

ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF SOUTHERN BESSARABIA

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Abstract. Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866), Ruler of the Romanian United Principalities, had also reigned during his years on the throne over Southern Bessarabia, meaning the counties of Cahul, Bolgrad, and Ismail. These counties had been taken from the Russian Empire, who had appropriated them in 1812, and were reunited with the Principality of Moldova through the peace treaty signed at the end of the Crimean War (1856). To oppose the process of Russification to which the Romanian population between the rivers Prut and Dniester had been subjected, thus also the people in Southern Bessarabia, ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza gave much attention to the education system. He had to start from the beginning with the creation of an education system in the Romanian language, which used the Latin alphabet. He created there a completely new education system: a new group of teachers, Romanian schools, Romanian handbooks, curricula. For this, the basis was the Education Law of 1864. In conclusion, I can write that ruler Cuza created the basis for the development of the Romanian education system, including that of Southern Bessarabia, a development which would happen during the time of his successor, Prince Carol I.

Keywords: Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Romanian United Principalities, Romanian language, Romanian education system

Following the Crimean War (1853-1856), in Paris, on March 18/30, 1856, during the Congress of the seven greatest European powers, the peace treaty was signed.¹ During the discussions there were taken into consideration, to some extent, the fiery interventions of Gheorghe Magheru and the letter addressed by the Moldovan boyars to the Congress. General Gheorghe Magheru was a handsome man, who wrote and spoke a form of French which was much appreciated in the Parisian literary salons. He was far ahead of the Brătianu brothers at the time, who were not to be seen by Emperor Napoleon III.² The intense activity of General

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¹ The 1859 Paris peace treaty was published among others in *Recueil des traités de la France, publ. sous les auspices du Ministère des affaires étrangères par M. Jules de Clerq*, tome septième, 1856-1859, A. Durand et Pedone-Lauriel, Paris, 1880, p. 59 and the following.

² Brothers Dimitrie and Ion Brătianu became antipathetic to Emperor Napoleon III because they were part of a Masonry wing, opposing the Emperor of France. They also participated in the murder attempt of Orsini against Napoleon III (see, more recently, A. Jianu, *1853-1854, Paris: Ion Brătianu*