

**REVOLUTION, UPRISING OR COUP D'ÉTAT? A CRITICAL
REVIEW OF THE ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL
TRADITION OF THE MOVEMENT
LED BY TUDOR VLADIMIRESCU**

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“Large portions of the literature on revolutions and social change have [...] judged or scaled other processes according to their proximity to some ideal type of revolution. In this way the specificity of both these «great» revolutions and of other processes and types of change was often lost.”¹

Abstract

From a historical point of view, the events of 1821 have not only a political significance, insofar as they are associated with the idea of revolution, but also a symbolic one, as a result of the “epochal threshold” that they imposed and the entire historical mythology built around them. Until recent decades, scholars have credited two traditions in interpreting revolution: the Marxist and the Weberian traditions. The structuralist view, dialectics, and historical materialism exercised an overwhelming influence on post-war Romanian historiography, including on the meaning of the concept of revolution, until around the 2000s. Our research aims to review the Romanian historiography dedicated to the events of 1821 in the Romanian Principalities and the manner they can be associated with these contradictory theories on the concept of revolution.

Our approach also takes into account Theda Skocpol’s definition of “social revolution,” S. N. Eisenstadt’s research on the phenomenon of “charismaticization” and Hans Blumenberg’s concept of “epochal threshold.” At the same time, we think it is important to refer to a recent article by Radu G. Păun, who reopens the discussion on Vladimirescu’s personality and intentions. Was he an exponent of the Romanian Old Regime or did he, in fact, go beyond his era, launching new ideas and political practices, coherent enough to propose a new type of political legitimacy, originating from a political community endowed with a historical personality (the nation) and not (or, at least, not only, as we find in other European states of the time) from God?

In our opinion, the answer to these fundamental questions will allow a critical approach to the vast Romanian historiography dedicated to this subject, as well as a new history of the moment of 1821, a history detached from the endless dispute about the affiliation (or not) of Tudor of Vladimiri to Eteria. The configuration of

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¹ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, Pt. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 617.

Vladimirescu's discourse and the political propaganda practices he adopted justify, in our view, a re-reading of the sources, in an attempt to understand the characteristics of this truly exceptional personality at the dawn of Romanian modernity.

Keywords: revolution, movement, coup d'état, historiographical tradition, historical epochal threshold.

From a historical perspective, the events of 1821 have not only a political significance, to the extent of their association with *the idea of revolution*, but also a symbolic one, due to the "epochal threshold"² they opened and the historical mythology built around them.³ The concept of *revolution*, was defined by many authors in the 19th century mainly as the founding event of a new legitimate political order, in line with the expectations of a large part of society – "the heroic revolution" –, as distinct from revolts, uprisings, conspiracies, *coups d'état*.⁴ In other words, following Reinhart Koselleck's demonstration, revolution became towards the end of the 18th century "a metahistorical concept" and a regulative

² In a study abundantly quoted by Hans Blumenberg's scholars and critics alike (Johann Arnason, "Hans Blumenberg: The Philosopher in the Middle of History," *Social Imaginaries*, 3, no. 1 (2017): 25-27), the German philosopher wondered: "What is an «epoch?» What is the structure of «epochal chance?» How is the incongruence of testimonies and events to be understood and methodologically handled? There are the very detailed questions that seem to be necessary to discuss and transform the problem of History from its daunting massiveness into something graspable" (Hans Blumenberg, "Epochenschwelle und Rezeption," *Philosophische Rundschau*, 6 (1958): 94-95). In search of an answer, he offered an explanation by appealing to the notion of "epochal threshold," because "there are no witnesses to changes of epoch. The epochal turning is an imperceptible frontier, bound to no crucial date or event. But viewed differentially, a *threshold* marks itself off, which can be ascertained as something either not yet arrived at or already crossed" (Hans Blumenberg et al., *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 469).

³ Meaning "baseless story," "groundless representation of a person, thing, or case," or, on the contrary, "narrative tradition" about a character or event, having an explanatory role (Laura Cruz and Willem Frijhof, Introduction: Myth in History, History in Myth, in *Myth in History, History in Myth: Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Society for Netherlandic History (Leiden Brill, 2009)*, 1; Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)*, 147), the historical myth represents a "means of justifying or, alternatively, challenging established institutions and conduct" (Coenraad Arnold Tamse, *The Political Myth, in Some Political Mythologies: Papers Delivered to the Fifth Anglo-Dutch Historical Conference*, ed. J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 14; Angus Nichols, *Myth and the Human Sciences: Hans Blumenberg's Theory of Myth (New York; London: Routledge, 1999)* XIV-XVI).

⁴ Sergio Luzzatto, *European Visions of the French Revolution, in Revolution and the Meanings of Freedom in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Isser Woloch (Stanford: University Press, 1996), 31-59; Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-2; F. L. Van Holthoon, *French Historians in the Nineteenth Century: Providence and History* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 23-116; George Lawson, "The Two Faces of the Revolution," in *Negotiating Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile*, ed. George Lawson (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

principle of knowledge, having a transcendent significance.⁵ The same concept was subject to a long debate in the following century, under the impact of the “Bolshevik revolution,” but also of the rise of dialectical and historical materialism in the explanation of social and political change,⁶ becoming a kind of “general concept,” that “means something anywhere in the world, but which in a more precise sense fluctuates enormously from country to country and from one political camp to another.”⁷ Until the last decades, the specialists credited two traditions in the *interpretation of the revolution*: the Marxist and the Weberian one;⁸ the first essentially structuralist, giving priority to socio-economic dynamics and the governance systems,⁹ the other more concerned with the autonomy of the political phenomenon, the configuration of the elites, representations and perceptions.¹⁰

From the historians George Lefebvre, Maurice Dobb and Albert Soboul, proponents of historical materialism and of the concept of *bourgeois revolution*,¹¹ Perry Anderson and Immanuel Wallerstein, who treat revolution as a phenomenon of accumulation and rupture in the context of the emergence of capitalism and of the industrial revolution,¹² to Jacques Godechot and Robert Palmer,¹³ who

⁵ Reinhart Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution,” *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 50; Reinhart Koselleck, *Conceptele și istoriile lor: Semantica și pragmatica limbajului social-politic*, trans. Gabriel G. Decuble and Maria Oruz, (Bucharest: Art, 2009).

⁶ George C. Comninel, *Rethinking the French Revolution: Marxism and the Revisionist Challenge* (London; New York: Verso, 1987), 5-12, with a Foreword by George Rude. For a detailed analysis, see John Rees, *The Algebra of Revolution: The Dialectic and the Classical Marxist Tradition* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998); François Furet, *Reflecții asupra Revoluției Franceze*, 2nd ed., trans. Mircea Vintilescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2021), 119 and *sqq* (the chapter *Catehismul revoluționar*, in which he formulates a systematic critique of the concept of bourgeois revolution).

⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, *Conceptele și istoriile lor*, 44.

⁸ Jack A. Goldstone, “The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8 (1982): 192.

⁹ William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 7-40; Colin Mooers, *The Making of Bourgeois Europe: Absolutism, Revolution, and the Rise of Capitalism in England, France and Germany* (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 2-4, 16-32; Randall Collins, “Maturisation of the State-Centred Theory of Revolution and Ideology,” *Sociological Theory* 11, no. 1 (1993), 117-128.

¹⁰ M. N. F. Giglioli, *Legitimacy and Revolution in a Society of Masses: Max Weber, Antonio Gramsci, and the Fin-de-Siècle Debate on Social Order* (London; New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 2013), 168-173; Roland Mousnier, *Les hiérarchies sociales de 1450 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969); Norman Hampson, *The First European Revolution 1776-1815* (New York: Thames&Huston, 1969).

