated, with the view to divide the sovereigns' power and mislead their subjects¹⁰⁴. Commending the step forward taken by the deism of Locke, Sidney, Milton, Price and Rousseau, the author of the open letter stresses out once more the idea that peoples neither challenge God's teachings when they rebel: they follow nature, attempt at reinstating its inherent rights, implement the Social Contract, thus fulfilling the orders of what Brissot calls the "Supreme Being"¹⁰⁵. He points out the merits of the Enlightenment in bringing light and dispelling the darkness in which feudal regimes have kept peoples by teaching them the ideology of the natural rights of man and citizen, which grants them inalienable freedom. The sovereigns of Europe – among whom Joseph II, the addressee of the present letter – must partake from the new ideas of the Enlightenment and rule their states according to these ideas. They should not claim that they are not familiar with these ideas when they are dethroned by the rage of the rebelled people due to the abuses they have perpetrated. In such case, if Brissot were the supreme being, he says, he would address the prince as such: "You miserable, haven't I done everything to enlighten you by making the American revolution succeed?"¹⁰⁶

The Church's response to the Deism of the Enlightenment Age was not late to appear. Its servants asked for scaffolds and pyres for the writers and

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 70.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

philosophers who spread such ideas, and Brissot mentioned the fierce persecution against J.-J. Rousseau's novel *Emile*, Marmotel's *Belisaire*, Helvetius's works and others and the devious urge of the priests: "Pray for those who persecute you!"¹⁰⁷

Moreover, seeing that they were gradually losing the monopoly over thinking and culture, the Church representatives demanded the philosophers and even the politicians to bring the proof of their right to address to the people. Brissot's prompt answer is a new attack against the respective institution, expressed in fulminating words: "My mission, I have myself taken over, my title, I have it from myself, from my own nature, I am a human being, I belong to mankind, I am due to wish its good, I want and must preach to enlighten it, to preach to uproot the prejudices you have infected it with, to break the chains you have bound it with and as long as I breathe I will cry out, I will preach against you, against your precepts. My views are pure, I ask no payment, I wish to remain unknown, anonymous, and I ask the heavens no other reward but to see the chains of despotism falling down in the same abyss as the clergy's altars."¹⁰⁸

Thus, a new modern philosophy should replace medieval theology; instead of ignorant and fanatic priests, philosophers should become the educators of state sovereigns, to advise them in order to improve the situation in their states. In this way, Philosophy left her contemplative position and was charged with significant duties in the anticipated social metamorphoses. Until it was not too late, through reformist measures, sovereigns had to adjust the situation in their states to the new trend, to fulfill the Social Contract, unless the people reinstated to the natural status rebelled and remove them.

Focusing the debate on the events in Transylvania during the Romanian peasant uprising, Brissot criticizes the fact – accounted in the "Letter from Hungary" – that the province authorities have sent the Orthodox bishop to the rebels in order to persuade them to put an end to their action. "A bishop! Always priests on the political stage! Perhaps because they know to perfection the art of seducing and deceiving."¹⁰⁹ He advises Emperor Joseph II to go alone in to the rebel camp, not send deputies and priests, in order to see for himself what are their "grievances" and try to make them happy, as he should do with all the subjects in his Empire, because this is the part the "Supreme Being" has ascribed him. Apparently resigned, Brissot confesses the fact that he "wished he were a deity in order to be able to make all mortals happy"¹¹⁰.

Sending imperial or government deputies to the rebels cannot be a sensible measure, because they are judgmental and do not treat them as their equals. The attempt at calming them down with "sweet talk" and also with "threats" is not

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

effective in the given situation: the former is a trap, the latter inciting, and the situation cannot be mended like this. The government's endeavor to "make the rebels see they've erred" starts from the false assumption that the "Romanians were wrong when they saw themselves unhappy",¹¹¹

As concerns the 30 florins reward offered by the authorities for the capture of each leader, it proves once again that the province administration has not been able to grasp the situation, thus kindling the war between the two sides, inciting them to perpetrate more crimes, to deceive and betray; moreover, this is another attempt at legitimating the crime of punishing the rebels.

