

**POLITICAL DEBATES BEFORE  
THE UNION OF THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES:  
BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND PAROCHIALISM<sup>1</sup>**

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“... A historian has the obligation to not only discuss well-established interpretations, but also to revive in people’s memories the parts of these interpretations which have been deleted due to certain historical unidentifiable interests,” says Sorin Alexandrescu in the *Introduction* to his book *Privind înapoi, modernitatea* (Looking behind, modernity). His plea refers concretely to the need to review the meaning of the “1877” moment, which he actually does review, but he also extends his suggestion to other moments in modern history where the political solution of the liberals prevailed, becoming considered in time, especially in historiography, as the only possible solution. The point of such a procedure would be to “de-naturalise” the vision on some very important events from national history, upon which the liberals have shed a certain light, having been able to present their own political interests as national interests.<sup>2</sup>

We have taken upon ourselves the task of making a congenerous plea – to reconsider the Moldavian separatism from before and after 1859. This supposes above all two things: the re-evaluation of the “prehistory” of the Moldavian conservatism, of the actions, the decisions and the speeches of the conservative groups around the time of the union of the Romanian Principalities, and, on the other hand, the rediscovery of the discursive articulations of the Moldavian parochialism from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which national metanarrative passed over and forgot. The first procedure implies a de-construction of the diabolical image of the Moldavian conservatives, consecrated by an entire discursive tradition, and the second consists in a delicate archaeology performed on our memories, through which we can rebuild the complexity of the historical period from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1</sup> The Romanian version of this study was published in: Dumitru Ivănescu, Cătălin Turluc, Florin Cântec (eds.), *Vârstele Unirii. De la conștiința etnică la unitatea națională* (The ages of the union. From ethnic conscience to national unity), Iași, Fundația Academică “A. D. Xenopol”, 2001, p. 109–134.

<sup>2</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, *Privind înapoi, modernitatea* (Looking behind, modernity), București, Editura Univers, 1999, p. 9.

The epistemological unity of this second reading has already been suggested: it helps us give up a determinist interpretation model and serves the comprehensive purpose of history through enriching and complicating the image of the past.

A simultaneous glance at the unionist documents from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of the historiography dedicated to the union in 1859 shows an extraordinary continuity of ideas. Such a comparative exercise reveals an amazing affinity between the political-ideological oratory of the unionists and scientific writings, although, theoretically, the two registers should be radically different. The ideas, the argumentations, the justifications of the unionists, the terms they used and even their metaphors have survived in historiography and have become prevalent in the unfolding of scientific explanations. The historian sympathised with his favourite characters, with the unionists, and went as far as to adhere to their system of representation. We will discuss the reason for this alliance of ideas further on. Let us notice, for the moment, that historiography has mostly kept a diabolical image of the conservatives because of the dark light their political opponents, the unionists, described them in. Further on there are some of the discursive tools which were used to discredit the conservatives.

### POLITICAL MANICHAISM

One of the great successes of the “national party”, in their political fights and electoral confrontations, from the years before the union, was the establishing of a manichaeist system of representing the opponent teams. G. Sion summed this up perfectly in an article entitled “Fisiologia alegerilor din Moldova” (Physiology of the Moldavian votes), published in Muntenia, in January 1859: “In Moldavia, till the Convention of the 7 (19) August (1858, the Paris Convention, emphasis added, A.C.) there were two separate parties: the unionist one, which represented progress, liberalism, patriotism, regeneration, and the other, the separatist party, which represented corruption, treachery, intrigue, in one word, all of society’s vices. The first group was made up of the most courageous, mature and optimistic men who held their standards up high and proudly; the second group was made up of people who always had a mark on their lives and who, like rascals, made themselves of use to foreigners, enemies of the Romanian nationality.”<sup>3</sup>

The way the sentences are phrased immediately betrays the procedures used to compromise the political opponent: the author radically sketches the political scene, simplifies everything into two camps and distributes values in a manichaeist

<sup>3</sup> G. Sion, *Fisiologia alegerilor din Moldavia* (Physiology of the Moldavian votes), “Românul”, 3/15 January 1859, in *Acte și documente relative la istoria renascerei României* (Documents and deeds about the history of the rebirth of Romania), vol. VIII, București, 1900, p. 296. From now on, we will cite this well-known collection of documents as “*Acte și documente...*”.

way. These oratory techniques, borrowed from the French revolutionary language, were widely used by unionist militants and their associated newspapers, resulting in the modelling of the political opinion about the political adversaries.

The tendency to simplify the political scene, which happened in most historiography about the union of 1859, is explained by the existence of a united separatist and conservative “party”. In fact, a closer look at the documents shows that separatists/conservatives, far from being united, had great difficulties in being solidary about “strong” interests, an elaborate political agenda or a personality to represent them.

Let us stop, briefly, and examine each one of these factors which were potential coagulants. In that epoch, influenced by the unionists’ oratory, the idea that the separatist party represented the interests of the gentry was widespread. Nevertheless, a large number of proofs with a prosopographical character show that to the two political parties of Moldavia belonged people from all kinds of social backgrounds who could express themselves politically. Even G. Sion, mentioned earlier, when he listed the named deputies, at the end of 1859, in the Assembly of Moldavia, said that in the separatist party as well as in the unionist party there were wealthy and less wealthy landowners as well as townsmen.<sup>4</sup> The unionist memoir-writer Ștefan Scarlat Dăscălescu varied and completed the scene: the separatist camp was made up of “all the aristocracy, especially the elderly gentry”, “the townsmen of Iași, who were afraid that their town would be lost”, “foreigners who had taken roots in Romania, and all the upstarts who were used to living as office-workers, and who are always supporters of those in power”.<sup>5</sup> After the act of union had been signed, the separatist group which was in Iași in 1866 – which we will discuss later – was also made up of people from all walks of life, but especially the gentry and Iași businessmen.<sup>6</sup>

The explanation for the heterogeneous social make-up of the political groups is simple: in the epoch that interests us, political actors related less and less, under the influence of modernity, to their social origin, and tended to take on an identity related to the ideas they proclaimed.<sup>7</sup> Around the year 1859, the principal theme of discussions was the union of the Romanian Principalities, and, according to this criterion, the political groups were formed.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Un cugetător politic moldovean de la jumătatea secolului al XIX-lea: Ștefan Scarlat Dăscălescu* (A Moldavian political thinker from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Ștefan Scarlat Dăscălescu), in AARMSI, seria III, tomul XIII, 1932, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> T.W. Riker, *Cum s-a înfăptuit România. Studiul unei probleme internaționale* (How Romania was created. Study of an international problem. 1856–1866), Iași, Editura Alfa, 2000, p. 477–478.

<sup>7</sup> Sorin Antohi, *Civitas Imaginalis. Istorie și utopie în cultura română* (Civitas Imaginalis. History and utopia in Romanian culture), București, Editura Litera, 1994, p. 144; Daniel Barbu, *La modernisation politique: une affaire des intellectuels?*, in “Studia Politica. Revista română de știință politică”, volum I, nr. 1, martie 2001, p. 59.

The separatists had in common the reticence towards the union and a centralized state, but beyond this minimal agreement there were different positions. Some wanted the Principalities to stay apart, whatever the cost; others militated for the organisation of a political body – a confederation or a state which would apply the principle of decentralization – to defend Moldavia's interests. Referring to the modernising reforms, things got even more complicated, and the reasons for disagreement multiplied. Briefly, the separatists were having difficulties finding a united political agenda, especially as they did not have a modern and well-developed organization where these decisions could be taken and shouldered. The "unionist party" shared these difficulties, being made up of many diverse groups, which were difficult to keep under the same political umbrella until January 1859.

Talking about the third criterion, it is enough to remember that the separatists did not have one single candidate for the throne. In the years leading up to the union, more than one candidate from the separatist party gave up their desire for ruling, but in 1859, there was still a discord because of the unusual rivalry between Mihail Sturdza and his son Grigore, who were both vying for the throne. This rivalry was one of the principal causes of the defeat of the separatists in the elections at the end of 1858, and the beginning of 1859.<sup>8</sup>

It is obvious then, that the "unity" of the separatists was not a reality, but just an oratory illusion. An illusion which was, however, very important because it helped distribute the values in a manichaeistic way. The unionist propaganda filled the public space with wording which accredited the values of progress, modernism, visionarism, to the national party while the conservative party was described as "retrograde", "reactionary", "corrupt", "selfish", "treacherous", etc.

#### IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS

The unionists were decidedly clear in the document of the constitution of the Electoral Committee, which would coordinate the unionist's actions and their propaganda starting in February 1857, that the "Union party" was also the "progress party".<sup>9</sup> The idea, insistently repeated in the programmatic documents and in the articles of the unionist press, before becoming an ideology was a propaganda formula.

In 1857, the synonymy between the themes of union and progress was not a matter of course. Nicolae Suțu, in his memoir from 1857 called "*Considerații relative la chestiunea unirii celor două Principate*" (Considerations about the idea

<sup>8</sup> *Memoriile Principelui Nicolae Suțu* (Memories of the prince Nicolae Suțu), transl. by Georgeta Penelea Filitti, București, Editura Fundație Culturală Române, 1997, p. 311–312.

