

FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ROMANIAN PRESS. NICOLAE FILIPESCU JOURNALIST

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ABSTRACT

Among the modern Romanian elite an outstanding part was played by the Filipescu family. The origin of this family is from Bucov, a village in the Prahova County. Members of the family held administrative responsibilities since the 16th. century. It is the aim of this article to analyze the way in which the Filipescus played an important role in the development of modern Romania, by shaping up its administrative and educational structure, as well as its cultural life.

KEYWORDS: *conservative party, „Epoca” newspaper, Nicolae Filipescu, modern Romanian elite, Romanian*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Filipescu family occupies a remarkable position within the Romanian elite of the modern period, playing a substantial role in shaping the administrative, educational, and cultural fabric of Romania. Among its distinguished members, Nicolae Filipescu emerges as a pivotal figure whose activities extended beyond politics into journalism, significantly influencing Romanian society at the turn of the 20th century. This article delves into the profound impact Nicolae Filipescu had through his journalistic endeavors, particularly through his leadership of the influential newspaper "Epoca." It examines how his editorial direction and combative style contributed not only to the vibrancy of Romanian journalism but also profoundly affected political discourse, public opinion, and the ideological trajectory of the Conservative Party. By scrutinizing Filipescu's journalistic methods, public engagements, and the controversies he navigated, this study illuminates the interconnected nature of media, politics, and societal transformation in Romania during a dynamic period of its history.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE RISE OF NICOLAE FILIPESCU

Most of the biographies of his time place the beginning of his journalistic activity at the founding of the newspaper *Epoca*, "whose success, unprecedented until then and perhaps not surpassed since in Romanian journalism, is surely still in everyone's mind" (Nicolae Filipescu, *Lumea ilustrată*, 1895, year II, p. 74). "Thanks to his combative temperament," notes another biographer, *Epoca* "became the most widely read and lively publication of its time" (N. Petrașcu, *Icoane de lumină*, II, p. 211). Indeed, the same chronicler of the life of the conservative ideologist recounts how, in special circumstances—such as when "newspaper sellers, instigated by the police, refused to sell *Epoca*"—Filipescu, together with a group of young conservatives, would take "bundles of newspapers under their arms and, transformed into street vendors," would spread out "into the streets, cafés, and other public places" (N. Petrașcu, *Icoane de lumină*, pp. 211–212). To protect the daily from repressive measures by the liberal government, the newspaper initially

appeared under the subtitle “an independent opposition newspaper” (C. Bacalbaşa, *Bucureştii de altădată*, vol. V (1916–1918), 2007, p. 226).

Epoca was first published in its initial series starting on 16 November 1885 (*Epoca*, year I, no. 1, Thursday, 2 November 1895, p. 231) until 14 June 1889, with Grigore Peucescu as its director. In its final year, it merged with the newspaper *România liberă*, giving rise to the daily *Constiuţionalul* (1889–1900). A year later, in 1900, *Epoca* merged with the newspaper *Patriotul*, and the journal continued publication under the title *Epoca* until 1907 (I. Hanganu, *Dicţionarul presei literare româneşti 1790–1990*, 2004, pp. 256–257).

In 1886, Nicolae Filipescu, a politician still unknown to the wider public, became the owner and director of the paper (*Dicţionarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, 1979, p. 332), with his name appearing on the front page (*Epoca*, year I, no. 187, Wednesday, 9 July 1886, p. 1). In fact, Grigore Peucescu had quickly resigned from his leadership role, disagreeing with the newspaper’s aggressive tone. Giving the newspaper a modern appearance, from 1895, when he officially assumed its management (C. Argetoianu, op. cit., pp. 387–388), Nicolae Filipescu brought in only professional editors for editorial work, maintaining total control over the newspaper (*Epoca*, year VIII, no. 1930–28, 1902, p. 1). Among the paper’s chief editors were Barbu Ştefănescu Delavrancea (1885), Grigore Ventura (1886–1889), and Anton Bacalbaşa (1895–1896), while other editors included Al. Vlahuţă (1885) and Alexandru Antemireanu (1900–1904) (I. Hanganu, p. 165). Contributors who signed in the newspaper’s pages included Alecu A. Balş, C. G. Costa-Foru, Nicolae Gane, Leon Ghica, Al. Odobescu, Tudor Arghezi, Mihail Dragomirescu, Nicolae Iorga (*Nicolae Iorga, Orizonturile mele. O viaţă de om*, 1934, pp. 48, 111, 112, 120, 133), Gala Galaction, Take Ionescu (Georgeta Răduică, Nicolin Răduică, *Dicţionarul presei româneşti*, 1995, p. 181), and others. Between 15 April and 17 June 1896, the Sunday edition *Epoca Literară* was published under the direction of Ion Luca Caragiale, who had been persuaded to take part in this venture by a letter from Nicolae Filipescu (*Epoca*, second series, no. 123, 1896). The new publication had Şt. O. Iosif as its editorial secretary and Al. Antemireanu as editor (*Dicţionarul...*, p. 333). Banned in Transylvania due to its virulent nationalist character, in 1898 *Epoca* attempted to bypass restrictions by changing its title to *Raiul* (Georgeta Răduică, Nicolin Răduică, *Dicţionarul...*, p. 181). Only in 1905 did the Austro-Hungarian authorities allow the newspaper to cross the Carpathians (Georgeta Răduică, Nicolin Răduică, *Dicţionarul...*, p. 181).

Recalling the early days of the newspaper, Constantin Bacalbaşa wrote in his memoirs: “*Epoca* soon became the most widely read newspaper. In addition to so many valuable pens, the paper had verve, it was well-informed politically, and Nicolae Filipescu himself was doing political reporting. Gradually, all the discontented gathered around this newspaper. Then the paper adopted a very aggressive tone that revealed the restless temperament of its owner” (Constantin Bacalbaşa, *Bucureştii de altădată*, vol. II, 2007, p. 27).

The atmosphere at *Epoca* at the beginning of the 20th century, when the daily was led by Timoleon Pisani, is recalled by Eugen Lovinescu in his memoirs. The climate of “indifference” toward collaborators, imposed by the director, who had “an asymmetrical and prognathous face like Vlad Ţepeş” and who “did not radiate goodwill,” was compounded by the hostility and apathy of the editors—everything unfolding under a “definitive” and awkward silence (E. Lovinescu, *Memorii*, 1916–1930, pp. 88–90).

From the very first issue’s *Word to the Readers*, those gathered around the newspaper declared that, in a country undergoing “an age of corruption and scepticism,” it was their duty, as young people who had preserved their pure souls and held their heads high and “who had no right to be

tired or discouraged” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 1, 1885, p. 1), “to join hands in brotherhood and intensify their efforts to save the country from this ruinous atmosphere,” watching over “the respect of the rights and liberties enshrined in the Constitution,” for “the prosperity of the majority” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 1, 1885, p. 1).

Wishing to assert their distinct position within the Conservative Party, the young people of *Epoca*, led by Nicolae Filipescu (Constantin Bacalbaşa, 1974, p. 201), expressed in the pages of the newspaper their personal views on the conservative political programme, supporting it through a vigorous editorial campaign against the government and the head of state.

Filipescu’s debut in journalism—having not yet appeared in the columns of *Epoca* in 1885—came with the issue of 14 January 1886 (*Epoca*, year I, no. 45, 1886, p. 1), when he published his first editorial, *The Governmental Lie*. Criticising the falsification of elections, when “all the powers of the state work together to distort the people’s will,” Filipescu concluded: “The country’s votes are thus sifted through the government’s sieve for the first time during elections, and whatever remains in the sieve becomes the government’s dowry, which is called the representation of the nation” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 45, 1886, p. 1).

In the same spirit, Filipescu soon returned to *Epoca*’s pages with the article *A Dissolver* (*Epoca*, year I, no. 45, 1886, p. 1), in which, after condemning the government’s dismantling of the opposition, he pointed to the “devious” role of the King who, when speaking about the coalition of the opposition, told its members that their coming to power would be “personally very unpleasant” to him (*Epoca*, year I, no. 45, 1886, p. 1).

