

UNION AND INDEPENDENCE OF ROMANIANS, IN THE VISION OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY

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The issues concerning the fate of the Romanians, their struggle for achieving unity and gaining their state independence, greatly concerned European diplomacy, as evidenced by numerous documentary testimonies, many of which originated from external archives, gathered and preserved in the Collection of Microfilms of the National Archives of Romania.

One of the first diplomatic reports worthy of attention comes from the Prussian Consul General in Iași, E. Richthofen, who, on May 29, 1848, informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. H. Armin, about the "Daco-Roman (Wallachian) popular assembly convened in Brașov by the Transylvanian Wallachs.

"The conclusion reached by the consul was that Russia also realized that the "Moldo-Wallachs" in Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia, and both Principalities wanted to assert their own nationality.

Just less than a month later, the same Prussian consul reported to his superiors on June 22, 1848, that the affirmation of the Romanians in Transylvania as a separate nation would have significant consequences for the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, as well as for Bukovina, and perhaps even Bessarabia.

The latter two, once Moldavian provinces, now belonging to Austria and Russia, respectively, are of the same nationality."

The aspirations of the Romanians not only concerned the great powers surrounding the Principalities but also drew the attention of other chancelleries and the entire European diplomacy.

Unfortunately, the Habsburg, Tsarist, and Ottoman Empires sought to present their own version of events in Paris, London, Berlin, and other European countries, not as they truly were, but through the lens of their dominant intentions and interests.

Many other documents testify to this, such as the one from July 31, 1848. In a diplomatic note, the Russian ambassador accredited to Paris revealed that

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the Moldavian boyars, who had taken refuge in Bukovina, in coordination with their brethren in Transylvania and even Bessarabia, were planning an action with the goal of "uniting the two Principalities into a single state without any connection to Russia or the Ottoman Porte" and becoming independent upon separation.

The mid-19th-century events were influenced by the reactionary offensive of the European powers, which had allied to suppress the extensive revolutionary process. Among the targeted populations were the Romanians, who did not cease to hope and fight for their ideals. This reality was also noted by the deputy military governor of Transylvania, Kalliany, who reported on March 12, 1851, that: "these people have nothing to lose," and their aspiration was for Greater Romania, meant to "unite all the ethnic Romanian populations within and outside Austria into a single independent Empire."

The perseverance, determination, and ongoing struggle of the Romanians entered a new phase in the sixth decade of the 19th century, culminating in the Union of the Principalities, a significant step toward Independence and Greater Romania. In this context, it is worth mentioning the increasingly clear realization by all of Europe regarding the justice of the movements, essentially the Romanians' struggle for Union and Independence.

As evidence, there is the Appeal of the European Democratic Central Committee addressed to the Romanian people, signed by Ledru-Rollin, Giuseppe Mazzini, Arnold Ruge, and Darasz. Addressing all Romanians, the Appeal began by emphasizing that: "You derive from an imperishable seed, your name, which has come down to you from your ancestors, from the Romans, the language, traditions, and customs, everything reminds that you are the descendants of that people who opened the way to European civilization."

The process of asserting the aspirations for Union and Independence of the Romanians reached a peak in 1859, with the Union of only the two Principalities and the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, due to the will of the people. However, it is necessary to emphasize the exceptional qualities of the Moldo-Wallachian prince, whom the falsifiers of National History attempted, in vain, to demythologize. In this context, we can refer to the report from January 25, 1859, by the French consul general, who personally conveyed compliments to the prince for obtaining unanimous votes.

On that occasion, he confessed that he had discovered with satisfaction: "qualities that placed him above any other candidate on the list. His reputation is that of an honest and sincere man, with good judgment and firmness of character."

From the beginning of his reign, the unifier and reformer Cuza had also considered the Independence of the Country. His goals are demonstrated by a diplomatic note from the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, who conveyed his

sovereign's appreciation to the Romanian prince, convinced that "you can do much for the destiny of the country, devoting all care to achievements in such a way as to show the world that the Moldo-Wallachs are worthy of obtaining more."

Unfortunately, the United Principalities were faced with difficulties caused by the three retrograde empires around their borders. Even under such conditions, they were confronted with accomplished facts and compelled to acknowledge realities. Among the documentary testimonies preserved in archives, there is a report from the Austrian ambassador in Paris, A. Hüfner, who, on February 10, 1859, referred to a conversation with Napoleon III's wife, after which he emphasized that the Principalities didn't desire only Union; "Independence is sought there. However, as Austria wants the maintenance of the Ottoman Porte, it opposes the Independence of the Principalities and, consequently, opposes the Union."

