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Matiuta, Cristina

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Romanian Diaspora in the Middle 19th Century and its View on Modernization

Associate Professor Cristina MATIUȚA, Ph.D.

cristinamatiuta@yahoo.com

University of Oradea, Romania

Rezumat: Articolul prezintă activitatea emigranților români, refugiați în capitalele vest-europene după înfrângerea revoluției de la 1848, viziunea lor asupra modernizării, expusă în articole de presă, conferințe și memorii adresate personalităților politice occidentale ale vremii. Indiferent de modalitatea de acțiune preconizată pentru atingerea obiectivelor ei, eliberarea de sub dominația străină și înfăptuirea statului național, diaspora românească apare ca un corp coerent sub raportul ideilor democratice și liberale promovate de membrii ei.

Cuvinte-cheie: unitate națională, libertate, autonomie, idei confederative, independență.

The liberal ideas and projects, advanced by the revolutionists during the 1848 Revolution, found their practical application in the second half of the 19th century. In spite of the fact that the successive defeats of the Revolution in Moldavia and Walachia marked the recovery to the Russian-Turkish control over the two Principates (approved through the Balta Liman Convention from the 19th April / 1st of May), the impact of the Pasoptist Revolution over the Romanian society was a lasting one, its program becoming in fact the program of building modern Romania. Also, the fulfilling of this program was influenced by the external framework, by the force proportion among the great powers, because as the historian Catherine Durandin remarks “the birth of Modern Romania as a nation is fulfilled within a history of imperial deconstruction, that of the Ottoman Empire and that of asserting of two new forces of rival expansion: the Russian hegemony and Occidental hegemony” (Durandin: 1998, pp. 69).

Forced to take the exile path after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution, the Romanian emigrants kept alive their national and liberal ideals and tried to influence the development of the events in the country, signaling the situation of the Principates to the great powers.

Constantinople and Paris became the main Romanian emigration centers and places, where Romanians met their Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, Croatian fellows, exiled as well. Towards Constantinople they were head to Ion Ghica, Ion Heliade Radulescu, A.C.Golescu and others who hoped to transform the suzerain power into a counterbalance of the absolute domination of the Russians. In Paris they were already Nicolae Bălcescu, C.A.Rosetti, brothers Dumitru and Ion C.Brătianu, I.Voinescu and others like them, developing here a remarkable action of advocacy for their country. Through memoirs addressed to Occidental political personalities of that period, through press articles, through brochures printing and organizing conferences they made a name for the cause of Romanians and gain the sympathy of larger circles.

Dumitru Brătianu for example who had arrived in Paris at the beginning of November 1848, leaved for a short period of time for London in order to carry on diplomatic actions around the British statesman and politicians, being aware of the importance England had in the politics of South-East Europe. Into a memoir addressed to the British Ministry of Exterior, Lord Palmerston, he explains in detail the situation in which his people live, threatened in its existence by Russia.

The right of “protective” power of Russia is based, as he shows, only on the force of the one hundred thousand bayonets of its occupying army, established in the Principates.

In what concerns the 1848 Revolution, its character and its aims, Dumitru Brătianu shows that it was just a willing act of the entire nation: “The quiet revolution of the Wallachs was but an overwhelming national manifestation, a declaration of principles, a great fraternity and was made without violence and without fight” (Iordache: 2003, pp. 101). Then he presents the abuses and inequities endured by his people after the defeat of the revolution and he tries to convince the British diplomat of the necessity of setting free the two Principates from the two conquering armies. The Romanians don’t want, he says, anything else than the recognition of autonomous rights, according to the treaties concluded with The Gate, and the ceasing of foreign interference into their internal affairs.

Being aware of the fact that he addresses to a politician with liberal views, representing an influential nation, Dumitru Brătianu approaches at the end of his memoir the union matter for the Romanian Principates and independence for the new state resulting from this union. Moldavia and Walachia are thoroughly connected through their common past, interests and the ardent will of a common future; their union and independence would approve a common history and the new state would be a factor of progress and stability at the confluence of three great empires: “The independence of Moldo-Wallachia is important not only from the point of view of European commerce, not only from the point of view of defending Turkey and Germany [...], but from the point of view of world civilization. Because Romanians, through culture, habits, origin and their traditions, through their connection with the civilized nations of Europe, through their language, the geographical position of their country, are naturally designated to transmit to the Eastern society the civilization of Occidental Europe, making thus the link between East and West”. He ends by suggesting England to accept no more the existence of a state of things as that one in the Principates and to initiate a call for assembling a conference of the Great Powers in order to give a final solution in the problem of the Romanian Principates: “A nation dies if it’s not helped; a word of Your Excellency can give its life, but the help must be given now, because tomorrow, might be too late” (Iordache: 2003, pp. 106).