Affirming his commitment to conservative ideals in the article *Still for the People*, Filipescu characterised the doctrine as consisting of democratic provisions, concluding that only conservatives “were concerned with the material and moral well-being of the people” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 93, 1886, p. 1).

A month later, Filipescu continued his series of attacks against the monarchy with the editorial *The King’s Constitutionalism* (*Epoca*, year I, no. 126, April 1886, p. 1). Arguing that the monarch was abusing the term—even though he had sworn to uphold the Constitution—Filipescu demonstrated that the King’s constitutionalism was based on a false understanding of the fundamental act, not out of ignorance, but to allow him “to keep Mr. Brătianu in power” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 126, 1886, p. 1).

That same year, on 20 May and 2 August, the young journalist returned forcefully to his favourite theme—attacks on the monarchy—with the lead articles *The King’s Powers* and *Constitutional Monarchy* (*Epoca*, year I, no. 187, 1886, p. 1). Granting the King “optional powers” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 147, 1886, p. 1), Filipescu noted: “The King cannot exercise the rights granted to him by the Constitution, but rather exercises rights that the Constitution does not grant him.” This was because, in the journalist’s view, the King had abdicated all his constitutional prerogatives and assumed “rights far greater than those granted by the law,” creating “in a hypocritical manner, behind the scenes, a secret, hypocritical and irresponsible power.” To end “such a situation,” the conservative leader demanded:

1. “that the King actually exercise his constitutional prerogatives.
2. that the King not exceed the limits established for him by the Constitution” (*Epoca*, year I, no. 208, 1886, p. 1).

The fierce press campaign against the regime led to one of Filipescu’s first journalistic confrontations—with journalist I.C. Fundescu, director of the newspaper *Telegraful*. Feeling slandered by an article published in that paper, Nicolae Filipescu sent witnesses to Fundescu to

demand satisfaction. The latter refused “in a chivalrous manner!” (*Resboiul*, year 10, no. 3205, 1886, p. 2) to engage in a duel.

Another press conflict erupted between the young owner of *Epoca* and a certain I. Skupieswski, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *L'Étoile Roumaine*. Although Skupieswski had insulted Filipescu in the paper he managed, when challenged to a duel by the director of *Epoca*, the “courageous” Skupieswski refused to fight (*Epoca*, year I, no. 209, 1886, p. 3).

The campaign against the government and the monarchy would soon bring the first serious troubles for *Epoca* (Constantin Bacalbaşa, p. 35), which arose following the assassination attempt of 4/16 September 1886 on Ion C. Brătianu, on Vămii Street (Ion C. Brătianu, vol. II, Editura Universul, 1934, pp. 239–240).

As the liberals blamed the attack on the “violent language of opposition newspapers” (Constantin Bacalbaşa, p. 42), on the morning of 5/17 September 1886—taking advantage, at least in the case of *Epoca*, of the absence of the newspaper’s owner from the capital—a group of 40–50 people headed for the offices of the main opposition newspapers (Constantin Bacalbaşa, *Bucureştii de altădată*, vol. III (1885–1888), 2000, p. 41). As reported the following day by *Epoca* (*Epoca*, year I, no. 236, 1886, p. 1), they went on to devastate the *Epoca* editorial office, assault the typesetters and editors, steal manuscripts (Anghel Dimitrescu, *Epoca*, year I, no. 246, 1886, p. 1) and the printing plate with the newspaper’s name, and ultimately destroy the layout of the previous day’s edition (I. Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, vol. II (1881–1886), 1892, p. 3).

Unintimidated, the *Epoca* team became even more incisive in their editorials and articles.

In a lead article from November 1886 (*Epoca*, year I, no. 294, 15/27 November 1886, p. 1), comparing liberalism and conservatism, Nicolae Filipescu wrote that although the two parties had “the same ideas,” the differences lay in their programmes—the conservative one being “still the same as in Barbu Catargiu’s time.” Analysing the liberal programme in depth in another editorial from November 1886, titled *What Liberalism Means*, Filipescu attacked it from the standpoint of the “forms without substance” theory—which entailed “preserving existing institutions untouched”—and criticised the liberals’ desire to modify state institutions in a way that “would completely disrupt the balance between culture and institutions” (*Epoca*, year II, no. 298, 1886, p. 1).

At the end of its first year of publication, the leadership of *Epoca* marked the event with a banquet held at the Hotel “De France”, attended by the editorial staff along with 80 guests, including collaborators and provincial correspondents (*Epoca*, year II, no. 302, 1886, p. 2). During the gathering, in a speech, the newspaper’s owner dissected the political events of the time, especially the government’s policies, referring to it as “that collective of interests” or “collector party” (*Epoca*, year II, no. 302, 1886, p. 2), supported by the monarch, whom *Epoca*’s opponents mockingly called “Carol the Tolerant” (*Epoca*, year II, no. 331, 1887, p. 1).

The year 1887 began in full force for the conservative journalist and owner of *Epoca*. In the article *The Solidarity of Mistakes*, Filipescu, after attacking both the government and the king, stated that this complicity “between the sovereign and his prime minister is not even the solidarity of successes or the collaboration in great deeds, which from a constitutional perspective might still be acceptable, but rather the solidarity of mistakes which must be condemned and brought to an end” (*Epoca*, year II, no. 332, 1887, p. 1).

Advocating for the preservation of monarchy as a political regime, in the article *What Kind of King Do We Want* (*Epoca*, year II, no. 339, 1887, p. 1), Filipescu asserted that the group he represented wished for “... a monarchy [...] that is a true constitutional monarchy” and, additionally, “a national

monarchy,” because only in this way could the monarchy enter into a contract not to have “any interest separate from that of the nation” (*Epoca*, year II, no. 370, 1887, p. 1).

Opposing the government, which Carp called “le régime de jouisseurs” and which Maiorescu described as a true “rulership,” Filipescu advocated for uniting the opposition, stating that “all resentments must be silenced, the parties must join hands,” because, in his view, this act represented a true “national act” (*Epoca*, year II, no. 357, 1887, p. 1).

From attacking the government, the sharp-tongued Filipescu moved on to mocking certain liberal political figures, whom he deemed real *Political Fossils* (*Epoca*, year II, no. 384, 1887, p. 1). Criticising the idea of replacing the Brătianu government with one led by Kogălniceanu – Dimitrie Ghica, Filipescu argued that “the end of Brătianu’s rule will also mean the end of the political careers of the likes of Kogălniceanu and Beizadea Mitică,” whom he considered “a relic of the collectivist era” (*Pe urmele lui Kogălniceanu*, 1979, p. 266).

At that time, *Epoca*, alongside the newspaper *Lupta*, was one of the most widely read dailies (Constantin Bacalbașa, p. 87). Amid the growing tension between the government and the opposition in Parliament—and especially in light of articles published in the newspaper against the government—some of *Epoca*’s editors turned journalistic disputes into physical confrontations. The initiator was Alecu Balș, son of a Moldavian landowner (Alexandru A. Balș, *București*, p. 257). After a series of article exchanges with journalists from the liberal official newspaper *Voința Națională*, occurring between the end of February and the beginning of March, Balș demanded, in an *Epoca* article, the name of the person who, under cover of anonymity, had insolently replied to him in *Voința Națională* (*Epoca*, year II, no. 386, 1887, p. 1). Not receiving a satisfactory answer from the liberal newspaper, *Epoca*’s editor considered retaliating based on the newspaper chief Nicolae Xenopol’s (Constantin Bostan, Editura RAO, p. 327) statement that he took responsibility for the unsigned articles—and, if necessary, also for the accompanying insults (*Epoca*, year II, no. 387, 1887, p. 1). As a result, Balș—uninterested in educating the collectivist journalists—decided to confront the editor-in-chief, especially after being invited to the liberal newspaper’s offices for clarifications (*Epoca*, year II, no. 388, 1887, p. 1). What followed was recounted in detail by *Epoca*’s editorial team in the article *A Lesson to a Scoundrel* (*Epoca*, year II, no. 388, 1887, pp. 1–2).

