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HISTORY

THE PRELUDES TO THE PRINCE CUZA'S RESIGNATION, IN 1866

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Synopsis

THE DIPLOMATIC PRELUDES TO THE PRINCE CUZA'S RESIGNATION, IN 1866

As the preludes of the events of the 11th February 1866, when the Alexandru Ioan Cuza resigned from the Throne of the Romanian Principalities, were frequently emphasized with regards for the internal political opposition against the both institutional and social reforms promoted by the Prince who received an imperative national mandate, in 1859, concerning such an order of things. It was of special significance to be emphasized, through this study, the preludes to those events which were happening in Bucharest on the 11th February 1866, from the international or diplomatic perspective. The Revolution in Poland, during the year 1863, was "an occasion" for the Conservative Powers, Russia, Austria and Prussia, to be again on a common position of reaction against any "trouble" as contrary to the "general European order". Prince Cuza was accused at Petersburgh, Vienna and Berlin, as well as at Constantinople, for his internal liberal reforms and for his "ties with the European conspirators". Within that time the French – British Concert was broken. It was an international context which was favourable for the Romanian internal plot in order to provoke the Cuza's resignation.

Keywords: The Union of the Romanian Principalities, The joint guarantee of the European Powers, the internal opposition against Cuza's reforms, the international context.

Given the worsening international situation – in January 1863, the Polish revolution had broken out – the powers indicated in a collective telegram from their ambassadors in Constantinople to the consul generals in Bucharest that the latter should act "in concert" to prevent "*une question locale de devenir une question générale*" (25 February 1863)[1]. On the night of July 13–14, 1863, an

[1] Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et du Commerce Extérieur de Belgique. Correspondance politique. Légations. *Turquie*, vol. 8 (?), no. 14, Arhivele Naționale ale României [The National Archives of Romania] (hereinafter A.N.R.), fond Microfilme [Microfilms Fund] *Belgia* [Belgium], r. 15, cd. 372 (telegram annexed to Greindl's letter to Ch. Rogier, Constantinople, 5 March 1863).

armed group of Poles – organised by Count Michael Czajkowski (Sadyk Pasha) and led by Colonel Z. Milkowski – landed from a British-flagged ship between Reni and Ismail intending to march towards Poland in rebellion against Russia. The Poles were surprised by Romanian troops at Costangalia and forced to surrender on 17 July at Rânzești[2]. Before such an incident, news had reached Romanian officials from Paris about Emperor Napoleon III's interest in establishing a Franco-British-Austrian coalition in favour of the rebirth of Poland. It was practically impossible to draw Austria into such a coalition because the Polish revolutionaries shared the cause of fighting both the Habsburg and Romanov empires with the Hungarians[3]. In favour of the Poles, Napoleon III had sought to propose to Tsar Alexander II the restoration of the constitutional kingdom, with Grand Duke Constantin Nicolaevitch crowned in Warsaw[4], which was unacceptable to the British. All that remained for the French Emperor was to assimilate the Polish question into some fanciful plans to create a new Europe[5], through a game of territorial compensation. In the given situation, the discussions between I. Alecsandri, Adam Czartoryski, and his son Ladislau could not lead to effective Polish-Romanian agreements, including commitments with the Hungarians[6]. It was imperative, therefore, that Prince Cuza and his ministers avoid subjecting the country to severe external dangers in the form of Russian reaction, Austrian threat, or Ottoman intervention at a time when Franco-British cooperation was seen to be somewhat vague in the East. This was also apparent in the efforts of the consuls in Bucharest to monitor the state of the United Principalities. Taking their special instructions seriously, the consuls began to meet in weekly sessions, acting as a kind of collective supervision of the prince's activities[7]. His initiative to include the revenues of the monasteries in the budget for 1863 – a disguised secularisation, as C. C. Giurescu highlighted[8] – prompted the Porte to propose (in a note by Aali Pasha, dated 2 April 1863) the convening of a conference in Constantinople, attended by the signatory powers of Protocol XIII. From the Romanian point of view, it was important not to enforce – in the issue of secularisation – an international arbitration or any decision of a diplomatic meeting in Constantinople. The Greek monks had secured the support of the British ambassador at the Porte, Bulwer. While a member of the European

[2] R. V. Bossy, *Agenţia diplomatică a României în Paris şi legăturile politice franco-române sub Cuza Vodă*, Bucureşti, 1931, p. 272, 273, 274 et sqq. (Baligot de Beyne to I. Alecsandri, 15, 16, and 18 July 1863).

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 59 et sqq.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 60.

[5] *Ibidem*; see also Fr. Charles-Roux, *Alexandre II, Gortchakoff et Napoléon III*, Paris, 1913, p. 315–363; Marian Stroia, *Românii, insurecția polonă din 1863 și semnificațiile sale europene*, in "Studii și materiale de istorie modernă", XIX (2006), p. 151–164.

[6] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 252 and 254 (I. Alecsandri to Baligot de Beyne, Paris, 21 February and 21 March 1863).

