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Positions and Interests in the 1856 Treaty of Paris Negotiations

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Abstract: For almost a century, until the middle of the 19th century, the Romanian Principalities are periodically subjected to “several categories of social misfortunes: wars; military invasions; robbery operations; challenges; extreme natural events (drought, floods, earthquakes, locust invasions), epidemics as well as fires, quite numerous in the urban environment”. Both in Wallachia and in Moldova, an “antagonism between the great and the small nobility, of identical origin, but with unequal privileges, existed since the 17th century”.

Keywords: Phanariot regime; Ottoman commercial monopoly; porto-franco; union of the Romanian principalities; collective guarantee of the great powers

1. Introduction

The 19th century represents, for Romanian history, a period of the most intense and full of achievements, truly formidable, for Romanians (Neagoe, 2013, p. 139). While at the beginning of it the Romanian Principalities, Moldova and Wallachia (Lovinescu, 1997, p. 125) were still in full process of Ottoman domination, having a Phanariot administration, with all the advantages and disadvantages derived from this, the end of the 19th century would find the Romanian nation facing the greatest historical challenges, namely that of preparing for the full unification of all Romanians within the borders of a single national and unitary state. Unfortunately,

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the existence of numerous internal tariffs will prevent the accelerated development¹ of some of several categories of the population interested in boosting commercial exchanges, a fact that would have contributed to the improvement of the internal situation in the two Romanian principalities. The Ottoman commercial monopoly over the Romanian Lands thus had the most undesirable social and economic impact on of economic and political growth hampering a social progress expected for generations. The political, economic and administrative gap was obvious and only the boyar elites trickled progressive ideas, theories and doctrines, truly modernist, capable of culturally arising the principalities to the level of Western Europe standards. Social dynamism would fully contribute to the acceleration of the process of economic complementarity with Western Europe and the appearance of rapidly developed cities, such as Brăila and Galați, which would benefit fully from acquiring the status of porto-franco. The trade of the Romanian Countries with other European states was on the massive export of Romanian grains and cattle, especially through Brăila and Galați. Therefore, these two riparian port cities achieved an extremely important position in the economy of the two principalities, a fact highlighted and by the large number of foreign representatives accredited in Moldova and Wallachia. The liberalization of trade determines a continuous and sustained development, thanks to the economic complementarity between Western Europe and the Romanian Countries, also causing a strong competition between the main beneficiaries of the elimination of customs duties, such as England, France, Austria, Italy or Prussia. The high demand for industrial products, machine tools, ironwork, manufactures (cotton, wool) from England is backed by the good quality of the products and the low price, while shoes, furniture, clothing, luxury products were imported with preference from France.

The cumulative efforts to modernize Romanian society can be found in the events that took place in the first half of the 19th century. The two Organic Regulations, established in Wallachia and Moldova, in 1831 and 1832, respectively, under the Russian military occupation, were of real importance for the modernization of the Romanian principalities. The economic and social evolution of the Romanian Countries after the adoption of the Organic Regulations (Constantinescu, 1999, p. 20) would soon exceed the general legislative framework provided by the regulatory principles, so that they soon become anachronistic and in contradiction with the economic, social and political reality. Moreover, the new administrative political organization of Moldova and Wallachia leaves the boyar privileges intact,

¹ Among the most important social and economic measures proposed by Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821, himself a skilled and rich cattle trader, the following stand out: the suppression of internal customs; the removal of unearthly elements from public and ecclesiastical offices; the creation of a national army of freedmen; abolition of privileges for foreigners; maintaining only the taxes and gifts during the reign of Ioan Vodă Caragea; exemption from donations, to the Ottoman Gate of the future lord, Tudor, the governors should be appointed on merit and not according to wealth, money or other favors, etc.

emphasizing the feudal dependence of the peasantry on the large farmland owners, now interested in producing and exporting as large a quantity of products as possible to the European markets. Therefore the Romanian society in both principalities, featured, a bizarre mixture of contrasts, among the most motley, such as in clothing, language, customs or administrative organization. Such social and economic transformations would cause the emergence and consolidation of national sentiment among Romanians in all territories under foreign domination. Transylvanian Romanians and those in Bucovina would demonstrate directly in favor of the imposition of social changes and the fulfillment of the national ideal. The inhabitants of the two principalities of Moldova and Wallachia would also be able to express their intentions during of the outbreak of the Romanian revolution in 1848, like other European peoples who fought for unity, independence, and a better life. The international and national context was not exactly favorable, foreign domination played, financial resources were very limited, and the territory had become a field of dispute between the great powers. The years 1831 to 1834 can be considered exceptional, since the Romanian Principalities were under “the suzerainty in law of Turkey and under the de facto occupation of Russia” (Polihroniade, 1937, p. 102) not having a well-structured and organized army. Through the Organic Regulations, the attributions of these militias were traced, in fact they highlighted “the aspect of an armed police rather than a true army: a national militia with a police character and a military aspect” (Polihroniade, 1937). In particular, the period 1831 – 1866 was under the “overwhelming influence of the Russian army; both the way of organization and the military instruction as well as the uniforms and the names of the ranks were influenced if not actually copied from those of the Russian army” (Polihroniade, 1937, pg. 101-102). Later, after the Crimean War, on the basis of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, and the Convention of 1858, the two armies of the Principalities “transformed from simple administrative police units into bodies intended to impose the existence of the state and the respect of borders by means of arms” (Polihroniade, 1937, p. 103). It is the period when the transformation of the police militia into a real army practically takes place. Many revolutionary ideas of the time also reached the Principalities, some of them included in social organization projects, while Russia was actually aiming “to complete the proposed reorganization, as an indefensible business (...) and as a measure that strengthened” political influence of Russia in the East. That is why, perhaps even the very term *gendarmerie* used in the content of the Organic Regulation of Moldova represented a new trend of Moldova’s progress, of implementing administrative reform trends.