<sup>9</sup> "Act de întrunire a Comitetului electoral al Unirii" (Document of the meeting of the Electoral committee of the Union), in *Acte și documente...* vol. III, București, 1889, p. 1108.

of the unions of the two Principalities), emphasized from the start: “the issue of union has become today the most important topic for those who claim to have progressive opinions.” And added later on: “The union of the Principalities, thought about in an absolute way, has become the common standard of those who, without being united in their more or less radical ideas, meet together in order to develop society. For the same reasons for which in the principle of the union there appeared ideas which, when discussing the organic base of society, can be contradictory, in the same way, the effects of an absolute union were judged from many different points of view, more or less limited.”<sup>10</sup>

The success of the unionists in presenting themselves as being progressists is even more astonishing when we know that the debates about the modernising reforms were stopped or reduced to general discussions, before the union, even in unionist clubs, because of the hugely different opinions which were on the verge of breaking up the fragile unity of the political parties. For example, in the discussions in the middle of 1856 about forming a union Committee, the problem of internal reforms was discussed: the election law, the make-up of the Assembly, the right to own land, the relationship between owners and peasants, etc. After many clashes of opinion, a decision was made to limit the debates to the main problem: the union.<sup>11</sup> “The document of the establishment of the union Committee” from Iași, on 30 May/ 11 June 1856, contained only two programmatic articles, “the union of the Principalities under a foreign prince” and “the establishment of a new Capital in the middle of these two lands”. None of the unionist programs gave more details about internal reforms,<sup>12</sup> and mentioned at the most general principles of organisation, of illuminist and romantic influence.<sup>13</sup>

It is important that in the “document of the establishment of the union Committee” in Iași, in a larger space than the programmatic articles were the stipulations through which the unionist propagandist activity was organised (which was to be carried out in the press, public gatherings and delegations to the provinces).<sup>14</sup> After experiencing the difficulty in communication from 1848,<sup>15</sup> the reformist elites felt the need to make more efficient their strategies and tactics for socializing their political ideas. Around the year 1859, they managed to build a

<sup>10</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 264; see also p. 263.

<sup>11</sup> Place către Walewski (Place to Walewski), 9/21 June 1856, in *Acte și documente...*, p. 544.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, one of the programs of the National Party – “Profesia de credință a partidului național din Moldavia” (Statement of belief of the national party of Moldavia), 26 November/8 December 1858, in *Acte și documente...*, VII, București, 1892, p. 1033–1036.

<sup>13</sup> Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești* (The history of Romanian political ideas) (1369–1878), München, 1987, p. 145.

<sup>14</sup> *Acte și documente...*, III, p. 531.

<sup>15</sup> Sorin Antohi, *op. cit.*, p. 64–103.

performing propaganda machine – which is to be examined in detail<sup>16</sup> – which transformed the idea of the union from an intellectual project, debated about in circles from outside the establishment, into a political solution relatively widely accepted. The impressive communicative effort of the unionists involved, besides the actual political propaganda, the construction of a new social-political<sup>17</sup> language, influencing the educational system, annexing the arts, especially literature and theatre<sup>18</sup>, etc.

The separatists, who felt that propaganda was an act of aggression and who denounced it as such, were much less capable in using this opportunity. This is how we explain the fact that the separatists acted, as their opponents put it, “in the shadows”. We cannot see here a sign of conspiring behaviour, but just the symptoms of their inability to use the public sphere. The unionists constantly fought to infer upon separatist actions a conspiratorial character, and this perspective was also adopted in historiography. Conspiracy implies: the singleness of the conspirator (and this is why the separatists were thought to be united), the tenacious and diabolical manoeuvres behind the scenes (it was said about the separatists that they acted diabolically “in the shadows”, using anything possible, be it even money or women), treachery and the following of “foreign interests” (the separatists were described as being “sold to foreigners”, which were Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Austria), etc.<sup>19</sup>

The unionist message was marked, as we have already said, by the equation between the theme of the union and that of progress. Up till the 1848 revolution, these two themes had been known as independent themes, as Vlad Georgescu observed.<sup>20</sup> After the failure of the revolution, the revolutionary forces were reinvested in a unique political project – the union – which *subordinated the*

<sup>16</sup> A useful starting point for further research could be the chapter about the unionist propaganda from Mihai Cojocaru’s book, *Partida națională și constituirea statului român (1856–1859)* (The national party and the constitution of the Romanian state), Iași, Editura Universității “Al.I.Cuza”, 1995, p. 315–339. One track to follow could be the analysis of the propaganda mechanisms and the discursive strategies, bearing in mind communication theories.

<sup>17</sup> Sorin Antohi, *op. cit.*, p. 136–174; Rodica Bogza Irimie, *Termeni politico-sociali în primele periodice românești* (Political-social terms used in the first Romanian periodicals), București, Editura Universității, 1979; Lidia Simion, *The modernization of the social-political vocabulary as reflected in the Romanian press of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, in RESEE, XXVI, 1, București, 1988, p. 27–33; Elena Toma, *Mentalité et langage*, in RESEE, XVIII, 4, București, 1980, p. 647–664, etc.

<sup>18</sup> See Liviu Papadima, *Literatură și comunicare. Relația autor-cititor în proza pașoptistă și postpașoptistă* (Literature and communication. The relationship between author and reader in the prose from around 1848), Iași, Polirom, 1999; Andreia Roman, *Le populisme quarante-huitard dans les Principautés Roumaines*, Bucarest, Les Éditions de la Fondation Culturelle Roumaine, 1999.

<sup>19</sup> For a profile of conspiracy, see Daniel Pipes, *Paranoia conspirației* (Paranoia of conspirations), transl. by Ligia Caranfil, București, Antet, 1998; George Voicu, *Zei cei răi. Cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă* (The evil gods. The conspiracy culture in Romania after communism), Iași, Polirom, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 69–72 and p. 338.

*modernising ethos to the nationalist solutions.* The Union was seen, in the atmosphere of the end of a regime of the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a panacea for all the social Romanian problems. In other words, it played the role of a salvation-myth, of a solution through which the “crisis would be imaginarily solved” (Rod Aya<sup>21</sup>). Investing hope in the curing abilities of the union was overestimated and this is how we can explain the wave of disappointment which washed over the political class and a part of society after the union took place.<sup>22</sup>

### THE POLITICAL STIGMA

Until it had negative effects, the unionist propagandist formula proved to be a fearsome weapon for daunting the political opponent. Taking the political fight onto the land of modernisation, the “progressive” unionists succeeded in labelling the separatists as “conservative”, “reactionary” and “retrograde”.<sup>23</sup> The terms “conservative” and “reactionary” entered the Romanian political language through French, at a time when they had negative connotations, far from their initial meanings which conservative and anti-revolutionary theorists had given them.<sup>24</sup> In this pejorative situation they appeared in the unionist political speeches.

At a time when everybody admitted the need for change,<sup>25</sup> the label “reactionary” or “retrograde” was like a real stigma. The fear of this label managed to provoke, as Nicolae Sutu showed us, a phenomenon of political migration (“a certain number of individuals who, for fear of being labelled retrograde, embraced the ideas of the unionists, going with the flow, without bothering to measure its vast proportions and its consequences”<sup>26</sup>).

<sup>21</sup> See Rod Aya, *Rethinking Revolution and Collective Violence. Studies on Concept, Theory and Method*, Amsterdam, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> Ion C. Brătianu mentions, in 1859, that the enthusiasm from the 24<sup>th</sup> January had calmed down, that the „Romanian people, disillusioned, discouraged, has lain down again on their beds of pain and shame, which the evil-wishers to his land have lain down for him.” Brătianu warned – „woe to the people whose future hangs on a momentary enthusiasm or on the devotion and courage of a few individuals!” – and built again on the theme of national modernisation/construction, reminding us that the union had been made dreaming of „national emancipation and reheneration”. See *Apel la conștiința națională* (Reviving call for the national conscience), in *Din scrierile și cuvântările lui Ion C. Brătianu. 1821–1891* (From Ion C. Brătianu’s writings), București, 1903, p. 197.

<sup>23</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 311.

<sup>24</sup> For a short presentation of the evolution of the meaning of the word “reactionary”, see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction. Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy*, Cambridge, etc., Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 8–10. The Romanian pejorative usage, in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is recorded by Rodica Bogza Irimie, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>25</sup> Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 265.

The public pressure upon the conservatives was so powerful, that they saw the need to constantly modify their titles. In a political program published on 9/21 October 1858, in French, but which was possibly also translated into Romanian, the conservatives called themselves “conservative-progressive”. In the program, the conservatives insisted upon the fact that they were not against the reforms but were against the “reform-mania”, the “excess of progress” and the “ideologists” who were promoting radical changes.<sup>27</sup> The newspaper “Patria” (Homeland) – which was the semi-official newspaper of the conservatives, more precisely of the group that gathered around the ex-ruler Mihail Sturdza, who was actively vying for the throne – talked about the stigmatization of the conservative party in a defensive tone: “the public party named conservative, because it maintained that we should hold on to the old Moldavia, to her exceptional administration, as it existed in old times, has been attacked for some while by other papers which accuse the party of being retrograde, retrogressive and would want, in one word, to bring back the old way of things, which was abolished by the Convention of 17 (19) August.” The newspaper felt the need to make a new change in the name of those it represented: “... we declare that we are in no way conservatives, in the way in which these papers understand the word, which in Iași is not suitable. The word separatists would be better to use to describe us because our principle has always been the political separation of the Principalities. Only from this point of view have we been and will we be conservatives; but not even formerly did we desire to maintain the old regime, with all its vices.” Further on, moving from a defensive attitude to an affirming one, the newspaper wrote: “We are the friends of progress, but of a reasonable and systematic progress, we are the partisans of reforms, but of gradual and methodical reforms. We also desire to move with the century; however, to reach more certainly our goal, we desire to imitate the turtles walk, not the twisting of the rabbit.”<sup>28</sup> On another occasion, the separatists called themselves “constitutional-conservatives”<sup>29</sup>. And, moving on to another document, in a “statement of belief”, which, at that point, replaced what is now an electoral program, the conservatives tried to change their image once more. They underlined right from the start that they did not want “to conserve the stationary regime and the abuses that had been in place till then”. “...Those who upheld the existence of Moldavia also upheld with the same zeal the real progress of the country”, wrote the newspaper. On the other hand, “Patria” criticized the “progress-mania” which “upset society”, the “too extreme” institutions, the “inapplicable theories”, and the insults to religion and properties addressed by the unionists.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Acte și documente...*, VII, p. 495–498.