Continuing the debate on the imperial and governmental measures against the rebelled Romanians and their leaders, as they were presented in the "Letter from Hungary", Brissot blames the Hungarian aristocracy for rising to insurrection from its own initiative. The fact that they have resorted to armed force, the perpetration of crimes more gruesome than those committed by the rebels, has increased the tension in the area of the events and prolonged the conflict. Thus, the noblemen have done a double crime; on the one hand, they are guilty for treating their subjects so badly that they have been compelled to start an uprising, on the other, of the crimes perpetrated after they have taken arms and attacked the groups of rebels. From the philosopher's point of view, by killing the rebels the aristocracy has legitimated the revolt, proving that they act against the government, who has tried to calm things down. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that they are guilty, the noblemen have not been punished, the punitive measures being taken only against the rebels.

From the account come from Hungary, the French thinker "emphasizes" the province administration's concern for the Romanians who, representing two thirds of the country's population, "are the ones who farm the land and if they are exterminated the province turns into a desert". The government's option for those who have two working hands at the detriment of those who have an insatiable mouth just indicates the usefulness of the sides in relation to the authority, the latter being not concerned in the happiness of the subjects, but in its own interest, as Brissot mentions to have demonstrated in the first letter addressed to the Emperor of Vienna¹¹². Their calculation – Brissot deems – is horrible, mean, because in this way they favor the noblemen's tyranny, the sovereign being blinded by such a judgement. Even though they have disapproved of the noblemen's insurrection and they "slapped them on the hand", the authority's behavior is completely wrong, unjust to the sides in conflict, equally guilty for what has happened in the area, although armed insurrection is the right of the oppressed not of the oppressor. He deems that the province administration has been duplicitous, treating the innocent – the rebelled Romanians – as guilty, while the really guilty, the noblemen, who have

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, p. 74.

pushed the Transylvanian peasants to rebel and then massacred them in the illegal insurrection, have remained unpunished, slightly admonished, actually reinstated to their old aristocratic privileges after putting down the rebellion.

But the most important piece of information included in the “Letter from Hungary concerning the Transylvanian uprising” is the list of items comprised in the peasants’ ultimatum addressed to the Administration of Hunedoara County, in fact to the noblemen who have taken refuge in the town of Deva for fear of the uprising, in the imperial military garrison at the foot of the stronghold. The text of the ultimatum is still famous for the radicalism of its demands, being a true program of the peasant movement. It has been notified on October 11, 1784, by an official with the Salt Office of Șoimuș, a port located on the opposite shore of the Mureș river, its content reaching the editorial board of several European newspapers which did not delay its publication. This is perhaps the only peasant stand that has taken this road, but covered in a Hungarian linguistic garment, namely the language spoken by those it has been addressed to¹¹³. Press “correspondents” in Hungary, among whom the author of the excerpt Brissot read, republished the respective items¹¹⁴. Having the items of the peasants’ ultimatum at hand – the true program of the Transylvanian Romanians’ uprising – the French philosopher is thus able to debate upon the meanings of the uprising, finally proving its legitimacy.

After enumerating the “capitulation items” proposed by the Romanians, the French author exclaims almost enthusiastically: “Is there anything more sensible, more natural than all these suggestions? The second uprooted for good the source of oppression eradicating the nobility.”¹¹⁵ He deals with the tyranny of the aristocracy separately, in a longer footnote, which is therefore given as an annex at the end of the pamphlet. But its text is placed at the end not only on aesthetic grounds, because there it could turn into a theoretical exposition on “the aristocracy’s tyranny wherever it exists”¹¹⁶. The second annex is the aforementioned “Letter from Hungary” and the author relates the theoretical analysis from the former to the actual events during the Romanians’ uprising in Transylvania. Thus, through the two annexes to Brissot’s pamphlet the author brings together once more two edifying texts concerning the issues debated upon in his writing.

The respective note shockingly starts with the assertion that: “Noblemen are oppressors of the people in all countries and they have always been, in all ages.”¹¹⁷

¹¹³ D. Prodan, *Ultimatumul țăranilor adresat nobilimii în răscoala lui Horea*, in the vol.: *Răscoala lui Horea (1784). Studii și interpretări istorice*. Edited by Nicolae Edroiu and Pompiliu Teodor, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1984, pp. 143–146.

¹¹⁴ *Seconde lettres d’un défenseur du peuple*, pp. 96–97.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 78. It is about the famous item in the peasant expression: “Aristocracy should be no more”.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

On their lands, in their country they are the true tyrants and tyranny in its turn enhances their power. There they insult, demean, and abuse their subjects because they are *peasants*¹¹⁸. In the noblemen's houses "wealth prevails and dominates". The *Note on the Tyranny of the Aristocracy* presents then the behavior of the first baron of France, Montemorenci Seigneur de Courtaulier en Perche, but also of a public servant who owned an estate, Gueau de Réverseaux, and whose abuses lead to the revolt of the peasants on their lands. The introduction of the French examples in the debate offers another term of comparison for the state-of-fact in Transylvania, internationalizing, if we may say so, once more the Romanian movement.