Despite the fact Lord Palmerston received it well, and after its’ publication in the brochure by other important figures of the British Parliament, the memoir of Dumitru Brătianu remained without any practical results, because England preferred to keep the distance towards the problems stipulated into the memoir and action only when a direct and instant interest would occur. In addition to this, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was the aim of the British politics in the Orient, and the memoir contained critical accents towards the Ottoman Gate’s hesitations in front of Russia. Dumitru Brătianu himself, after the publication of his memoir, makes some notes in the London newspaper “Morning Herald”, showing the fact that the Romanians recognize to the Sublime Gate the effort paid in defending the rights of Romanians at Constantinople and Bucharest.

The attitude towards Turkey was as a matter of fact a reason for discrepancy among the Romanian emigrants as well, discrepancies coming from the 1848 Revolution. The Moderates among which we find Nicolae Bălcescu, I.H.Rădulescu, Christian Tell, Al.G.Golescu and others shared the idea of unconditionally supporting Turkey for defending the autonomy right of

Principates and were against anything was contradicting this idea. On the other side, the radical group of Brătianu brothers and C.A.Rosetti was disagreeing Turkey's unconditional support, considering that this sustain will not give any results as long as the two great European powers, England and France, won't be convinced to take attitude.

A laborious activity, oriented on several plans, is undertaken in exile by Nicolae Bălcescu. Firstly he endeavors in order to gather all the Romanian exiled into a Committee, which would assure the unity and convergence of their manifestations. Then he militates for bringing together the connections among Romanian revolutionists and those of other European people. Ultimately, through his writings, he informs the European public opinion on the Romanians' rights and their aspirations.

Bălcescu, as the other Romanian revolutionists, was convinced that the burst of a new revolution is inevitable and close. In an article published in the pages of "Future Romania" magazine in Paris, November 1850, entitled *The Progress of Revolution in the History of the Romanians*, he makes an analysis of the causes and the programs of the Revolutions in 1821 and 1848 and visualizes a new revolution, which will be a national one: "from 1848 mainly the words unity and nationality are in all Europe mouths, their feeling in all the hearts, and armed all the arms, shed blood in this past two years, blood that will always bleed as long as Europe's chart won't change, the statues built on conquest, on infringing the nations' rights, will crush, the nations will reunite in their liberty and the saint alliance of the people will arise".

The national unity, Bălcescu considers, was the aim of the Romanian leaders over the centuries, no matter they were called Mircea cel Bătrân or Ștefan cel Mare, Mihai Viteazul or Șerban Cantacuzino. The Romanians are legitimate to unite themselves into a single state of their common nationality, that is common language, religion, habits and feelings: "If nationality is the heart of a people, if as long as it keeps this characteristic sign of its individuality, this life spirit, it is invested with the indefeasible right to live freely, the national unity being the assurance of its liberty, it is its needed body in order that the soul won't die or stiffen, but on contrary would grow and develop".

Thus, the future revolution won't make anything else then complete the revolutionary synthesis of Romanians, add the requests of the 1821 and 1848 unity and national liberty: "The 1821 Revolution called out *equity*, and wanted for all Romanians liberty and equality, and the state to become Romanian. It was a democratic revolution. The 1848 Revolution wanted for the Romanian to be not only free, but also owner, instead of which liberty and equality is but a lie. That is why they added to their slogan the word *fraternity*, this essential condition of social progress. It was a social revolution. The future revolution can not limit itself in wanting for the Romanians to be free, equal, owners of land and capital and brothers associated into a common progress accomplishment. It won't limit itself in asking liberty from abroad, the liberty under the foreign domination, but will ask the national unity and liberty. Its' slogan will be: *Equity, Fraternity and Unity*. It will be a national revolution".