After the unsuccessful attempt to reach an understanding with the liberal editors during the visit, on the evening of 10 March, Alecu Balș stopped by Capșa Confectionery and informed N. Filipescu of his “intention to slap Nicolae Xenopol at his home” (Constantin Bacalbașa, p. 55). Strong-willed and loyal to his friends, Filipescu, considering the affair one involving the newspaper, “joined Balș” in the act. Upon arriving at the home of the historian A.D. Xenopol’s brother, Balș, without any introduction, asked the liberal paper’s editor-in-chief whether he was the author of the article. As Xenopol hesitated, Balș instantly slapped him. In the ensuing scuffle, which also involved C. Dissescu, Xenopol managed to leave the room. Returning armed with a pistol, the liberal editor fired a shot, which was stopped by the conservative journalist’s fur coat. The second bullet had the same outcome. At that point, the fight between the two turned into a tragicomedy worthy of Caragiale’s characters (*Epoca*, year II, no. 12(24), p. 2), played out in French. “This aggression caused a great stir in the country, especially given the intense animosities between the government and the opposition” (Lupu Kostaki, *Memoriile unui trădător*, 1850–1919, f. 45).

The incident concluded at the Court of the First District, where the two defendants were defended by an army of lawyers (a total of 12), prominent figures of the bar such as Nicolae

Blaremburg (a relative of Filipescu), Nicolae Fleva, Alexandru Lahovari, Titu Maiorescu, G. Pallade, G. Panu, Take Ionescu, and others. The victim, Nicolae Xenopol, had engaged the lawyers Aristide Pascal and C. Corbescu (*Epoca*, year II, no. 393, 18/30 1887, p. 3). At the end of a passionate trial, peppered with press jabs from both sides (N. Filipescu, *Epoca*, year II, nos. 398 and 399, p. 1), the two aggressors were sentenced to 6 months in prison (no. 395, 1887, p. 1), reduced on appeal to only 4 months. However, the fine of 300 lei and court costs of 500 lei were upheld (no. 434, 1887, p. 1). Although they requested in a new trial, held at the 4th section of the Ilfov Tribunal, to remain free pending appeal to the Court of Cassation by posting bail, the court denied the request (no. 434, 1887, p. 1). As a result, they were imprisoned in the Văcărești Penitentiary (Lupu Kostaki, *Memoriile unui trădător*, 1850–1919, ff. 45, 46). After the appeal was rejected at the end of May (no. 451, 1887, pp. 2–3) by the Court of Cassation, the two served only part of their sentence, during which time they were visited by many politicians, cultural figures, journalists, and military officers (nos. 456 and 484, 1887). On 31 July, the King, who was at Sinaia, granted them a royal pardon for the remainder of their sentence (no. 502, 1887, p. 1). Toward the end of the year, another moment marked *Epoca*'s activity as an opposition newspaper: the banquet celebrating the second anniversary of the newspaper's founding and its entry into its third year. In a detailed on-site report suggestively titled *Our Banquet*, the editors recounted the event step by step, carefully noting all the toasts delivered on the occasion (*Epoca*, year III, no. 582, 1887, p. 1).

The banquet, held on 8/20 November 1887 at the same “Hotel de France” in Bucharest, brought together, alongside the newspaper staff and provincial correspondents, notable figures of Romanian public life: Al. Lahovari, Nicolae Fleva (who at that time was collaborating with the newspaper), Take Ionescu, C. C. Arion, Al. Djuvara, and others. In the opening speech, it was stated that the newspaper was determined “to work in the future as it had in the past” (*Epoca*, year III, no. 582, 1887, p. 1). Furthermore, with the support of a segment of public opinion and figures from the United Opposition, *Epoca* affirmed that its “leading idea,” in fact “the only idea, in the end,” was that “the time for delay and procrastination is over, that it is time to fight, that it is time to deliver the blow that will bring down the rotten regime,” which had reached “the highest levels of oppositional action” (*Epoca*, year III, no. 582, 1887, p. 1).

Following rousing toasts by the newspaper's owner and the conservative leader Al. Lahovari, and motivational speeches by Al. Holban and N. Fleva, came the especially inspired speech of Constantin Ressu, a leader of the United Opposition from Galați (G. Panu, *Lupta*, 1893, pp. 134–136), and correspondent of *Epoca*. At the height of the event's excitement, paraphrasing Gambetta (Leon Gambetta, Craiova, 1991, p. 63), Ressu referred to the king's position “in the current political struggles” and demanded that he either “submit or leave” (*Epoca* notes that for five minutes...*, year III, no. 583, 1887, p. 1). The next day, *Epoca* published the remaining speeches given at the event (Ion Miclescu, C. C. Arion, G. Demetescu, Ion Lahovari, and Take Ionescu), which were in line with what one would expect from such occasions (*Epoca*, year III, no. 583, Wednesday, 11/23, 1887, p. 1).

In this explosive context, reaffirming his belief in the United Opposition of conservatives and some liberals “against a Caesarian regime,” Filipescu, in an article with the same title, argued that this cooperation was not a coalition, “but the most natural, the most logical union when the entire opposition fights for the same purpose—for reclaiming trampled public freedoms, for removing the falsified parliamentary regime, and for restoring the constitutional regime, which has effectively been suppressed” (*Epoca*, year III, no. 583, 1887, p. 1).

Beginning in 1888, *Epoca* would mobilise all its resources to legally bring down the liberal regime. Involving himself directly in the struggle, the owner of *Epoca* attacked the crumbling regime without restraint. Referring again to the possibility of entrusting the new cabinet to Dimitrie Ghica, President of the Senate (Petre Dan, Editura Meronia, Bucharest, 2004, pp. 112), Filipescu clearly stated: “In the face of a government composed of such moderate elements, whose attitude cannot yet be fully understood, the opposition, we believe, will adopt a wait-and-see stance.” For it to count on the opposition’s neutrality, the new government had to plan for “dismantling the former government, punishing the guilty, and holding free elections” (*The New Government and the Opposition*, no. 673, 1888, p. 1).

Shortly after, the impulsive journalist returned with the article *The Provisional Government*, in which he criticised the king—who had left for the funeral of his relative, Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany (1871–1888)—for keeping the collectivist cabinet in place even in a provisional form, calling it “an incitement to civil war” (no. 693, 1888, p. 1).

Filipescu’s involvement in the United Opposition uprising during the turbulent days of 13–15 March 1888—after which he was arrested along with Nicolae Flevea—further increased the popularity of the newspaper he owned. Anticipating the dissolution of the opposition following the liberal government’s fall (*Epoca*, year IV, no. 996, 1889, p. 1), Filipescu, revisiting the topic of the United Opposition, promoted the idea of maintaining it in one form or another, although leaving it to the liberals to propose the solution “and we shall submit to their decision” (*Epoca*, year III, no. 772, 1888, p. 1). The rise to power of the *Junimist* government, which *Epoca* conditionally supported (no. 710, 4/17, 1888, p. 1), while advising political circles to “be patient and wait with confidence” (Constantin Bacalbaşa, p. 89), subdued the newspaper’s combative spirit and the fighting temperament of its owner.

Drawing from the government’s programme, Filipescu authored short articles analysing the feasibility of certain provisions, such as *The Sale of State Estates* (*Epoca*, year III, no. 832, 1888, p. 1), *Agricultural Education* (no. 833, 1888, p. 1), and the establishment of model farms (no. 834, 1888, p. 1). His conclusion was that during its term, “the Conservative Party will wage an impersonal battle in Parliament, aiming to deliver the reforms the country needs and usher in an era of peace and progress” (no. 874, 22, 1888, p. 1).

And, as in every year, 1888 ended with the *Epoca* banquet, this time held at the “Union Hotel.” At the celebration, alongside Filipescu, toasts were given by conservative politicians Constantin Olănescu, Ion Lahovari, and I. Manolache Epureanu. Expressing his confidence in conservatism “which descends from the realm of metaphysics onto the ground of reality,” Filipescu argued that this movement remained the only one able to respond to “real needs [...] in the face of threatening socialism and impotent liberalism” (no. 897, 1888, p. 1).