¹¹ George Lefebvre, *La Révolution Française*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957); Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1946); Albert Soboul, *Understanding the French Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1988).

¹² Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London; New York: Verso 2013), 10-13; Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no. 4 (1974): 403-414;

developed George Lefebvre's older theory of the "Atlantic Revolution,"¹⁴ the structuralist view, the dialectical and historical materialism had a significant influence on post-war Romanian historiography until around 2000, including the meaning of the concept of revolution.¹⁵

Known in post-war Romanian historiography as an author who "uses Marxist teaching,"¹⁶ Maurice Dobb insisted on the connection between a certain level of growth, of structural development and the accentuation of interaction and tension between the leading, dynamic categories of the social framework, in the outbreak of revolutions.¹⁷ Albert Soboul, another Marxist historian with influence in Romanian historiography,¹⁸ attributed modern revolutions to the action of "groups of forces," of bourgeois, intellectual, institutional, but also noble extraction, the revolution being inevitably the expression of the clash of social interests ("class interests"), in the context of the "crisis of feudal relations," the rise of capitalism and the rationalization of state organization.¹⁹ These views were present among important Romanian historians, from Andrei Oțetea to Gh. Platon and Dan Berindei, who have approached in a structuralist manner, but far from ideological dogmatism, the problem of the modern revolution, including the events of 1821.²⁰

Immanuel Walerstein, *Sistemul mondial modern: Mercantilism și consolidarea economiei mondiale europene, 1600-1750*, vol. 4, trans. Dorel Abraham, Ilie Bădescu and Marcel Ghibernea (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1993), 107-122.

¹³ Jacques Léon Godechot, *Les Révolutions (1770-1799)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); Jacques Léon Godechot, *La Grande Nation. L'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde de 1789 à 1799*, 2 tom., (Paris: Aubier, 1956); Robert Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

¹⁴ See a critique of the "Atlantic Revolution" concept at Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4-5.

¹⁵ Gheorghe Platon, *De la constituirea națiunii la Marea Unire: Studii de istorie modernă*, vol. 2 (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 1998), 138-146. See a problematized presentation of these works, including comments on their relevance to the Romanian historical research, at Sergiu Columbeanu, "Conceptii actuale în problema revoluției franceze," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 17, no. 3 (1964), 599-610.

¹⁶ S. Columbeanu, "Istoria economiei feudale occidentale în lumina unor lucrări recente," *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 13, no. 6 (1960): 184; Nicolae Stoicescu, Ana Ioachim, "Recenzie to "Studii Storici," Roma, II, nr. 1-4, 1960," *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 16, no. 3 (1963), 744-745.

¹⁷ Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development*, 12-13.

¹⁸ See Sergiu Columbeanu review of *Les sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II. Histoire politique et sociale des sections de Paris. 2 juin 1793-9 thermidor an II*, by Albert Soboul, *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 15, no. 2 (1962): 462-471. Among the many reviews of Albert Soboul's books, we quote, Nicolae Liu, *Recenzie*, review of *La civilisation et la Revolution Française*, vol. 1, by Albert Soboul, *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 25, no. 2 (1972): 414-417; and Mihai Manea, *Recenzie*, review of *Comprendre la revolution. Problemes politiques de la Revolution Française*, by Albert Soboul, *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 37, no. 6 (1984): 596-598.

¹⁹ Albert Soboul, *op. cit.*, p. 15-42.

²⁰ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1971), 102-113; Gheorghe Platon, *Geneza revoluției române de la 1848. Introducere în istoria*

Among the ideas of French historian George Lefebvre, a classic of the Marxist current in the historiography of the revolution,²¹ the association between revolutionary political radicalism and the upheavals of the “popular masses,” peasant movements, spontaneous revolts, carried out in the context of the crisis of the Old Regime, had a consistent impact in our historiography.²²

After the fall of communism, the Romanian historians proved receptive to more recent conceptualizations of the revolutionary phenomenon.²³ First, the global theories of modernization viewed the revolution as an expression of the political and social change in the transition from traditional societies to the modern state.²⁴ Some of the promoters of this current have postulated that “international economic, international geopolitical and military competition influence dramatically the direction a revolution will take, the line-up of the domestic forces, and the outcome of the revolution,”²⁵ in a manner which suggests, at the level of enunciation, many similarities with the course of the revolutionary events of 1821 in the Romanian Principalities.²⁶ The studies that emphasized the ideological and psychological side of the revolutionary impulse, have linked it to the emergence of new values,²⁷ collective perceptions, expectations and frustrations, generated by the contact with

modernă a României (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1980), 54-71; Dan Berindei, “L’Abolition du régime féodal dans les Principautés Roumaines,” *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, no. 169 (1969): 284-285. On the personal relations of some Romanian historians with Ernest Labrousse and Albert Soboul, their research visits to France and the Romanian-French conferences in the late 1960s, see Ovidiu Bogzan, “Destindere și istoriografie: Vizita lui Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie în România (1968),” *Caiete Diplomatice* 4-5, no. 4-5 (2016-2017): 142-146.

²¹ George Lefebvre, *La Grande Peur de 1789* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France 1932).

²² V. Cristian, “Lucrări recente asupra lui Babeuf și Babuismului,” *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 18, no. 3 (1965): 675-685; Florin Constantiniu, “Aspecte ale mentalului colectiv sătesc în societatea medievală românească,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 7 (1974): 76-77.

²³ See Camil Muresan’s study on the critical revisionism that emerged in the French historiography towards the theory of the bourgeois revolution (“Sur la signification universelle de la Révolution française,” *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 28, no. 1-4 (1990), 140-141).

²⁴ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000), 5-6; Neil J. Smelser, *Getting Sociology Right: A Half-Century of Reflections* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2014), 94-98; Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 171-174.

²⁵ Michael S. Kimmel, *Revolution. A Sociological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 7.

²⁶ F. Rosen, *Bentham, Byron, and Greece: Constitutionalism, Nationalism, and Early Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 77-101; Radu G. Păun, “La construction de l’état moderne et le sud-est de l’Europe. Quelques réflexions méthodologiques,” *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 35, no. 3-4 (1997): 215. See also Nicolae Ciachir’s study, in which the author gives priority to elements of impact of the international context in the argumentation of a revolutionary character of the events of 1821 (“Rusia și mișcările revoluționare de la 1821 din Sud-Estul Europei,” *Studii. Revista de Istorie* 35, no. 9 (1982): 1013-1032).

²⁷ William H. Sewell, Jr., “Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections of the French Case,” *The Journal of Modern History* 57, no. 1 (1985), 57-85; Norman Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 63-81.

more economically, politically and culturally advanced societies²⁸ have been well received especially in the Romanian recent social science research.²⁹

Second, in the 60^s-80^s of the last century, a number of high-impact authors have proposed true “general theories of revolution,”³⁰ among which are those that insist on the organized and ideologically well-structured character of the revolutionary movement, in relation to a non-functional political order, that is facing the erosion of its legitimacy.³¹ Instead, the recent studies have concluded that it is not easy to define the concept of revolution, because of the diversity of the historical manifestations of the phenomenon, which is difficult to contain in precise patterns.³² In recent decades, interest for a “general theory of revolution” has diminished, giving way to critical approaches and case studies that have focused on the different types of crises (socio-economic, political) faced by societies in the “pre-revolutionary” period, the competition for resources and authority between the different components of the elite, and the phenomenon of the erosion of the legitimacy of political regimes.³³

Can the events of 1821 in the Romanian Principalities be associated with these contradictory theories about the concept of revolution? For instance, the

²⁸ Ted Robert Gurr, *Political Rebellion: Causes, Outcomes and Alternatives* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), 11-48.