[7] T. W. Riker, *Cum s-a înfăptuit România. Studiul unei probleme internaţionale 1856–1866*, translated from English by Alice Bădescu, Bucureşti, 1940, p. 430.

[8] Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viaţa şi opera lui Cuza Vodă*, Bucureşti, 1970, p. 155 et sqq.

Commission of Inquiry in the Principalities in 1857, the latter had shown himself sympathetic to the question of monastery properties, which was a matter of domestic public law in the two Romanian states[9]. In Constantinople, in 1862–1863, the British ambassador yielded to the influence of Mrs Aristarki, a Greek from Phanar[10], taking the side of the monks. Furthermore, only the Russian ambassador to the Porte, Novikov, outdid the British in taking that side[11]. The position of France – a power which, invoking the independence of the internal administration of the Principalities, called into question the international arbitration on the question of secularisation – was decisive[12]. Moreover, to Bulwer's disappointment, Britain officially endorsed France's position[13]. Claiming that the affair in question was a matter of domestic public law[14], Prince Cuza – in complete agreement with the thought expressed by N. Bordeanu, *i.e.*, that the most absolute and most powerful sovereign was "its majesty, the *fait accompli*", before whom everyone bowed[15], – enforced the act of secularisation (13/15 December 1863). The law provided that all the monasteries in Romania would remain the state's property. The income obtained from the assets would be included in the ordinary income of the state budget; a sum would be allocated to the Holy Places to which some of the monasteries were dedicated, only by way of aid; the amount would be limited to a maximum of eighty-two million Lei (the Constantinople exchange rate), once and for all, including in the amount of thirty-one million Lei which the Holy Places owe to Wallachia, according to previous provisions. The government would take back from the Greek abbots the ornaments, books, and vessels endowed by "the piety of our ancestors" to these establishments, as well as the documents entrusted to the said hegumens, according to the inventories to be found in the archives of the country[16]. Faced with a new *fait accompli* – where T. W. Riker deciphered the significance of a national revolution prevailing over treaties[17] – the powers could only agree on the indemnity for the Holy Places, with the proceedings of the Constantinople Conference being long dragged.

[9] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[10] *Ibidem*.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 79 et sqq.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 229 et sqq. (I. Alecsandri to N. Rosetti-Bălănescu, Paris, 18 September 1862), 275 et sqq. (I. Alecsandri to Baligot de Beyne, Paris, 23 July 1863), 279–283 (I. Alecsandri to Cuza, Paris, 18 August 1863).

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 90 et sqq.

[14] In this regard, the Romanian government had submitted to the Constantinople conference a memorandum prepared by C. Negri and titled *Mémoire avec pièces justificatives présenté à la Commission internationale pour les couvents dédiés; apud* Dumitru Vitcu, *Diplomații Unirii*, București, 1979, p. 119.

[15] Constantin C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

[16] *Istoria României în texte*, ed. Bogdan Murgescu, București, 2001, p. 232 (The Law on the Secularisation of Monastery Assets, 13/25 December 1863); see also *Texte și documente privind istoria modernă a românilor 1774–1918*, ed. de Iulian Oncescu, Târgoviște, 2011, p. 336 (the same doc.).

[17] T. W. Riker, *op. cit*., p. 458.

The ruler's attempt to obtain the tacit adherence of the powers (first and foremost the Porte) to the draft constitution (sent to Constantinople along with a memorandum in June 1863), which envisaged the establishment of a Senate and more prerogatives for the executive power, also proved to be highly challenging[18]. Even if Cuza's request relied on the establishment of the Senate confirmed by the 1861 *firman*, the Ottoman dignitaries noticed the intimate thought of the ruler to provoke – by revising the convention – a reversal of the states of affairs placed under the collective guarantee of the powers concerning the Principalities. As a basis for the future organisation of the Romanian state, Cuza proposed several measures. The first was the considerable reduction of the electorate and eligibility census and the total fusion of the electoral colleges (having one legislative body with strictly limited and defined powers). The second was a High Chamber or Senate, a mediating body whose members would be appointed by the prince and for a definite term; a Council of State, charged with drafting laws and upholding them before the Chambers, as well as drawing up regulations for public administration and solving challenges in administrative matters. The third was a Court of Auditors, charged with examining and controlling the use of public money[19]. In seeking to recognise the Principalities' full legislative autonomy, the reification of the draft constitution without prior deliberation by a diplomatic conference would have meant limiting the regime of the collective guarantee and the Porte's sovereign prerogatives only to the external being of the Romanian state. However, upon understanding the status quo, the Ottoman Porte – by the circular of Aali Pasha of 30 October/ 11 November 1863 – requested the powers' involvement concerning Cuza's proposals for improvements to the Paris Convention. Due to the indiscretion of the Parisian newspaper "La Nation", the Porte's gesture drew protests from the Romanian ruler, who claimed that he could not accept a constitution of any other than domestic origin. Despite the Ottoman dignitary's attempts to justify himself, the prince clearly understood the need for the *coup d'état*[20], which he had planned for 30 November/12 December 1863. It would be superfluous to dwell on the multiple causes that led Al. I. Cuza to postpone the *coup*. Some of them are worth mentioning, however, because they concern various changes in the attitudes of the powers towards general politics. Such mutations were also reflected in the conduct of the great powers towards the Romanian question. The Bucharest Government had to consider, first of all, the changes in the attitude of France, on whose support it had counted and to which it had offered its services and those of the army of the United Principalities, should they have been requested[21]. However, the entry into action of France on the side of the Polish insurgents could not take place without British or Austrian support, which was difficult because of the divergences between the capital interests of the three

[18] Constantin C. Giurescu, *op. cit*., p. 179.