<sup>28</sup> “Patria”, nr. 4, 8/20 December 1858, in *Acte și documente...*, VIII, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> “Patria”, nr. 1, 24 November/6 December 1858, in *Acte și documente...*, VII, p. 1013.

<sup>30</sup> “Patria”, nr.1, 27 November/9 December 1858, in *loc. cit.*, p. 1068–1069. From this indecision in naming themselves appeared difficulties in historiography in choosing a suitable name for the political adversaries of the unionists. As for us, we will use “conservatives” and “separatists”, to suggest the ambiguity of the times.

### THE NEGATIVE PERSONIFICATION

The main target of the unionist attacks was Mihail Sturdza, the ex-ruler who had come back from the Occident – where he had emigrated in 1850 – to compete for the throne. The warm welcome he received when he arrived back in Moldavia<sup>31</sup> determined “*Steaua Dunării*” (The star of the Danube), the principal unionist publication in Moldavia, to unleash a mad campaign against the ex-ruler. The themes for the dispute were taken, principally, from a complaint, from 1848, signed by the most important Moldavian gentry, who recanted Sturdza, in the complicated context of the year of the revolution. The complaint – one of the indictments about the rule of Sturdza formulated in 1848 – was put into circulation by “*Steaua Dunării*”.<sup>32</sup> The document contained the principal directions of the accusations – his retrogressive attitude, his authoritarian and oligarchic tendencies, corruption and his complicity with foreign countries – which are what the unionist militant concentrated on.

In the unionist propaganda discourse, the separatist (or conservative) party was confused, by synecdoche, with the contested ex-ruler. This was one of the reasons for which the cosmeticizing of image, mentioned earlier, did not have any impact. The conservatives always tried to maintain a distance between them and Sturdza, whose negative image contaminated the party’s image which he claimed to belong to, but the unionists were always careful to overlap the two images.

In fact, carefully reading the documents of that epoch, it is obvious that the links between the conservative group and Sturdza were by no means as tight as the unionists made it seem and as many historians maintained in later years. Sturdza came to Moldavia a little before the elections and did not have time to coordinate his actions with those of the conservative party (the correspondence they had whilst he was away, however intense, could not give substance to their political relations). It was not by accident that the programs Sturdza signed and those of the Moldavian conservatives were only very slightly similar.<sup>33</sup> And then, let us not forget how

<sup>31</sup> D. Ciurea, *Moldavia sub domnia lui M. Sturza. De la Convenția de la Petersburg la Convenția de la Balta Liman* (Moldavia under M. Sturdza’s rule. From the St. Petersburg Convention to the Balta Liman Convention), Iași, 1947, p. 98–99; Gödel Lannoy către Buol, 7 November 1858, in *Documente privind unirea Principatelor* (Documents about the union of the Principalities) II, *Rapoartele Consulatului Austriei din Iași (Accounts of the Austrian consulate in Iași) (1856–1859)*, edited by Dan Berindei, București, 1959, p. 400.

<sup>32</sup> “*Steaua Dunării*”, 29 November/11 December 1858, in *Acte și documente...*, VII, 1097–1111. To learn more about the context in which the complaint was written, see Ioan C. Filitti, *Domniile române sub Regulamentele Organice*. (Romanian rules under the Organic Regulations) 1834–1848, București, 1915, p. 655, *passim*.

<sup>33</sup> Sturdza’s “Statement of belief”, from 2/14 October 1858 (*Acte și documente...*, VII, p. 473–474) or the complaint he wrote in 1857 to the Russian embassy in Paris (see Vasile Maciu, *Un proiect din 1857 al lui Mihail Sturdza pentru organizarea Principatelor Române* (A 1857 project for the organisation of the Romanian Principalities, by Mihail Sturdza), in “*Studii*”, tom 19, nr. 1, 1966,

Sturdza left the country. The complaint republished by “Steaua Dunării” is one proof, out of many, that Sturdza had received, at the end of his rule (1834–1849), the general blame, including that of the big landowners. Moreover, despite the historiographical cliché, Sturdza’s relationship with the gentry was always under great tension, the authoritarian Moldavian ruler creating interesting policies to counterbalance their power (which has been, till now, insufficiently researched<sup>34</sup>). Sturdza must have remembered the old conflicts, seeing as, in a political program in 1857, he hoped more for the back-up of the Europe to receive the throne than for the help of the gentry.<sup>35</sup>

The study of Sturdza’s image after his rule is a fascinating subject which would be worth more attention from historians. Especially seeing as the way the social memory and the public image of the ex-ruler was structured, under the impact of the 1848 revolution and of the unionist one of 1859, was of prime importance for the political context before the union.

Thus, although the relationship between Mihail Sturdza and the separatists was fragile, the unionists succeeded in personalizing the separatist party, transferring to it the negative attributes and diabolical image of the ex-ruler. Mihail Sturdza was named a “ghost” of the past and the conservatives were likewise disparaged.<sup>36</sup> The happy crowd that filled the streets of Iași, after the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as the ruler of Moldavia, automatically associated the two, shouting: “Down with ghosts! Put Mihail Sturdza to death!”<sup>37</sup>

### THE ARGUMENTS FOR SEPARATISM

These were some of the discursive strategies that were used by the unionists to scorn the conservatives and to neutralise their separatist message. We will now have a look at the arguments the separatists had against the union.

A good synthesis of these arguments was written by Nicolae Suțu in the already mentioned memoir from 1857. Suțu, although he was convinced of the necessity of the union, knew how to suppress his subjectivism and objectively

p. 59–91) should be compared to the conservative programs already mentioned. Sturdza shared with the separatists from the Principalities only the aversion to bringing in a foreign ruler and the fear that the Muntenians would rule the institutions of a united state.

<sup>34</sup> To briefly name two of these strategies: the political promotion of the public functionaries and the small and middle gentry; the political manipulation of the public holidays, for the symbolical construction of the authority of the rule and for the creation of a scenario “society against the political class”.

<sup>35</sup> Vasile Maciu, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>36</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 311.

<sup>37</sup> V. Alecsandri to I. Alecsandri, 20 January/1 February 1859, in *Documente privind Unirea Principatelor*, (Documents about the union of the Principalities), III. *Correspondență politică (1855–1859)*, edited by Cornelia Bodea, București, 1963, p. 486.

surprised the reasons for which the separatists were circumspect about an eventual union of the two Principalities, even admitting that “there is a grain of truth in their argumentation”. Suțu observed that the anti-unionists feared that, in the case of the union, the capital would move to Bucharest, and Moldavia would be marginalized. They thought that “Iași and all of upper Moldavia would not be but the eccentric points of the new state”, and that “their interests will move to a secondary position”; that the union would leave Moldavia to “continuous depreciations of capitals and products”, in conditions in which “commercial contacts, material improvements would gradually move toward the capital”. The separatists expected Muntenians to dominate the political leading of the United Principalities: “The Romanian Country, vaster than Moldavia, also has a larger number of inhabitants. If to these advantages we add the difficulty of travelling for the Moldavians, there is no more doubt that the majority in the governing bodies, as in the legislative bodies, will be reserved for Muntenians, and Moldavians will be obliged to endure their law and to be, let us say, absorbed more like a conquered people rather than a united one with the Wallachia”.<sup>38</sup>

Further on, Suțu makes an excursion on the theme of the regional differences: “Despite the similarities between the inhabitants of the two Principalities, in their habits, their customs and even in their laws there are differences which will not be able to be wiped out without hurting more or less important interests. The industries of the two countries are in different states. In Moldavia, where the population is relatively well grouped, where agriculture is better understood and more productive, the conditions of exploitation of the estates are radically different from those in Wallachia; these conditions will have to be changed according to the law which will prevail due to the interests and demands of the majority, which is the Muntenians”.

Thus, the separatists used, to back up their attitude, a conservative motivation: for them, the uniting was an artificial project because it meant giving up “a state which has the advantage that it has been thus established for a long time”, and “denying a fought-for nationality, and past traditions”, which, as they put it, “means suicide”.<sup>39</sup> Suțu considers the separatists as “realists” because they “consider that the material and immediate results of this change will oblige them to take on an unknown lifestyle, they are afraid of losing the position they have, the right they fought for, and they base their patriotism on opposition to progress and exclusivism”.<sup>40</sup>

The arguments Suțu lists were popular at that time, and it would be useless to try and find out who thought them up. It is important however to point out that most of them can be found in the writings of a very influential person at that time, but who today has been almost forgotten – we are talking about Nicolae Istrati, an ex-1848

<sup>38</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 267.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 267–268.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 267.

unionist who became, around the time of the union, a real ideologist of separatism, having a much more important role in the structure of the separatist movement than Mihail Sturdza. Istrati worked for “Nepărtinitorul” (“The Impartial man”) and “Patria”, two anti-unionist newspapers, and was also the author of a famous pamphlet, called *Despre cvestia zilei în Moldova* (About current affairs in Moldavia) in 1856.<sup>41</sup>