3. THE ROLE OF JOURNALISM IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION: „EPOCA” NEWSPAPER

In 1889, Filipescu published an article in *Epoca* simply titled *To the Readers* (no. 1011, 1889, p. 1). After reiterating that the newspaper’s original goal—set four years earlier—had been achieved, and that the “collectivist” regime had been removed and replaced with a government of the “Whites,” composed of all conservative factions, *Epoca*, “not wishing to choose between one conservative faction or another; unwilling to fully support the new conservative government, and unable to oppose a conservative government,” stated: “silence is the only role that befits us” (no.

1011, 1889, p. 1). With this, Filipescu solemnly announced: “from today, my collaboration with the editorial board of *Epoca* ceases” (no. 1011, 1889, p. 1).

Regarding the future of the newspaper’s publication, this was to be decided after a series of “consultations” that Filipescu would undertake in the following days with his political allies, after which they would determine whether *Epoca* “could still be of service to the conservative cause” (no. 1011, 1889, p. 1). The next day, following these consultations, Filipescu, heeding the advice of his friends, agreed to continue collaborating with *Epoca*, although he had in fact stepped down from its leadership (no. 1011, 1889, p. 1). In conclusion, the editorial team promised that the paper “will continue to appear just as before, and the articles to be published in *Epoca*, signed by our many contributors, will demonstrate that *Epoca*’s programme remains the same” (no. 1013, 1889, p. 1).

And yet, shortly afterward, in the summer of 1889, *Epoca*’s editorial board, in the lead article *To the Readers*, announced the discontinuation of the newspaper’s publication. Justifying the decision by stating they had failed to achieve their main objective—namely, “the unification of the conservative factions”—the editors declared that the final issue would appear on 14/26 June (no. 1070, 1889, p. 1). *Epoca* was succeeded by another daily newspaper that resulted from a merger with *România liberă* (no. 1070, 1889, p. 1).

Until the launch of a new edition of *Epoca* (in 1895), N. Filipescu published mainly in the daily *Timpul* (nos. 253–257, 1890, p. 1), whose leadership he had joined in 1890 (*Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, Bucharest, 1979, p. 851). Concerned about the fate of this paper, which in 1892 was going through a severe financial crisis—as its three editors had not been “paid regularly”—Filipescu wrote a letter to Alexandru Ciurcu, the director of the paper (N. Filipescu to Al. Ciurcu, 1892), proposing a plan to revitalise *Timpul*, which he insisted should not be understood “as a personal matter, which does not exist in any form, but as the simple wish to have a good newspaper” (N. Filipescu to Al. Ciurcu, 1892).

The project, which he wanted the editorial leadership to consider, proposed that the newspaper be taken over by a group of journalists “who were offering themselves for this purpose at their own risk,” and who were willing to issue receipts amounting to 2,500 francs more than the current expenses (N. Filipescu to Al. Ciurcu, 1892). In the same spirit of “reviving” *Timpul*, Filipescu also proposed selling the newspaper “at half price,” with the new investors committing to form a more complete editorial team (N. Filipescu to Al. Ciurcu, 1892). Thus, “in two words,” Filipescu concluded, this project aimed “to turn *Timpul* into a first-rate newspaper” (N. Filipescu to Al. Ciurcu, 1892).

Filipescu’s rich correspondence with Al. Ciurcu reveals, on the one hand, the mechanisms and degree of involvement of the conservative leader in running the newspaper (BAR, Manuscripts, Correspondence of N. Filipescu), including financially (BAR, Manuscripts, Correspondence of N. Filipescu), and on the other, his clear desire and intention—as previously shown—to relaunch *Timpul* by all means (BAR, Manuscripts, Correspondence of N. Filipescu).

The appearance, in May 1892, of an unsigned article in *Timpul* that damaged the reputation of the newspaper *Adevărul* prompted Alexandru Beldiman (Lucian Predescu, *Enciclopedia României*, Editura Saeculum I.O. și Vestala, Bucharest, 1999, facsimile edition, p. 93; and Dim. R. Rosetti, *Dicționarul contemporanilor*, 1st edition), who “would not talk to servants” (*Adevărul*, year V, no. 1178, 1892, p. 1), to address N. Filipescu, whom he considered the main culprit behind the defamation campaign targeting the paper he directed. Knowing Filipescu to be a courageous man who “would not hide behind a salaried pen” (*Adevărul*, year V, no. 1178, 1892, p. 1),

Beldiman, quoting from articles in *Epoca*—which drew from texts written by the conservative politician—sought to prove that Filipescu himself had once been a staunch opponent of King Carol, which was entirely true.

Feeling offended, N. Filipescu sent two representatives, Leon Ghika and Captain Grădișteanu, to the *Adevărul* editorial office to demand explanations regarding the article published on 14 May 1892. After explaining to the director of *Adevărul* that Filipescu was not the director of *Timpul*, and that the articles published there—and reprinted by *Epoca*—were not his and sometimes appeared under other signatures, Beldiman expressed his regrets to the emissaries and retracted any words that might have offended the conservative leader (no. 1179, 1892, p. 1).

A year later (October 1893), a new conflict arose—this time between Henri Catargi, president of the Ilfov Tribunal, 3rd section, and N. Filipescu, now the new mayor of Bucharest. It did not end with words between envoys; instead, they decided the offence would be resolved on the field with weapons. The weapon of choice: the sword. The duel was held at the Hippodrome. Following the 12 October 1893 clash, the magistrate sustained two wounds—one to the hand and one to the stomach (*Epoca*, year VI, no. 1666, 1893, p. 2).

His work at *Timpul* also brought Filipescu into conflict with diplomat Trandafir Djuvara (Lucian Predescu, p. 276). Djuvara believed an article published in *Timpul* had harmed his honour, and thus demanded accountability from N. Filipescu and Al. Ciurcu, through the pages of the liberal daily *Voința Națională* (L. Predescu, p. 200), whom he regarded as the paper's overseers. Djuvara wanted to know who wrote the slanderous article in order to seek redress. Since neither Filipescu nor Ciurcu responded, Djuvara published another article in *Voința Națională*, titled *The Knights of Timpul*. Feeling offended by this second article, Filipescu sent emissaries to Djuvara to request satisfaction through a duel. At a preliminary meeting at Emil Costinescu's home, between Djuvara's witnesses and Filipescu's (see *Timpul*, year 16, no. 35, 1894, p. 2), the former stated that Djuvara did not intend to insult Filipescu. Moreover, although they acknowledged that *The Knights of Timpul* was offensive, Djuvara's witnesses claimed the piece had a general tone and did not damage Mr Filipescu's honour. As a result, Filipescu's representatives accepted the explanation as satisfactory and agreed to close the matter in a written statement, noting that, despite the differences in views between Filipescu and Djuvara, the duel would not take place (*Resboiul*, year 18, no. 5734, 1894, p. 2).

The fall of the Conservative Party from power in 1895 brought *Epoca* back into public life and reader attention. In the article *Our First Word*, the editorial team explained that the Conservatives' departure from government gave them “the opportunity to begin the fight from the very first day, with the serenity of those whose past does not weigh upon them” (*Epoca*, new series (II), year I, no. 1, 1895, p. 1).

The next day, Filipescu published his first political article in the new series, symbolically titled *Our Fight* (no. 2, 1895, p. 1). Although the Conservative Party had stepped down from government according to the principle of rotating cabinets, Filipescu declared that his party had not abandoned the struggle. More than that—threatening those in power—he stated that the role given to the opposition in parliament would determine the strategy that the Conservatives would adopt in the future, even hinting at taking the fight outside of parliament if necessary (no. 2, 1895, p. 1).

Now an experienced journalist, Filipescu published several substantial articles in 1895, confirming both his professional status and his intellectual role as a conservative ideologue—an image shaped in previous years. In articles like *How Governments Change* (no. 26, 1895, p. 1)—

originally published in *Timpul*—and especially in a four-part series titled *The Conservative Party* (*Epoca*, nos. 42, 43, 44, and 45, December 23, 24, 29, and 30, 1895, p. 1), Filipescu blended sharp insight with strong argumentation, combining general ideas with detailed precision. While setting future goals for the Conservative Party in opposition, he put forward, for the first time, innovative programme ideas for both the party and Romanian society at the end of the 19th century.