We can deduce based on available of the documents that the Russians did not support of a proper army in the Principality, as long as general Kisseleff himself considered the limited attributions of the guard and the new organization of the national militia actually reflected stable foundations the attributions concerned guarding the border, especially with regard to trade and quarantines, as well as guarding good order and

public peace inside. The role of the militias of the two principalities were thus organized with many similarities “to be able to unite and form a single army”¹ and to act “whenever the safety from within or without will be threatened”².

It is certain that in the political context of the regulatory period, the suzerainty power could hardly come to terms with the idea of its own subject territory being regulated by another power, the protecting power. The development of this military structure was hampered by many difficulties and impediments specific to the respective period related to recruitment, training, endowment, equipment, discipline, budget, etc. With all the concerns of the Russian administration to stop the crimes that were committed under the Moldova administration, they continued during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and even during the reign of Prince/King Carol I. The administration was considered to be outdated and accustomed to bad temper.

The ruler’s power was somewhat restricted, as he did not have the “authority of the occupation regime” (Iorga, 1938, p. 16), it was this issue of the rulership “either the Lord or the Assembly must have the power to rule” (Iorga, 1938, p. 16). The ruler positioned himself as an “official with his hands tied to the Regulation” (Iorga, 1938, p. 16). The convention for the definitive organization of the Danubian Principalities of Romania and Moldova, August 19, 1858 provided that “the Principalities will give the Suzerain court a fixed tribute of one million five hundred thousand lei for Moldova and two million five hundred thousand lei for Romania”³.

Beyond all the rivalries between France and Austria regarding their interests in Europe, but especially those related to the Romanian Principalities, these “were not only manifested on political, but also on economic grounds” (Bucur, 1939, p. 108). France was also interested in the exploitation of the resources of Wallachia. In connection with these intentions, he supported “the implementation of a navigation project on the Prut and the Șiret” (Bucur, 1939, p. 108) but this project was never completed due to Austria’s thwarting actions. In turn, England associated itself with this “anti-unionist policy. It was natural that her representative in Constantinople, Lord Stratford, would have declared himself on the side of Austria, supporting her request to cancel the French privilege. This privilege constituted a success of the French influence and therefore of the partisans of the union” (Bucur, 1939, p. 110).

Even if the Treaty of Paris consolidated the ideas for union, it established free movement on the Danube, a fact that highlighted the importance of the Principalities from the perspective of the trade that could be carried out with them. This fact thus affected Austria’s economic supremacy. Through the Treaty of Paris, the economic

¹ Art. 42, Convențiunea pentru definitivă organizare a Principatelor Danubiene România și Moldavia, 19 august 1858.

² Ibidem, art. 43..

³ Art. 8, Convențiunea pentru definitivă organizare a Principatelor Danubiene România și Moldavia, 19 august 1858.

importance of the Danube is increasing by acquiring and recognizing the attribute of an international river “from Ulm to Sulina”. An international commission was foreseen, composed of the neighboring countries, which were then Turkey, the Danubian Principalities, Wurtemberg, Bavaria, Austria-Hungary and Serbia” (Brătianu, 1920, p. 8). The regional context created after the Crimean War placed the two Principalities in a “special situation (...), i.e. Russia was still all-powerful, Romania was just forming, and Turkey was very weak, the great states meeting in Paris found that they should especially safeguard freedom at the mouths of the Danube through their presence” (Brătianu, 1920, p. 8). Austria’s interests aimed for this freedom to actually be “in its exclusive favor” (Brătianu, 1920, p. 8).

The interests of the Ottoman Empire had in mind that “by uniting the principalities, they could become a weapon in the hands of Russia rather than a barrier against it, and this fear especially instilled in it the religious identity of the Romanians with the Russians” (Xenopol, 1880, p. 269). The documents of the time and the diplomatic correspondence relate the anti-unionist positions of the Porte, Austria and England which were “determined to prevent the union, you don’t have to worry too much about what the French want” (Xenopol, 1880, p. 286).

