

# SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE ROMANIAN SOCIETY OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY, REFLECTED IN THE PERIODICALS OF THE TIME

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**ABSTRACT.** In the first half of the nineteenth century the press was a real catalyst between different social segments, more or less trained, and a constant vector in the (trans) formation and adaptation of Romanian mentality to the realities of European culture.

**KEY WORDS:** Romanian principalities, cultural development, European culture.

With the end of the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 and the implementation of the provisions peace of Adrianople, the Romanian Principalities signs of modernization are becoming increasingly visible. The abolition of the Ottoman monopoly on trade (1829) allowed a connection of the Danube countries to Western values, reflected, on the one hand, by adapting the political system to a level which was appropriate with the requirements of trading partners, and on the other, through a series of innovations encountered in the institutional and cultural field. The presence of young noblemen in European capitals to complete their studies, contacts with innovative ideologies of the time campaigning for national and social liberation, is symptomatic phenomena that have attracted the attention of future elites, who returning in the country, tried to induce the public opinion a favorable conduct for a modernizing society.

Keeping the shortcomings of the old system of Ottoman rule, trends of Europeanization South-east European societies, national liberation movements triggered in territories under Ottoman rule, is part of the topics that held the attention of the press. Developing printing and education, involvement progressive intelligentsia, from among which stood Ion Heliade-Rădulescu, Eufrosin Poteca, Dinicu Golescu, Florian Aaron, Gheorghe Asachi, Gheorghe Lazăr etc., paved the matchless cultural development, to whose spread press contributed, although there was the beginning.

If during the first two decades of the nineteenth century *Biblioteca românească sau adunări de multe lucruri folositoare întocmită în 12 părți* appeared in Buda and *Fama Lipschii pentru Dația* in Leipzig, during 1829-1847, 43 periodicals circulated, including 16 in Moldova,

21 in Wallachia and 6 in Transylvania. From among these, 10 were general in nature, 17 were cultural periodicals, two-religious, four for science etc., which demonstrates the stable nature of this type of press.

Romanian media beginnings are related to the occurrence in 1829, in Wallachia, *Curierul românesc*, edited by Ion Heliade Radulescu and *Albinei românești* in Moldova, whose initiator, Gheorghe Asachi, informed the readers that his publication will include political and interesting news from all the countries of the world and they will house a full chronic of the events among whom they live. Instead, *Curierul românesc* wanted to be a *harbinger of common* things to present the reader news from Petersburg, on the Russo-Turkish war and administrative information. One can see Ion Heliade Radulescu and C. Moroiu's concern to give the newspaper a general guidance, in addition to *outside* matters (external politics), the literature, language, education, occupying an important place in the economy quite publication.

Sharing the same foreign sources, both newspapers took over and published information without any commentary, sometimes without even checking their authenticity, however, as remarked Mihail Kogălniceanu, for those days it represented *a revolution to the Romanians*. Due to the low level of literacy, both newspapers will move to a new editorial policy of bilingualism which was the new formula that will stimulate readers' interest for the *sensational* and contribute to shaping the public opinion. Starting from a low circulation, *Curierul românesc* came to have during the period 1836-1843, a total of 300 subscribers annually, and in 1844 to reach the figure of 1300 constant readers. Particularly prevalent in Moldova, *Albina românească* has not enjoyed real success, however, Asachi expressed his joy at the news that the publication of Heliade Radulescu adopted Latin script and that it *opposed* the monopoly of *Cyrillic letters*.

Periodicals published between 1829-1848 marked a beginning, rather shy, of expanding the media in the Romanian Principalities, whose main objective, the cultivation of language, was subsumed to the ideal of national unity. Using an appropriate journalistic language to introduce terms borrowed from German or Russian instead of coming from Turkish and especially the distinction between *policy language* and *spirit and heart language* were the modernizing trends which manifested in a transitional period when the media was trying to shape public opinion and form a new mentality.

Transylvania Romanian press developed on two initiatives, one belonging to George Barițiu, who in Brasov in 1838, establishes *Gazeta de Transilvania* with its supplement *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, the other from Blaj where, in 1848 Timotei Cipariu alongside Josif Many and Aron Pumnul publishes the first issue of *Organului luminării*. *Gazeta de Transilvania*, the first crossromanian organ how Nicole Iorga would characterize it, was mainly a political periodical, which dealt with national interests of Romanians from Transylvania, and presented striking similarities in terms of information sources, periodicity, and even the format with a number of newspapers edited in the principalities. *Organului luminării* was a weekly religious, political and literature publication, written in Latin script and designed a quite selective public, which is why Timotei Cipariu publishes a separate supplement, *Învățătorul poporului*, addressed primarily to peasant environment.

Although initially focused only informing the reader, the materials presented in the pages of *Gazeta de Transilvania* were debating national issues in a quite moderate tone, given the existing political situation at the time, characterized by denationalization and breach of Romanians fundamental rights in this province. Since 1840, there has been a change of attitude

regarding the manner of selection and presentation of information, many of which are discussed in detail, which shows, on the one hand, the growing interest of readers for events across the Carpathians, but also that Barițiu was concerned to cultivate public opinion in terms of the acceptance of his vision.

*Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* had a great role in the development of progressive Romanian culture, in its pages being debated issues such as cultural and political emancipation of Romanians, their economic *raise*, the need for better organization of education, the struggle for unity and preserving the language and for the prosperity of original literature etc.

Cultural periodicals will specialize in time, the objectives followed being of growing and modernizing literature vocabulary. So, *Curier de ambe sexe*, *Alăuta românească* or *Dacia literară*, published in 1840 by Mihail Kogălniceanu, advocating for a *national literature* and imposing specific rules that would create a value system for the Romanian public. *Arhiva romaneasca* or *Magazinul istorii pentru Dacia* edited by A.T.Laurian and N. Bălcescu and highlighted the history and the place it had in the national consciousness, showing that the publication was addressed to the registers provinces of Romanians in Dacia. Citing the cultural unity of the nation, the two editors of the publication *prayed all Romanian patriots in different parts of Dacia, which possessed historical documents about Dacia* to provide for their exploitation in the various parts of the magazine.

Currents of thought of the time expressed confidence in traditional values and promoted a sense of national unity via major political figures. They, many scholars and opinion makers, were actively involved in building the modern Romania, creating a deep philosophical nationalist thinking reflected in the press. The great merit of Kogălniceanu and those grouped around the *Dacia Literară* was to have cultivated a truly authentic literature, mobilizing, addressed all Romanians across the ancient Dacia. The magazine program, established in **Introducție**, indicate that it will avoid as much as possible political and will deal only with written literature of diaspora, which must have a *common language and literature for all*. **Introducția** laid the foundation of national specific theory of literature and reveals the necessity of selection criteria by value. The creation and promotion of original literature was possible only by pointing to a past poets and prose writers to history, to popular creation, for the natural landscape.

Romanian periodicals were located at *an elevated level* under the influence of foreign media, European cultural patterns reflected through them generated a series of stereotypes of Romanian identity discourse. A. Marino in his study entitled *Luminile romanesti si descoperirea Europei* highlighted the contribution of the domestic environment at the dedication of the European complex, but also the contribution of Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania to disseminate the ideas advocated for asserting national rights. This complex of European consecration has become a determining factor in shaping cultural, social and political public opinion, periodicals by titles they took, *Dacia, Romania*, evoked the idea of solidarity and unity.

The fact that a number of periodicals were printed bilingually, using German, Italian and, in particular, French- *Spicuiorul Moldo-Roman. Le Glaneur Moldo-Valaque*, edited by Gh. Asachi in 1841 in Iasi- demonstrates the influence exerted by the European press on the manner of disclosure, knowing that at the time constraints of censorship determined the selection of news. *Albina Romaneasca* Printing and publishing was done after the practice from other countries policies and The Guiding Assembly had to watch over news that were to be inserted, as there is some misinterpretation straining *against the law and morale*. Special measures were

planned and publications that *could bring public disturbance*, recommending restricting the *targeting words* and all expressions and even their abolishment, such as the *Dacia Literara departed from duties that restrict the conditions of publication of this sheet*.

In the run up to the 1848 revolution there was an explosion in publishing, most periodicals enrolling other coordinates than literary presentation of internal and external information; They were prevalent political news. Economic issues, cultural issues, even the social gave way to politics, which *occupied more than half of the columns*, as remarked Kogălniceanu; removing censorship allowed freedom of expression and affirmation of the progressive movement of ideas which formed part of European revolutionary atmosphere.

*Gazeta de Transilvania, Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură, as Pruncul român, Poporul suveran, Reforma or România* have adopted similar positions during advocating the construction of modern national identity. A series of clichés were assimilated and transformed into revolutionary ideology, in order to legitimize the new regime on behalf of the people reclaim *power*. The 1848 Speech targeted strengthening solidarity around the program that revolutionary elite, through propaganda, was trying to expand on the whole society. Here's how a publication, such as *Poporul suveran*, activated national consciousness, calling quite radiant future: *Romanians in the Principality of Wallachia, after several centuries of bitterness and captive, Romanians whose name was driven from the names of other nations, Romanians which seemed that do not yet have their arms than to be burnt only in captivity chains and not merely have the head than to bow to the tyrannical oppressors, on June 11 rose to the voice of freedom*.

Illustrious lineage, glorious past, *God's chosen people*, were strong resonance clichés and arguments working effectively in shaping public opinion. Self-image, a favorite theme of revolutionaries, has created a sense of trust for the participants that the *children of Rome were living on the territory of Dacia*<sup>8</sup> and, in the context of the forthcoming foreign intervention, called the great figures of old princes could maintain heroism and devotion to the homeland. Spreading the ideas of the revolution, popularizing their backgrounds as diverse movement was due to amplification of news, media, school, church and propaganda commissars are the main envoys.

Rural revolutionary message received religious support to replace the untranslatability of linguistic concepts such as justice, progress, freedom, reason had accredited the idea of equality before God. In this case, the priest, the teacher, some literate peasants, were reading, in front of an audience sensitive to changes that disrupts traditional balance, *sheets* that warned against social changes that were to occur.

Ideology of the forty-eighter generation has realized the need to modernize the large groups of society, on overcoming the backwardness in which they were. Strength ideas expressed during the course of the Revolution has shaped public opinion in the sense of involvement in the promotion of progress and national interest.

In the post-forty-eighter, when principalities knew Russo-Turkish occupation and Transylvania was part of the repressive actions of the counterrevolutionary forces, the press was again subjected to a regime of censorship. Many publications were closed, their number was extremely low, which is why revolutionaries who had taken exile, grouped around the magazine have decided to support the fight for the creation of the modern Romanian state. The work undertaken by emigration was extremely energetic, calls to European public opinion, affirming the political agenda in a number of publications *Romania viitoare* (1850, Paris), *Junimea*

*Română* (1851), *Republica Română* (Paris, 1851 Bruxelles, 1853) or membership of the European Democratic Central Committee, based in London, aimed at triggering a new European revolution, are only some of the objectives that they had proposed in *shaping* the public image.

What was the impact of periodic premiums and innovative ideas which they spread is difficult to decipher, but we state with certainty that in the first half of the nineteenth century the press was a real catalyst between different social segments, more or less trained, and a constant vector in the (trans) formation and adaptation of Romanian mentality to the realities of European culture.

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