In order to hurry the burst of the new revolution, Bălcescu and the other Romanians in Paris bounded to the Central Democratic European Committee, set up in London in the summer of 1850, especially from the initiative of the Italian Giuseppe Mazzini and having representatives from the French, German, Polish, Hungarian, etc revolutionists. On the other hand, the Romanians

were planning solidarity with the Central-East European nations' exponents under the form of a Democratic Confederation of Nations in the Oriental Europe (Stan, Ploesteanu: 2001, pp. 138). The Romanian Principates, Hungary and Poland, but also other South-Slavonian nations, were head to construct the ethno-political structure of this confederation. Bălcescu was convinced that the "Romanian issue", namely of the Romanians in Hungary was "fully" recognized by the representatives of the Hungarian emigration. He said that the principle of nationalities will model the status of minor people from this part of the continent, proposing the transformation of Turkey into a protective power for the minor Est-European nations, eliminating thus from the area both the influence of Russia and Austria. Bălcescu suggested the negotiations with other Hungarian representatives than Kossuth in order to come to an agreement regarding the confederation. He considered that Ludovic Kossuth represents the past Hungary, which was buried for good, and centres his attention especially on general Klapka and Teleki. In April 1850 he developed the prior confederal ideas, suggesting a confederative formula called the United States of the Danube, inspired from the American model. The confederacy was to comprise Hungary, Moldavia, Wallachia, Bukovina, Basarabia and Serbia, so three distinct nationalities: Hungarians, Romanians and South-Slavonians. The unifying element of the associated countries was to be the Central Federal Assembly, composed out of 150 deputies, 50 for each nationality. It would meet once a year, successively, in the capital of each national state, and would also assign a federal government formed out of three members, one being the War Minister, the second of external relations and the third of commerce and communications. The Federal Assembly would establish as well the contributions for each nationality, according to the demographic balance and the incomes gathered, and the collecting of the contributions would be made by each government for each national entity. Bălcescu was reminding that the basis of the confederation need to be firmly lied on the nationalities principle and as a decisive element in building it is the agreement between Romanians and Hungarians on the basis of the principle of equality and national equity (Stan, Ploesteanu: 2001, pp. 143-144).

The national-confederative ideas exposed by Bălcescu are well received by the Hungarian emigrants, who feel the need to advice themselves with Kossuth, who was in exile at Kutahia in Turkey. He had a great influence upon other Hungarian leaders and was a key-person within the debates on the confederation of East-Central Europe, not only because of the role he played in the Hungarian Revolution, but also because such a confederative structure would have in its centre Hungary. Mazzini himself, a supporter of East-Central Europe's reorganization on confederative base, asked Kossuth, in August 1850, in the name of Central Democratic European Committee, to expose his conception regarding fraternization and cooperation among Hungarians, Romanians and South-Slavonians within a confederate structure.

Answering to this request, but also in order to clear things, Kossuth elaborates and presents on April 25, 1851, a document entitled *Projet de l'organisation politique de l'Hongrie*, which is meant to be an alternative to Nicolae Bălcescu's proposal. According to his project, Hungary was to become a democratic republic or a constitutional monarchy with a Chamber of Representatives designated by direct voting and a Senate that would replace the superior Feudal Chamber. They also proposed local autogoverning houses, which would assure equal rights for all

nationals. The official language of each community or county was that of local majority, and the language of the Parliament was given by the majority of the elected representatives.

To the minorities they promised that they can use their own language. In what concerns the en-acting of the laws, they could appear in each of the languages used in Hungary, and the central authorities and judiciary corps would be obliged to use the language of the citizen in the cause. The language used in schools was decided at local level, and for the minority population they assured the right to set up schools, the parents being free to choose the school for their children (Gero: 1995, pp. 89).

Kossuth understood, thus, to give to the cohabitant nationalities wide democratic rights, such as the use of mother tongue in culture and administration within the autonomy of shires and counties, but without giving territorial autonomy which would have led inevitably to the deconstruction of historical Hungary. His constitution tried to unify two opposite principles: the maintenance of historical Hungary and the rights of the nations to autodetermination (Stan, Ploesteanu: 2001, pp.155). In a memoir sent specially to Mazzini in London, Kossuth himself explained the fact that he considers intolerable that a Central-Est European Confederation can affect the historical Hungary. He wanted liberty, equality and fraternity for “the entire people” who lived in Hungary, to whom in the cultural-confesional limits he awarded the assurance for nationality. But he rejected the principle of nationalities, formulated by Romanian emigrants, because in the last instance, this would mean that Transylvania became a “gift” to the Romanians, a thing which for Hungary meant clear suicide.