From Istrati’s point of view, the union meant a “simple centralization of the government”, which he saw no need for, and even considered dangerous. Dangerous for the Moldavians (who would have to “sacrifice themselves” and give up their “privileges” because of the new state arrangement, which would be ground away by the “inside rivalries”), for Moldavia (which was to become a “province”), for Iași (which risked becoming a “second Hârlău”), for the institutions, for the local church,<sup>42</sup> for the indigenous economy and the estates it is based on, for the customs, privileges and immunity of Moldavia, which had all been left by their ancestors and left alone by the international *statu-quo*. Istrati admired the “wisdom, peace and indifference of the Moldavians who do not give up, whatever happens, the privileges of their Homeland” and said that there is no reason for “those who do not want to change their certainty for uncertainty, reality for ideal to be charged”. The author of *Despre cvestia zilei* maintained that it was possible to have a double belonging, saying that the anti-unionists “also have the feeling of patriotism, but also have family ties and local business connections”. Insisting upon the fact that the idea of the union is a “new” one (“a political transformation that has never before taken place”) and “unfamiliar” to the Moldavians, that the “Romanian nationality is not something we all believe in”, that “up till a few years ago, the name Romanian was an insult even to real Romanians”, that up till then, Romanians did not have “a complete history, tongue, or even literature”, the ideologist affirmed something very important for the separatists: “the only thing that upholds the plea for nationality are the institutions and the government”.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Nicolae Istrati was not very popular at that time, nor in historiography; see Constantin Hurmuzaki, *Un renegat al Unirii Principatelor* (A renegade of the Union of the Principalities), in “Steaua Dunării”, nr. 41, from 3/15 July 1856 (in *Acte și documente...*, III, p. 663–667); Paul Cornea, *Un pașoptist renegat: N. Istrati*, (A renegade ‘48-ist: N. Istrati) in idem, *Studii de literatură română modernă* (Studies of modern Romanian literature), București, Editura pentru literatură, 1962, p. 321–353; Mihai Cojocariu, *op. cit.*, p. 139–151; Liviu I. Roman, *Un jurnal antiunionist: “Nepărtinitorul”* (An antiunionist newspaper: “The Impartial man”) (21 June–10 September 1856), in “Cercetări istorice” (Historical research) (serie nouă), XVII/2. Istorie medie, modernă și contemporană, (Middle age, modern and contemporary history), Iași, 1998, p. 207–219.

<sup>42</sup> The Moldavian metropolitan bishop Sofronie Miculescu, who oscillated between unionism and separatism, feared that, by uniting, the Moldavian metropolitan seat would be transformed into a bishopric and that a foreign prince would jeopardize the Orthodox Church. See A. D. Xenopol, *Unioniști și separatiști* (Unionists and separatists), in AARMSI, seria.II, tom.XXXI, București, 1908–1909, p. 744–745.

<sup>43</sup> Nicolae Istrati, *Despre cvestia zilei în Moldova* (About current affairs in Moldavia), Iași, Albina, 1856; I used the French version of the text (in *Acte și documente...*, p. 125–137). The

Added to what we have mentioned up till now, the separatists wished that the eventual union with Muntenia should be just a “peace and love union”, not in a centralized form, under foreign rule, but in the form of a “confederation”, which would not change in any way the administration of either country.<sup>44</sup>

### PAROCHIALISM AND NATIONALISM

Those were the main anti-unionist arguments, spread by the newspapers and brochures or maintained in speeches. Taking them as a starting point, there are a few comments to make.

Firstly, as can well be seen, the separatist speeches were largely reactive, defensive. Most of the political principles they proclaimed were answers to the ideas and solutions the unionist had brought up. As the adepts of the *statu-quo*, separatists did not have anything of their own to suggest, they revised or contested the solutions the unionists had imagined. We can find in the separatist propaganda, as we can see from the fragments from earlier on, all the Hirschmanian themes of the reactionary oratory – the jeopardy thesis, the futility thesis, and the perversity thesis.<sup>45</sup> Rhetorically articulated, these themes were transmitted by combination – the separatist argumentation being, in fact, an extensive communication of concerns. The exploitation of the fear of change was the principal electoral element of the separatists.

Nevertheless, the lack of the affirmative dimension in the separatist discourse proved to be a handicap in the political competition, in the situation in which the unionists succeeded in establishing the idea of the need for change – a need which demands new solutions.

The handicap is clearer – this is the second comment – if we follow the principal political debate of the epoch, the one related to the political involvement of the collective identity. The largest difference between the unionists and the separatists, in their confrontations before the union, was the fact that the former had an affirmative and autonomous discourse about the identity problem, whilst the other did not have. This is the symptom of inadequacy which affected the conservative movement in the whole of Europe.<sup>46</sup> Without an autonomous identity discourse, the

brochure received a unionist reply from Mihail Cantacuzino-Paşcanu, *Câteva întâmpinări asupra Chestiei zilei a d-lui Neculae Istrati* (A few comments on the Current affairs of Mr Neculae Istrati), in “*Steaua Dunării*”, nr. 41, from 3/15 July 1856 (*Acte și documente...*, p. 657–660), which was answered by *Refutație la întâmpinările lui M. Cantacuzino* (Refuting Mr Cantacuzino’s comments), in “*Nepărtinitorul*”, nr. 10, 23 July/4 August 1856.

<sup>44</sup> See the “conservative-progressive” program, mentioned earlier on (in *Acte și documente...*, VII, p. 496); the idea first appeared in “*Nepărtinitorul*”, see I. Sigara, *op. cit.*, and encouraged by N. Istrati, *loc. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>45</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> George Schöpflin, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Europe, East and West*, in Charles A. Kupchan (ed.), *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 43.

separatists improvised, to oppose the union, conservative-type arguments. In this way, they refuted the project of the formation of a Romanian state as a new, artificial, untried and thus uncertain idea; they required respect for tradition and for the traditional solidarities; anyway, they pleaded for gradual political changes, describing the union and centralization as being sudden and potentially traumatizing changes. The conservatism of the separatists was only aristocratic to a small degree. We could describe it rather as *positional and practical conservatism of reaction* – in the circumstances in which it reacted to a radical change project, in the name of those who had a place in the Moldavian establishments and of a principle of action which combined experience, adaptive solutions and pragmatic calculations.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, the unionists succeeded in giving a substance to the national identity, attaching a set of identifiable representations, which is what today we call ethnicity (a common name, the myth of common origins, a shared historical memory, common cultural elements – tongue, religion, customs – a symbolical geography, the feeling of solidarity faced with common goals<sup>48</sup>).

The separatists seldom spoke of the “Moldavian people”, of the “Moldavian nation”<sup>49</sup> and hesitated in searching for symbols to identify and distinguish the inhabitants of Moldavia. Their only tentative which is worth mentioning was their effort in making a statue of Ștefan the Great – made by Nicolae Istrati and Gheorghe Asachi, amongst others – a statue whose message was to be the “retention of Moldavia as an autonomous state”.<sup>50</sup> Apart from that, the separatists did not try to give an ethnic definition of the people of the Moldavian Principality and to invent symbols to represent them, because they were scarcely interested in explaining “what Moldavians are like” and what are their irreducible characters. For this reason they had difficulties, in their political fights (fought in the unionists’ register), identifying and defining the community they were defending.

The third comment: in defining their identity, the unionists insisted (in Aristotelian terminology for definition) on *genus* – *the Romanian nation*, whereas the separatists focalised on *differentia* – Moldavianism. From these differences came the political exigencies. The unionist discourse was, by definition, *nationalist*, requiring that political and national unity be congruent.<sup>51</sup> From this point of view, the national

<sup>47</sup> For a complete and useful presentation from a methodological point of view, of the conservative ideology, see Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, Oxford and Cambridge, Blackwell, 1992, p. 55–83.

<sup>48</sup> See A. Smith, J. Hutchinson, *Ethnicity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>49</sup> See M. Cojocariu, *op. cit.*, p. 144, 178.

<sup>50</sup> “Jurnalul Comitetului însărcinat cu rădicarea monumentului lui Ștefan cel Mare” (The journal of the committee taking care of Ștefan cel Mare’s statue), from 6/18 December 1856, in *Acte și documente...*, III, p. 985–986.

<sup>51</sup> This is the classical definition which Ernest Gellner gave of nationalism, in *Națiuni și naționalism. Noi perspective asupra trecutului* (Nations and nationalism. New perspectives on the past), transl. by Robert Adam, București, Antet, 1997, p. 9.

identity, the Romanian one, was, in Craig Calhoun's words, a *categorical identity*,<sup>52</sup> and the project of political unity, which had been treated up till then like a myth of salvation, an *imperative project*.

On the other hand, the separatist discourse can be characterised as parochial, *parochialism* being the tendency to choose, on a scale of the available identities, proximity, the closest identity, vicinity, traditional solidarities, an easily spotted, smaller community which has a smaller area than the nation.<sup>53</sup> Parochialism is a *localism*: it depends on a memory of the place and comes out of instinct, a feeling of what is natural, rather than out of a desire for auto-definition. The feeling of identity it offers is not made by the voluntary organisation of the representations of oneself around some recent cultural construct (like nationalism does), but comes out of a lifestyle which has been established in time. Born out of a feeling of what is natural and seeing as it is fundamentally passive, parochialism is in the first place *a memory* and only in a small measure a discourse. This feature explains, in our opinion, the modern destiny of parochialism. Lacking the need to be articulated in a discourse, parochialism will perish in time, in the circumstances in which modernity quantifies and homologates discursive identities. Parochialism (often called regionalism) was, as we know, one of the main inertial forces which resisted the uprising of nationalism.<sup>54</sup> Powerful in the short term, parochialism lost its energy once its "lieux de mémoire" were wiped out by the nationalist engineering, and its object was not once mentioned due to the politics of oblivion.