²⁹ Ștefan Stănciugelu, *Violență mit și revoluție* (Bucharest: All, 1998); Radu G. Păun, “Scenă și simbol: reprezentării ale puterii în Vechiul Regim românesc,” in *Spectacolul public între tradiție și modernitate: Sărbători, ceremonialuri, pelerinaje și suplicii*, ed. Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu and Maria Pakucs Willcocks (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2007), 115-121; Nicolae Mihai, *Revoluție și mentalitate în Țara Românească (1821-1848): O istorie culturală a evenimentului politic* (Craiova: AiusPrint Ed, 2010); Alexandru Zub, *La sfârșit de ciclu: Despre impactul Revoluției Franceze*, 2nd ed. (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2017).

³⁰ Jack A. Goldstone, “The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 8 (1982), 192-194; John Foran, “Introduction,” in *Theorizing Revolutions*, ed. John Foran (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 2-7.

³¹ Charles Tilly, *Revoluțiile europene (1492-1992)*, trans. Victor Cherata (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 16-26, 54-62; Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter V. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7-11.

³² Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, “Structural Theories of Revolution,” in *Theorizing Revolutions*, 38-42.

³³ An inflection point in the transition from *the tradition of general revolutionary theory* to a *cultural history of revolutionary political experiences* was Lynn Hunt’s book *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1984), 5-17, 23-25; Robert Darnton, *Marele masacru al pisicii și alte episoade din istoria culturală a Franței*, trans. Raluca Ciocoiu (Iași: Polirom, 2000); Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009), 106-135; Ken Adler, *Engineering the Revolution: Arms and Enlightenment in France, 1763-1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Aurelian Crăiuțu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012); Tim Harris and Stephen Taylor, *The Final Crisis of the Stuart Monarchy: The Revolutions of 1688-91 in their British, Atlantic and European Contexts* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015).

revolutionary movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu meets all three essential features identified by Theda Skocpol in defining “social revolution:” the collapse or inability of the central administration and the institutions of force to ensure social order and the safety of the inhabitants, large-scale peasant revolts and a coherent political movement of “marginal” political elite, deprived of power and access to resources.³⁴ On the other hand, S. N. Eisenstadt has associated the modern revolution with a phenomenon of *charimatization of political change*, when the image of some leaders of the protest movement personified ideas and values with great social adherence, later adopted in the discourse of the ruling elite, regardless of the success or failure of the revolution.³⁵ Also, the Romanian and Greek uprisings can be associated with Hans Blumenberg’s notion of “epochal threshold,” because they represented “a turning point in not only the history of ideas, but in the very set of assumptions and moral norms by which a society structures the world it inhabits.”³⁶

But the movement led by Tudor seems to best fit with the definition of revolution given by sociologist Michael S. Kimmel: “revolutions are attempts by subordinate groups to transform the social foundations of political power.”³⁷ On the one hand, the revolutionary movement of 1821 marked the transition from the traditional politics of the boyars to the modern political act, which gradually generated discursive coherence and social mobilization, indispensable features of modern politics, with the principle of collective sovereignty and the idea of nationhood as its legitimating support.³⁸ Not suddenly, but over time, Romanian politics broke out of the traditional framework, reconfigured its priorities, rethought its means under the impact of the “events that happened in the country” in the “year 1821.”³⁹ On the other hand, after a century of Phanariot rule, latent energies and accumulated frustrations erupted to the surface, and the atmosphere of political turmoil brought to light new ideas and new people, for whom the memory of Tudor of Vladimiri, the example of his actions, constituted a true political legacy.⁴⁰ Until the forty-eighth “mythologization” of the protagonist,⁴¹ the

³⁴ Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolution in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 137-158.

³⁵ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations*, Pt. 2, 725.

³⁶ Joseph Rivera, “Blumenberg’s Problematic Secularization Thesis Augustine *Curiositas* and the Emergence of Late Modernity,” *Religions* 12, no. 5 (2021): 314.

³⁷ Michael S. Kimmel, *Revolution. A Sociological Interpretation*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 6.

³⁸ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile “partidei naționale” din Principatele Române: Sub semnul “politicii boierești” (1774-1828)* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2013), 565.

³⁹ Sorin Alexandrescu, “Tudor din Vladimiri pe scenă,” *Observator cultural*, no. 1069, (7-13 July 2021): 15.

⁴⁰ From an ideological perspective and in terms of Tudor’s recognition as a founding figure of the Romanian national movement, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Ion Ghica and Nicolae

immediate, frustrated memory, unaffected by the skill of later historical writing, shows Tudor Vladimirescu at an unexpected, truly heroic stature.⁴² Controversial from the beginning, Tudor's image reflects, in the configuration of memory and historical myth,⁴³ a shared set of meanings, beliefs and experiences, related to the adherence or, on the contrary, the challenge of the legitimacy of the political regime and social order.⁴⁴

Bălcescu will be the first to validate this quality, not in a unified way, but from quite different, contrasting angles, illustrating the turmoil of the "birth" of Romanian romantic nationalism. In the case of Heliade Rădulescu (Ion Heliade Rădulescu, *Opere*, tom. 2, *Istoria critică universală, Biblicele, Echilibru între antiteze*, ed. Mircea Angheliescu (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedică, 2002), 415-416), Tudor appears as the armed hand of the patriotic and antiphanariot boyarism, in the case of Ion Ghica a popular hero, crushed by the political context and the duplicity of the boyars ("În vremea zaverei," in *Scrisori către V. Alecsandri*, ed. Radu Gârmacea, Ion Ghica, Rareș Ionașcu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014), 89-96; A. D. Xenopol, "Note istorice asupra perioadei de la 1821-1848, culese din gura dlui Ioan Ghica, fost ambasador al României la Londra," in *Arhiva. Organul Societății Științifice și Literare din Iași* 3 (1890-1891): 556-561) and in the case of Nicolae Bălcescu, the first figure of Romanian democratic nationalism (Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere*, tom. 1, Pt. 1, *Scrisori istorice, politice și economice*, ed. G. Zane (Bucharest: Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol al II-lea, București, 1940), 25).

⁴¹ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă în țările românești 1821-1822* (Bucharest: Institutul de Studii și Cercetări Balcanice, 1945), 10-13 (the chapter *Mitul lui Tudor Vladimirescu*). Lucian Boia (*Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), 355-356) has pronounced on Tudor's memory and historiographical perception, disregarding the best text on the subject, inserted as a sub-chapter (*Mitul lui Tudor*) in Paul Cornea's book (*Originile romantismului românesc. Spiritul public, mișcarea ideilor și literatura între 1780-1840*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972), 170-172), and the author's profound conclusion: "Through his entire moral configuration, Tudor stands at the antipodes of the soul typology created by the Phanariot era" (Paul Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc*, 171).

⁴² Quoting from contemporary sources critical fragments about Tudor, Andrei Oțetea omits the appreciative ones, some of them really fiery, known at the time of the publication of his book ("Un dialog în versuri între Tudor, Prodan și Macedonski," in *Acte justificative la istoria revoluțiunii române de la 1821*, ed. C. D. Aricescu (Craiova: Editura Tipografiei Române G. Chițiu, 1874), 24-27; Emil Vîrtosu, "Versuri inedite despre 1821," in *Revista arhivelor* 3, no. 8 (1939), 342-345 (*Teodor Vlădimirescu biv vel sluger și acum zelos mântuitor al doritei patrii, cde greci, fanarioți*), 345-349 (*Jălirea necuviincioasei morți a heroului românimeii*); Emil Vîrtosu, "Un călugăr admirator al lui Tudor Vladimirescu: Arhimandritul Ghenadie Părvulescu 1805-1873," 243).