The Romanians reacted to this type of attitude characteristic to Kossuth, but also to other Hungarian emigrants. Thus, Dumitru Brătianu, a representative of Romanian emigrants within the Central Democratic European Committee has a polemic in the summer of 1851 in several numbers of the French publication “La Presse”, with Daniel Irany, former secretary in the Public Salvation Committee of the Hungarian Revolution (Iordache: 2003, pp. 130-136). The latter one tried to break-up the excessive nationalism accusations, brought to the Hungarian leaders, accusing Romanians and Serbians that allied themselves with the imperial Viennese circles within revolution time. Brătianu answers, pointing to an entire historical past which comes to proof that the Romanians were considered tolerated in their own country. It is obvious, Brătianu says, that the union of Transylvania with Hungary in 1848 was made without Romanians, against the will of Romanians, without even taking into account their protests. The Romanians asked at that time a representative Diet, resulting from elections that would decide the union or non-union, but they were not taken into consideration, and the only rights they had were those resulting from their Hungarian quality, because over Hungary, only Hungarian nationality was recognised.

For all the injustices made to his people, in 1848 and before, Brătianu states that, like him, the other Romanians don't seek for revenge, but understanding for the common cause of liberty, addressing at the end the following appeal to the Hungarians: “Hungarians, Providence has given you a terrible advertisement. Take care! Do not embitter democracy with your historical realm and with the conquest right and hold with sincerity, with love the fraternal hand that we offer to you. One again, take care, be afraid of having tomorrow against you the number and the righteousness, the people and Good. I am addressing especially to you, the Hungarian emigrants, because you have a great responsibility hanging over you”.

The Romanian emigrants were convinced that only through a common fight, the real crusade of democracy, the oppressed people would regain their liberty. Each people, Brătianu said, must have the right to decide its own destinies, within the interior of some frontiers that are not established through forces, but through right, within a Congress of European democracy, the decisions of which to be applicable to everyone.

On September 10, 1852, from London, he launches an appeal to the Romanians in the Principates, urging to action and cooperation with other European nations, for Romania's revival in its ethnic space: "Now, the whole Europe knows you, he says, now they know your power, they know that all Romanians have a single language, a single tradition, a single Country ... that all that you are, have the same belief, the same will, the same action, the same soul". In the end of his appeal he addresses to his compatriots in the name of Central Democratic European Committee, whose member he was, with the following words: "Romanians, you come from the race that never dies [...], you are the head of the Latin race and must be one of the union link meant to connect its activity with the Slavonian and Hungarian races. The consciousness of your task represents and attests your nationality. Develop it with faith and do not hesitate; suffer, work, fight for it. It is your duty towards mankind; it is your right before the nations that comprise it. In the name of the peoples, who through us had signed the preliminaries of the European Federative Pact, we ascertain this duty and this right of yours. Be our brothers as we are yours" (Iordache: 2003, pp. 145-147).

Dumitru Brătianu does not forget about the Romanians in the Habsburg Empire, launching in the name of the National Romanian Committee an Appeal to *The Romanians in Transylvania fighting in the Austrian army*, urging them to be solidar with Italians, Hungarians or Poles in case of a insurrection stirred by the latter ones, because such an insurrection aimed the freedom of all the nations in Austria, and being of help for the reconstruction of Daco-Romania. "Upstanding soldiers of Romania – was written into an appeal – fight with courage, fight in Romanian way and in union with the other nationals, because only when you will burn the kingship you will be able to shout from your hearts and fruitfully: Long live Romania! Long live liberty!"

Defending own nationality, the collaboration with the other oppressed people and the union of the Romanians into a single state, were besides the disputes from the interior of emigration, the main concern of its members. In an article entitled *Our Aim*, published in "Romanian Youth", and signed by G.Crețeanu, one of the founders and D.Florescu, a revolutionist and advocacy commissioner in 1848, exiled then in Paris, the authors sum up the objective of the Romanians: 1. war to the oppressing ones, solidarity to the oppressed; 2. independence and the union of all the Romanians; 3. organising the real democracy. The article signed by the two is meant as an impulse addressed to all Romanians, especially to the youth, in order to fight for their union: "Youth we are on our own, we are addressing especially to the Romanian youth in all the provinces; we make a call to all noble feelings, to all generous hearts; we urge everybody to gather round the flag which has written on it the slogan: *Romanians Union*. Only united we will be able to advance, we will be able to win in the day of fight. Maybe this day is not so far away. The whole Europe waits and calls for it" (Cornea, Zamfir: 1969, pp. 114-124).