Continuing the discussion on the items in the peasant ultimatum, Brissot appreciates that when the peasants ask that the noblemen who could hold an imperial office made a living out of it, but all the aristocrats paid the taxes to the state like everybody else, they want but a healthy politics, because all the members of a state should bear the burden of its maintenance. Through items 4 and 5 in the rebels' ultimatum concerning the dispossession of the aristocracy and distribution of their estates to the peasants they have finally made justice rule; these items justify to the highest degree the legitimacy of the Romanians' rebellion. Without the right to property, the peasants have finally reinstated the natural law, being thus right when they have rebelled. The peasant demands – Brissot notes – are fully legitimate, sensible, just, much more moderate than the claims of the noblemen who ask for chains and the peasants' blood. Isn't this whole program rational, natural? Haven't the rebelled Romanians and their leaders fight to death for its fulfillment? – concludes the author¹¹⁹.

If someone believes that the program is unjust or irrational – the author of the pamphlet upholds – then one should prove the fact that the *Declarations* and *Constitutions* of the United States of America are equally irrational and unjust. And "if the Americans had the right to revolt because they wished to levy taxes on them without their consent, the more so the Romanians enjoyed the right, as they possessed neither property nor freedom, and were depending on the good will of merciless masters."¹²⁰

Nevertheless, the Romanians' uprising was put down in a bloodbath, Horea was punished, thus being ranged with the great martyrs of history. The investigation of the history of rebellions persuaded J.-P. Brissot of three capital truths: "1. The people does rebel but when it is oppressed and never asks for unjust things; 2. Sovereigns are ready to promise, hardly keep their word and often do not keep their promises at all; 3. Whereas the people is granted what it has asked for, its leaders are always punished, which is a quite revolting contradiction."¹²¹ Or the same

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 79–80.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

thing happened in Transylvania after the Romanians' uprising at the end of 1784: the Romanians were oppressed by noblemen and they received but promises at their legitimate requests, when they rebelled force was sent against them, many being killed, and Horea pursued, captured and subject to a barbarian, gruesome execution. After the way he behaved Horea did not deserve such a treatment, as well as his companion, Cloșca (whose name is not mentioned in the French text). Brissot was the "first to claim it over their ashes, even on their ashes...because, when the people has no longer a defender, it is the philosopher's duty to watch over the magistrates of the people, to enlighten their judgment, and to investigate in order to understand whether the people they strike deserve to be punished or revenged."¹²² The author turned into the defender of all Romanians who had perished in the uprising, not only of the main leaders. Emperor Joseph II was advised to start doing things right in Transylvania, where more than 600,000 Romanians were speaking the language of despair when Brissot was writing these lines¹²³.

At the end of the letter, the French philosopher presents the Emperor of Vienna with three solutions in brief:

1. to give back the Romanians their ancestral freedom and grant them property if he is persuaded by the truth contained in this second letter addressed to him;
2. to allow the Romanians to emigrate to the other states of his Empire, where he should give them land, or to America, and give them boats to carry them there if he is not convinced by the above demonstration and wishes to perpetuate the noblemen's privileges but do justice to everyone;
3. if the noblemen oppose by force to the humane projects of the Emperor, he should leave the country alone, and the subjects will then rise against their tyrants and the conflict will be soon solved¹²⁴.

The solutions suggested to Joseph II at the end of this lengthy debate are rather theoretical, philosophical-ideological than political or social. The reinstatement of individual freedom could no go farther than the act of abolishing slavery, introduced in Transylvania by the Imperial Decree of August 22, 1785, which was the direct outcome of the Romanian peasants' uprising of the previous months. The bondage continued to burden the peasants, and they would be given landed property only half a century later.

In its turn, the freedom of emigration, which Brissot resumed at the end of the pamphlet, could not be granted by the emperor due to the shocking discrepancies between the provinces of the Empire; it would have led to population movements undesirable in the eyes of the Court of Vienna, which had been confronted with the phenomenon before. Granting land in the provinces where the

¹²² *Ibidem*, p. 88.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 88-99.

emigrants might settle would turn upside down the landed property system there, and the expenses for the travel to America would affect the imperial exchequer, anyway forced to pay at that time for the military conflicts at the border.