⁴³ Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 120.

⁴⁴ To some writers, Tudor appears as a character misunderstood by his contemporaries, who "gathered a band of fools, seeking justice" and had the fate of "those who raise mutinies against the rulers" (Ioan Dârzeanu, "Cronica revoluției din 1821," in *Izvoarele contemporane asupra mișcării lui Tudor Vladimirescu*, ed. Nicolae. Iorga (Bucharest, 1921), 85) or a tool of the *Etairia* plans (Iordache Golescu, *Pre scurtă însemnare dă turburarea Țării Rumânești, în Izvoare narative interne privind revoluția din 1821 condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu*, ed. G. D. Iscriu (Craiova: Editura Scrisul Românesc, 1987), 175). Other authors, such as Mihai Cioranu, who was close to him, see Tudor's image as eminently positive, and his patriotism undeniable and ardent (Mihai Cioranu, "Revoluția lui Tudor Vladimirescu," in *Izvoarele contemporane asupra mișcării lui Tudor Vladimirescu*, ed. Nicolae Iorga (Bucharest: Editura "Cartea Românească," 1921), 298).

Nothing has troubled historical writing about 1821 more than the seemingly endless discussion surrounding *the character of the events*.⁴⁵ In the search for the right definitions and explanations, it has provoked lengthy and interesting controversy.⁴⁶ Among older historians (A. D. Xenopol, Nicolae Iorga, Ioan Filitti, Emil Țirțosu, Dumitru Bodin) the social orientation of the movement, typical of a popular uprising, was placed in contradiction with its political, national substance.⁴⁷ The most difficult to fit into the patterns of the epoch proved to be the protagonist himself. In the two Principalities, no other man of modest origin had appeared in the last hundred years, who not only disturbed the country, as was usually the case with the riots, which were few and narrow in the 18th century,⁴⁸ but who really challenged the known order of things, the political and social settlement.

Attempting a problematization, three historiographical directions can be distinguished. **The first one** is based on the premise of identifying three main actors with quite different profiles: *Tudor Vladimirescu*, exponent of the lower

⁴⁵ Andrei Oțetea, "Caracterul mișcării conduse de Tudor Vladimirescu: răscoală sau revoluție?" *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 20, no. 4 (1967): 675-679; Vasile Maciu, "Caracterul mișcării lui Tudor Vladimirescu," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 14, no. 5 (1971): 931-950; Dan Berindei, "Revoluția din 1821 condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 33, no. 5 (1980): 825-830, 834-845; Gh. Platon, "Despre Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821," in *Istoria ca lectură a lumii*, ed. Leonid Boicu, Gabriel Bădărău, Lucian Nastasă, (Iași: Fundația Academică "A.D. Xenopol," 1994), 201-214.

⁴⁶ Ioan C. Filitti, *Tudor Vladimirescu (rostul răscoalei lui)* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Lupta" N. Stroilă, 1937), 1-3; Dumitru Bodin, "*Tudor Vladimirescu în București*," *Revista istorică română* 13, fasc. 2 (1943), 18-32. The sub-chapter *Tudor și istoriografia românească* in *Introduction to the Andrei Oțetea, Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, p. 20-33, has a pronounced polemical character, vehemently contesting the conclusions of A. D. Xenopol (the theory of the two stages, social and national), N. Iorga (the thesis of the "peasant war," inspired by the Serbian model) and Emil Țirțosu (the legalist character of Tudor's movement). Mircea T. Radu, one of the fiercest and most insistent opponents of Andrei Oțetea's theory on Tudor Vladimirescu's affiliation to the plans and objectives of *Etairia*, presented his first arguments, both documentary and conceptual, in a study published in 1964 (Mircea T. Radu, "Răscoala de la 1821 și logica istoriei," *Romanoslavica* 10 (1964): 243-274). He will return in an extensive book with a veritable program of deconstruction of Andrei Oțetea's theory, both in terms of conception and in terms of the main sources as supporting material (Mircea T. Radu, *1821 Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din Țara Românească* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1978), 30-52; 196-216, *passim*).

⁴⁷ Nicolae Corivan, "Tudor Vladimirescu și istoricii români: A. D. Xenopol, N. Iorga, E Țirțosu, I. C. Filitti, D. Bodin, A. Oțetea," *Studii și cercetări de istorie* 20 (1967), 96-106; Francesco Guida, "Tudor Vladimirescu e la rivoluzione del 1821 nei Principati danubiani nella storiografia romena," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 62, no. 3 (1975), 291-315.

⁴⁸ Florin Constantiniu, *Relațiile agrare din Țara Românească în secolul al XVIII-lea* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1972); Constantin Corbu, *Rolul țărănimii în istoria României (secolul XIX)* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1982).

classes and of the small provincial boyar families, victims of the extortions and abuses of the Phanariot regime; the anti-Phanariot “national party,” composed by great native boyars, crystallized in the fire of decades of confrontations with the Phanariot princes and boyars, especially through petitions, migrations and passive resistance to the “tyrannical” rulers (refusal to occupy great offices);⁴⁹ *Etairia*, a Greek organization that appeared on the territory of Tsarist Russia, aiming to liberate the Greeks from Ottoman domination, but suspected by many Romanian historians for its affinities with Russia’s policy of expansion and the presence of some Phanariots in its ranks.

The first in chronological order, among those who formulated a *theory about the character of the movement*, A. D. Xenopol argued that the action of 1821, started as an uprising against the nobility to claim the rights of the people,⁵⁰ “was pushed by the boyars in the political and national field,” on the anti-phanariot path, with the sacrifice of the initial social objectives.⁵¹ Why? Because, according to the great historian from Iași, the “anti-Greek” party formed by the native boyars, had the experience and connections necessary to take over, sooner or later, secretly and with great caution, the strings of a movement compromising for the Phanariots.⁵²

Contested later by Ioan C. Filitti and Andrei Oțetea,⁵³ this theory was revived and further argued by several Romanian historians who wrote important books about the movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu, in the 70-80° of the 20th century, especially after the notes of the Russian colonel I. P. Liprandi and internal narrative sources (Zilot Românul, Iordache Golescu etc) were published,⁵⁴ partially

⁴⁹ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile “partidei naționale,”* 320-326.

⁵⁰ A. D. Xenopol saw a causal connection between the local peasant upheavals of the previous decades and the movement launched by Tudor in Tismana in January 1821 (*Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 10 *Istoria Țărilor Române dela Pacea de la București până la răsturnarea fanarioșilor*, (“Cartea Românească,” București, 1921), 52-54), argumentative approach to the initial social character, of peasant rebellion, of the action from 1821, assumed and extended by other Romanian historians, especially in the years of communism, as evidence of the “class struggle” (Dan Berindei, Traian Mutașcu, *Aspecte militare ale răscoalei populare din 1821* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1962), 38-43, 52-60; Constantin Corbu, “Țărănimea – forță de bază a revoluției române de la 1821,” in *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 34, no. 3 (1981), 395-415).

⁵¹ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 68.

⁵² A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 66-67.

⁵³ Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice și sociale în Principatele Române de la 1821 la 1828* (Bucharest: “Cartea Românească,” 1932), 51-53. Andrei Oțetea (*Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, 23-25) considered “Xenopol’s theory in contradiction not only with logic, but also with the documents.”