The position adopted by France to support the union was also based on the plan of Napoleon III by which “he alone had offered the principalities to Austria, on the condition that it consented to the restoration of the Polish kingdom, which Austria, understandably, had refused. There was therefore no other means left for him to achieve his goal than strengthening the Romanians” (Xenopol, 1880, p. 288). In addition to these interests on the part of the European powers, several internal measures were taken, such as: the suspension of the press; the reintroduction of censorship; the withdrawal of the privilege for establishing a national bank; ceasing the return of 1848 Revolution emigrants (the unionist boyars, patriots from the two principalities). Therefore, foreign interests and internal measures generated a context favorable to the union by turning perceived vulnerabilities into true opportunities for the fulfillment of the ideal of union.

Turkey’s anti-unionist attitude was also visible on June 11, 1856 when a ceremony was organized in Iasi “on the occasion of the distribution of medals given by His Majesty the Sultan to the troops that took part in the war that ended”¹ in “the infantry barracks now occupied by the imperial troops”².

The measures taken internally, especially by Căimăcănia Moldovei, aimed at the establishment of a “secret police”. We do not know exactly what the duties of such a structure were, but the press of the time reveals that an “interesting brochure began to circulate the Report of the Administrative Council on the current state of the

¹ Ziarul *Gazeta de Moldavia*, luni 25 iunie 1856.

² *Ibidem*.

Finance of the Principality of Moldova”¹. This document had as appendix a “copy of the report of the Department of Finances addressed to the Honorable Căimăcănia, which specifically shows the sums released from the country’s Treasury during these last years for the maintenance of a secret police”². However, such a structure could also have performed political police duties against machination of political opponents, considering that the Minister of Finance was Nicolae Vogoride (December 18, 1856 - March 7, 1857) during the caimacane of Teodor Balș, later caimacan of Moldova (1857 – 1858), who was subject to the Sultan.

It is important to highlight that, wanting to get out of the international political isolation, (after the defeat in the Crimean War, 1853-1856), Russia would agree to the union, while Turkey oppose it on the grounds that the separation of the two principalities dated back a long time, according to the capitulations concluded, and that it would be neither desirable nor expedient. Austria, however, was the staunchest opponent of the union being afraid that the new state would be a point of attraction for the all Romanians living in the territories under Austrian domination, namely Transylvania, Banat, or Bucovina. Sardinia was clearly favorable to the union while England would swing from one camp to another according to the politics and interests of the moment.

The Paris Peace Conference (February-March 1856) was chaired by Emperor Napoleon III. From the very beginning he acted as a faithful supporter of the Romanian cause, since solving the political situation of the inhabitants of the two principalities constituted an integral part of the Oriental crisis in the international relations of the European concert of the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike the Romanian cause, which was discussed at the congress, the cause of the Polish nation was sacrificed once again, precisely because the system of alliances between the Great Powers would have become even more unbalanced due to the vehement opposition of Prussia, Austria and Russia. Romanian representatives banked on this, arguing fulfilling of Romanian national ideals would not affect the interests of the main European states. The results of the Moldovan elections were the subject of debate in the European chancelleries and in 1857 in Osborne, Napoleon III met with the Queen of England to resolve the dispute in favor of the union and thus the conclusion was reached that the elections must be resumed the saving the alliance in relations between the two states is was a priority. France would abandon the express idea of union and England would agree to the resumption of ad hoc elections in Moldova.

The other states, especially Austria and Turkey continued to make a strong opposition in favor of maintaining the political status-qvo in the principalities, but Sardinia and Russia would continue to support the unionist cause. Consequently,

¹ Ziarul *Zimbrulu și Vulturul*, anulu al patrului, no. 40, mercuri 24 dekem., 1858, p. 1.

² *Ibidem*.

canceling the elections and their subsequent resumption was recommended. In fact would set the position of the progressive and unionist camp in Moldova and Wallachia in the fall of 1857. Following the ad hoc meetings the European commission in charge of the report on the situation in the two principalities, would ascertain the desire of the inhabitants of the Danube principalities to unite in one state. The May - August 1858 conference focused exclusively to the problem of the Romanian Principalities at the expense of solving the political situation in Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro. The political situation of the latter would be discussed later, in the usual diplomatic way between the great European powers concerned.

The political compromise adopted at the negotiating table was extremely fragile, with both France and Austria threatening to leave the negotiations. In December 1857, the French foreign minister, Count Walewski abandoned the project of uniting the principalities under a foreign prince, previously formulated in May 1857, setting forth "his plan of union with two lords, two administrations" *** (1984, p. 72). Following the pressure exerted by Emperor Joseph on Napoleon III, France would also give in on the matter of the common flag which Paris had previously supported. The representatives of Russia at the negotiations, although they did not agree with the cause of the union of the principalities and followed the policy of France in this matter, were deeply surprised by the French compromise in favor of England, which supported Turkey in this matter.

The official position of France regarding the future organization of the Danube principalities expressed that "it was satisfactory (...). If it is not the immediate union, it is certainly the union secured in the future" *** (1984, p. 77). The Paris Convention would not fully satisfy the ideals of the Romanian nation in terms of unity and independence, despite the fact that now the two Romanian countries represented a valuable exchange currency in international relations.

The Paris Convention only created the general framework for fulfilling these desired unity and independence in Principalities' own way, although the pro-union press both from the principalities and abroad, especially from France, exaggerated the results of the convention for various reasons.

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