[19] Cuza, *explanatory memo* for C. Negri, Bucharest, 15/27 June 1863; see *Texte și documente privind istoria modernă a românilor*, p. 325–336, especially p. 333.

[20] Ion Hudiță, *Franța și Cuza Vodă. Lovitura de stat proiectată în 1863*, Bucureşti, 1941.

[21] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 296 et sqq.

courts[22]. It allowed Petersburg, which benefited from a favourable position from Prussia[23] and Italian expectations, to consider the pacification of Poland as an exclusively Russian affair[24]. Left alone in the Mexican adventure (Spain and Great Britain had withdrawn from it), France sought to reaffirm its status as the champion of European diplomacy by proposing the convening of a *General Congress* – meant *à régler le présent et à assurer l'avenir*[25] – among whose issues Paris proposed to include the Romanian question[26]. The French initiative, however, led to a rapprochement between Vienna and Petersburg; the two great cabinets were able to assess each other's intentions on the topic of the dedicated monasteries (*la pierre de touche des relations austro-russes*)[27]. The situation was perfect for Prussia, which, sensing the coldness in Austro-Franco-British relations, felt that the time had come to show the power of the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs (the

[22] The memo of Baron von Dörnberg is intriguing from this standpoint (Vienna, 26 December 1862): *Mémoire betreffend die Beziehungen Osterreich zu England und Frankreich*, in *Quellen zur deutschen Politik Osterreichs. 1859–1866*, Bd. II, Berlin, 1935, p. 694–697.

[23] Following the Russian-Prussian agreement of 8 February 1863 concluded during Konstant A. von Alvensleben's mission to Russia; Fr. Charles-Roux, *op. cit.*, p. 328 et sqq.

[24] See the *Memorandum* penned by Gorchakov (26 August/7 September 1863), in *Documents diplomatiques* (Affaires étrangères), *1863*, Paris, 1863, p. 72–90.

[25] The letter addressed by Emperor Napoleon III to the European sovereigns (4 November 1863) in *ibidem*, p. 1–2; see also *Les origines diplomatiques de la guerre de 1870–1871*, ed. Henri Charles Lavauzelle, vol. I, Paris, 1910, p. 1 et sqq.

[26] Paris had proposed to London that the "Polish question", the "Italian question", the "situation of the Principalities", and the "Schleswig-Holstein question" be listed as "principal". In his reply, Palmerston would consider the last two "*comme non essendo délia competenza Europea*", admitting only the 1815 treaties as a basis for discussion. D'Azeglio also reported on all this to Visconti Venosta in London (21 November 1863). *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, prima serie, ed. Walter Maturi, Federico Chabod, Mario Toscano, vol. IV, p. 287. The reservations of the British cabinet have, to a large extent, scuppered the "Napoleonic idea of a congress". Palmerston, personally, did not see the possibility of the congress's proceedings entailing significant results because many of the matters to be deliberated were rather mutually exclusive: "If there was any chance that a Congress would give Moldo-Wallachia to Austria, and Venetia and Rome to Italy and incorporate Schleswig with Denmark, and separate the Poland of 1815 from Russia make it an independent State not touching the Question of the Rhine as a French Frontier nor the relieving Russia from what was imposed upon her by the Treaty of Paris such a Congress would be a well doer by Europe but such Results can scarcely be expected"; *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902), or Documents Old and New*, ed. by Harold Temperley and Lillian M. Penson, Cambridge, 1938, p. 254 et sqq. (Palmerston to J. Russell, 8 November 1863). *Foreign Office* justly appraised that "as to Austria we know that if any Proposals were made about a Cession of Venetia, She would leave the Congress. If indeed the Scheme which you say Aali is inclined to, could be effected, and the Moldo-Wallachian Provinces could be given to Austria in exchange for Venetia, Italy making money Compensation to Turkey, such a Scheme would be good for Austria, Italy, and Turkey, but would no doubt be much opposed by Russia, and probably objected to by the Moldo-Wallachians"; *ibidem*, p. 256 et sqq. (the same to the same, 18 November 1863), 258 et sqq. (*Russel's account of the Cabinet's decision to refuse the Congress*, 19 November 1863 because London believed that Congress could not resolve questions concerning Poland, Germany's relations with Denmark, Italy, and the United Principalities).