⁵⁴ Ivan P. Liprandi, “Răscoala pandurilor sub conducerea lui Tudor Vladimirescu în anul 1821,” in *Documente privind istoria României: Răscoala din 1821*, vol. V *Izvoare narative*, ed. Andrei Oțetea, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1962), 163-360; I. P. Liprandi, “Căpitanul Iordache Olimpiotul,” in *Documente 1821*, vol. V, 361-454; *Izvoare narative interne...., passim*.

confirming the thesis of A. D. Xenopol. The investigations undertaken by Alexandru Vianu in the Russian archives brought to light the important testimonies of some Russian officials (I. P. Liprandi, Pavel Pestel), in which were mentioned the actions of a group of native boyars opposed to the *etairist* plans and the dissensions between Tudor Vladimirescu and the *Etairia* members in Wallachia.⁵⁵ In his turn, G. D. Iscru has made a valuable inventory of the internal writings of the period in which the same aspects are noted, but his conclusions are speculative and even fanciful.⁵⁶ The most important, however, remains Mircea T. Radu's research on Tudor's relations with the boyars of the ruling Committee and their attitude towards the movement led by Vladimirescu, confirming both the existence of an "anti-Phanariot party" in Wallachia and the development of several phases in Tudor's relations with the boyars.⁵⁷

In Xenopol's view, the reasons for this development, explained by impeccable logic, were to be found in the strictly conspiratorial and improvised nature of the *etairist* movement, without any assumed Russian political support, and in the lucidity of the native boyars from the Romanian Principalities, who quickly understood that the Russian armies would not cross the Prut and that there was no such intention.⁵⁸ Quoting Ubicini,⁵⁹ A. D. Xenopol subscribed to one of the versions circulating in the Western memoirs and historiography in the mid-19th century,⁶⁰ concerning the links between the initiators of the Odessa *Etairia* and the former ruler of Moldavia, Alexander Mavrocordat Firaris,⁶¹ an eternal conspirator, but with no real influence in Russian official circles. Without explicitly crediting Ioannis Capodistrias as the initiator and secret protector of the *etairist* movement, Xenopol suggests his duplicity and refers to sources showing, on the one hand, his appeals to caution and patience – he quotes a famous memoir of Capodistrias to the Russian consuls in the Balkans, most of Greek origin,⁶² rarely mentioned by

⁵⁵ Alexandru Vianu, "O lucrare inedită despre mișcarea revoluționară de la 1821 în Țările Române," *Studii. Revistă de istorie* 10, no. 1 (1958): 67-91.

⁵⁶ Gheorghe D. Iscru, *Revoluția din 1821 condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1982), 111-174.

⁵⁷ Mircea T. Radu, *Răscoala de la 1821*, 319-345.

⁵⁸ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 41-44.

⁵⁹ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 41.

⁶⁰ See in this respect the critical presentation of some documentary sources and the main publications, at Notis Botzaris, *Visions Balkaniques dans la préparations de la Revolution Gréque (1789-1821)* (Geneve: Librairie E. Droz, 1962), 74-75.

⁶¹ M. A. Ubicini, *Lettres sur la Turquie ou tableau statistique, religieux, politique, administratif, militaire, commercial de l'Empire ottoman*, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Militaire, 1854), 95; A. G. Mavrocordato, "Cu prilejul memoriului lui Hauteville," *Arhiva. Organul Societății Științifice și Literare din Iași*, (1904): 341. Alexander Mavrocordat Firaris spent the last years of his life in Moscow, where he died on 8 February 1819 (V. Mihordea, "Fuga lui Alexandru Mavrocordat în Rusia și întrederea de la Kerson (1787)," *Revista istorică* 29, no. 7-9 (1943): 248).

⁶² A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 41, no. 14 (Ioannis Capodistrias, *Observations sur les moyens d'améliorer le sort des Grecs*, Corfou, 9 april 1819).

other Romanian historians until today – and, on the other hand, the protection under which he placed the *etairist* agents Nicolae Galatis and Gheorghe Leventis, both sent to Iași and placed in the care of the Russian consul here, Andrei Pisani, with whose help they circulated unhindered to Kishinev, Hotin and Odessa.⁶³ Poorly prepared, naive, without any genuine official support from Petersburg, Xenopol concluded, the *etairist* movement was to end as a “pitiful tragedy.”

On the other hand, Xenopol treats the movement launched by Tudor Vladimirescu with greater attention, which he sees from the beginning as a direct expression of the internal turmoil in the Romanian society and the crisis of the existing political regime: the exploitation of peasants, the abuses committed against *pandours*, marginalization of the real “patriotic” great and small native boyars. Without having at his disposal the internal sources that would only be published after several decades, Xenopol relied on external diplomatic and documentary sources, the relevance of which was also well recognized in Greek historiography.⁶⁴ He does not deny to Tudor a certain intelligence and political coherence, which can be seen in his gestures to Ottoman officials and in his correspondence with the boyars,⁶⁵ and points out the particular targets of Tudor in relation with the *Etairia*: the movement “of the Greeks having a political character directed against Ottoman rule; his own, initiated against the pillaging boyars, with the specific indication that it is not against Turkish rule.”⁶⁶ The unifying factor of these contradictory tendencies, outlined after Tudor’s arrival in Bucharest – “the rejection of the Greeks at the head of the Romanian countries and the overthrow of the Phanariot regime”⁶⁷ – constituted for Xenopol *the essence of the national character of the movement*⁶⁸ and the reason for its division into two stages: one in Oltenia (social), the other after his arrival in Bucharest (political and national), generating the first explanatory historical theory that persisted for a long time in Romanian historiography.

The explanatory attributes of the Xenopolian theory and the importance given to the national character of the movement of 1821, including also boyar elements – the “anti-Greek” party – were to ensure its longevity, especially among

⁶³ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 41-42.

⁶⁴ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 58, no. 57 (Anton Prokesch-Osten, *Geschichte des Abfalls der Griechen von Türkischen Reiche im Jahre 1821*, vol. 3 (Wien, 1867), 58); 62, no. 79 (Friedrich Paalzow, *Aktenstücke der Russischen Diplomatie*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Verlag von Franz Dunder, 1854), 1).

⁶⁵ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 58.

⁶⁶ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 60.

⁶⁷ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 67.

⁶⁸ A. D. Xenopol, “Despre naționalism,” *Arhiva. Organul Societății Științifice și Literare din Iași*, no. 6 (1908): 265.

the authors critical with the aims and methods of the *etairist* movement.⁶⁹ A descendant by marriage of C. D. Aricescu, the writer Iulia Aricescu was a true apologist of the boyars' "national spirit," reflected in the opposition to the Phanariot rule and in the cultivation of "national culture," animated by a spirit of rebellion, with occasional episodes, which the Tudor's movement raises to another level – *the revolt of the whole country*.⁷⁰

Some of the later research, supported by new unpublished sources, had the tendency to validate the Xenopolian theory, especially regarding the autonomy of the Romanian movement in relation with *Etairia*, showing at the same time a certain moderation in the portrayal of Tudor Vladimirescu's personality and role.⁷¹ Xenopol's arguments about an agreement between Tudor and some "patriotic" native boyars, before the outbreak of the revolt, for which the great historian had no precise documentary data, but relied on Ion Dărzeanu's statements⁷² and on the analysis of the internal historical context, were revived when Tudor's agreement with this boyars (Barbu Văcărescu, Grigore Brâncoveanu și Grigore Ghica) was first published by Constantin Greceanu in 1946⁷³ and testify to the formation of the native boyar faction opposed to *Etairia*, the "anti-Greek" party of which Xenopol had spoken several decades before.⁷⁴ Thus, his thesis concerning the national orientation and the *revolutionary character* of Tudor's movement,⁷⁵ after his arrival in Bucharest, gained new credibility and energy.