Nevertheless, European diplomats who were familiar with the aspirations of the Romanians, without fully appreciating them, were aware of the determination and possibilities of the Romanian people. This is also evidenced by the remarks of the British consul of Great Britain in Iași, H. A. Churchill, who reported on February 11, 1859, that the accomplished fact of the Union, when presented to the great powers, could also become an accomplished fact in regard to the Independence of the Country. The same report highlights another remark from the author, according to which "the Principalities are prepared to shed their last drop of blood for their autonomy and independence."

A careful analysis of the archival documents allows us to conclude that the origins of the aspirations for union and independence had a longer history, as indicated by a report from the Belgian diplomat J. Nothomb, accredited to Berlin. Referring to the attitudes of the major powers, divided into different camps and taking a more neutral stance, he concluded that: "The double election is equivalent to the Union of the Principalities; the Union of the Principalities means their independence." Focusing on the position of the Ottoman government, Nothomb did not overlook the Porte's dissatisfaction, which believed that the Organic Regulation had given "too much consistency, too much independence to the Principalities." Although the Ottoman Porte tried to blame Russia for going too far in the Regulation inspired by it; in reality, everything was due to the Moldavian and Wallachian boyars, who contributed to the drafting of the document. Convincing evidence of this is found in the decidedly definitive two distinct articles in the Regulation of Muntenia, which came into effect on May 1, 1831, and that of Moldavia, validated on January 1, 1832. Both were in the same language, all being common to the compatriots of the two sister principalities.

As one delves deeper into the content of diplomatic sources, it can be observed that their authors were not merely reporting events and informing the overseeing authorities.

Within the limits of each individual's capability and the interests of the countries they represented, some diplomats ventured to explain the Romanian phenomenon existing not only within the Principalities but also in territories under foreign rule. Among those who dared to undertake such an analysis was the French Consul General in Bucharest, L. Beclard.

In a report submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Al. Walewski, he attempted to explain how the acclamation of Cuza by the Wallachian deputies was possible. To put it plainly - according to his statement - he concluded that: "three causes or three very different sentiments influenced the vote: timidity, envy, and patriotism." History has proven that everything achieved in those times was due to patriotism. Attempting to bridge the gap over time, it is not difficult to notice that, of the three sentiments, only the first two have remained, with patriotism today being considered as nationalism. Thus, the need to speak of Europeanism, globalization, and any other phenomenon aimed at erasing national identity is even more pressing.

In this context, it is even more imperative to emphasize the Instructions given by Al. Walewski to Beclard regarding the conduct he should manifest towards the act of the double election of Al. I. Cuza, an act attributed to the "national character of the absolutely spontaneous movement, which, in both Principalities, brought the same man to power."

Archival sources, in addition to Cuza's efforts to perfect the Union, also highlight his intentions to consolidate the autonomy of the Principalities. In a report from the French ambassador to Constantinople on October 16, 1860, he extensively recounted Cuza's visit to the Sublime Porte and the discussions held by the Romanian prince with the Ottoman authorities and the French diplomat. Among the issues addressed, the ruler referred to the obstinacy of the Turkish ambassador in Paris to withdraw the Moldavian and Wallachian travelers' national passports and replace them with Turkish passports.

Believing that passport issuance was an act of internal administration, the French ambassador appreciated that: "the ruler's complaint in this matter is justified."

Despite being willing to make some concessions, all the great powers, in reality, sought to impose their dominance and divide among themselves the rule of territories that did not belong to them. Moreover, despite their significant differences, they formed a united front to suppress the revolutionary manifestations that had swept Europe.

The vigorous actions of the Romanians were constantly in the sight of the great powers, as evidenced by the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs'

statement to his ambassador in St. Petersburg in 1861: "the fervor that has taken hold of the minds in the Danubian Principalities... should warn governments against the national aspirations of Romania."

The evolution of events, the consolidation of the Union, and Cuza's strong measures, which would culminate in modern political-administrative reforms, increasingly raised the concerns of the great powers, who saw themselves at risk of facing other accomplished facts.

Towards the end of 1861, precisely on November 19, the political agent and French consul general in Bucharest, H. Tillos, conveyed one of his observations that the Moldo-Wallachian Union "is insufficient and could only yield fruitful results if the entire Romanian nation were united. Thus, it's not only about Moldo-Wallachia, but also Transylvania and Banat."