Expanding his scope of interest in 1896, and responding to the political climate of the time, Filipescu began addressing both the national question—then a burning issue—and pressing social matters in *Epoca*. In articles titled *The National Question* (*Epoca*, series II, year II, no. 51, 1896, p. 1) and *The Social Question* (nos. 53 and 54, 1896, p. 1), the latter published across two consecutive editions, he analysed and further developed the conservative programme introduced the previous year.

After responding to liberal accusations regarding his management of Bucharest City Hall during his mayoral term (*Epoca*, nos. 60, 61, and 62, 1896), Filipescu returned to forceful anti-government pieces—true journalistic assaults—of the type that had defined the early stages of his career.

In the article *After 4 Months*, borrowing techniques from the political pamphlet, Filipescu described the early months of a government “without authority,” led by a “leader without prestige,” backed by a parliament “sunk in idleness,” concluding that due to the malice of the “venomous men” of the “collectivist party,” liberals were no longer worthy of the nickname “the Reds,” but rather “the Greens” (no. 70, 1896, p. 1).

While still engaged in political controversies of the time (such as the issue of the metropolitan primate) (no. 70, 1896, p. 1), the conservative leader also published a pamphlet against the new *drapelist* cabinet, which he mockingly dubbed *The Ministry of Epigones* (no. 310, 1896, p. 1). This new government, unconditionally supported by a “servile” parliament, represented—in national affairs—the politics of “unanimities” (of the parliamentary majority) against the “minorities” (the nearly non-existent opposition in the legislature) (no. 31, 1896, p. 1).

A talented portraitist—a difficult journalistic skill he would perfect—Filipescu delivered a biting character sketch in a December 1896 article (no. 336, 1896, p. 1) of the *drapelist* prime minister. Although the portrait was at times unfair, it was cleverly constructed. Emphasising every negative trait of P.S. Aurelian, Filipescu compared him unfavourably to the former liberal prime minister D.A. Sturdza, while granting Aurelian at least the merit of lightening the political atmosphere somewhat. The final months of 1896 saw Filipescu focusing on political analyses regarding the development of the electoral system and the potential introduction of universal suffrage (no. 334, 1896, p. 1).

The new year, 1897, marked a turning point in Nicolae Filipescu’s journalistic career. Engaged in the electoral struggle, celebrated by party leaders at Hotel Boulevard “for the bravery with which you fight to strengthen the conservative idea in Romania” (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 365, 1897, p. 1), and organiser of conservative demonstrations against the liberal government, the restless conservative ideologue would become involved, toward the end of the year, in what began as a routine press offence but ended tragically—an event that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

The duel between N. Filipescu and G. Em. Lahovari at the close of the 19th century would stir the Romanian aristocratic society of the time (Sorin Cristescu, 2012, p. 387) and divide the press in Bucharest—and beyond—into camps either supporting or condemning the defence of honour through the chivalric method of duelling.

George Emanoil Lahovari (Fond Krețulescu, files: 677, ff. 1, 3; 678, ff. 1–7; 681, f. 1), a diplomat and prestigious journalist, came from the illustrious Levantine-origin Lahovari family, naturalised in Wallachia at the end of the 18th century (Costel Iordăchiță, Pitești, 2004). A passionate politician and formidable journalist, G. Em. Lahovari summarised the results of his political activity in a well-received late 19th-century essay suggestively titled *Histoire d'une fiction. Le Gouvernement des Partis* (G. Em. Lahovari, Bucharest, 1897). Disillusioned with Romanian public life, Lahovari concluded in this essay, with pessimism, that everything offered by the parliamentary institution was a harmful fiction, playing a negligible role in the functioning of the state. This state of affairs, he argued, was due to corruption, the absence of political principles, servility, behind-the-scenes manoeuvring, and petty, material rather than ideological rivalries, administrative pressures, political rivalry, and ultimately, the lack of political (especially electoral) conscience within public opinion (G. Em. Lahovari, Bucharest, 1897).

4. CONTROVERSIES AND LEGACY: DUEL, TRIALS, AND HISTORICAL IMPACT

At the end of January 1897, George Em. Lahovari, owner and director of the newspaper *L'Indépendance Roumaine* (Costel Iordăchiță, 1885, p. 180), resigned from the Executive Committee of the Conservative Party through a letter addressed to the party's president, Lascăr Catargiu. The reason he cited was his desire to remain impartial in journalistic debates and to involve only himself and his newspaper in political disputes with the government—not the political party he belonged to. He believed such a commitment was necessary, as at some point, in order to maintain the authority of an independent publication director, one had to “speak aloud what lies in everyone's conscience” (no. 361, 1897, p. 1). Assuring the “venerable president” that he would remain “a devoted soldier of the conservative idea,” Lahovari felt that only in this manner could he better serve the cause of the party that had established his reputation (no. 361, 1897, p. 1).

However, this man, who “under his modest and somewhat timid exterior hid a heart of rare kindness and a very determined character” (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 626, 1897, p. 1), signed with his initials an article which, though not overtly hostile, “had a provocative appearance” (no. 627, 1897, p. 1). In the article titled *Deux politiques* (Marian Ștefan, Oscar Print, Bucharest, 2011, p. 168), Lahovari—without initially naming his target—launched grave accusations against the newspaper *Epoca*. He blamed its editorial staff for the way they reported on the antisemitic actions of students at the Dacia Hall (Rudolf Dinu and Adrian Bogdan Ceobanu, Iași, 2013, p. 218), many of whom were “literary contributors” to the mentioned paper.

Later in the article, the accusations were also directed at the newspaper's director and owner, well known for his “blind hatred” of Jews (Rudolf Dinu and Adrian Bogdan Ceobanu, Iași, 2013, p. 218). Moreover, the author alleged that the director of *Epoca* had planted agents among the students to provoke unrest, thus creating more trouble for the government—behaviour he concluded was dishonourable for any politician. His dilemma lay in the duplicitous conduct of *Epoca* and its director, who had initially condemned the student actions just like the government newspaper *Voința Națională*, only to later support them and call for the liberal government's resignation due to the unrest. Concluding that this was not the first instance of such double-dealing (he also mentioned the affair with Metropolitan Ghenadie), Lahovari openly attacked *Epoca*'s director in the article. Accusing him of being behind all these schemes and of promoting “very learned conservative theories of English puritanism,” Lahovari described Filipescu as “either the first among demagogues or the last among tribunes” (Rudolf Dinu and Adrian Bogdan Ceobanu, Iași, 2013, p. 218). He accused him of violating a conservative principle—namely, involving the

population in resolving a political issue—merely to strike at the liberal government, condemning this approach to political life.

Publicly disavowing Filipescu's stance, as well as the veiled threats he had received from him in the form of "a bill to be settled," which had been made "for some time" in his paper, Lahovari ended his article with a prophetic line: "If Mr. Filipescu pursues his politics, we shall not abandon ours; but if there remains a balance, we are ready to settle it. Public opinion will judge which of these two politics is conservative and useful to Romania" (Rudolf Dinu and Adrian Bogdan Ceobanu, Iași, 2013, p. 218).