[27] Mihai Dimitrie Sturdza, *La Russie et la désunion des Principautés Roumaines (1864–1866)*, in "Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique", vol. XII, 3^{e} cahier, 1971, p. 250.

latter in isolation) as *embarquées dans le grand Omnibus des affaires allemandes*[28]. Moreover, noting that Great Britain agreed only to the idea of a restricted congress, aimed only at revising the 1815 treaty system – far too little to meet France's expectations – the Berlin cabinet, associating itself with the Vienna cabinet, succeeded in conferring upon the question of duchies the character of a German-Danish affair[29]. It was, therefore, a failure of France's attempt to consolidate its international position employing Napoleon III's favourite method: *the European Congress*.

The quasi-unanimous fears of the great cabinets about France's intentions[30] led to an – albeit temporary – regrouping of the powers, which, as far as the Eastern question was concerned, showed no favourable signs of restructuring the order. Anxious not to risk *isolation* in Eastern affairs and lose its influence in Constantinople in favour of the northern courts – suspected, in the first part of 1864, of having concluded a treaty of alliance[31] – France urged Cuza[32] to stop acting contrary to the joint deliberations of the powers. The same advice came from London, where the danger of Russia regaining its predominant influence in the Principalities was worrisome for some ministers[33]. For all their insistence, however, it was not the Franco-British advice that weighed most in determining the postponement of the *coup* but the Romanian government members' concern about the tightening circle of neighbouring powers. Austria and Russia – exaggerating the implications of the Bucharest government's measures to improve the army – suggested to the Porte the solution of Ottoman intervention in the United Principalities or, possibly, of a *triple occupation*, for which purpose Austrian and Russian troops were already gathered at the confines of the Romanian state[34]. Furthermore, it was at this time that the attitude of Vienna and Petersburg in Eastern affairs met with Berlin's adherence, Bismarck being anxious to disseminate his opinion that *Couza est évidement un voleur et un conspirateur et nous ne saurions le couvrir de notre protection*[35].

[28] *I Documenti diplomatici italiani* (1ª serie), IV, p. 469 (Launay to Visconti Venosta, Berlin, 27 January 1864).

[29] *Les origines diplomatiques*, I, p. 63 (Talleyrand to Drouyn de Lhuys, Berlin, 1 January 1864).

[30] In a letter to Napoleon III, in Petersburg (19 February 1864), Marquis Pepoli argued, among others, "c'est la prépondérance de la France qui est un danger pour le monde, tout outre danger s'amoindrit auprès de celui-là. Il faut que sans délai les autres quatre Grandes Puissances se tendent la main. La libre Angleterre ne craint de la tendre à la Russie sur le cadavre de Pologne. L'Autriche et la Prusse se rapprochent en oubliant Olmütz. Comme en 1840 la diplomatie organise l'entente morale de quatre Grandes Puissances". *I Documenti diplomatici italiani* (1ª serie), IV, p. 550 et sqq.

[31] On this topic, Drouyn de Lhuys would correspond with the French embassies in Petersburg, Vienna, Berlin, and London. *Les origines diplomatiques*, II, p. 130 et sqq., 142 et sqq., 149.

[32] In a meeting granted to I. Alecsandri, D. de Lhuys – "jamais […] aussi sévère à notre endroit" – would express his dissatisfaction that "depuis dix-huit mois que je suis au ministère, il ne m'a pas été donné une seule fois d'entendre une bonne nouvelle des Principautés". R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

[33] Paul Henry, *L'abdication du prince Couza et l'avènement de la dynastie de Hohenzollern au trône de Roumanie*, Paris, 1930, p. 23.

[34] Mihai Dimitrie Sturdza, *op. cit*., p. 250.

[35] *Die auswärtige Politik Preussens. Diplomatische Aktenstücke*, hrsg. von Erich Brandenburg, Otto Hoetzsch, Hermann Oncken, vol. IV, Berlin, 1932..., p. 700 (Oubril to Gorchakov, Berlin, 25 March/6 April 1864).

We believe that the facts mentioned above are sufficient to support the idea that even during the *coup d'etat*, the Romanians' success was not possible only due to the skilful exploitation of a favourable conjuncture. Obviously, it was a confrontation, with Cuza and his collaborators resorting to the new great *fait accompli* of 2 May 1864, more to ward off an imminent external danger than to avoid missing a favourable moment. As in the case of any great political act, there was also a dose of recklessness and risk. The "creators" of 2 May relied on the firm conviction that their action was legitimate and on its effect because of its accentuated international tendency to circumscribe the position characteristic to the powers. As is well known, on hearing the news of the coup d'état, France and Great Britain – with the apparent intention of countering the Austro-Russian advances in Constantinople through an *intervention* in the United Principalities – found the necessary resources to draw the Porte by mutual agreement into recognising the improvements made by Cuza to the Convention (a secret Anglo-French-Ottoman protocol was concluded on 10 May 1864)[36]. To convince the Sublime Porte, the Western powers had undertaken to persuade Prince Cuza to reach a direct agreement with the suzerain court during an immediate visit to the Ottoman capital. The ruler would make this gesture, but only after taking upon himself the burden of the domestic consecration of his acts through a plebiscite[37]. Under these circumstances, though formally all the powers considered the *coup d'état* contrary to the treaties (*vertragswidrig*)[38], the Constantinople Conference was forced to take note of the new *fait accompli*; by sanctioning the *Addendum to the 1858 Convention*, it only succeeded in paying homage to the dear departed (*i.e.*, the Paris Convention)[39]. After the events, few could still believe in the efficacy of the warning given to the Romanians in the preamble to the *Addendum*, that, although the United Principalities may in future amend or change the laws concerning their internal administration, with the legal concurrence of all the established powers and without any intervention, it is well understood that this faculty cannot extend to the ties which unite the Principalities with the Ottoman Empire, nor to the treaties between the High Porte and the other powers, which are and remain binding on these Principalities[40]. The measure of autonomy was provided by the *Statute expanding the Paris Convention*. According to this expanding document, the

[36] Constantin C. Giurescu, *op. cit*., p. 263 et sqq.

[37] For details, see *ibidem*, p. 252 et sqq.

[38] *Die auswärtige Politik Preussens*, vol. V, p. 202 et sqq. (Bismarck to Werther, in Vienna, Berlin, 9 June 1864); *Die Notizen zur orientalischen Frage* (in *ibidem*, p. 134 et sqq.) are also interesting because they comprise the perspective of Lord Russell, according to whom Cuza's *coup*, compared to that of Napoleon III, is "similar but less entitled because of the Porte's suzerainty" ("*ähnlich, aber weniger berechtigt wegen der Oberhoheit der Pforte*").

[39] T. W. Riker, *op. cit*., p. 562.

[40] The Protocol of 28 June and *Actul adiţional la convenţia de la 1858*, in *Acte şi documente relative la 2 mai 1864*, publ. by V. M. Kogălniceanu, with a *Precuvântare* by D. A. Sturdza, Bucureşti, 1891, p. 71–76 (the quotation in the text, on p. 72).

convention of 19 August 1858, concluded between the suzerain court and the guaranteeing powers, remained the fundamental law of Romania. However, the double election of 5 and 24 January 1859, the completion of the Union and the dissolution of the Central Commission of Focşani made several articles of the mentioned diplomatic act inapplicable. Hence, a rebalancing of the equilibrium between the powers of the Romanian state was imposed as an addendum to the convention. For that resettlement, it was provided that the public powers should be entrusted to the prince, an *Adunare Ponderatrice* (Senate), and the Elective Assembly. The Legislative Power should be exercised collectively by the ruler, the *Adunare Ponderatrice* (Senate) and the Elective Assembly; the prince alone should have the initiative of laws, which he should prepare with the assistance of the Council of State and submit to the Elective Assembly and the *Adunare Ponderatrice* (Senate) for voting; the deputies of the Elective Assembly should be elected according to the electoral arrangement (*i.e.*, the new electoral law); the Elective Assembly would discuss and vote on the draft laws submitted to it by the prince[41].

By the international recognition of the great *fait accompli*, Prince Cuza had good reason to make it known, through his *proclamation* to the country (2 July 1864), that Romania acquired its autonomy from within[42]. Such an achievement – combined with enhancing the programme of internal reforms bearing the mark of Kogălniceanu's political genius, with contracting the Stern loan and the commission business to settle the dispute with the Holy Places, with the accession of the United Principalities to the international telegraph convention; with the attraction of English and French capital to carry out essential public works, etc. – signified the attainment, in the second half of 1864 and the first half of the following year, of the highest level of the great work accomplished under the sceptre of the Union ruler. This reality was, of course, also reflected in consolidating the position of the Romanian state concerning the great powers. To elucidate, under the new circumstances, the consular corps ceased to exercise its powers of advising the ruler on acts of a domestic nature[43]. Furthermore, the intransigent attitude of the ruler towards the collective approach of the consuls (19/31 March 1865) on the question of consular jurisdiction[44] would prove the determination of the Romanian side to make no concessions concerning the acceptance it gave to full autonomy. As can be seen, the Romanian side had gained a valuable point in its confrontation with a conservative international regime. This success – the fruit of a sustained effort – also meant the completion of the prelude

[41] *Istoria României în texte*, p. 337 et sqq. (*Statutul dezvoltător al Convenţiei de la Paris*, 2/14 May 1864).

[42] Dumitru Vitcu, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

[43] T. W. Riker, *op. cit*., p. 548.

[44] C. C. Giurescu, *Tranzitul armelor sârbeşti prin România sub Cuza vodă (1862)*, in "Romanoslavica", XI, 1965, p. 340.

to the overthrow of Cuza[45]. *The revolution for unity* (to use N. Bălcescu's inspired phrase) was accomplished, and to broaden the prospects of the *revolution for Independence and the Great Union*[46], a complete overthrow of the status of the Principalities was necessary, an objective for the achievement of which neither he (Cuza) nor any other native prince could have gone further. It would have been possible for a foreign prince who could have had the audacity and diplomatic assistance to consider it seriously[47]. It was a well-understood truth at the time, and it is mainly responsible for the revival of the opposition to the prince, with actions carried out domestically and abroad. Paris became a veritable centre for the whole conspiracy[48].

The event of 11 February 1866 was due, not least, to the policy of the great powers. Having lost the power to deliberate on internal acts, the high courts were still able to rule on Cuza's general attitude since the acts confirming him as ruler and, therefore, the power reserved to the contractors to rule on the maintenance of the Union in the event of the throne being vacant remained in force. This is how, by his very status, the person of the ruler – who had contributed most to the consolidation of autonomy – had ended up in the dramatic position of being a potential pretext or instrument of interference by the powers in the internal affairs of the Romanian state. Moreover, if the tendencies of interference were stopped, it was primarily due to Cuza's dignified and firm attitude, brilliantly demonstrated during the diplomatic incident provoked by the *vizier's letter*, by which Fuad Pasha tried to draw the ruler's attention to maintaining internal order, threatened, it was claimed, by the turmoil of 3/15 August 1865. The incident corresponded – an interesting aspect here – to perceptible changes in the attitudes of the guaranteeing powers, which denoted the "temperature change" mentioned by T. W. Riker[49]. Against the backdrop of the international crisis of 1863–1864, Prussia's actions showed too little respect for international agreements. Bismarck claimed *qu'il est préférable avant tout d'attendre les événements sans inventer l'histoire*[50] –, that it was preferable, above all, to wait for events without inventing history. However, if left unsanctioned, Prussia's actions threatened to strike the Concert of Europe at the very core of its existence. The great powers grew worried: France, about the

[45] Al. Lapedatu, *Preludiile căderii lui Cuza vodă*, in "Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice", series III, tom XXV (1942–1943), p. 1011–1112; see also idem, *Austria şi lovitura de stat de la 2/14 mai 1884. Cu trei serii de acte inedite privitoare la acest eveniment*, in loc. cit., series III, t. XXVIII (1915–1946), p. 127–270; Marian Stroia, *Lovitura de stat de la 2/14 mai 1864 și puterile europene*, in the vol. *Omagiu profesorului Iacob Mârza*, Alba Iulia, 2006, p. 310–325.

[46] Gh. Platon, *1866 – Începutul "revoluției române pentru independență"*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie «A. D. Xenopol»", Iași, t. XXI, 1984, p. 442 et sqq.

[47] Paul Henry, *op. cit*., p. 43 et sqq.

[48] V. Russu, *"Monstruoasa coaliție" și detronarea lui Al. I. Cuza*, in the vol. *Cuza vodă. In memoriam*, ed. L. Boicu, Gh. Platon, Al. Zub, Iași, 1973, p. 518.

[49] T. W. Riker, *op. cit*., p. 596 et sqq.

[50] *Die auswärtige Politik Preussens*, vol. V, p. 458 (Oubril to Gorchakov, Berlin, 29 October/10 November 1865).

future of its Rhineland policy; Britain, sensing that the port of Kiel might be the turning point for Prussia's rise to great naval and, in time, colonial power; Austria, anxious to avoid a crisis in international relations through a new territorial sacrifice at the expense of Habsburg possessions; Russia, blaming the cancellation of its much-reduced influence in German affairs[51]. Thus, the great powers seemed eager to overcome some differences between their interests and find ways to reach a new Concert. *En fermant le temple de la guerre*, as hoped by Napoleon III[52], the powers resorted to a veritable test – observable for the second half of 1865 and the beginning of the subsequent year – of their collective attitude regarding Eastern affairs[53]. As a result, it seems entirely explicable that the Powers used the internationalisation of the episode of 3/15 August 1865 to display the velleities of their concerted attitude. We refer to the apparent manifestations of the Powers' policy since the channels of *secret diplomacy* (the case of the correspondence between Gorchakov and Ignatiev being eloquent)[54] were not devoid of other calculations and testing regarding the prospects of future realities. In Bucharest, in the search for a momentary concerted solution, the Consuls General, first those of Great Britain and France[55], and then – in early 1866 – those of the other guaranteeing powers (except for Prussia!) had received *similar instructions* to draw the ruler's attention to the fact that he would no longer be allowed to disregard existing treaties[56] and inspire *des mesures plus sages et plus propres à le sauver de la situation déplorable où il se trouve*[57].

In his letter of 21 October 1865, addressed to Napoleon III and often quoted by historians[58], the ruler himself made an assessment of his work as coming from the impulses of Romanian national emancipation and supported by France. When the French emperor waged war in the Crimea, the people of the Danube enthusiastically acclaimed the French flag. That glorious deed had been inspired by a great Napoleonic idea to stifle projects threatening the European balance, revive the East using the principle of nationalities, and sow the fruitful seeds of progress

[51] Hermann Oncken, *Die Rheinpolitik Kaisers Napoleon III. von 1863 bis 1870 und der Ursprung des Krieges von 1870–71*, vol. I, Stuttgart/Berlin/Leipzig, 1926, *passim.*

[52] *Discours de l'Empereur à l'ouverture de la session législative (15 février 1865)*, in *Les origines diplomatiques*, vol. V, p. 428.