In our case, separatists had problems in translating the parochial instinct into a political oratory. The result of their attempts was, as can be seen from the electoral argumentation we represented earlier on, a mixture of *localism* (the expression of a memory of an inherited and established lifestyle) and *statism* (the expression of an institutional memory, tied to the state and circumscribed by political boundaries<sup>55</sup>). The political discourse of the separatists does not affirm, it only confirms. They did not state what Moldavians are like (following the ethnic substantialist model set by the unionists), but only reminded people of their different lifestyle – taking from this the reason for their maintaining the *statu-quo*.

<sup>52</sup> Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1997, p. 29–50.

<sup>53</sup> For a more recent usage of the word, see Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *De la identitate națională la naționalism* (From national identity to nationalism), in "Sfera Politicii" (Political Sphere), nr. 97–98, an IX, Oct.–Nov. 2001, p. 35–51.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Peter Blickle (ed.), *Résistance, représentation et communauté*, Paris, Presse Universitaire de France, 1998.

<sup>55</sup> We have used the term "statism" with the meaning Hurst Hannum gave it, as different from "nationalism"; see *Autonomie, suveranitate și autodeterminare. Aplanarea drepturilor conflictuale* (Autonomy, sovereignty and auto-determination. The settling of the conflicting rights), transl. by Mihaela Barbu and Veronica Popescu, București, Paideia, p. 28.

It is very important we underline that parochialism was present in both of the parties. A large number of unionists also shared at least a part of the separatist fears. As we can see in a document we have already quoted from,<sup>56</sup> the Moldavian unionists were concerned that Moldavia should not be marginalized in the new state – and for this reason they asked for the construction of a new capital in the middle of the country. The percentage of the Moldavian elite in the centralized institutions, the fate of Iași, of the Moldavian institutions, church and economy were problems that greatly preoccupied the Moldavian unionists, before the union but also for a few years after it. For them the unionist impulse was more powerful than their fears because it incorporated an important number of salvationist promises (most of them linked to the idea of “national sovereignty”). This is how the “sacrificial” theme arose, a sacrifice which Moldavia was obliged to make for the saving of the nation, a theme which often reappeared in the unionist discourses and became the main focus of nationalist oratory. The idea of the sacrifice has a transactional suggestion: the sacrifice was made to receive something in exchange, to receive compensation.<sup>57</sup> This aspect was ignored after the union was established, and, although the inhabitants of Iași asked for symbolical compensations for their “sacrifice”, their requests were systematically refused, for reasons we will further discuss. One thing is certain though, that this was one of the important reasons for the tensions in Iași, after 1859.

### PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

These were, therefore, the principal discursive strategies of the two parties involved in the political fight around the moment of the union of the Romanian Principalities. On the one hand, the unionists successfully used the propaganda instruments to disqualify and diabolize their political adversaries; they transformed the union project, through subordinating the modernising ethos to nationalist solutions, into a salvation-myth; they knew how to (re)present, through their positive and active discourse, the national identity as a categorical identity, which demands the sacrifice of the other identities. On the other hand, separatists were always on the defensive; they did not create a positive discourse through which they could offer a structured alternative to the projects the unionists had imagined and to the principal themes they suggested – modernization and national identity; they had difficulties explaining the community which they belonged to and instrumenting the identifying inertias in the political fight.

<sup>56</sup> See above, note 9.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istoria religiilor* (Handbook of the history of religions), transl. by Mariana Noica, București, Humanitas, 1992, *passim*.

These are some of the facts which, in our opinion, added to the information gathered from the history of international relations (an ample historiographical segment already discussed by Romanian historians, reason for which we have not spent more time on it), explains what happened in January 1859.

It is difficult to evaluate, even impossible, what was the social impact of the ideas and debates listed earlier on. It is interesting that, although the political confrontation happened in a period in which democratic consulting and measuring of the public opinion had not been invented yet, both parties claimed to own the majority. Unfortunately, historiography entered the game, stating almost consistently that the unionists enjoyed the support of the majority of the population. In fact, we will never know which party had the majority for the simple reason that support for a side can not be measured, not even approximated. It is more important to notice that this fact did not count, for several reasons. Let us not forget that the political decisions were taken, at that time, by only a handful of people, with the support of many other thousands who participated in the elections. As G. Sion wrote, referring to the political confrontation about the Union, “the stubbornness and the fighting only happened between the heads of the intelligent parties and the revolution was an affair of the upper classes, without bloodshed, and no disturbance of the public order”.<sup>58</sup> For this reason, the political fight had to be interpreted not in democratic terms but in terms of *intra-* and *inter-group influence* at the elite level.<sup>59</sup> The visibility of the crowds out on the streets was one of the many ways of politically influencing people, because in this way people could see the “majorities” behind the political actions, establishing a new kind of political legitimacy, based on the doctrine of national sovereignty. The political ideas that were publicly spread were, as G. Sion says, even more important instruments of influence<sup>60</sup> – and for this reason we have paid attention to them in this article. Furthermore, we can not ignore the fact that we are referring to a period in which the level of political competence of the population was very low (or, to put it differently, and to quote G. Sion again, “a large part of the country” was “not yet sufficiently enlightened in politics”<sup>61</sup>). This is how the volatility of political options<sup>62</sup> is explained, but also the ignorance and passivity of the population, which many sources from that time speak about.<sup>63</sup> This is what Nicolae Suțu states: “The people watched the unfolding of the events with utter

<sup>58</sup> G. Sion, *Fisiologia alegerilor din Moldavia*, *loc. cit.*, p. 297.

<sup>59</sup> We believe that, in case this methodological suggestion will be continued in further research, through an interpretive interdisciplinary effort, new aspects of the fight for the union will become clear, pointing to, especially, decisional mechanisms and ways of structuring the public opinion.

<sup>60</sup> G. Sion, *Fisiologia alegerilor din Moldavia*, *loc. cit.*, p. 297.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>62</sup> Mihai Cojocariu, *op. cit.*, p. 77, 273.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, *Documente privind unirea Principatelor*, II, documents with the numbers 33, 87, 194, etc.

indifference and had no opinion whatsoever. Limiting themselves to the small circle of their individual preoccupations, they do not have aspirations, even when their interests are at stake, they do not have a point of view about the unfolding events or about the way the governors behave. If they suffer, they resignedly blame destiny and do not participate in a political manifestation unless they are forced to by the government or an active party".<sup>64</sup> By this description, the political culture of the population would correspond, according to Almond&Verba's model, to the parochial-participative type.<sup>65</sup> It is tempting to maintain that, as a consequence, this being also a judicious statement, that the parochialism of the separatists had a potential support base that was far wider than the unionists'. But then again, this counts for very little.

At that time, it was not the majority that was important, at least for the short term, but the way ideas were manipulated and used in the small group of people who had access to the decision making. The Union was an intellectual, elitist project, imposed by discursive strategies (several of which were explained earlier), which ignored or refused the traditional forms of power. The institutions, properties, parochial identities weighed little in the alchemy of the decisional act. Nevertheless, after the establishment of the union, some of these structural forces started to have their say again. We will further explain this phenomenon in the following section.

### NATIONALISM AND CENTRALIZATION

After 1859, in the new state arrangement, a radical centralist formula was chosen from the political-administrative point of view, and, from a cultural point of view, they opted for an identity uniformisation.

Centralization was not the only organisational formula disposable in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We have seen that separatists opted for a confederation, that is for a state which would respect regional identities and interests. It is interesting to point out that the confederative projects were made up and spread, in a first stage, especially in the revolutionary groups, as part of an attempt to get the east-European national identities out from under the control of the empires and to organise them in new political formulas.<sup>66</sup> The centralized nation-state was an ulterior option, suggested by ex-revolutionaries when the international context allowed it. In the

<sup>64</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 374.

<sup>65</sup> Gabriel Almond, Sidney Verba, *Cultura civică. Atitudini politice și democrație în cinci națiuni* (The civic culture. Political attitudes and democracy in five nations), transl. and introductory study by Dan Pavel, București, DU Style, 1996, p. 56.

<sup>66</sup> See George Ciorănescu, *Românii și ideea federalistă* (The Romanians and the federalist idea), București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1996; Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 319–321.

separatists' case, the assuming of the confederative project did not express ambitious and sophisticated reorganisation projects, but was the symptom of their concern for the protection of Moldavia after the association with Muntenia.

The same concerns were the starting point for the decentralization projects. Before the union, there were a few important authors of politograms – most of them were even unionists – who formulated arguments in favour of the administrative decentralization (Mihail Kogălniceanu, Alexandru Odobescu, Nicolae Suțu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Constantin Eraclide and especially Vasile Boerescu<sup>67</sup>). The well-known Vasile Boerescu noted, in a text from 1856, impressive by its erudition, rigour and depth, that “la décentralization administrative, cette belle institution qui fait la force et le progrès de presque tous les Etats civilisés d’aujourd’hui, est inconnue dans les Principautés”.<sup>68</sup> In fact, as can be understood from what we will explain further on, the jurist wished to say not that the principle of decentralization was unknown, but that it was not put into practice in administration, the prefects and administrative divisions depending, as in the Russian model, completely on the centre. In reality, the decentralization principle had been debated on in ad-hoc councils, reaching an agreement with all political parties, and had been established by articles 106–107 of the Constitution of 1866, but was never put into practice.<sup>69</sup> After the union, separatists gave up the confederation project, reinvesting their energy in the idea of “decentralization” – which appeared at a noticeable frequency, hard to imagine today, in the speeches of the Moldavian politicians.