Although warned by his editorial team that such a piece might cause trouble, the article was published in the evening edition of *L'Indépendance Roumaine* on 27 November 1897 (21st year, 5th series, no. 6297, 1897, p. 2). Upon reading the article, Filipescu—who was dining with George Duca (A. C. Cuza, p. 168)—immediately appointed two seconds, as per the rules of duelling. These were Al. N. Săulescu and Victor Ionescu (N. Filipescu, no. 3928, 1898, p. 2), who met Lahovari's seconds—initially C. Isvoranu and Th. Văcărescu—at the Jockey Club to arrange the terms of the duel. After their first meeting, Lahovari's seconds declared "on their honour" that they found nothing in *Deux politiques* that could offend Mr. N. Filipescu, and, on behalf of their client, they stated "that he had no intention of offending" (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 627, 1897, p. 1). Th. Văcărescu subsequently stepped down and was replaced by Nicolae Drosu. Furthermore, the article's author stated through his seconds that he believed he had "remained within the bounds of permissible polemic" and that he was "ready to offer satisfaction by arms to Mr. Filipescu, if that is what he desires," though he wished "not to have the meaning of his article or the intention behind it misrepresented" (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 627, 1897, p. 1). The inflexibility of Filipescu's seconds—who found the response unsatisfactory—led to the arrangement of the duel. The agreed weapon was the sword, and the duel would consist of two-minute rounds, not fought "jusqu'au premier sang" (to first blood), but until one of the duelists was unable to continue (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 627, 1897, p. 1). The confrontation was held at the Shooting and Gymnastics Hall on the Dâmbovița embankment, which had a heated fencing room (Hagi Moscu, p. 267).

Of the two, only Filipescu was a member of this society (*Voința Națională*, year XV, no. 3927, 1897, p. 1), although Lahovari also had previous duelling experience (Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași, pp. 109–110). The difference was that Filipescu had undergone more rigorous training (*L'Indépendance Roumaine*, year 21, 5th series, no. 6305, 1897, p. 1) and had a stronger constitution (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 627, 1897, p. 1). Though "skilled with the sword," as some close to him claimed, Lahovari was left-handed, frail, and suffered from painful corns on his feet (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 636, 1897, p. 1). Scheduled for 29 November at 11:00 a.m., the duel took place in the presence of doctors Romalo and Toma Ionescu (Lucian Predescu, p. 433). At the start, once again, Lahovari's second, C. Isvoranu (*Voința Națională*, year XV, no. 3928, 1898, p. 2), attempted a reconciliation, but Filipescu's representatives refused (*Voința Națională*, year XV, no. 3928, 1898, p. 2), and Filipescu himself intervened, declaring that "he was not permitted to hear such explanations, as they were forbidden by the laws of duelling" (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 627, 1897, p. 1). The duel took place in a poorly suited room—only 12 metres in length, compared to the 26-metre gymnasium—and shortly into the second round, Lahovari collapsed, fatally wounded (Andrei Oișteanu, *Duelul la români*, 2006, pp. 16–17). Although the attending doctors, joined by C. I. Istrati, attempted to resuscitate him (*Epoca*, series II, year III,

no. 636, 1897, p. 1), Lahovari died soon after, allegedly uttering with his last breath, according to his valet: *Ils m'ont assassiné* (Fond Krețulescu, file 906, ff. 1–7).

The debates held in the press by both sides, the pro and con reactions from part of the public opinion (*Epoca*, series II, year IV, no. 698, 1898, p. 2), Filipescu's immediate regrets (*L'Indépendance Roumaine*, year 21, series 5, no. 6303, 1897, p. 1), his attempts to seek moral support from renowned duel experts in France (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 636, 1897, p. 1), and the tributes paid by numerous national and international personalities (Fond Krețulescu, file 697/1897) could not compensate for the loss of a successful journalist. At only 43 years old, a prominent and honourable journalist disappeared, "in a duel that revealed the savagery rather than the civilisation of mankind" (Fond Krețulescu, file 679, f. 4).

Moved, like many others, by the tragic outcome of the duel and seeking to draw some lessons from it, Candiano Popescu, the famous republican of 1870, wrote:

"The lesson we must learn from the Filipescu–Lahovari duel imposes an urgent and essential reform—that the second must be a serious and balanced man, and the law must provide harsh penalties for a second who fails to fulfil his duty with energy and competence, because [...] the famous axiom will remain: 'It is not the swords that kill in a duel, but the seconds'" (Fond Candiano Popescu, file 54/1908, f. 9).

Following the trial (*Voința Națională*, year XV, no. 3930, 1898, p. 2), held in the 3rd section of the Ilfov Tribunal, Nicolae Filipescu, who had refused legal representation (Rudolf Șuțu, *Iașii de odinioară, Colecția Istorie cu Blazon*, Corint, Bucharest, 2015, p. 41), was found guilty of violating Article 259 of the Penal Code. After nine sessions (*Messengerul Brăilei*, year V, no. 605 (67), 1898, f. 1), he was sentenced to six months of correctional imprisonment and ordered to pay one leu in civil damages, as requested by Maria Em. Lahovari, the deceased's sister (Fond Krețulescu, file 680, f. 47). The seconds were acquitted under Article 10, paragraph II of the Penal Code (*Voința Națională*, year XV, no. 3930, 1898, p. 1).

Meanwhile, N. Filipescu, a "prisoner of honour" (Corneliu Șenchea, *Un prizonier al onoarei. Nicolae Filipescu, Historia*, year IX, no. 88, 2009, p. 53), resigned from the Committee of the Conservative Club, where he was a member along with the victim's father-in-law (Mihai Dimitrie Sturdza, vol. I, p. 627)—a resignation unanimously rejected by the assembly (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 640, 1897, p. 1). Deeply affected by the death of his opponent, Filipescu also rejected all offers of legal assistance and refused the public shows of support offered by provincial conservative branches (*Messengerul Brăilei*, series V, no. 596 (59), 1897, p. 1), which believed the case against him was fuelled by the government "for the dishonourable purpose of ridding itself of an opponent, exploiting human grief" (*Epoca*, series II, year III, no. 640, 1897, p. 1).

Regarded as an increasingly common method of honour-cleansing in Romanian society, the duel could not be eradicated as long as justice continued to absolve the combatants (P. Cucu, Bucharest, 1898, p. 13). Since, as Bălcescu once said, "prison obliges, just like nobility," Filipescu refused to appeal the sentence and served his term at Văcărești prison. During his imprisonment, the conservative leader received numerous encouraging telegrams (*Messengerul Brăilei*, series V, no. 610 (73), 1898, p. 1), to which he replied, "deeply moved" by their gesture, and promised that he "looked forward to the day when he could shake hands with them all" (*Messengerul Brăilei*, series V, no. 611 (74), 1898, p. 1). The prison was also the site of a student demonstration in his support, with attendance exaggerated by *Epoca*'s editors at between 1,000 and 1,500 people (*Epoca*, series II, year IV, no. 725, 1898, p. 1).

Pardoned in the summer of 1898 (BAR, Manuscripts, *Correspondence of N. Filipescu*, p. 120), Filipescu received congratulations once again from numerous Conservative leaders, party branches, and political supporters (BAR, Manuscripts, S 14/CXXXVI).

Also in 1897, Filipescu dedicated several articles to cultural topics that had long concerned him. In the pages of *Tribuna Literară*, after a four-part series devoted to idealist currents in culture, initially focusing on philosophy, religion, and morality (*Epoca*, year III, series II, nos. 545, 555, 560, 561, 1897, pp. 1–2), Filipescu offered a perceptive two-part analysis of the poetry of Eminescu (*N. Filipescu, Către un nou ideal*) and Coșbuc (*Epoca*, year III, series II, nos. 568, 569, 1897, p. 1). Analysing the works of the national poet and the Transylvanian bard, the conservative leader concluded that while Eminescu's poetry induced "a deep spiritual unease, the result of his philosophical inquiry combined with profound political disillusionment" (Eugen Lovinescu, *Antologia scriitorilor ocazionali*, p. 89), Coșbuc's works—characterised by "health" and "rustic simplicity"—reflected "a natural idealism" in which "the beliefs of our peasants are mirrored effortlessly" (*Epoca*, year III, series II, no. 569, 1897, p. 1).

Returning to public life at the end of 1898 (Andrei Oișteanu, p. 17), Filipescu resumed his journalistic activity sporadically beginning in 1900, focusing more on parliamentary work and practical party matters. Declaring *Epoca* an independent organ (*Epoca*, year VI, nos. 1332–140, 1900, p. 1), which did not reflect only the views of N. Filipescu, the newspaper began to publish mainly his parliamentary speeches and addresses at electoral or party gatherings.

The first significant article written by the right-wing politician after the events of 1897–1898 appeared in 1901. Titled *Laboremus* (*Epoca*, year VII, no. 1669–119, 1901, p. 1), it may still be seen today—through its content and ideological orientation—as a manifesto proposing that conservatives, in the new century just beginning, become a party attractive to "those disillusioned with liberal leadership" (*Epoca*, year VII, no. 1669–119, 1901, p. 1). To this end, Filipescu believed the right wing of Romanian politics needed, alongside internal party reform, to undertake "the noble task of guiding the country towards its noble destiny" (*Epoca*, year VII, no. 1669–119, 1901, p. 1).

This journalistic endeavour initiated in 1901 would not be repeated over the next two years (1902 and 1903). Absorbed by political activity and internal party struggles, Filipescu became increasingly absent from the pages of the daily newspaper. Consequently, on numerous occasions, Filipescu demanded retractions—especially from the liberal press—which attributed to him articles he had not written (*Epoca*, year VII, no. 1640–90, 1901, p. 1). The newspaper's prestige, built over time, transformed *Epoca* from the *Junimist* mouthpiece in 1901 into the official organ of the *Junimist Central Club* by 1903 (Al. G. Florescu, pp. 1027–1028). On this occasion, the new editorial leadership restructured the newsroom, appointing individuals responsible for specific areas (T. Maiorescu, *Însemnări Politice II*, 1900–1908, p. 1031), recruiting enthusiastic and well-prepared young people. The newspaper's revival prompted Maiorescu to express his delight with *Epoca* under its new editorial board (T. Maiorescu, *Însemnări Politice III*, 1900–1908, p. 1032).

The year 1904 began for the conservative leader with a series of political articles grouped under the title *The Radical Programme* (*Epoca*, year X, no. 11, 1904, p. 1), in which Nicolae Filipescu tackled the issues of the *Rural Bank* and *universal suffrage*, ideas beginning to take shape at the time. Declaring himself against these reforms promoted by the liberals—which he viewed as mere "electoral speculation"—Filipescu soon presented an analysis of the new customs tariff (*Epoca*, year X, no. 22, 1904, p. 1) and followed up with a well-documented critique of the Rural Bank, a liberal invention aimed at "refreshing their popularity" (*Epoca*, year X, no. 38, 1904, p.

1). That same year, Filipescu also adopted a new journalistic formula, publishing in three October issues (*Epoca*, year X, nos. 27, 29, 1904, p. 1) a series of letters exchanged with a distant friend, writing under the initials TDF. Initially philosophical in nature, their correspondence naturally drifted into politically charged themes. When asked by N. Filipescu “Do we still have issues?”, the mysterious correspondent responded that the real question should be, “Do we still have men?”, given that the older generation had “shown their true measure,” while for the younger ones—like Filipescu himself—the answer was uncertain (*Epoca*, year X, no. 296, 1904, p. 1).

With 1905 being an election year, Filipescu’s attention turned to campaigning. Emotionally and politically involved, the pages of *Epoca* featured many of his speeches at electoral rallies as well as rebuttals to attacks from various central newspapers. That year, he also initiated a press polemic with Take Ionescu—his former ally and friend—which would intensify in the following years, reaching a paroxysm around 1908–1909. The dispute began over political differences at a meeting on 30 January 1905 in Brăila (*Epoca*, year X, no. 30, 1905, p. 1) and evolved into attacks on Take Ionescu’s entire political activity. From July onwards, under Filipescu’s direction, *Epoca* began to list financial dealings allegedly made by Take Ionescu to the state’s detriment and in favour of third parties—including newspapers, especially *Adevărul*, considered the number one enemy of *Epoca* (*Epoca*, nos. 181, 205, 1905).

In 1906, *Epoca*—now the mouthpiece of the *Junimist-Liberal opposition*—intensified its attacks on other members of the government, particularly those close to Take Ionescu. The most aggressively targeted was the Minister of Justice, Alexandru Bădărău, whom Filipescu did not hesitate to call a “scoundrel” in the Chamber of Deputies (*Epoca*, year XII, nos. 32, 36, 38, 1906, p. 1). Shortly thereafter, the acid pen of *Epoca* extended its critique to the entire government (no. 43, Wednesday, 1906, p. 1), labelling its members with a range of epithets. Still, by year’s end, Take Ionescu remained the main focus of *Epoca*. Both he and *Adevărul* (no. 241, 1906, p. 1) were accused of representing Jewish interests in Romania, especially after *The Bulletin of the Israelite Alliance*, no. 30, described Take Ionescu as “the man best suited to resolve the Jewish issue in Romania” (no. 215, Saturday, 1902, p. 1).

The attention given to Take Ionescu in 1906 extended into 1907. As early as January, *Epoca* published an article titled *Mr Take Ionescu’s Habits* (*Epoca*, year XIII, no. 13, 1907, p. 1), promising even greater scrutiny of the politician. Branded a “universal swindler” (no. 4, 1907, p. 1) and the leader of “the most shameful and detestable movement” (no. 34, 1907, p. 1)—namely *Takism*—he came to symbolise, in the eyes of the paper and its owner, all that was worst in early 20th-century Romanian politics. These attacks miraculously ceased—briefly—after the Conservative fusion of 17/30 April 1907, under Junimist leader P. P. Carp. That same year, *Epoca* continued to cover Filipescu’s political activity, publishing his main speeches in parliament and other contexts. Noteworthy among the materials published in 1907 was Filipescu’s letter *A Statistical Novel* (no. 185, 1907, p. 1), a detailed critique of G. D. Creangă’s study *Rural Property in Romania*. Also in 1907, in light of the country’s social circumstances, Filipescu published in *Convorbiri Literare* a comparative study on *Agriculture in Russia and Romania* (N. Filipescu, 1907, pp. 245–253). After analysing the agricultural sectors of Romania, Russia, and Hungary, the politically savvy Filipescu concluded that “in all respects, the lessons of our neighbours must be taken into account, at least regarding agriculture,” because, he concluded, “from an agricultural standpoint, we belong to Eastern Europe, and an alliance with Russia and Hungary is imperative” (N. Filipescu, 1907, p. 253).

While in 1907 the attacks in *Epoca* against the *Takists* and their leader were limited to editorials and contributions, from 1908—especially with the creation of the new political formation—Filipescu personally led the charge. In January 1908, in an article published in *Viitorul* and reprinted in *Epoca*, he labelled the new party an “adventure.” In the same journalistic piece, he declared he saw no reason why “a man in full possession of his senses would not join the liberals or conservatives but instead enlist in this group—except for those who, like its leader, complain about the ingratitude of political parties” (*Epoca*, year XIV, no. 18, 1906, p. 1). Beginning in February 1908 (when the Democratic Conservative Party was founded), the press campaign against Take Ionescu intensified. In public meetings and print, he was portrayed as “a source of division within the Conservative Party” (no. 25, 1908, p. 1), who had taken advantage of every party split to remain in the political elite. However, after the Conservative merger, having failed to win Carp’s trust, he left the “Whites” faction. These press attacks and almost daily public meetings culminated in a speech by Filipescu in Brăila, later published in *Epoca*. He described the new party as a “scourge,” its dissident members akin to barbarian hordes who had ravaged “but founded nothing,” leaving behind no trace of civilisation, only “a slight breeze that covered with dust the hoofprints of their horses” (no. 202, 1908, p. 1).

Increasingly involved in public life, especially in parliamentary affairs and political meetings, 1909 could be considered non-existent from a journalistic standpoint for Nicolae Filipescu.

However, 1910 ushered in a new period in which *Epoca*, and especially its owner, launched renewed attacks on the Democratic Conservative Party. That year, Filipescu authored one of his best political satires, aimed at his fiercest rival at the time, Take Ionescu. Recalling how Filipescu wrote this biting portrait in Sinaia, I. G. Duca noted in his memoirs:

“He worked on it for about two weeks, changing something every day, adding a new epithet, polishing a phrase, refining a comparison—and laughing out loud.” (I. G. Duca, 1994, p. 58).

First sketched at a conservative meeting in Iași (*Epoca*, year XVI, no. 6, 1910, p. 1), this scathing character profile—titled *Shloim with Caesar’s airs*—was later published in the conservative newspaper *Evenimentul* (*Evenimentul*, year XVII, no. 27, 1910, p. 1).

The immediate cause for writing the article was Take Ionescu’s admission, in a letter to Alexandru Bădărău, that while he had served as minister in the Conservative government led by Gheorghe Grigore Cantacuzino, he had maintained financial ties with the newspaper *Adevărul*, which was subsidised by the “Israelite Alliance”. This information fully revealed the notorious antisemitism of *Epoca* and its owner. Wishing to insinuate Take Ionescu’s Semitic origin, both in appearance and behaviour, Filipescu painted a portrait—at times forced, insincere, and offensive—that nonetheless resonated in a Romanian society rife with anti-Jewish fears. Here is the excerpt that I. G. Duca considered, from a literary point of view, an unparalleled page (I. G. Duca, op. cit., p. 58):

“Look at him: a Semitic curve to his nose, a blinking eye like a sideshow performer, the voice of an Itzik, an affected and hypocritical familiarity, an olive pallor of one who blushes only from fear, an oily cowardice spread over his entire being. In his face as in his life, there is not a single straight line—only curves, sinuous features, insinuating manners that lend his skin, always cold and damp, a reptilian quality. Yet he has one gift that fools and the dishonest consider a virtue: the gift of speech. He speaks and bewilders. But his speech: it is not an expression of conviction or feeling—those are absent. For him, speech is a virtuosity—he sings! He is not an eagle; he is a quail. I do

not wish to diminish him. I acknowledge that he plays an important role. He plays a great role, but an infamous one. So infamous, in fact, that it shall become historic.” (*Evenimentul Zilei*, year XVII, no. 27, 1910, p. 1).

On the occasion of Titu Maiorescu’s 70th birthday, the journal *Convorbiri Literare* dedicated a “major special issue, with 156 pages contributed by leading Romanian intellectuals studying the life and work of the celebrated figure” (Eugen Lovinescu, *Titu Maiorescu*, vol. II (1876–1917), 1940, p. 338). On this occasion, Nicolae Filipescu published the essay (or sketch) *Mr. Titu Maiorescu in Politics* (*Convorbiri Literare*, year XLIV, vol. I, 1910, pp. CVI–CXVII). Analysing various aspects of this Conservative elder’s activity—writer, professor, logician, philosopher, literary critic, orator, and politician—Filipescu, under the influence of the moment, sought to summarise his illustrious colleague’s legacy, writing:

“There are men who are the sons of their works, yet whom circumstances elevate. Our public life did not create such circumstances for Mr Maiorescu, and he has always been nothing more than the son of his own work.”

(*Convorbiri Literare*, year XLIV, vol. I, 1910, p. CXVI).

Appointed Minister of War in Carp’s cabinet, Filipescu’s journalistic activity again took a backseat during this period (December 1910 – March 1912). During this time, *Epoca* published his speeches at various party and electoral meetings. Once out of office, and wishing to be heard, Filipescu returned, from March 1912 onward, to the columns of *Epoca*. In the article *The New Government in Parliament* (*Epoca*, year XVIII, no. 92, 1912, p. 1), he positioned himself as the advocate of the new Conservative cabinet, which had been “formed at a time of great tension between the parties”. After criticising the infamous tramway scandal, Filipescu expressed his belief that the government led by Titu Maiorescu “would find its authority, which would ensure its success”.

Later appointed Minister of Domains (October 1912 – 31 December 1913) in the Maiorescu cabinet, and preoccupied by internal party conflicts as well as foreign affairs (the Balkan Wars), Filipescu drifted further from journalism. After resigning from government (5 April 1913) and, for a brief time, from the party itself (1913), he focused on the political reforms proposed by the Liberals—agrarian and electoral—which he would combat both in Parliament and in public assemblies. The political intrigues, the situation in the Balkans (*Epoca*, year XX, no. 98, 1914, p. 3), and then the outbreak of the First World War would once again divert his attention to this final great tragedy of the modern era. Aside from interviews on foreign affairs given to national and international newspapers, *Epoca* published only a few of his public statements during the Conservative Party leadership disputes, campaign speeches, or parliamentary interventions on the burning issues of the time. Romania’s neutrality brought Filipescu back into the spotlight of political life. As one of the leaders of the national movement, initiator and organiser of the *National Action* and the *Unionist Federation*, and an active participant in the Cultural League meetings, Filipescu stirred public opinion. *Epoca* published his speeches, which had a profound impact on Romanian society. This political and journalistic campaign would be his last. Gravely ill and exhausted, he would soon withdraw from the public stage.

Having entered politics closely tied to the daily newspaper he would manage until the end of his life, Filipescu did not treat journalism as a business, a springboard to a political career, or a means to gain popularity. Without perhaps knowing what Nicolae Iorga would later say, he regarded this work as “a duty, a sacrifice” (Ion Bulei, 1990, p. 206). Expressing his political convictions through the press, his vehement campaign against the liberal government, launched in

Epoca—a relatively large paper for its time (C. Argetoianu, p. 387)—contributed in short order to the fall of Ion C. Brătianu's cabinet. Believing his goal had been achieved, Filipescu decided to suspend the paper's publication so as not to further disturb Romania's already troubled political life. Reappearing in 1895, *Epoca*—now more appealing, better crafted, and more aggressive in tone, led directly by its owner and director—became a formidable voice in Romania's press landscape. Already an experienced journalist, who had paid for some of his "sins" with prison time, Filipescu's pen became one to watch. His diverse activity attracted attacks from all sides. One of these ended in tragedy, leading to his increasing detachment from journalism. His expanding public engagements, widely recognised and respected, further convinced the Conservative leader to treat journalism as a secondary pursuit.

After 1900, Filipescu intervened in the press only at moments he deemed appropriate, often regarding the written word as the clearest way to express himself or as a complementary form of political combat. Embracing all forms of journalistic style, Filipescu—much like in his oratory—wrote in a concise, clean, natural language, close to everyday speech, yet with carefully constructed ideas. Depending on the article's type, his sentences were either brisk, his reasoning logical and well-argued, or the tone emotional, abrupt, and incisive, reflecting his inner agitation. His written replies were often colourful, suggestive, and turned into moral condemnations of his targets. At times, however, his attacks were unjust, subjective, and lacking in fair play. The power of his political pamphlets—in which he excelled—turned him into a true political weapon for the Conservative Party. Honest, with nothing to hide, yet irritable and sensitive to his aristocratic honour, Filipescu viewed every press offence as an affront to be avenged by sword. This explains the many duels he was involved in, some of which occurred for this very reason.

Striving to use journalism as a tool for education—which, as he put it, "requires warmth and enthusiasm" (N. Filipescu, *Political Speeches*, vol. I, 1888–1901, Preface, p. V)—Filipescu, who had both, explained in simple language the most important social issues of his time. A talented journalist with a fiery and restless temperament, he brought the same tone to the newspaper he ran. Although journalism was not the primary aim of his existence, he approached the craft with the nobility and preparation that his background afforded him. Often enriching newspaper pages with heartfelt and substantial articles, Filipescu did his work largely with integrity and always with intelligence.

With a pragmatic approach, a lightning-fast debut in journalism and simultaneous entry into politics, and a drive for action and dynamism in parliamentary activity, Nicolae Filipescu remains a keen observer of public life—also through the lens of the press. For many of his contemporaries, he came to embody "*A heart. A conscience. And a character.*" (M. Mihăileanu, p. 5). And thus he has remained in the collective memory of future generations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Nicolae Filipescu's legacy is intricately connected to his journalistic rigor and his unwavering political convictions, as demonstrated through his stewardship of the newspaper "Epoca." His bold editorial style and confrontational approach reshaped Romanian journalism, setting new standards for political discourse and public engagement. Despite controversies and personal confrontations that sometimes overshadowed his career, Filipescu's impact on Romanian society and politics remains significant, illustrating the powerful role journalism plays in national development and ideological evolution. His story reflects the

complexities of a transformative era in Romanian history, offering insights into the enduring relationship between media, politics, and societal change.

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