While both solutions were reformist in nature, the latter was quite revolutionary. It threatened the European thrones by anticipating radical changes. It seems impossible that J.-P. Brissot, whom we see in the first lines of the French Revolution only four years later, didn't think of the possibility to dethrone all the kings and emperors of Europe with the annihilation of the tyrant noblemen. It is equally impossible that Emperor Joseph II didn't understand his point. The solutions for the crisis were gradually suggested to the Habsburg Emperor, who could choose the most convenient one. This was the meaning of the philosophical-legal debate developed by the author in his entire writing, which expressed a rather theoretical than practical attitude, ranged with the category of theoretical rather than programmatic text, aiming at stirring the spirit of the age, and kindling a pre-Revolutionary effervescence. J.-P. Brissot was then a reformer with republican and revolutionary tendencies, oscillations and limits mirrored in the pages of the pamphlet. A true defender of the people wouldn't have addressed open letters to the emperor, even to Joseph II who was an advocate of enlightened reformism, to give him mostly utopic solutions before a new revolutionary upraise of the enslaved social categories. In fact, neither the 18th century philosophical thought had a clear revolutionary strategy; they believed that the only way to change society was the "enlightenment" of the people, its betterment through culture, but this couldn't be the cause but the effect of deep revolutionary changes.

Seen within the wider framework of the century's ideas, side by side with similar writings, Brissot's pamphlet makes a valuable contribution to the idea of progress. It represents a harsh critical stand against the feudal edifice in its main constitutive elements, thus playing a significant part in the preparation of the Democratic European Revolution. We should also underline the positive tendency of the French writer, present in the pamphlet, towards getting Philosophy in general out of its contemplative state, even though the mission ascribed to it could be but a compromise from the author's position.

The pamphlet *Seconde lettre d'un défenseur du peuple à l'empereur Joseph II* written by J.-P. Brissot has a special significance among the sources on Horea's Uprising. Although it mainly expresses a philosophical-legal attitude, it should be regarded as a significant source dedicated to the revolt of the Transylvanian Romanians. It does not provide factual-documentary material, historical data on the event, but it is edifying with respect to the European echoes of the Romanian revolt, to the way it was perceived by the European circles.

It is the most progressive stand taken in Europe towards Horea's Uprising during its development, undoubtedly holding the leading place in everything that has been written by the contemporaries of the movement abroad.

The fulminating “open letter” addressed to Emperor Joseph II concerning his reforms and the uprising of the Transylvanian Romanians by J.-P. Brissot, the future Girondin during the French Revolution, is at the same time the warmest defense of the Romanian revolt, of the legitimate nature of the peasants’ cause, of Horea’s and the other leaders’ actions. The writer’s entire argumentation is based on the theory of the natural right of the people to emigrate, to revolt, all in all, to embark upon any enterprise that could lead to the happiness of man, society, and peoples.

It is a significant approach, on a most advanced tone, made on the eve of the European Democratic Revolution. Brissot’s writing, as noticed above, is deeply pervaded with the spirit of the American Revolution. His journeys across the Ocean, where the young American states were promulgating their democratic constitutions, at that time the most liberal in the world, on the basis of which they established their political-administrative and social-legal institutions, persuaded J.-P. Brissot of the value of the democratic realities established there after the removal of the monarchic dependence. What was only an ideology, a philosophy on the verge of turning into a revolutionary program in Old Europe – we should not forget that we are a few years before the outbreak of the French revolution – was put into political practice in North America. This was a decisive argument in the open debate carried on in Western Europe in written texts printed in the newspapers of the age and in pamphlets that enjoyed significant circulation. Horea’s Uprising in Transylvania in 1784 was the most favorable opportunity to deepen the debate due to the factual “material” it offered, to the questions it raised, to the place held in its development by the leading actors, the Romanian peasants. Although he had taken reformist measures with the view to change the state-of-facts in the provinces of the Empire, the enlightened sovereign Joseph II, to whom J.-P. Brissot addressed his open letters, was not able to uproot the causes of the crisis.

Through their action, the rebel Transylvanian Romanians led by Horea had opened the revolutionary way towards changing a society that still functioned according to old aristocratic privileges of medieval source, fiercely defended by the Hungarian aristocracy in the intra-Carpathian province.

Temporally located between the American and the French revolution, Horea’s Uprising – the questions it raised and its substantial echoes on the European continent and over the Ocean – can be ranged with what is more and more labeled today as the *Euro-Atlantic Revolution* at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, which has opened the way to the Democratic revolutions that have changed the course of history.