However, the chosen model was centralization. The reason? Here are three possible explanations. Firstly, the two Principalities had already been through their own process of centralization which culminated with the carrying out of the Organic Regulations, based on the Russian model. In the moment of the union, having this political-administrative experience, the only thing that was somewhat traditional was centralization. Secondly, the subordination of the modernisation theme to the nationalist one made it possible for the newly formed community to be conceived – on the foundation of the lack of deep political debates, with a theoretical vocation, concerning the internal organisation of the state – in the coordinates of the nationalist-organic imagery. Imagery for which the idea of unity around a single centre, uniformity, functional articulation, mystical adhesion, messianic sacrifice etc, is essential. The third explanation is found in the external threats and pressure. The part of Alexandru Ioan Cuza's rule with the most important centralizing actions coincides with the period of attempting to gain international recognition of the union.<sup>70</sup> There is a tight link between the two, in the

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191–192.

<sup>68</sup> Vasile Boerescu, *La Roumanie après le Traité de Paris du 30 Mars 1856*, in *Acte și documente...*, III, p. 100.

<sup>69</sup> Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>70</sup> Dan Berindei, *Epoca Unirii* (The epoch of the Union), București, Editura Academiei, 1979, p. 157–158.

situation in which a part of the reticence of the Guaranteeing Powers related to the union, constantly recalled in international meetings, were based on lack of belief that the two Romanian states, but especially Moldavia, really wanted to unite. As I. C. Brătianu said, some of the Guaranteeing Powers declared that the Romanians did not lack the “right, but the will to unite”.<sup>71</sup> Centralization was a part of an ample demonstrative effort, made in front of Europe, of constructing and testing unity, internal coherence and the functionality of the new state. When, in May 1860, Mihail Kogălniceanu, who was then the head of the Moldavian government, declared that the “centralization of the administration and of the legislative power have become a primary need”,<sup>72</sup> he was referring to these external exigencies.

While in Western Europe centralization was primarily ideologically based on the Enlightenment, on its rationalising ethos, in the Principalities, as in other newly formed European states,<sup>73</sup> centralization was linked to nationalism. This meant that, more than the known assets of centralization (the increased ability to govern unified territories within precisely fixed boundaries; the putting into practice of a united, continuous, predictable and efficient government by a single centre; a strict system of orders, enforced in a large territory; the centralization and bureaucratization of the administration; the modification, extension and uniformization of the fiscal management; the alphabetization of the population; the perfecting of the mechanism of mobilization; the elaboration of strategies of legitimating under the pressure of a newly appeared doctrine of the people’s sovereignty; the control on lawful violence, etc.<sup>74</sup>), the process involved the building of a common identity. Furthermore, all the political and administrative measures mentioned were interpreted in an ethno-cultural perspective. In this way, loyalty to the state, required by the status of citizen had to be coupled with loyalty to the ethno-cultural community; alphabetization was taken on, monopolised and supported by the state, as a way of catechizing the nation; the doctrine of the people’s sovereignty was understood exclusively as the doctrine of national sovereignty; the use of legitimate violence was linked to symbolical violence, etc.

One more observation: after 1859, nationalism, with its centralizing effect, became *raison d’état*,<sup>75</sup> because, on the one hand, it was the source of coherence and efficiency in internal politics, and on the other hand, it upheld the complete

<sup>71</sup> A.D. Xenopol, *op. cit.*, p. 733.

<sup>72</sup> In “Românul” (The Romanian), nr. 134–135, 13–14 May 1860, p. 403.

<sup>73</sup> For the centralization of the new Balkan states, see Barbara Jelavich, *Istoria Balcanilor. Secolele al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea* (The history of the Balkan states. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), vol. I, transl. by Mihai-Eugen Avădanei, Iași, Institutul European, 2000, p. 265–266 și *passim*. About Germany and Italy see, for example, Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger (eds.), *European Politics in Transition*, Lexington, Massachusetts, Toronto, 1987, p. 227–234 și p. 320–324.

<sup>74</sup> G. Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, London, Hutchinson, 1978, p. 60–61.

<sup>75</sup> Sorin Antohi, *Exercițiul distanței. Discursuri, societăți, metode* (Exercising distance. Discourses, societies, methods), ediția a II-a, București, Editura Nemira, 1998, p. 304–305.

sovereignty project the new state desired, in its budding external politics. The confusion between the concept of external and internal sovereignty<sup>76</sup> explains why administrative problems – the choice between centralization and decentralization, for example – became, in the official discourse, problems of national security. Nationalism was always twinned, in the official discourse, with the theme of the besieged city and the state of emergency.

### THE SPECTRES OF SEPARATISM

We will carry on having a look at some of the events which illustrate the tendencies we saw earlier. After 1859, the political dispute between the unionists and the separatists stopped being an equal fight: the former had legislative and institutional levers to be able to implement their policies and had to hand the prerogative of legitimate violence to impose conformism and silence to those who contested the new state arrangement. Developing the institutions of the modern state, the political class had a good alibi to marginalize and repress any centrifugal movements. Separatism was classed as no longer being a political movement but rather an anti-system movement, against which they were justified in taking any course of action. For this reason, “separatists” disappeared as such off the political scene, their parochial instincts expressing themselves in different contestations made in the name of and for the protection of Moldavia and Iași.

From the point of view that interests us, during Alexandru Ion Cuza’s rule, there were two stages: before and after the beginning of 1862. Until 1862, when the United Principalities had separate governments and Elective Assemblies, and the harmonization of their interests was discussed in the central Commission of Focșani, the parochialist energies were concentrated on the effort to make a different town than Bucharest – Focșani – be the capital of the new state. The debates held in the Central Commission were very heated, and greatly concerned the unionists and worried the ruler, who had already chosen Bucharest. The fight was stopped in 1862, when, after having received external approval (The Constantinople Conference, at the end of 1861), a decree was published for the centralization of the principle institutions in Bucharest. This was a first shock for the Moldavians, in their new political context. Cuza came to Iași to proclaim the completion of the union, but here he was to be received in an unpleasant way: the assembly of Moldavia received him (On 3/15 December 1861) in “glacial silence”. The famous declaration from the 11/23 December, also from Iași, in which Cuza says that “The union has been completed! The Romanian nationality is established!” and which is recalled by historiography as a moment of national

<sup>76</sup> For a debate about the two faces of sovereignty, see Cristopher Pierson, *The Modern State*, London and New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 47–50.

enthusiasm, was received with restraint in Moldavia.<sup>77</sup> In the last session of the Elective assembly of Moldavia, the deputies asked the ruler to “take measures” for defending the local interests of Moldavia.<sup>78</sup>

The centralization left Iași, the capital of Moldavia for 300 years, without institutions which had been fundamental coordinates of its symbolical geography. It is normal, therefore, to imagine that the centralizing measures taken, of a political-administrative type, had traumatic effects for the inhabitants of the city. All the more so, as we have seen, seeing as the feeling of identity of the Moldavians was linked to an institutional memory.

From 1862, the new reason for a political fight for the parochialist Moldavians was the problem of the “moral compensation” they required for the “sacrifice” Iași had made for the Union. This is how the idea of putting the Court of Cassation in this city. 23 of the 28 Moldavian deputies from the united elective assembly transformed the idea into a legislative proposal, requiring a “moral compensation for the losses this city has suffered”. The debates were heated, even violent, this time round; the suggestion was refused in the end, due to the position of the nationalist Moldavians, led by Mihail Kogălniceanu, who maintained that putting an important institution in Iași would encourage separatism.<sup>79</sup> This was the second major shock of the centralization which was felt in Moldavia. Nicolae Istrati organised a demonstration to protest, while Mihail Kogălniceanu and Anastasie Panu’s portraits were burned publicly, and the two were warned that they will never again be chosen as deputies. The protesters spoke repeatedly about the “swallowing up”, the “annexing” of Moldavia by Muntenia.<sup>80</sup> Amongst the people, disappointed about the hurried centralization, was also the French consul Place, who had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Union.<sup>81</sup> The transferral of the Military School from Iași to Bucharest and the refusal of the authorities to discuss the legislative proposals for the “consolidation of the University” of Iași, made by Kogălniceanu, strengthened the impression that Moldavia was disfavoured by the union.<sup>82</sup>

Another source of tension was the symbolic violence the new state used. The intense propaganda of the nationalist symbols, the occultation of the Moldavian ones, the excessive visibility of the representatives of the centre (prefects, public

<sup>77</sup> T.W. Riker, *op. cit.*, p. 323–324.

<sup>78</sup> N. Grigoraș, *Alexandru Ioan Cuza și Iașii* (Alexandru Ioan Cuza and Iași), in L. Boicu, Gh. Platon, Al. Zub (ed.), *Cuza Vodă. In memoriam*, Iași, Junimea, 1973, p. 481.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 484–485.

<sup>80</sup> T.W. Riker, *op. cit.*, p. 331. See also Dumitru Vitcu, *Iașii și Unirea Principatelor* (Iași and the Union of the Principalities), in Gh. Buzatu, A. Karețchi, D. Vitcu (eds.), *Aspecte ale luptei pentru unitate națională. Iași: 1600–1859–1918* (Aspects of the fight for national unity. Iași: 1600–1859–1918), Iași, Junimea, 1983, p. 132–133.

<sup>81</sup> T.W. Riker, *op. cit.*

<sup>82</sup> D. Vitcu, *op. cit.*, p.133–134.

functionaries, Muntenian military moved to Moldavia), the control over education<sup>83</sup> and over the mass-communication means,<sup>84</sup> the confiscation of the public sphere<sup>85</sup> – all created a sensation of violence which called for reactions both in the time of Cuza's rule and later on.