The *essential question*, first raised by Xenopol, then only suggested by other historians, overwhelmed by the strength of Oțetea's documentation and demonstration, was to be forcefully repeated by Mircea T. Radu: in the light of the two pacts (unknown to Xenopol) – the first with the boyars of the ruling Committee, already mentioned, the other with the *etairist* captains, discovered by

⁶⁹ Nicolae Corivan, *Tudor Vladimirescu și istoricii români*, 96-97; Mircea T. Radu, *Răscoala de la 1821*, 246; S. I. Gârleanu, *Tudor Vladimirescu: Viața și fapta sa* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1971); G. D. Iscriu, *Revoluția din 1821*, 1982, 10-11.

⁷⁰ Iulia Aricescu, *Considerații asupra revoluției lui Tudor Vladimirescu* (Bucharest: Tipografia "România nouă," 1924), 27-32 and the following.

⁷¹ Vasile Maciu, *De la Tudor Vladimirescu la răscoala din 1907* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1973), 9-37; Gheorghe Platon, "Despre programul național al revoluției de la 1821. 150 de ani de la revoluția națională condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu," *Analele Științifice ale Universității "Al. I. Cuza" din Iași*, *Istorie*, new series, fasc. 1 (1971): 19-24.

⁷² A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 41-42.

⁷³ Constantin Greceanu, "Încă un act în legătură cu mișcarea de la 1821 din Țara Românească," *Revista istorică română* 16, fasc. 1 (1946): 1-9.

⁷⁴ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice în România*, vol. 1, *De la origini până la 1848* (Bucharest: Libraria Stanciulescu, 1920), 9-11, 41-44, 53-57.

⁷⁵ In the same way Ubicini characterized Tudor Vladimirescu's movement: "Théodore Wladimiresco, dans la petite Valachie, avait relevé le drapeau national et négociait avec la Porte, lui offrant de se joindre à elle pour chasser les Grecs, à la condition qu'elle rendrait à la Roumanie ses anciennes franchises et le gouvernement de ses princes indigènes" (M. A. Ubicini, *Lettres sur la*, 101).

Andrei Oțetea in the Hungarian archives in 1955⁷⁶ – do the *etairists* in Bucharest and the boyars of the Committee represent a single faction, placed under common objectives, or different groups, competing for the recruitment of Tudor Vladimirescu?⁷⁷ The answer to this question, stated more rhetorically by Xenopol – “there is no basis for the version that circulated in 1821 according to which Tudor was pushed by the Russians to revolt” together with the *etairist*⁷⁸ –, clearly stated by Mircea T. Radu in the sense of attracting the whole country (peasants, *pandours*, small boyars, great boyars) to revolt, highlights the revolutionary character attributed to the movement led by Tudor – at Xenopol, in the second phase, in Bucharest, at Mircea T. Radu since the initial phase – as *an expression of the structural turmoil in Romanian society and the crisis of the political regime, in other words, a “social revolution.”* For both authors, joining an arch over time, it is not the different ethnicity of the Romanians and Greeks that is the essence of the problem, but the *etairist* connections with the exponents of a political regime that had fully lost its political legitimacy and the ability to ensure a minimum of social order.⁷⁹

Our conclusion is oriented towards the idea that Mircea T. Radu’s book, solidly documented, excelling in the critical analysis of the sources, and with a methodological approach consistently oriented in the direction of historical materialism⁸⁰ has validated in our current historiography the theory of A. D. Xenopol on the character of *social revolution* of the movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu, in the sense attributed to this concept by Theda Skocpol: a political movement originating in society, generated by structural causes and aimed at renewing a political regime that has completely lost its legitimacy. Without being abundantly cited in the decades that followed, this book had an unusual fate. The

⁷⁶ Andrei Oțetea, “Legământul lui Tudor Vladimirescu față de Eterie,” *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, no. 2-3 (1956): 125-133.

⁷⁷ Mircea T. Radu, *Răscoala de la 1821*, 247-248.

⁷⁸ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor*, 62, no. 79.

⁷⁹ Paradoxically, in the case of other historians, such as Nicolae Iorga and G. D. Iscru, who explicitly used the term national revolution in defining the events, unlike A. D. Xenopol and Mircea T. Radu, the “ethnic” Romanian-Greek conflict, strongly highlighted, do not provide sufficient arguments for a genuine revolutionary character of the two movements, but only the clash between two national identities in the process of formation and deeply marked by the aggressive features of alterity. Inspired by the Serbian movement, which broke out in 1804, Nicolae Iorga thought, Tudor “represents a step forward in the political conception of national and popular freedom in these Eastern European parts,” a “government of the country through the peasants” (Nicolae Iorga, “Comemorarea lui Tudor la Academia Română,” in *Izvoarele contemporane asupra mișcării lui Tudor Vladimirescu*, ed. Nicolae Iorga (Bucharest: Librăriile “Cartea Românească,” 1921), XII).

⁸⁰ On the author’s Marxist conception of social structure and relations, but especially the class character of the political acts of those involved (Tudor, *pandours*, peasants, boyars, *etairist*, etc.), see especially the chapter “Despre cauzele și caracterul revoluției *pandurilor*” in *Răscoala de la 1821*, ed. Mircea T. Radu, 54-76.

ideas and demonstrations it sets out are to be found everywhere in later texts by authors who advocated *the affirmation of the revolutionary and national Romanian character of the 1821 movement*, which was also in a complicated and potentially conflictual relation with *Etairia*.⁸¹

Moreover, as a general trend, the historiography of the 70-90^s of the 20th century followed the direction opened by A. D. Xenopol, attracted by *the causal historical determinism characteristic of his work*, with the notable exception of Andrei Oțetea and Nestor Camariano. From this historiographical perspective, if Tudor's movement was not a revolution in terms of program and development, compared to the classical model of the revolution of the time in the other parts of Europe, it appears as *an authentic revolution by consequences and by the new historical stage of emancipation it opened*.⁸² Two aspects emerge as essential, true pillars of this interpretative theory – the autonomy of the Romanian movement in relation with the *Etairia* and the connection between the social and the political (national) character of the revolutionary movement of 1821 – which must be

⁸¹ Dan Berindei, *Revoluția română din 1821* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1991), 196-197; Vladimir Osiac, *Pandurii din Țara Românească* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1995), 90-91; Gheorghe D. Iscru, *Revoluția română din 1821 condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu* (Bucharest: Casa de Editură "Nicolae Bălcescu," 1996), 299-300; Nicolae Isar, *Principatele Române de la 1821 la 1848: Sub semnul renașterii naționale* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2004), 7-41.

⁸² Most historians concerned with the subject, creatively interpreting the Marxist canons, have resolved the dilemma of the connection between social and national character by appealing to the deterministic dialectic of development, more in a Hegelian sense (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) than in a Marxist one (the contradiction between the forces of production and the means of production). Thus, it has been argued that "the modernisation process," which began at the end of the 18th century, created "the objective conditions for a synthesis between the social and national aspects" (Gheorghe Platon, "Social și național în istoria României moderne. Premise pentru o discuție," in *De la constituirea națiunii la Marea Unire* (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 1995), 266-267). The infiltration of capitalist relations into agriculture and international trade would have convinced many boyars that they were the first to benefit from domestic reforms, inspired by the Western Enlightenment and the French Revolution, to redress the precarious condition of the peasantry. From early on, towards the end of the "obsessive decade," the thesis of the alliance between elements of the native boyars and Tudor Vladimirescu is outlined, based on common political and economic interests, superior in importance to the contradictions and divergences. In addition, the progress of national consciousness, also present in the small rural boyar group, adherent to Tudor's movement, would have stimulated the political solidarity with the great boyars against the foreign Christians ("Greeks") and the Turks. So, far from being considered as antithetical, the social and national plans merged in this conception, ensuring the ideological unity of the "revolution of 1821," but which appeared more as a prefiguration of the revolution of 1848 than an event in accordance with the specificity and context of the epoch in which it occurred (Nichita Adăniloaei, "140 de ani de la răscoala condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 14, no. 3 (1961): 555-557; Gheorghe Platon, "Revoluția din 1821. Opinii în jurul unor controverse," in *De la constituirea națiunii la Marea Unire. Studii de istorie modernă*, vol. 1, ed. Gheorghe Platon (Iași: Editura Unirsității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 1995), 103-117; Dan Berindei, *Revoluția română din 1821*, 200-207; Gheorghe D. Iscru, *Revoluția română din 1821*, 22-24, 63-72; *Istoria Românilor*, VII, *Constituirea României moderne (1821-1878)* ed. Dan Berindei (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2003), 21-27, 48).

