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## EMERGENCE OF „NATION” IN THE VOCABULARY OF THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

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**Abstract:**

*IN THE WAKE OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, FEW WOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THE FACT THAT NATIONALISM WOULD COME BACK SUCCESSFULLY IN THE ARSENAL OF THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SPEECH. THE CHANGES, WHICH HAVE OCCURRED WITHIN THE ETHNICAL STRUCTURE OF THE FRENCH SOCIETY, HAVE MADE SHORTLY THE NATIONAL FRONT LED BY JEAN-MARIE LE PEN, MOSTLY APPRECIATED BY THE FRENCH ELECTORATE, ON THE BASES OF STRONG ACCENTS NATIONALIST AND ANTI-SEMITE. THUS, IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 2002, LE PEN SUCCEEDED IN REACHING IN THE RUNOFF ELECTION, WHERE HE OBTAINED ONLY 18% OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES. HIS POLITICAL ADVERSARY JACQUES CHIRAC HAS ACHIEVED A REAL SUCCESS, BECAUSE NOT OF A REMARKABLE CAMPAIGN, BUT RATHER BECAUSE OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE REACTION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR COUNTRY LED BY AN EXTREME-RIGHT PARTY. THE SAME HAPPENED WITH THE MOST RECENT ELECTIONS IN FRANCE, WHEN THE DAUGHTER OF LE PEN, MARINE, HAS LOST THE ELECTIONS IN THE FACE OF THE CURRENT PRESIDENT, EMMANUEL MACRON. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE FRENCH ARE NOT WILLING TO TOLERATE SUCH EXTREME ACCENTS NOR NATIONALIST, THE SITUATION IN FRANCE IS COMPLICATED ENOUGH FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW. THE NUMBER OF THE FRENCH CITIZENS BORN FROM FRENCH CITIZENS IS SMALLER AND SMALLER. IN OTHER WORDS, THE FRENCH ARE AT RISK OF BECOMING A MINORITY IN THEIR COUNTRY. OTHERS DRAMATIZE THE PROCESS IN SAYING THAT FRANCE WILL SOON BECOME A MUSLIM COUNTRY. THE REASON IS THAT IN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS, IMMIGRANTS, ESPECIALLY FROM THE MAGREBIAN REGION (ALGERIA, TUNIS, MOROCCO), HAVE ASSAULTED FRANCE EFFECTIVELY, AS WELL AS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, REGIONS WHERE FRANCE POSSESSED MANY COLONIES. THE IMMIGRATIONS “INFLATION” MARKING PROFOUNDLY THE EUROPE OF NOWADAYS MADE THE NATIONALIST SPEECH AT LEAST PARTIALLY RE-EVALUATED, NOT ONLY IN FRANCE, BUT ALSO IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.*

**Keywords:**

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## INTRODUCTION

Romania was in a similar position to that of France, when, in the runoff election for presidential position in this country have qualified Emmanuel Macron and Marie Le Pen. In our country, in 2000, the Romanians went to the polls to elect their president Ion Iliescu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Even if the immigrants' exodus from Africa and Asia do not affect Romania, the Romanian nationalism needs continuous re-interpretations.

It is important to note that the emergence of nationalism and the national idea in the Romanian countries is as old as the idea of being closer to Europe or since the first European integration, whether the reader allows such an expression. The things happening in Romania in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brings forward the effervescence in the Principalities at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Close to the date of date of Tudor Vladimirescu's Revolution, Moldavia and Valahia were fighting to get out of the age-old influence of the Ottoman Empire. Nowadays Romania comes after a long period in which the Soviet influence was extremely pungent in everything that meant the transformation of the Romanian society for more that forty years. In the first years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanian society in both Principalities considered beneficial their approach to France for their future. The same happened after 1989, when the Romanian political leaders attempted an approach to the United States of America and France, too. Yet, above all stood the common conscience of the Romanian political class of the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the contemporary one that the Romanians future must be in close connection to the European values.

Within the Romanian historiography, there are two works, describing very well and with lot of talent, the way in which the French culture influenced the Romanian society, starting with early 19<sup>th</sup> century. We are talking about Pompiliu Eliade's doctoral thesis, *De l'influence française sur l'esprit public en Roumanie*, the work not translated into Romanian until 1982 under the title *The French Influence upon the Public Spirit in Romania*. The other fundamental work for this topic is Neagu Djuvara's one called *Between East and West. The Romanian Countries at the Beginning of the Modern Époque (1800-1848)*, published in my editions by Humanitas.

Interestingly, after the restoration of the earthbound rules, Moldavia and Valahia enter an era marked by huge transformations, which one can summarize through the way the perception of the western world changed towards the Romanian countries, at least partly. Thus, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of those who entered the Romanian space, either as mere travellers or as representatives of the western powers in Moldavia and Valahia, began to give up making use of the syntagms "East gate" when referring to the Romanian space, the syntagms replaced with yet another, "Belgium of the East". This change of perception justifies through the changes occurring in the Principalities in a period, whose borders are 1829 and 1881.

Alecú Russo captured this change occurring in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Principalities. Therefore, he appreciated that in a period of only sixteen years (1835-1851), more changes occurred in Moldavia than in the rest of its history. Alecu Russo put it "Our forefathers opened their eyes upon the ancestors' cradle; the people of 1835, inaugurating the current generation emerged in the clamour of the new ideas. Our parents' eyes and thought went to east, ours toward the west, like the difference between night and day. [...] Clothes, customs, land suffered changes as well as the names. [...] The first weapon and the most terrible was changing the old clothes, which conquered the citadel of the past, [...] nowadays civilization is the logical deed of leaving the old clothes, the new idea had come over the country at the same time with the pants even more terrible than the Mongol hordes; [...] Just like the spring that breaks the ice and fills the rivulets and starts the flooding, as such was changing the clothes the sign of starting the spirit of waking. The idea and progress came out of the tuxedo



and from the pocket of the waistcoat: the swiftness of the revolution was great, furious breaking down to the left and to the right the good and evil alike, tossing all the customs and all the people's old beliefs [...] changing the clothes quickly changed the social conditions of our world as well as the family relations. The toddlers' emancipation, fear and slaps of the pedagogue derive from the pants" (Russo, 1910, pp. 32, 37-38).

The beginning of the relations between France and the Romanian space may have a connection with organizing a plan of sending a mission of the Valahia boyars. The mission aimed to draw attention of the French emperor, Napoleon on the fate of the Romanian countries and the importance they could have within the plans regarding foreign affairs of France in the region. The boyars found Nicolae Dudescu as their messenger. He was one of the most educated and the richest boyars in the Principalities at those times and a good speaker of French. The rumours went that after installing into a palace in the Saint Honore neighbourhood, he spent a great part of his huge fortune to organize parties in the honour of some people close to that who, by then was only Prime Consul (Djuvara, 2009, p. 117). The rumours also went that one of the extravagancies, which Nicole Dudescu could afford, was to buy huge quantities of sugar and had it spread in the street, and then he walked by the sleigh as if to give the image of the Bucharest in winter. One thing is certain, the mission of the patriot boyar remained without practical consequences. Nicolae Dudescu could not even meet Napoleon, whereas the principalities remained a marginal stake for the external policy of France, representing a mere exchange coin in case of negotiations occurred between Napoleon, Habsburg Empire and the Czarist Russia.

Interestingly, at least in what the Romanians are concerned, Joseph de Maistre's observation, according to whom the levers utilized by France to set the world into motion, namely, language and the proselyte spirit, has its validity (de Maistre, 2010, p. 21). It is certain that only a small part of the Romanian society adopted "the fashion" of speaking French. Similarly, only a small part of the Romanian political elite adopted the political ideas developed in France at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The reason was that those considering the ideas conveyed by the French Revolution did not correspond with the political, economic and social spirit in the Principalities, were not few. In fact, it was about those boyars, which blamed the new revolutionary spirit as an expression of "the French disobedience spirit". Modernization of the Romanian society is one of the mostly approached topics in our historiography. The historian considered it as a natural consequence of the export political ideas proposed by the French Revolution in 1789. Nonetheless, the direct influences of the French revolution are not many (Elitele puterii ..., 2018, pp. 291-292). Moreover, the ideas comprised by these programmes and memories are more declarations of rights and liberties and less rules regarding the functioning of the public institutions.

One of the fundamental thesis of French Revolution is that of replacing the old sovereign with a new one, the nation. This is the reason for which the Romanian political elite was reticent enough regarding the "French disobedience".

Despite the influence exercised by the French civilization upon the society in the principalities, the Romanians followed the pattern imposed in Europe by Germany, as it happened with other states in Eastern Europe (Boia, 2012, p. 77). Yet, the fact has no connection with the cultural affinities between France and the Romanian space, but rather with some different evolutions of the Romanian space in particular and the Southeastern one in general. The German space was extremely crumbled to pieces from the political point of view until the end of the Franco-Prussian war, whereas the unification of the Romanian territories even more difficult and ephemeral. It is important to note that the Romanian territories had functioned under a unique political authority for an extremely short period. Miron Costin regarded the 1600 union as the result of a conquering activity of Mihai Viteazul (Boia, 2012, p. 36). Another attempt of the kind was that of Stefan cel Mare. The historians do not



interpret it either from a national perspective, but rather a similar conquering one, of territorial expansion. Ștefan cel Mare, as a leader of the Orthodox part of Europe in the fight against the Ottoman Empire, had conceived a plan, which in its first stage comprised the detachment of Valahia from the influential sphere of the Ottoman Gate and appointing on the throne of this principality a ruler subject of the Moldavian ruler (De potestate ..., 2006, p. 82). Across the mountains, in Transylvania, Ștefan cel Mare already possessed two strategical locations: Ciceu and Cetatea de Baltă (De potestate ..., 2006, p. 82). Notwithstanding, in time these projects disappeared from the rulers' preoccupations, the rulers that followed beginning with the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first reformation tendencies of the Romanian society and turning it into a western point dates from the Phanariot rules.