From 1863, Moldavian parochialism entered a petitionary stage. Bucharest felt the tension from the ex-capital of Moldova and tried to control and re-direct it. At the suggestion of the minister of Internal Affairs, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> January 1863 (so exactly before the symbolical day of the 5<sup>th</sup> January, when, in 1859, A. I. Cuza was elected Prince of Moldavia, being later confirmed, on January 24<sup>th</sup>, as Prince of the united state) a discussion was organised at the prefecture to which the manufacturers, merchants and the handicraftsmen of Iași were invited. The report of the meeting (in fact it was a petition), which was kept, is a very useful document because it shows us the level of discontentedness of the inhabitants of Iași about the union. The participants complained that the level of commercial changes in 1862 (the year of the centralization) had fallen by 70% compared to 1861. The report stated that the “trades and factories of Iași have completely fallen”, that “flour mills, brick makers, leather works, soap manufactories have no work to do”, that “printing works and lithographs are as good as shut down”, in the same way “all the other trades, in general, are paralysed”. Further on, the participators observed that “the value of houses fell dramatically in 1862”. The conclusion was obvious: “faced with such sad proof which shows the decline and complete ruin of Iași, it would be appropriate for the economical and commercial interests to be powerfully supported, especially as in Bucharest there are the governments of both the countries”. Bringing examples of European towns of secondary importance, or of ex-capitals which had kept their glow even after having declined from this position, the Moldavians gathered at the Iași prefecture desired for “Iași to remain a central residence, keeping the rights of its ecclesiastical and civil institutions”. The taking of the Court of Cassation to Iași was asked for, bringing forth a very interesting argument: “If the Court of Cassation were to be brought to Iași, as we have already requested, so that there would be a real reciprocity between Muntenians and Moldavians with an equal principle, Bucharest having the central Government, the presidency, the Ministries, the Legislative Assembly being visited by Moldavians, in the same way, Iași, *as a second capital* [emphasis mine, A. C.], having the Court of Cassation, would be visited by Muntenians and they would

<sup>83</sup> Nicolae Sutu writes that nationalists were given a public education and the teachers were chosen from amongst the youth who had “subversive” ideas and were proud about the fanaticism of the pupils, *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 321, 376. See also Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă* (The life and works of Cuza Vodă), București, Editura Științifică, 1966, p. 95–96.

<sup>84</sup> The Moldavian press had undergone measures of an “extreme rigour”, *Memoriile Principelui*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>85</sup> The unionists profited “in an exclusive manner of the right to assemble”, *Ibidem*.

learn to know each other in their own lands". The petitioners made a long list with requests for the amelioration of the situation Iași was in, amongst others the transformation of the city into *porto-franco*, the navigability of the Prut, the building of a road between Iași, Sculeni and Țuțora, the creation of a mortgage banc, of a school of commerce, the finishing of the buildings that had been started a long time before (The metropolitan Cathedral or the barracks in the Copou), the allocation of funds from the monasterial money for university education, etc.<sup>86</sup>

The general conclusion of the document was rewritten, in October 1863, in a report summed up by Kogălniceanu (newly named minister of Internal Affairs) which stated that, after the 24th January 1862, almost all of the towns in Romania had "profited" from the union, only Iași had suffered "heavy losses".<sup>87</sup> From autumn 1863, the complaints of the inhabitants of Iași were directed to a consultative Commission, created by order of the government, which was made up out of 38 nobles from Iași, led by the metropolitan bishop. Due to the care of Th. Codrescu, the reports of this commission were kept. The Commission wrote a list of proposals for the "development and improvement of the material and moral situation of this town". At the end of November 1863, the list of suggestions was sent to Kogălniceanu. In the document it was required that they put into practice, not only for Iași, but for the whole state, "the three big principles of modern science: administrative decentralization, municipal independence and the independence of the magistrature through the gradual putting into practice of irremovability". The signatories justified their requests by the desire for "Iași, as the whole country, to escape from the deadly concentration of all national life and activity in one place wherever it may be". Amongst the administrative suggestions, there was the creation of a district council and a communal council. It is important that the first central institution to be criticized was the ministry of internal affairs, which was asked to change the regulations of the police force and the "suspending of violent procedures and of degrading punishments, which are incompatible with the fundamental law".

The list of suggestions also included: the connecting of Iași to the rest of the country by railroads, roads and efficient postal services, a series of improvements – communal, commercial (amongst which the declaring of the city with *porto-fraco* and the navigability of the Prut), moral and intellectual (for example, the growth of the university and the bringing back of the Military School to Iași), clerical (for "Iași to be the decided living place for the head of the Romanian church" and the "meeting place of the synod", measure which would make Iași a "religious centre")

<sup>86</sup> Th. Codrescu, *Uricarul sau colecțiune de diferite acte care pot servi la istoria românilor* (Uricariul or a collection of different documents that can be of use for the history of the Romanians), vol. XII, Iași, 1889, p. 339–346. From now on referred to as *Uricariul*...

<sup>87</sup> N. Grigoraș, *op.cit.*, p. 492.

improvements, and other urban improvements. A special place was dedicated to the “moving of the Court of Cassation to Iași”, which would bring about a “real brotherhood between Moldavians and Muntenians”.<sup>88</sup>

Once suggested, these proposals remained, according to N. A. Bogdan, “dead letters”.<sup>89</sup> Not even did the initiator of the commission, Kogălniceanu, seem ready to put into practice any of the requests mentioned above. Kogălniceanu was heard saying that he would prefer seeing “grass growing on the streets of Iași” rather than agree to move the Court of Cassation to Iași.<sup>90</sup> As we have already suggested, the Commission had been made as an instrument to control the opinions and frustrations of the Moldavians, rather than as a way to solve the problems they brought up. In this way the petitionary era ended. The following demonstrations of parochialism took the shape of a rebellion.

At the end of Cuza’s rule, Moldova was still full of frustrations and her unhappiness was, as T. W. Riker states, generalised, in all the different social classes.<sup>91</sup> Amongst the unsatisfied were, as already mentioned, firstly the gentry and businessmen, and, from the political point of view, the former separatists, but also many unionists who were disappointed with the way the events unfolded after 1859. The inhabitants of Iași celebrated the end of Cuza’s rule, on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1866, by three nights of illuminations.<sup>92</sup> The consul of Prussia in Iași, Goering, thought that, if Moldavians had the possibility to express themselves freely, the result would have been little favourable for the union.<sup>93</sup> “The whole of Moldavia is suffering, noted Nicolae Suțu, frankly, from the oblivion in which it has been left since the union; in fact, it was nothing but an annexing and the destruction of its being, because of the lack of stipulations which would have made the sacrifice less painful”.<sup>94</sup> This was the context in which the Iași uprising in April 1866 exploded – and can be explained.

After Cuza’s abdication, Bucharest feared two things, that the Guaranteeing Powers, who, as it is well known, had accepted the union only under Cuza’s rule, would ask them to come back to what it had been before, till 1859; and that Moldavia would make use of the context to force a divorce from Muntenia. In the Paris Conference (February-June 1866), where they talked about the situation of the United Principalities, the problem about the “real desire” of Moldavia to remain united with Muntenia reappeared.<sup>95</sup> The Russian ambassador Budberg considered

<sup>88</sup> *Uricariul...*, p. 386–400.

<sup>89</sup> N.A. Bogdan, *Regele Carol I și a doua sa capitală* (King Carol I and his second capital), Iași, 1916, p.11

<sup>90</sup> *Uricariul...*, p. 400, Th. Codrescu’s note.

<sup>91</sup> T.W. Riker, *op.cit.*, p. 477.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 476.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 478.

<sup>94</sup> *Memoriile Principelui...*, p. 326.

<sup>95</sup> Gr. Chiriță, *România și Conferința de pace de la Paris, februarie-iunie 1866* (Romania and the peace conference in Paris, February-June 1866), II, in “Revista de istorie”, tom 38, noiembrie 1985, p. 1080.

that “the majority of Moldavians seriously desires (*au fond*) a separation”.<sup>96</sup> The Austrian consul, Haas, wrote that in Iași, people were “very tense” and that an Easter rebellion could be foreseen.<sup>97</sup> The rumour was that Grigore Sturdza,<sup>98</sup> the ex-candidate from 1859, and another ambitious young man, who had just returned from abroad, Nicolae Rosetti-Roznovanu<sup>99</sup>, desire the throne of Moldavia and was organising a coup to detach Moldavia from Muntenia.

After the coup on 11 February, in Iași appeared three types of opinions: the partisans of the government and of keeping the union under a foreign prince (Vasile Pogor, Titu Maiorescu, the Negruzzi brothers, P. P. Carp), those who wanted to keep the union under a Romanian ruler (N. Ionescu, D. Lateș, D. Tacu, etc.), and the separatists (N. Rosetti-Roznovanu, Constantin Moruzi, Teodor Boldur-Lăteșcu, Nicu Ceur-Aslan, the lawyers Alecu Cernea, Panaite Cernea, Alecu Spiru, Sandu Bonciu, who were joined by the metropolitan bishop Calinic Miclescu).<sup>100</sup> Initially, these three parties met together to prepare for the elections for the Assembly. On 28 March (according to the old calendar), Boldur-Lăteșcu held the first separatist charge, maintaining that “dear Moldavia” was threatened with “becoming a vassal”. The next day, the unionists were excluded from the assembly,<sup>101</sup> and N. Rosetti-Roznovanu presented a diatribe against Muntenians: “today, all our movements, in my opinion, should be towards saving our poor homeland Moldavia from a yoke that is harsher and more shameful than any other, the yoke of those who call themselves, who dare call themselves our brothers, but by their deeds have demonstrated enough that they have no other desire than to use us as slaves, to suck out of us the little we have left, to sacrifice us like innocent victims of their debauched ambitions”.<sup>102</sup>

Feeling the danger in Moldavia, Bucharest took special measures. Before organising the plebiscite for the election of Carol I, two out of the three members of the ad-interim rule – Nicolae Golescu and Lascăr Catargiu, as well as the minister for Public Works Dimitrie Sturdza came to Iași, alongside a Muntenian regiment, to closely survey things. The prefect’s job was taken over by Ștefan

<sup>96</sup> Dimitrie A. Sturdza, *Însemnătatea europeană a realizării definitive a dorințelor rostite de divanurile ad-hoc în 7/19 și 9/21 octomvrie 1857* (The European importance of the coming about of the desires stated by the ad-hoc councils on the 7/19<sup>th</sup> and 9/21<sup>st</sup> October 1857), in AARMSI, seria II, tom XXXIV, 1911–1912, București, 1912, p. 805–808.

<sup>97</sup> T.W. Riker, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 477.

<sup>99</sup> Gh. Chiriță, *Manifestări antidinastice în perioada venirii lui Carol I în România (aprilie–mai 1866)* (Anti-dynastical demonstrations in the period Carol the 1<sup>st</sup> came to Romania (April–May 1866)), in “Studii”, tom 20, 1967, nr. 6, p. 1080.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*; Titu Maiorescu, *Istoria politică a României sub domnia lui Carol I* (The political history of Romania under the rule of Carol I), București, Humanitas, 1994, p. 16; N. A. Bogdan, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>101</sup> Gh. Chiriță, *op. cit.*, p. 1081.

<sup>102</sup> *Uricariul...*, IX, Iași, 1887, p. 110.

Golescu (the brother of the ad-interim ruler)<sup>103</sup> and there were changes made in the army and magistrature.<sup>104</sup>

The mission of the ad-interim rulers in Iași was extremely difficult, because not only were the separatists worried about the fate of Moldavia, but the unionists were too. Catargiu tried to talk at the main unionist club in the city, but was immediately interrupted by cries from the audience: “Down with Muntenia! We don’t want to be taught by gypsies!”. On another occasion, Catargiu and Golescu were in danger of being lynched in that same club, after they requested a national loan.<sup>105</sup>

The Iași rebellion was hurried by the announcement on the 2/14 April, of the candidanship of Carol of Hohenzollern. The day after, on Thomas’ Sunday, after mass, the crowd that met between the Metropolitan church and the Roznovanu palace (where the separatist leaders had assembled), around 500 people according to official approximations, set off with the metropolitan bishop leading the way, to the Administrative Palace where the two ad-interim rulers were. The protesters were armed with clubs and stones; some had rifles. In front of the Muntenian regiment, massed in the road on the way to the administrative Palace, they tried to put up barricades. The crowd shouted “Down with the Union!”, “Down with foreign princes!”, “Long live Moldavia”, “Long live the Convention!” (The Paris Convention which mentioned separate rulers in the two Principalities). Initially, the soldiers did not have the right to fire, but the fight was becoming unequal because the protesters attacked with their clubs and stones. Finally, the signal was given for them to fire and to attack with their bayonets. In this way a bloody confrontation began, it lasted one, two or three hours, no-one actually knows. It would seem that amongst the wounded was the metropolitan bishop also. Order was re-established swiftly, the streets were cleaned of blood and the barricades, and the leaders of the uprising were arrested. No-one knows the number of victims because the authorities investigated in utmost secret. The numbers must be of tens of dead and wounded.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Gh. Chiriță, *op. cit.*, p. 1082.

<sup>104</sup> T.W. Riker, *op.cit.*, p. 478.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 479.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 480; Gh. Chiriță, *op.cit.*, p. 1083–1084; N.A. Bogdan, *op. cit.*, p.15; *Uricariul...*, p.112; Dumitru Vitcu, *11 februarie 1866: hermeneutica unei pretinse revoluții* (11 February 1866: the hermeneutics of a so-called revolution), in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “A. D. Xenopol”*, Iași, 1992, p. 175–177. After these events, Constantin Moruzi, protégé of Russia, fled abroad, the metropolitan bishop was arrested, pardoned by Carol I and renamed metropolitan bishop, Rosetti-Roznovanu gave up separatism, requesting just decentralization and hoping for a political career. Only Boldur-Lătescu held to his separatist message, editing a gazette with virulent messages about the Muntenians. The gazette “Boldul” (“The pin”) bore the symbol of an ox whose skin was being eaten off by a crow – an obvious allusion. In September 1867, Boldur-Lătescu was beaten and stabbed while he was at the circus, by two Muntenian officers. The investigation was hushed up by the prefect. See, for more details N.A. Bogdan, *op. cit.*, p. 102 sqq.

The Iași movement is not spoken about in the history manuals, or in many of the scientific works. When it is brought up, it is treated as being marginal and accidental and the participators are diabolised. Nevertheless, we hope that it is clear from what we have explained so far that the state of things in Moldavia favoured an uprising seeing as the institutional mechanisms that should have solved the Moldavian problems did not work, because of lack of political interest. Furthermore, in the uprising in April 1866 took part 500 people, which means an important number for that time, seeing as in the attempt at a Moldavian revolutionary uprising in March 1848 took part 1,000 people. The scales were tipped in favour of the unionists not because of the popular lack of adherence to the separatist ideas, but because of the violent intervention of the authorities and of their efforts to hush up the event.

After 1866, Moldavian parochialism was to come back to the petitionary form of expression. The moving of the Court of Cassation and decentralization became the principal points on Iași's agenda. Nevertheless, as under Cuza's rule, every time when there were legislative proposals for these things, in Bucharest, they were rejected. The reason was the same: the spectre of separatism, that "bugbear", according to N. A. Bogdan, which "blinded all the Muntenian rulers".<sup>107</sup> The attitude of Prince Carol was different from Cuza's. Warned about the state of affairs in Iași, he was careful to arrange their susceptibility, creating symbolic compensations for their "sacrifice". Thus, he named Iași, from his first discourses, the "second capital" (a title the inhabitants of Iași had asked for, as we saw earlier,<sup>108</sup> his "second home" or, picking up an idea suggested first by Titu Maiorescu, the "cultural capital of the country".<sup>109</sup> These formulas, spoken with a therapeutic role will often be repeated in Carol I's speeches. Furthermore, the prince borrowed themes from the parochial discourse, often mentioning, in his frequent visits to Iași, the urgency of rewarding Moldavia and the application of the decentralization principle.<sup>110</sup> The political holidays called for by Carol I's many visits to Iași, made on important occasions (10 May, Coronation day, 8 April, his birthday, both of them becoming national holidays, replacing 24 January, a celebration left to one side after 1866<sup>111</sup> because of its potential hurtful meaning for the Moldavians<sup>112</sup>),

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>108</sup> See above, note 81.

<sup>109</sup> The formula "Iași – cultural capital of the country" has been kept in public memory until today, and carries on playing the role of a compensating myth; see Adrian Cioflâncă, *Clîșeul terapeutic* (The therapeutical cliché), in "Monitorul", 22 November 2001, p. 6A.

<sup>110</sup> An impressive documentation about the relationship Carol I – Iași was drawn up by N. A. Bogdan, *op. cit.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>112</sup> Until 1861, both the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> January were celebrated as national days. From 1861, Romania stopped celebrating on the 5<sup>th</sup> January because of the "separatist" connotations the double celebration could have; see D. Vitcu, *Iașii...*, p. 130.

were important tools for pacifying Moldavia, socialising the national symbols and mobilizing the Moldavian's enthusiasm.

### AS A CONCLUSION

The events we have talked about received little attention from most historiographic writings. Although they marked the political life of the newly formed Romanian state for many years, historians had the tendency to ignore them or to put them aside considering them marginal, and siding with the triumphant political discourse of the times. We have shown through this article some of the many unionist topics which were continued *tale-qualè* in historiography. This happened because of the alliance between historiography and nationalism,<sup>113</sup> an ideology that was structured back in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became constituent of the modern Romanian state and a background for the cultural metadiscourse.

Separatists, as an expression of Moldavian parochialism, were in turn – as we have tried to show – diabolised, politically defeated, ignored or institutionally aggressed and repressed. The last weapon used against them is oblivion (the politics of oblivion using the already mentioned vulnerability of parochialism faced with the techniques of homologing of modernity). In 1861, Mihail Kogălniceanu suggested something that later on would be institutionalised. He required that the celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> January be included in the one on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, because “to keep both these celebrations would be to establish a separatism which needs to disappear more and more from our laws, our customs and even from our contemporary annals”.<sup>114</sup> (Emphasis mine, A. C.) Not only did the authorities participate in this alliance of oblivion, but historiography also did. Ernest Renan was right in saying that “l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses”.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Alexandru Zub, *Istorism și naționalism în România modernă* (Historism and nationalism in modern Romania), in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (ed.), *Doctrină politică. Concepte universale și realități românești* (Political doctrines. Universal concepts and Romanian realities), Iași, Polirom, 1998, p. 130–141.

<sup>114</sup> “Monitorul Oficial al Moldovei” (The official gazette of Moldavia), 29 December 1860.

<sup>115</sup> *Apud* Benedict Anderson, *Comunități imaginate. Reflecții asupra originii și răspândirii naționalismului*, (Imagined communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism), transl. by Roxana Oltean and Ioana Potrache, București, Integral, 2000, p. 183. For the link between memory, history and oblivion, see Paul Ricoeur's volume, *Memoria, istoria, uitarea* (Memory, History, Oblivion), transl. by Ilie Gyurcsik and Margareta Gyurcsik, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2001. Exploring the strategies in building the cultural canon which is fixed in the people's mind, combined with the archaeology of the oblivion policies is an epistemologically valid technique (much better than the „demything techniques”) through which the historiographical discourse could be revised.