confronted with the sources known now once again. The main weakness of this theory, however, remains its inability to highlight the individuality and political stature of the main character – Tudor Vladimirescu, clearly expressed in his proclamations and letters to the authorities (the Committee and the Russian consulate).⁸³

The **second direction**, centered on the affirmation of the unity of purpose and action of the *etairist* movement and that led by Vladimirescu, on the fact that Tudor was fully or to some extent an *etairist*, is usually associated with Andrei Oțetea's demonstration. It must be said that before him, Ioan C. Filitti, critical especially of Emil Vîrtosu's theories, had stated clearly that some of the main characters of the "drama" of 1821, such as Grigore Brâncoveanu and Bishop Ilarion Ghiorgiadi, were *etairist* initiated.⁸⁴ I. C. Filitti unhesitatingly qualified *Etairia* as a liberal, even democratic movement, incompatible with the Phanariote regime, convergent with the aims of Tudor Vladimirescu and other patriotic native boyars.⁸⁵ On the basis of skillful rhetorical artifices, he ironically rejects the arguments of other authors regarding the social, anti-boyar's character of the initial peasant movement and even the profile of Tudor constructed by these authors as the moral exponent of popular discontent.⁸⁶ The key to its argumentative construction is the emergence of a Greek emancipation movement, inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution, and the connections between this movement and the native elite of the Principalities, with Romanian society, which could explain a certain political solidarity of Greeks, Romanians, Serbs and Bulgarians, the Orthodox of the Balkans, against the Ottoman Empire, with the help of Russia.⁸⁷ An eminent connoisseur of the history of the Balkan peoples of the early 19th century, Filitti has selected information from various sources and placed it into a convincing narrative construction of Tudor's affiliation with the *etairist* movement for three reasons, all of them contextual: the common interests of the

⁸³ Cristian Ploscaru, "Tradiție și inovație în demersul politic al lui Tudor Vladimirescu (I)," *Analele Universității din Craiova. Istorie* 15, no. 1 (17/2010): 87-100; (II), *Analele Universității din Craiova. Istorie* 16, no. 2 (19/2011): 61-73.

⁸⁴ Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice*, 21, 26.

⁸⁵ Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice*, 18; Ioan C. Filitti, *Tudor Vladimirescu*, 5.

⁸⁶ The deep sense of outrage that emerges from Tudor's acts and words, used by Emil Vîrtosu to outline his moral profile (Emil Vîrtosu, *Tudor Vladimirescu, pagini de revoltă*, 28), is for I.C. Filitti only a minor aspect in the predominantly political context of the outbreak of the two revolutionary movements, simultaneously and with anti-Ottoman objectives (Ioan C. Filitti, *Filitti, Tudor Vladimirescu*, 2).

⁸⁷ Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice*, 8-14.

Russian-supported Greek and Romanian emancipation movements; the old solidarity of arms, from the time of the last Russo-Turkish war, between Tudor and the *etairist* captains;⁸⁸ the internal contemporary testimonies about secret discussions between the Russian consul, Alexander Pini, the *etairist* captains, Tudor, and several native boyars about launching an anti-Ottoman revolt.⁸⁹

The biggest problem of the theory of Ioan C. Filitti – the compatibility between the supposed liberal character of the *etairist* movement and the Balkan policy of Russia, an autocratic power –, to which would be added other important aspects, known but ignored by the author (the open hostility of some of the native boyars towards Constantine Ipsilanti at the time of his deposition,⁹⁰ the expulsion of Ignatius of Arta, eminent promoter of the Greek emancipation movement, from the metropolitan seat of Wallachia,⁹¹ the growing anti-Greek discourse in Wallachia in the decade before 1821⁹²), was compensated by an intelligently formulated interpretation scheme. In this way, Filitti speaks of two objectives of Tudor: a minimal one, to obtain from the Turks, with the help of the boyars and Russia, the “rights of the country,” without interfering with the *etairist* plans, and a maximal one, the liquidation of the Ottoman domination together with the *Etairia*, under the protection of Russia.⁹³ The circumstantial evidence provided does not clarify the complicated and contradictory relations between Tudor, *Etairia* and the native boyars, Filitti applying the same explanatory scheme before Oțetea – it would be a matter of stratagems, hiding the true intentions of the protagonists.

Part of a historiographical paradigm that includes the works of Pompiliu Eliade and Eugen Lovinescu, concerning the detachment of the Balkan peoples from the Orient under the influence of Western ideas, Ioan C. Filitti’s conception

⁸⁸ Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice*, 13-20.

⁸⁹ A little reluctant in the absence of a certain documentary evidence, given the great importance of the matter, Filitti supports Tudor’s adherence to *Etairia* on the basis of several contemporary testimonies, such as that of Constantin Izvoranu. The latter, in the quotation of Filitti, related that towards the end of 1820, Tudor, “when he came to Bucharest ... went to Samurkas,” who “was in agreement with the Russian consul and told him that no one could raise the revolution beyond the Olt but only Tudor, whom he took to the consul” (Ioan C. Filitti, *Tudor Vladimirescu*, 4). Filitti also quotes Mihai Cioranu: “Tudor, in Bucharest, where he had trials, knew the propaganda of the Greeks and that, suddenly, calling him Samurkas, the bishop of Argeș Ilarion and of Râmnic Galaction, asked him if he would revolt together with the *pandours* [...], entrusting him that the Russian army would come,” Ion Solomon, Iordache Gorescu și pe alții (Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice*, 22-23).

⁹⁰ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile “partidei naționale,”* 458-460.

⁹¹ Nicolae Iorga, “Mișcarea națională munteană contra mitropolitului grec Ignatie,” *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 54, no. 11-12 (1936): 657-665; T. G. Bulat, “O conspirație boierească contra mitropolitului Ignatie grecul al UngroVlahiei 1811,” *Arhivele Basarabiei* 8, no. 2-3 (1936): 3-20.

⁹² Cristian Ploscaru, “Représentations identitaires en Moldavie au temps de la restauration des princes indigènes,” *Transylvanian Review* 23, no. 2 (2014): 38-48.

⁹³ Ioan C. Filitti, *Frământările politice*, 24.

of the “revolution of 1821” places the two movements, the *Etairia* and the Romanian one, in the “revolutionary wave” opened by Righas Velestinlis, which reached ideological and political maturity in 1848.

Conceptually different from I. C. Filitti’s approach⁹⁴ and in contradiction to the dominant theses before him, which he systematically deconstructed in a famous book, Andrei Oțetea denied the existence of major social objectives and attributed to Tudor’s movement an eminently national character, but anti-Ottoman, not anti-Greek.⁹⁵ His thesis, based not on the use of unpublished sources, but on “approaches and comparisons of texts” already published, has the merit of organically connecting the facts and explaining them as a whole,⁹⁶ in other words, it is logical, without contradictions. Insisting on the anti-Ottoman orientation of the Romanian movement of 1821, Oțetea presented the social component of Tudor’s action as a stratagem, intended to mislead the Turks.⁹⁷ Implicitly, Tudor appears as a character misunderstood by his contemporaries, who had the fate of “those who instigate rebellions against the rulers.”⁹⁸

In support of the thesis that Tudor was *etairist* and he subordinated his actions to *Etairia* goals (up to a certain point and to a certain extent), Andrei Oțetea uses admirable argumentative subtleties, masterfully navigating through the contradictory information provided by the sources. In his two books, published in 1945 and 1971, Oțetea’s thesis – the action in Wallachia was planned by the Russian consul Alexander Pini, in agreement with some captains of arnauts initiated in the “mysteries of *Etairia*” (Iordache Olimpiotul, Ioan Farmache and others) and with several boyars, who together mandated Tudor to start a rebellion in Oltenia, as part of the military plan of *Etairia* – presents Tudor as an instrument of a broad strategy to start a general uprising in the Balkans, secretly supported by Russia.⁹⁹ It was only after the Tsarist disavowal that Tudor’s actions (the march to Bucharest, the agreements with the boyars, the secret negotiations with the Turks) would acquire a political personality of their own, but he failed in his attempts, crushed by a political context, with international implications, that he could not control.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Andrei Oțetea categorically denied the liberal and democratic profile of *Etairia*, describing it as a “predominantly aristocratic and conspiratorial” organization, that “relied in its action only on the privileged classes” (Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, 182).

⁹⁵ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 115-139.

⁹⁶ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 6.

⁹⁷ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 10-11.

⁹⁸ Ioan Dârzeanu, “Cronica revoluției din 1821,” in *Izvoarele contemporane asupra mișcării lui Tudor Vladimirescu*, ed. Nicolae Iorga (Bucharest, 1921), 85, quoted by A. Oțetea.

⁹⁹ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 123-139; Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, 184-197.

¹⁰⁰ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, 321-339; Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 217-238.

Seeing things in this way, the revolutionary character of the movement is contradicted by the very narrative construction of the author, not coincidentally the five precious volumes of documents published later under the coordination of Andrei Oțetea bearing the title – *Răscolă de la 1821*, a formulation also in contradiction with the same narrative, which denies an authentic social character of the movement led by Tudor.¹⁰¹ For this reason, we believe that Oțetea's theory would be better suited to a definition of the events as a "*coup d'état*" (first in Bucharest, after the death of Alexandru Suțu, then in Iași, with the passing of Mihai Suțu to the side of *Etairia*), followed by a military insurrection in Oltenia.¹⁰² The evidence in support of this theory, overwhelming in the manner in which it is corroborated – internal narrative testimonies and documentary sources published by Emil Vîrtosu¹⁰³ – has convincingly explained the course of events and the relations between the protagonists, at the cost of some ambiguities and contradictions regarding the character of the events and the extent of Russia's involvement.

The sources published afterwards raised serious questions about Andrei Oțetea's scenario, both in terms of Russia's secret, but direct involvement at the highest level, and the relations between *Etairia*, Tudor and the boyars. An example in this respect were the writings of the Russian colonel I. P. Liprandi, photocopied by Alexandru Vianu from the Central Historical Archive in Petersburg, containing "extremely rich and generally first-hand information"¹⁰⁴ about the plans of a "party" of native boyars opposed to the *Etairia*.¹⁰⁵ This information was liable to undermine Andrei Oțetea's thesis, based, among other things, on the famous agreement between Tudor, Iordache Olimpiotul and Ioan Farmache¹⁰⁶ and on the assumption, rejected by Liprandi, that the boyars of the ruling Committee were *etairist*.¹⁰⁷ Andrei Oțetea's response was not delayed, formulated in an ironic and magisterial tone, because "the issue must be seriously discussed and the documentary value of Liprandi's memoirs critically established," so that "less expert researchers" would not be misled.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 147-149. In the book published in 1971, Oțetea somewhat revises his initial point of view, admitting a genuine social, anti-boyar, character of the movement (Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, 204-205).

¹⁰² Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 130. On the meaning of "*coup d'état*" in the 18th century and changes in the meaning of the expression in the context of the French Revolution, see François Furet and Mona Ozouf, *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 11-12 (voice *Coups d'état*); Arnold D. Harvey, "The pre-history of the *coup d'état*," *Terrorism and Violence* 6, no. 2 (1994): 235-243.

¹⁰³ See the bibliography (Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 406-408).

¹⁰⁴ Al. Vianu, S. Iancovici, "O lucrare inedită despre mișcarea revoluționară de la 1821 din Țările Române," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 11, no. 1 (1958): 73.

¹⁰⁵ Al. Vianu, S. Iancovici, "O lucrare inedită despre mișcarea revoluționară," 76-77.

¹⁰⁶ Andrei Oțetea, *Legământul lui Tudor Vladimirescu față de Eterie*, 130-133.

¹⁰⁷ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și mișcarea eteristă*, 129.

¹⁰⁸ Andrei Oțetea, "Valoarea documentară a memoriilor lui I. P. Liprandi," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 11, nr. 3 (1958): 78.

With impeccable logic regarding Tudor's relations with Iordache Olimpiotul in January-February 1821, which reveals Tudor's connections to *Etairia* and the nature of his political dialogue with the *etairist* group in Bucharest, led by the Russian consul Pini, Andrei Oțetea's demonstration¹⁰⁹ slips, in my opinion,¹¹⁰ into speculations supported (surprisingly!) on dogmas of Marxist dialectical materialism, which would exclude a secret collaboration of Tudor with the group of boyars around Grigore Brâncoveanu, because, after all, the leader of the popular movement "could not be satisfied with replacing exploiters as rapacious as the Greek princes."¹¹¹

A brilliant mind, a scholar and a redoubtable debater, not to mention his institutional authority, Andrei Oțetea won this "historiographical war," his ideas prevailed and survived, but neither the character of the Romanian movement of 1821, nor the level of Russia's effective involvement, or the political personality of Tudor Vladimirescu can be clearly discerned from his work.

The **third direction** revolves around the *personality of Tudor*, who is presented at an overwhelming height, by his clear intentions, liberating in a national and social sense, but also by his spirit of sacrifice. A true hero. The role of the native boyars is described as subsidiary and without doctrinal clarity, being too fearful and tributary to group interests. The positioning of *Etairia* as an enemy of the Romanian movement led by Vladimirescu, not initially, but as events unfolded, because of its gradual *Phanariotization*, appears in the accusatory tones against presumed intentions to perpetuate the Phanariot regime and the position of power of its exponents in the Romanian Principalities.¹¹²

One of the first historians to follow this direction, Emil Vîrtosu, a relentless editor of documents about 1821, adjusted the interpretation proposed by Xenopol. In his view, Tudor, determined at first to eradicate the causes of the oppressive regime in the country, both in a social and national sense, determined and severe with the boyars and *Etairia*, was forced to adopt a legalistic strategy after the Tsar's disavowal of his movement, seeking the support of the native boyars, necessary in the difficult negotiations with the Ottomans. This compromise does not prevent Vîrtosu to credit Tudor with a "messianic" image, of a national hero,

¹⁰⁹ Andrei Oțetea, "Valoarea documentară a memoriilor," 79-80.

¹¹⁰ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile "partidei naționale,"* 577-585, 598-600.

¹¹¹ Andrei Oțetea, *Valoarea documentară,* 81.

¹¹² Dumitru Bodin, "Tudor Vladimirescu în lumina izvoarelor italiene," in *Revista istorică română*, 11-12 (1941-1942): 60-61; Sava Iancovici, "Complotul împotriva lui Alexandru Șuțu Vv. (febr. 1820)," in *Revista Arhivelor* 47, no. 1 (1970), 75-85; