

LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON THE POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF ROMANIA

Iulian PÎNIȘOARĂ

Lecturer Phd.

”Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu-Jiu

ABSTRACT:

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY, THE ROMANIAN SOCIETY BECAME A WITNESS OF A KIND OF SOCIAL "EXPERIMENT", AN EXPERIMENT THAT LED TO THE CREATION OF A TOTALLY NEW SOCIETY, OPPOSED TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL EVER BEFORE. AFTER A CENTURY WHEN THE PRINCIPALITIES CROSSED THE SO-CALLED "FANARIOT AGE", DEMONIZED BY A PART OF ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY, BUT WHICH HAD ITS SUCCESSES, MOLDOVA AND WALLACHIA WERE ON A NEW, EXTREMELY SINUOUS AND UNCERTAIN ROAD, BUT WHICH RESULTED, AFTER ALMOST A CENTURY, THE CREATION OF A MODERN, EUROPEAN ROMANIA, A TRUE POINT OF EQUILIBRIUM IN A REGION MARKED BY DEEP DIVISIONS AND CONFLICTS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

KEY WORDS: CAROL I, GOVERNMENT, DECENTRALIZATION, DRAFT, VASILE LASCĂR, PUBLIC ORDER, STATISTICS.

The sensitivity of the romanian society to the events that took place in the other part of the continent dates from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. The french revolution of 1789 will have profound insights into the political and social evolution of the pincipalities and later on Romania. The revolutionary ideas at the end of the eighteenth century produced a double effect in the principalities, being both the origin of the conservative party constitution and the emergence on the romanian political scene of the liberal party. The process of coagulation of the two political parties that would dominate the romanian political life until the beginning of the last century when, after the end of the first world war, the new realities of our society have led to the disappearance of the conservative party whose leaders have failed to adapt their political discourse to the new political, economic and social context.

Both liberals and conservatives have extracted the main ideological landmarks from the experiences of the french revolution. The Moldovan and Wallachian conservatives immediately agreed with Edmund Burke's views expressed in his work ”Reflections on the revolution in France”, a paperwork that became famous and entered very quickly and in the mandatory lecture list for those who would mark the history of the conservative party and the romanians for the entire period of the nineteenth century as well as the first years of the next one. The "keystone"

of conservative ideology was the idea that the starting point for a modern romanian society, linked to the values shared by western european civilization, was the respect for public order.

For conservatives, respect for public order or, as is often the case, great conservative politicians, underlined the importance of this aspect for the political life of the principalities, using the old latin adagio *salus patriae suprema lex esto*, was not just a fundamental principle in which they were conducting in political life, but one of the most important points of the political ideology that they wanted to preserve the main political and social milestones at the level of the early nineteenth century. The representatives of the land aristocracy in the two principalities wanted to maintain the political, economic and social monopoly on romanian society in order to postpone the occurrence of events similar to those of France at the end of the eighteenth century, which had the effect of separating the history of this country from the old and the new regime. For this reason we can express the idea that, for conservatives, the primacy of public order as a principle of government could be conceived as a potential "cover" for another aspect of conservative political thinking. In fact, respect for public order was the principle invoked by conservatives every time when opposing any legislative initiative coming from liberal opponents. Invoking the need for respect for public order, the conservatives have always tried to counteract their opponents' tense of liberalizing, to a certain extent, our political life by introducing reforms that were democratic. Much more inspired would be the invocation, in support of the oppositional attitude towards the democratic reforms proposed by the liberals, would have been the idea used by a part of the conservative politicians in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the society called Junimea, and who declared themselves against all the values that liberals wanted from the west and implemented in romanian society, through the articulation of what became known in romanian historiography as the theory of forms without substance. According to this theory, junimists, and published in the journal "Convorbiri Literare", edited by this group of intellectuals, in a number from 1868, in an article titled "In contrast to today's direction of romanian culture", the reform attempts proposed by liberals were to be doomed to failure. The junimists considered that the liberal rush of introducing modern institutions in the romanian society, specific to the more advanced societies in the western continent, could not have the same benefits that the respective institutions produced in the western world, because of the artificial character these institutions acquired when they were adapted to the realities of romanian society.

With all the exaggerations that the junimists have criticized waters that have formulated it in the way of liberals to liberalize the romanian society, the junimists were right to a great extent. This opinion is also justified by the opinion of the ruler, at that time Carol I, who, as well as the junimists, considered that the random adoption of a number of institutions specific to the more evolved societies of western Europe, without adapting these institutions to the specificities of romanian realities could not have been a great success. On the contrary, bigger were the shortcomings that such a habit could have produced to Romanian society. These views, Carol I made known to them through an apocryphal letter that was later published in the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*. The ruler lamented "the unfortunate country, who has always been kneeling under the harshest yoke, has suddenly and without intercession passed from a despotic regime to the most liberal Constitution, as no nation in Europe has. After my experience, I think this is an

even greater misfortune, as the romanians can not boast of the civic virtues that are required for a form of quasi-public state. "¹

Only a few times, Carol I managed to capture the main reasons why the romanian people were inadequate to adapt to the "most liberal constitution in Europe". And Carol I's opinion is not valid only for the period when he was ruler and then king of Romania but, unfortunately, for the contemporary period.

As for the "citizenship virtues" that lacked the Romanian, the thing is quite easy to explain. Such virtues could not even be acquired in a "despotic regime" like that which the Romanian principalities had crossed since their appearance on the political map of Europe. Just removing absolutism was one of the reasons why part of the youth of the two principals who enjoyed a quasi-independent status had begun to embrace the ideas of "early" "liberalism, as Emanuel Turczynski calls that bundle of ideas that, after awakening much of the French society, were proffered with us in order to introduce as much of the Romanian society into politics."²

Of the two political orientations, the liberals were more active, more visible, and because of the way they had the habit of propagating their political ideas, and because of inferiority in terms of political and economic rights to the category of aristocracy.

Even at the beginning of the 19th century, moldavian Vasile Mălinescu drew the attention, for the first time, to the necessity of solving the peasant issue, otherwise he expected that the outbreak of revolts might be very possible. However, there could have been other causes that could lead to the outbreak of peasant movements, such as the lack of a legislative framework guaranteeing peasants respect for their rights.³ As a solution, Mălinescu proposed, in a letter to the Metropolitan of Moldova, Veniamin Costache, the realization of a "passionless" research of the situation of the peasantry and its relations with the boyars, such an investigation being "of the interest of all the people".⁴ Writing, on the same occasion, about the obedience of the "people's voice" and the discovery of a legal way "to discover the wills and needs of the human state", Mălinescu actually proposed the adoption of a representative system, taking into account the interests of the entire society. It is also he who proposed, for the first time, the adoption of legislative measures to allow for the appropriation of the peasantry.⁵ Using the example of the Bucovina peasantry, Mălinescu asked the moldovan boyars to follow this model in relations with peasants from their own estates.⁶ If political claims were resumed by others, the idea of ownership of peasants was rarely discussed until the ad-hoc assemblies were set up. It should be noted that Vasile Mălinescu was part of the great boyar of Moldova.

Another defender of the peasantry was Eufrosin Poteca. He reproached the leaders of the 1848 revolution that they were concerned only with political demands such as the dismissal of

¹ Titu Maiorescu, *Istoria contemporană a României (1866-1900)*, Titu Maiorescu University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 22.

² Emanuel Turczynski, *De la iluminism la liberalismul timpuriu*, The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000.

³ Ibidem, p. 90-91.

⁴ Apostol Stan, *Liberalismul politic în România. De la origini până la 1918*, Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 21-22.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 22

⁶ N. N. Hârjeu, *Istoria Partidului Național Liberal. De la origine până în zilele noastre*, vol. I. 1915, p. 56.

prince Michael Sturza without proposing any measures to improve the peasantry situation. The same reproaches were directed against the revolutionaries in Muntenia.¹

Particular importance was given to Poteca and to the evolution of the romanian school, claiming the necessity of "the founding of the schools and the teaching of the teachers, and the translation into romanian of the classical and romanian writers".²

Poteca considered that the most important issues that should be pursued by political leaders would be religion (not by chance, taking into account Poteca's theological formation), justice (or righteousness), trade, and then agriculture. As far as public functions are concerned, Poteca believes that the only criteria that should have been taken into account in such situations were those relating only to the professional training of candidates. Last but not least, Poteca fought for "the euphoria of contributions to the maintenance of state tasks".³ All these reforms would have the effect of "re-awakening" national consciousness.

In a speech on July 20, 1827, a speech held in front of a chosen audience, including the ruler, the Metropolitan and other senior dignitaries, Poteca highlighted the importance of respecting public freedoms, particularly referring to the freedom of the press, censoring censorship and appreciating that the printing houses had the purpose of bringing "the place where darkness reigned where the reign of slavery took place."⁴

A study colleague with Eufrosin Poteca, Simion Marcovici also had concerns about reforming Romanian society. The political establishment designed by Marcovici provided for the organization of the state as a hereditary constitutional monarchy. Freedom of printing was one of the fundamental freedoms in the political construction imagined by Marcovici. Unlike Poteca, however, he considered that agriculture, rather than trade, was a priority for economic development.⁵

Ion Campineanu, another prominent leader of the romanian political elite in the first half of the nineteenth century, in a constitutional draft in 1838, considered the sovereignty and freedom of the "place" as endangered, and the National Assembly was regarded as a formal institution because its attributions were always strained by the various firms issued by the Porte.⁶ The form of government proposed by Ion Câmpeanu was the hereditary constitutional monarchy.⁷ The constitutional draft also included, among other things, the inviolability of the head of state, the freedom of the person, the freedom of the press, the right of the head of state to grace or grant decorations, the establishment of a national guard and a "power of water".⁸

Extremely preoccupied with the political and social problems of the principals at the beginning of the nineteenth century was Ionică Tăutu, one of the most prolific political writers of

¹ Ion Vîrtosu, Pagini din autobiografia lui Eufrosin Poteca, Printing House of the Church Books, Bucharest, 1937, p. 8.

² G. Dem. Teodorescu, Vieța și operele lui Eufrosin Poteca (cu câte-va dintre scrierile'i inedite), Printing House of Romanian Academeia, Bucharest, 1883, p. 37.

³ Ibidem, 37-38.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 41.

⁵ ⁵ Ionică Tautu, Scrieri social-politice. Cuvânt înainte, studiu introductiv, note, Emil Vîrtosu, Scientific Publishing House, Bucharest, 1974, p. 75

⁶ ⁶ Cornelia Bodea, Anul 1848 la români. O istorie în date și mărturii, vol. I, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1982, p. 119.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem, pp. 124-125.

the time, whose name is linked to one of the first constitution projects in the history of the romanians, under the name "The Constitution of the carbonars". Tăutu, a representative figure of the small and medium-sized boyarship, a descendant of an old boyar family from Moldova, a follower of the constitutional monarchy, formed his political opinions following the writing of some writers such as Rousseau, Voltaire, Plato, Aristotle, Locke, or encyclopaedists d'Alembert or Diderot.

In a text entitled "Shouting to the people of Moldavia fell among the villagers and the Metropolitan," (the Metropolitan being the same Veniamin Costache), Ionică Tăutu criticized the lack of continuity between the new legislation (especially the Callimachi Code) and the habit of the earth (consuetudinar law), but also the fact that it was written in Greek, thus absolutely inaccessible to the majority of moldovans and, as a consequence, inequality before the law: "Mr. Calimah's code, good, fair, comprehensive, but endowed with two mistakes. first, not taking into account old habits; and the two, because it is in an unknown language, most of the people ".¹ Also in support of affirmation of the principle of equality before the law came the claims of another text written by Ionică Tăutu, in which he stated that "the laws and customs are settling in order to lack the will of the strong and his whims."²

He also emphasized the importance of education, claiming that "teaching is the most solid wealth ... by teaching only, it is destined for man to be happy for the earth!"³, or elsewhere, "we need to make and decorate the language, to increase scholarship, to craft science ..." in a word, we need the drawing and adornment of the country and the people."⁴

The tendency to emancipate the principals is particularly noticeable if we look at the very large number of political memories, constitutional drafts and reform programs written especially during the period 1769-1848. Among the best-known such programs and projects we mention *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* (1792), Plan or Form of an Aristo-democratic Republic in Moldova, drawn up by logographer Dimitrie I. Sturdza (1802) or the Constitution of "Carbonars" of September 13, 1822.⁵

Undoubtedly, the documents attributed to Dimitrie I. Sturdza and Ionică Tăutu are among the most important political programs of the early nineteenth century, even if they are not very original. On the one hand, the program, most probably written by Dimitrie I. Sturdza, is unique, even though it was written by one of the great boyars belonging to one of the most illustrious families in Moldova, an "aristodemocratic" republic, of a republican regime closer to the political regimes in Italy than the rebellions of what a political regime implied in accordance with the new values affirmed during the franchise revolution of 1789. According to this project, all the high positions in the state were to be occupied exclusively by representatives of the aristocracy, respectively representatives of the first and second ranks, while the small boyars would be excluded from the exercise of high dignities in the state.

¹ Ionică Tăutu, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

² Ibidem, p. 33.

³ Ibidem, p. 254.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 264.

⁵ Some of these documents were published by Vlad Georgescu in the *Memoires et Projets de reformes dans les Principautés Roumaines 1831-1848*, and a very rich inventory of constitutional texts and reform projects and programs written by smaller boyars or larger ones from the Principalities, together with the texts of these projects, is included in the work of Cristian Ionescu, *Constitutional Development of Romania. Documents and Documents 1741-1991*, 3rd Edition, C. H. Beck Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016.

On the other hand, the draft constitution drafted by Ionica Tăutu, a representative of the little boyars, was embedded in everything that was most present in the arsenal of political ideas of times. The constitution of the "carbonars" was rather a political program than a constitution that would organize the powers of the state. Moreover, in its constitutional project, Ionica Tăutu grants a very large space to "legalize" the fundamental rights and freedoms of the future citizens of a governed Moldavia based on this text. The fundamental institutions of the state were regulated very briefly, with the exception of the judiciary, which received increased attention, translated into a larger number of articles regulating the organization and functioning of the state. Like Dimitrie Sturdza's project, Tăutu's did not apply, although the ruler Ionita Sandu Sturdza had promised to adopt this constitutional draft and to govern according to his prescriptions.

Most times, conservatives and liberals will be in a hurried position on subjects of greatest importance to the romanians. The peasant issue, the rights and freedoms to be recognized by law, or the adoption of universal suffrage are just a few of the political themes that have given rise to some of the most interesting oratoric duels in Romania's parliamentary history. An example of this is the famous oratorical dispute between Barbu Catargiu conservative representative, defender of the great property and the first president of the Council of Ministers of the two principalities, and Mihail Kogalniceanu, defender of the idea of creating a larger category of free, small peasants landowners.

There have also been situations in which conservatives and liberals shared the same point of view. Among such situations we mention the moment of Moldavia's union with Valahia and the election of AI Cuza as the ruler, bringing Carol I to the throne, but also the decision to suppress the peasant uprisings of 1907 when the leaders of the two parties agreed that the only solution at that time, was the use of the army.

One of the most important political disputes between liberals and conservatives was the dispute over the constitutional text that was adopted in the summer of 1866. On the one hand, the conservatives were the followers of a bicameral parliament, by establishing a Senate (or a weighing chamber as it was then called), although the Senate institution had been introduced to us by Cuza, whose detention was determined by liberals and conservatives associated in what the romanian historiography called the "monstrous coalition".¹ The main reason the conservatives have advocated for a bicameral parliament was that the conservatives were to maintain a monopoly over romanian political life through this forum. The conservatives also imposed their views on the vote on a very high census, a provision that kept a large part of the Romanians out of political life.

Another episode of the struggle between the two romanian political parties of the nineteenth century was registered during the liberal government of 1871-1876, around the legislation of the local public administration, an area in which both conservatives and liberals, when they held political power, relied on centralizing measures in local government, and in opposition militated for decentralization. Thus, in 1872 a draft law for the modification of the law of the county councils was adopted by which they were to consist of 12 members, each college (according to the valid criteria for establishing the electoral colleges for the Chamber of Deputies), being represented by three members.²

¹ *Istoria Parlamentului și a vieții parlamentare din România până la 1918*, Publishing House of the Academy of Socialist Republic of Romania, Bucharest, 1983, p. 153.

² *Ibidem*, p. 216.

In 1874 the law of the municipal councils came to be amended. The mayor was to be appointed by the central or county authorities, and in the case of the local councils they were to be elected by a single electoral college for the rural communes and by three electoral colleges for the urban communes.¹

During the protracted regular session of the spring of 1904, the debate on the draft law on the modification of the rural communes law was started in the Chamber of Deputies, a draft made to liberal Vasile Lascăr. In the explanatory memorandum read in the April 5, 1904 meeting, "our rural communes, they have no administration. The officers who administer them are either incapable or unworthy if they are not one and the other."²

The local government faces many problems. The local government faces many problems. Among them, the authors of the new rural bill enumerated: the lack of medical personnel (infant mortality in Romania was among the highest rates in Europe, due to the numerous diseases that made the rabies among children), the lack of agents, "gendarmes who, besides securing the fortune and the person of the villager, as well as maintaining the public order, would force the villagers to respect the laws, regulations and administrative ordinances, especially those prescribing the hygienic measures, the first and most important concern of the authorities".³

In support of his legislative proposal, Vasile Lascăr also presented an extremely eloquent statistic for the state of the Romanian public administration. Those statistics, which were presented to the Chamber of Deputies by the Minister of the Interior, showed that on 1 November 1903 there were 2884 mayors in Romania. Of these, 97 followed only the first grade of the primary cycle, 327 had 2 classes, 399-3 classes, and 1425 graduated the entire primary cycle. In total, Romania had 2248 mayors who had attended part or all of the primary school. As for the secondary cycle, of the 424 mayors enrolled at this level of study, only 35 completed this level. There were, therefore, 212 illiterate mayors. This was not considered to be very serious: "pushed by the current of the development that is in us," they have given the bruise, that if they can not learn to read in old age, they will even learn to to sign, so that they can participate in the papers what is being done in his name, and can not be changed later. They are in number 162. But there are only 150 people who do not know how to sign and sign or with a stamp or finger. "How could" personally participate "in managing the problems of the local community a mayor who could not directly and effectively know the content of an act, is hard to say. But it is obvious that they were the most vulnerable to pressure from governments, big landlords or lessees.

In his speech, Interior Minister Vasile Lascar showed that the bill in the Chamber's debate was demanded by the duty of the political class to the peasantry, being "a matter of justice for the same petition for peasants as for the townspeople."⁴ This initiative was not the result of a party strategy, but the result of the thorough research of the living conditions in the Romanian communes. Collaboration between the government and local authorities has materialized in an investigation lasting about a year, when the government received the "opinion" of all local government structures (prefects, county delegates, county councils, doctors, veterinarians, priests). In this data collection campaign, the teachers who had been commissioned to conduct monographs for each rural community were also included.

¹ Ibidem, p. 217.

² Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților, sesiunea ordinară prelungită 1903-1904, ședința din 5 aprilie 1904, pag. 891.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ D.A.D., ședința din 8 aprilie 1904, pag. 997.

Vasile Lascar had been extremely careful in preparing the reform of the public administration, which was highlighted by the numerous statistics the minister had brought to the senators and deputies. Such statistics referred to the intellectual training of mayor's allowances. On this, things were much worse than the mayors. Thus, out of a total of 2930 primary mayors, 1172 - almost half, did not even have a primary class.

With all the arguments used by Vasile Lascăr to motivate the necessity of an administrative reform, he failed to sensitize even his party colleagues, so that after the debates in the two chambers of Parliament, the adopted law had very few common elements with the project submitted by Lascar.

This time, the initiative of the Liberal leader was even opposed by some party colleagues who tried to force him to abandon some provisions that, although beneficial to real administrative reform, could remove the civil servant from the sphere of influence politics.