Nevertheless, the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the following were to bring the Enlightenment ideas in the Principalities as well as those of the French Revolution. Words such as people, nation or citizen the Romanians started to utilize more and more.

Moreover, the great thinkers of the classical period, in order to make the difference between Greeks and the rest of European inhabitants, which they called “barbarian”, made use of ethical criteria, as well as linguistic and historical (Lawrence, 2006, p. 5). Then, during the Roman rule, the term *natio* came to designate a smaller community, yet larger than a family (Billington, 1980, p. 57). The nation could not arise without the help of historians (Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 14).

Lord Acton gives another definition of the term “nation”. According to him, nationalism, in the continental version, value more freedom and prosperity, in considering that the aspects regarding the political organization and borders, the territorial limits of the state should be primordial (Smith, 2003, p. p).

Even more interesting, the first were representatives of Școlii Ardelene, an unexplainable thing for the Romanians emancipation. Although, there were many who wrote about the Romanian origin of the Romanians, the representatives of Școala Ardeleană were the first who wrote also about the common origin of the inhabitants in the three Romanian Principalities. The common elements they shared were the language, traditions, and customs, thus following the nationalism way ethno-linguistic and cultural in the variant articulated by Johann Gottfried Herder (Hermet, 1997, p. 145). The definition of nation sounded in a similar way in a meeting of the ad-hoc committee in Moldavia on 1 November 1857. “We have the same beginning, the same language, the same religion, the same history, the same civilization, the same institutions, the same laws and customs...the same borders to safeguard...” (Georgescu, 1987, p. 326). Whereas, Cuza refers to the nation as “communauté de langue, de religion et d'intérêts.” (Georgescu, 1987, p. 326). Interestingly, the nation appears more often than not with another term, revolution, meaning the change of the political and social architecture of the state. Approximately the same period, another word emerges, namely self-determination, according to which, the nation elects, appoints those who would exercise leadership, governance and would become the representatives of the nation.

Nevertheless, between people and nation, there are some small differences. Generally, the people is a primary form of organization based upon the community of language, customs, and culture (Newman, 2005, p. 17). Whereas the transformation of the people into nation encompasses a certain degree of education, firstly political, to which those forming the people have access. This education enables first framing some forms of institutional organization allowing capitalizing the potential of a people.

Therefore, late of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the wake of the 19<sup>th</sup>, the people and nation as well as other words have found their way in the modern political thinking, thus becoming more and more present in the Romanian principalities, especially in the petitions, projects and programmes of reform edited in that period.



One of the most important documents in that period, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* showed that the Romanians were the most ancient of the “nations” in Transylvania, a statement based on “the grounds of the historical testimony, of a tradition never interrupted, of the similarity of language, traditions and customs” (Ionescu, 2016, p. 35).

Thus, writing about values like the human rights, private property or civil society, the authors of the *Supplex* unveiled their inspirational sources. The petitioners had read and studied thoroughly the political documents in fashion of the times such as Declaration of the human rights of the citizen in France or Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America.

Interestingly, one of the documents framed during the 1821 Revolution, *Arzul* addresses to the High Gate by Tudor Vladimirescu on behalf of the Romanian people in Valahia distinguished clearly among some boyars, or as the text mentioned “our terrible tyrants...merciless villains” and the people (Ionescu, 2016, p. 65). In this way, he complained about the necessity of conferring the people their innate rights.

Nonetheless, there was clear distance between theory and political practice in the Principalities and the Western one. The document addressed to the Ottoman sultan ended with the clarification that the complaint represented the wish “of all the Romanian people in Valahia” (Ibidem). similar to the first words in the Declaration of Human and Citizen’s Rights, namely, “the representatives of the French people, constituted in the National Assembly...”. While he first words in the Constitution of the United States put it “We, the people of the United States...”. The difference among the three documents is that while the first two are right declarations, the Romanian document was a proposal of improving the social and political situation of the inhabitants in Valahia.

## CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, in Moldavia, the political vocabulary was, in this first stage, as archaic as the one in Valahia. Yet, the political ideas are as current as those across the Milcov are. In the context that a part of the boyars addressed a petition toward the High Gate to express their discontent for the ruler Ioniță Sandu Sturdza. Ioniță Tăutul made clear the fact that “the great boyars were not the country, but rather only a small part of beneficiaries... a people cannot rest until all, listeners of the rulers, would share equally the goods and needs of the country” (Tăutul, 1974, p. 32).

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