[53] *Ibidem*, VI, p. 50 (Talleyrand to D. de Lhyus, Petersburg, 21 March 1865). The French ambassador recounted that Gorchakov would have told him: "chacun [cabinet] replié sur lui même se fortifiait dans l'inaction générale. Nous sommes tous dans un marais […]".

[54] Mihai Dimitrie Sturdza, *op. cit*., p. 257–266.

[55] T. W. Riker, *op. cit*., p. 599 et sqq.

[56] *Ibidem*, p. 600.

[57] Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Archives diplomatiques – Paris. Correspondance politique des consuls (hereinafter M.A.E. – A. D.), *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 27, f. 44; A.N.R., fond Microfilme *Franța* [France], r. 12, cd. 46 (Tillos to D. de Lhuys, 29 January 1866).

[58] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 382–386; *Românii la 1859. Unirea Principatelor Române în conștiința europeană*, vol. I, *Documente externe*, ed. Ion Ardeleanu, V. Arimia, Ionel Gal, Mircea Mușat, București, 1984, p. 599–603 (in French), 603–607 (in Romanian).

in that ancient world. The Treaty and Convention of Paris gave the Romanian people serious guarantees. The new order of things called for *a new man* in the Principalities. Entrusted by the citizens, the difficult task was taken on by the elected of 5 and 24 January 1859 as a duty, persuaded that he would be encouraged and supported by the one to whom he attributed, like grateful Romania, the initiative of the political change so precious to the country. He found the Principalities disorganised, without being able to feel entirely responsible for fixing things; he found himself, in his work, hindered by some complications in the constitution (*i.e.*, the Convention of Paris) provided to the United Principalities. He resorted to strengthening his authority so that Romania would not suffer as Greece did after more than thirty years of constitutional monarchy, with improvised state reorganisation, harassed by foreign influences. Despite all the difficulties and his lack of experience, with all the mistakes, Romania progressed (*Fort heureusement le progrès a des lois invincibles*)[59]. The Union – the secular dream of the Romanians – was achieved; the country was given back a fifth of its territory, usurped by foreign monks; a million *clăcași* [corvée labourers] became a million owners and citizens. Codes modelled on the Napoleonic Code were promulgated, with the effective establishment of equality for all before the law, rights for all in the family, through civil marriage and the prohibition of divorce. The administration of justice improved under the influence of the Court of Cassation; finances were reorganised, with an essential role for the Court of Auditors and the Savings Bank, perhaps also a national bank; primary education became compulsory and free. The decimal system was established; hospitals and schools were created; the communications network increased, with new bridges and railway lines under construction; thoroughly organised armed forces would be a priority (from four or five thousand Russian rifles, dating from the time of Empress Catherine of Russia and about ten worthless cannons of Turkish, Russian, and Austrian origin, the country's defence came to possess sixty thousand grooved rifles bought from France, twenty-five thousand non-grooved rifles due to the generosity of Emperor Napoleon III and distributed to the communes, where a guard service was established. Seventy-two French-built cannons strengthened the country's defences; the country's political education progressed appreciably under the influence of new ideas and through newly created institutions. The period of nearly a century when the Principalities had been the prey of foreigners (sometimes as a place of passage, other times as a battlefield for the armies of Austria, Russia, or Turkey) ended. The Principalities – almost always occupied militarily – often became a centre of intrigue, the thread held by certain powers hostile to national interests and a common market where goods were stolen to enrich the Phanar or combat Western influence in the East. With the revenues of the Principalities and on their land, Russia – who dominated them – formed the Greek-Slavic legion in 1854,

[59] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 383; *Românii la 1859*, vol. I, p. 600.

encountered by French soldiers in the trenches of Sevastopol. Thanks to the victory of the Western powers in the war that ended in 1856 and France's generous support, Romanians have a political existence and an awareness of their rights and duties; Romanian people live their own lives ([...] *il est roumain et rien que Roumain*)[60]. The great and happy transformations undergone by Romania for six years have been brought about by the efforts of a new reign and the success of the powerful protection by the Emperor of France. The ruler felt supported by the arm of France and was accustomed to believing that he was among the modest points of support of a great policy on which the future of his country depended.

So he did, receiving and following advice precisely as the war in Italy was inspiring ardent aspirations in Eastern Europe; the same when relying on the support of the French Emperor, he ventured to impose political principles on the Danube, to establish social institutions which drove a wedge between Romania and its former protectors. However, for some time, he had felt stopped in the middle of his tasks/missions, to such an extent that he wondered or expressed his own opinion on the challenges he encountered. He asked whether he had been too fearless and overconfident in the powers of the country and the value of the instruments at his disposal or, more dramatically, whether he had lived up to the high role assigned to him by Providence. He could have complied with some fatherly warning from the Emperor of France but not with the unjust revelations made about his reign by the Parisian newspaper "Le Moniteur". He refused to believe that the sympathies he had won for Romania and his person had cooled in Paris; he could not allow himself to dwell for a moment on the combinations recommended by the Austrian press, the calculations which made the United Principalities the object of some territorial compensation. He could not believe, as any of his compatriots, that the existence of an independent Romanian nationality would be sacrificed so long as the voice of Emperor Napoleon prevailed in the world. Personally, if he felt that the emperor's thoughts were influenced by the spectacle of internal struggles, party intrigues, or the need to have Romania entrusted – without danger to its autonomy – to more skilful hands, then he, the ruler, was ready to step down from the throne, gladly return to his private life, leaving a throne which he neither coveted nor sought, which he owed only to the esteem of his fellow citizens, and which he accepted, from the very first day, only as a tiresome burden ([...] *que comme un pénible fardeau*)[61]. There was nothing else for him to desire if his retreat could strengthen Romania's independence and give actual guarantees to its prosperity; on a solemn occasion, he came with deep confidence to ask for the protection of His Imperial Majesty Napoleon III for the Romanian people.

The long princely letter addressed to the Emperor clarifies, more than any other documentary text, both the meaning of Cuza's great work and the reasons

[60] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 385; *Românii la 1859*, vol. I, p. 602.
[61] R. V. Bossy, *op. cit.*, p. 386; *Românii la 1859*, vol. I, p. 603.

hastening the end of his presence on the throne. The high role that Providence, from a spiritual perspective, attributed to him had as its source – according to the standards of public life – his double election on 5/17 January and 24 January/5 February 1859, to the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia, respectively. The national vote of those days had, in fact, constitutional force, updating – by circumventing at least specific clauses of the Paris Convention – the political programme of the ad-hoc Assemblies of 1857, consisting of the four points: autonomy and neutrality of the national state entity, the Union of the Principalities into a single state called Romania, the foreign prince, and the representative government. Therefore, having an *imperative mandate* to carry out those points or the great desires of the nation, Cuza saw himself as an enabler rather than a crowned prince. The accomplishments of his reign – tremendous, no doubt – have, in only a seemingly paradoxical way, undermined the reasons for his presence on the throne. He understood that it was hardly within the powers and prestige of a native ruler to keep the actual constitutionalisation of the role of head of state or the approaching prospect of the country's independence, hence the reinforcement of the need to have a foreign prince. The increase in internal tensions accompanied by evermore vehement contestations of Cuza's reign added to an increasingly acute feeling in Romanian public life that external circumstances endangered the Union and even the national state. Prince Cuza's invocation of the support or protection of Emperor Napoleon for Romania appeared – over and above its rhetorical and sometimes dramatic notes – as coming from an objective understanding of the worsening state of a small country with a disputed ruler and exposed to foreign dangers. Isolated in domestic political life, the ruler found himself increasingly vulnerable to external pressures, accusing that, in Bucharest, the consuls of the guaranteeing powers, though divided in their positions, were subjecting him to a kind of suffocating censorship. It was not difficult for the prince to understand the different ways in which the consuls followed their instructions. Thus, unlike the attitudes displayed by the consuls of France, Great Britain, and Italy – showing signs of their governments' acceptance of keeping the status quo – the advice and warnings of Eder and Offenberg suggested the hopes of Vienna and Petersburg for a return to the pre-1859 state of affairs[62]. Concerned about the fate of the Union, Cuza made a point of expressing to Tillos his disappointment that the Franco-English attitude did not involve the *consensus à résoudre la question du prince étranger*, which would make him consider *l'union de la France et de l'Angleterre comme pouvant devenir très féconde*[63]. Upon grasping very well that his maintenance on the throne *comme mandataire des Puissances*[64] threatened the

[62] *Les origines diplomatiques*, vol. VII, p. 16 et sqq., 144–145 (Talleyrand to D. de Lhuys, Petersburg, 1 September 1865 and Gramont to D de Lhuys, Vienna, 20 October 1865).

[63] M.A.E. – A. D. *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 27, f. 18; A.N.R., fond Microfilme *Franţa*, r. 12, cd. 20 (Tillos to D. Lhuys, 9 January 1866).

[64] *Les origines diplomatiques*, vol. VII, p. 145 (Gramont to D. de Lhyus, Vienna, 20 October 1865).

very fate of the Union, the prince did not hesitate – through his message of 5/17 December 1865, at the opening of the new parliamentary session – to make it well known that he would not impede any event that would allow consolidating the political edifice (for the consolidation of which he was happy to contribute, that in Alexandru Ioan I, Romanian prince, Romanians would always find Colonel Cuza, who had *received* the crown as an unquestionable and unwavering expression of the national will for the Union – but only as a sacred deposit[65]. These words – expressing not the weakness but the moral strength of a great personality – proved, at the same time, the belief of the ruler himself that Romanian action was facing a complex problem (*i.e.*, Union with an indigenous prince but dependent on the powers' consent, or Union with a foreign prince, imposed against the will of the high courts, as a fulfilment of an essential objective of the national political program), which the events of 1866 would resolve.

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[65] *Texte şi documente privind istoria modernă a românilor*, p. 341 (The message of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza during the opening of the Legislative Bodies, 5/17 December 1865); see also C. C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

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