The same qualities of Al. I. Cuza, confirmed by history, provided the support for the affirmation and recognition of the Romanians' identity and, ultimately, of Romania, even if the great powers thought and felt otherwise. The fact that the European reaction opposed the course of history is demonstrated by the Instructions given by the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs to the consul general in Bucharest in February 1862. On the occasion of the events surrounding the opening of the Moldo-Wallachian Assembly on January 24, K. Eder transmitted a message on behalf of the consular diplomatic corps, using certain terms that were not appropriate, "although we are inclined to respect the customs of the place." Therefore, the relevant minister drew attention to the fact that: "The Principalities must now be called the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, and as for their inhabitants, the imperial authorities must avoid the word 'Romanians'."

The attention and interest of European chancelleries regarding the complex process of perfecting the Union, reforming the Country, and preparing for state Independence are also highlighted in the report of the French ambassador to Constantinople.

In July 1863, among other issues, he referred to Cuza's Memorandum addressed to the Ottoman Porte, regarding the necessity of changing the Constitution of the United Principalities. Following discussions with the Ottoman authorities, the French ambassador found that Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizier, was convinced of the need to modify the "poorly drafted and impractical" Moldo-Wallachian Constitution.

Consequently, the Turks were willing to support "a revision of the Constitution based on the prince's proposals." To illustrate Cuza's multifaceted activities, other evidence confirming his visionary qualities, all subordinated to the same Creed of Unity and Independence of the Romanian Nation, must be brought into the discussion.

In reality, it was not the natural aspirations of the Romanians that caused unease among European chancelleries, but the divergences between the great powers that sought to divide and rule over territories that did not belong to them. The Crimean War did not resolve these issues; evidence shows that the moribund Ottoman and Habsburg Empires were trying to survive. The other so-called great powers were lying in wait, and Russia was attempting to take advantage of and exploit its rivals' weaknesses.

These realities can also be supported by the report dated October 22, 1863, from the French consul general in Bucharest. The diplomat conveyed new information that Russia had encouraged Prince Cuza and Prince Mihail Obrenovic to take part in events that would lead to a war. In Gorchakov's opinion, Serbia and Romania were supposed to seize the opportunity to gain their independence. The same report indicates that the events were becoming increasingly threatening, with talks of taking Transylvania and Bukovina from Austria and taking Bessarabia from the Russians. In such situations, Russia advocated for the necessity of occupying the Principalities and appointing a foreign prince.

Despite all the machinations of the great powers, Cuza was determined to continue the process of modernizing Romanian society. When necessary, he resorted to the coup d'état of May 2/14, 1864, once again presenting Europe with a *fait accompli*. Moreover, responding to reproaches from the Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha, the Romanian prince declared that he "acted in the unquestionable interest of the Country and that far from violating international stipulations, he developed and consolidated them."

It is worth noting that all these internal events unfolded while Austria had massed troops with over 30,000 soldiers on the western border of the country, and beyond the Prut River, Russia had mobilized around 40,000 troops.

As revealed in a report from the French military attaché in the Principalities, a witness to the events of 1864, the two major powers had not brought their troops to defend against potential attacks from the Romanians. Instead, they intended to intervene based on the internal evolution of the Country, which Cuza aimed to make independent.

Despite the divergences and threats, as illustrated by the documents, no obstacle would have been able to stop him from "implementing the reforms he had begun so well." Furthermore, in a document dated June 3, 1864, it was anticipated that upon his return from Constantinople, Cuza would adopt new measures "that would allow him to act more effectively than he has done so far, for the civil and military reorganization of Romania."

Among the numerous archival sources that support and demonstrate Cuza's personality and the value of his accomplishments, one stands out particularly.

It is the Confidential Letter of the Romanian prince, addressed to the Emperor of France, Napoleon III, in October 1865. In fact, it is not a simple letter but a Memorandum of his activities, discussing his policies, achievements, and shortcomings during his seven years of reign. From the very beginning, aware of his human qualities and limitations, Cuza questioned whether he "had the right to be completely satisfied with the results achieved." Naturally and sincerely, he stated that he couldn't claim that his governance was free of mistakes, that he hadn't succeeded in uprooting all abuses and healing all wounds, and that the reorganization of the country was complete.

He was convinced that he could have done more and better if he hadn't been hindered by certain internal complications, but especially if he hadn't had to deal with "obstacles seemingly deliberately created by neighboring Powers, which always viewed Romania's prosperity development and, above all, the spread of Western civilizing ideas, with hostile eyes." With the modesty that characterized him, Cuza expressed his satisfaction that, despite the difficulties, Romania had progressed, achieving the Union, the age-old dream of Romanians, and regaining one-fifth of its territory.

In the same context, he highlighted that he had transformed a million serfs into proprietors, reorganized finances, established "mandatory and free primary education," then reformed the communication network, and, not least, the Romanian army, which "had only four or five thousand Russian rifles dating back to the time of Empress Catherine." Revealing that Romanian territory had been a passageway and a battlefield for the armies of Austria, Russia, and Turkey, and that the Principalities, having been temporarily occupied, had become a center of intrigues "whose thread was held by certain Powers hostile to the interests" of Romanians.

Confronting the vicissitudes of the times, achieving the Union, and reforming society, "the Romanian people henceforth live their own life, they are Romanian and only Romanian." Expressing this creed, Cuza affirmed that "he would never believe, and no single Romanian would ever want to believe, that the existence of an independent Romanian nationality could be sacrificed." At the same time, aware of the gravity of the effects caused by "internal intrigues and ambitions from abroad," Cuza assured Napoleon III that if it was considered that his personal authority was insufficient, he was ready to relinquish "a throne he neither coveted nor sought, a throne he owed only to the esteem of compatriots." With the same dignity, he confessed that there was nothing left for him to desire if his withdrawal could have "consolidated the independence of Romania and provided genuine guarantees for its prosperity."

A concise analysis of the memorable document left to posterity, not just as a simple letter, even if confidential, but as a testimony and proof of the dignity and identity of a Nation, allows us to bring attention to another reality.

Specifically, this political Testament of Cuza was conceived in 1865, just over three months before the blow dealt by the monstrous coalition of the "World Order" of that time, resulting in the dethronement of a true Romanian prince, of pure blood.

Creating an arc across time and comparing the events of then with those of today, including those within Romania, we consider it unnecessary. Although the "possible replacement of the Romanian prince had become known, as indicated in a report by Metternich from December 1865, Cuza continued his reform program and the affirmation of the ideal of Independence. Regarding this last aspect, it is sufficient to refer to a document from November 1865, in which the Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire sent instructions to the Turkish ambassador in Paris. Essentially, the assistance of France and, through it, that of the other European powers was requested to intervene with the aim of suppressing Al. I. Cuza's intention to achieve Romania's independence.

Cuza's attitude, or rather his intentions, gave cause for thought not only to the Ottoman Empire but also to other powers that were considering removing him from Romania's leadership. The evolution of events in Europe after 1870, the changes in the balance of power among the major powers, undoubtedly contributed to the affirmation of the idea and, above all, the necessity of Romania's Independence.

The same diplomatic reports demonstrate that the "right" of diplomatic representation for the country had become a national aspiration. Illustrative is the report by the Consul of Belgium in Bucharest, who, on April 12, 1874, reported that "Romania's desire to fully exercise its sovereignty asserted towards Europe, through the right to have diplomatic representation and to conclude treaties, completely aligns with the national aspiration that has driven it on this path with specific inclinations." To a similar conclusion had also come the French Consul accredited in Romania, after a meeting with Romanian Foreign Minister Vasile Boerescu.

The French consul confessed that he did not omit "to address the issue of Romania's independence with Mr. Boerescu. The minister didn't hesitate to declare to me that independence was Romania's destiny, that sooner or later, it had to be proclaimed, and that the only condition for the release of the Principalities consisted of the consent and guarantee of the Powers." Concerning Romania's Independence and the conditions imposed, European diplomacy also considered the controversies sparked by Romania's obligation to cede the southern part of Bessarabia (with the counties of Cahul, Bolgrad, and Ismail) to Russia.

Despite the maneuvers and decisions of the major powers, taken without Romania's consent, the government in Bucharest had officially declared that it "does not accept any discussions regarding the return of Bessarabia to Russia"

Moreover, as revealed in the report of Serbia's diplomatic agent in Vienna, K. Tukici, "the Romanian government, only in a situation of being obliged, and that with protest, will yield its rights in favor of a greater power, be it Russia or Europe." The delay in recognizing Independence and its repercussions were keenly observed by British Foreign Minister Robert Arthur, who stated that the Romanian government, having obtained recognition from the powers, is more interested in regarding the refusal of the Western Powers with complete indifference and making any new move in this direction extremely difficult."

Leaving the possibility and right to draw eventual conclusions to specialists, we merely reiterate that the Union of 1859 and the acquisition of Independence in 1877 were made possible and owed to all Romanians, who showed the entire world that they have the will and believe in their national identity.