Another programming article, published this time in "The Romanian Republic" and signed, in the name of "editorial staff" by I.C. Brătianu, militates for the same ideas. He pleads in his

argumentation in favour of the natural rights of men, on which the liberal doctrine set its basis and which need to be the foundation of a society. A good society is that one which allows the development and happiness of people, and its basis must be according to the great liberal thinker, “the individual liberty, the connection and the morality of the family, national unity, the intimate connection with the nations of the same roots and solidarity with all the people that is the union of mankind!”

When a society is obedient to arbitrary laws or imposed through force, it has not only the right but the duty to set free from them, because such an order is contrary to human nature. That is why the Romanian is liable to “get responsible in his own eyes as human and enthrone himself into all his rights, in order to be able to live in consent with his nature, developing, perfecting and accomplishing his mission in society with all the glory and virtue he is capable of “What does he want for Romanians? Here it is the answer: We want an independent and free country; a country with 10 million Romanians, all with the same rights and duties; a whole part and equally to national sovereignty; a family if they will deserve it through love and their morality, a property if they will want to work. We want that everyone to be sovereign on the harvest of his work, without being in danger of being stolen by the loafers of mankind with a single straw. [...] We want Romania to be in solidarity with other people that will tend at least towards righteousness, solidarity and fraternity”.

In a wide article published in the same “Romanian Republic”, two years later, in 1853 and reproduced in 1857, in several numbers of “The Romanian”, I.C.Brătianu showed that there are two “essential conditions” of a new society: “1. The reorganization of Europe in nationalities, and not in a forced gathering, therefore from the construction of each nationality in its wholeness, to come out a solidarity among all Europe’s people, and thus to come out that unity of the universal republic, which was unable to accomplish by the Catholics. 2. The inner unity of each nation, by putting an end to social classes and the reunification of each individual’s rights, offering its means for developing all faculties and thus to accomplish its mission given by nature by one handiness or another”. The last of the conditions refers more to the abolition of privileges and exploiting in the society, in order that each individual should have the opportunity to develop according to his merits, a deep liberal thinking, and the first one is essential for a people. “What I strongly want – Brătianu says – is to make the Romanians understand that to live as a nation is the first condition of a people, consequently to defend their nationality against those who have the nerve to oppose to it is not only a right, but is a saint duty, crime and suicide of not doing. I still want to convince my Romanian brothers, that nationality as the first condition of liberty cannot be achieved or develop under the flag of despotism and that is why the flag of nationality and democracy must be one and the same”. Inserting his writing with several historical arguments, I.C.Brătianu addresses an appeal to Romanians, especially those in the Habsburg Empire, in order not to make compromises and not to lose hope into a free and united Romania. “My brothers, prepare for the saint and great hour, because is not far away. Any other preoccupation instead of this idea is useless. Do not accept, do not make any agreement for another condition they would like to make, but that of a free Romania, one and unsplit. Do not agree with the enemy, not only for one minute. Do not believe that nationality can develop under foreign breath” (Cornea, Zamfir: 1969, pp. 474-477).

One can draw conclusions from this brief presentation of the activities of some Romanian emigrants in the Occidental capitals that they put all their energy on behalf of freeing from the foreign domination and constructing the Romanian state. The Romanians managed to attract, as we have seen, the sympathy and support of some important politicians and diplomats from Occidental countries. Moreover, in France they become disciples and friends of some prestigious intellectuals such as Jules Michelet or Edgar Quinet, these connections of friendship being very important as a part of an ideological complicity and making up the lead of Franco-Romanian discourse up to 1918 and afterwards (Durandin, 1989, pp. 89).

And even if it did not 'coagulated' organizational structure and did not foresee the same way of action for reaching its ideals, the emigration appears still as a coherent group with regard to the liberal and democratic ideas promoted by its members.

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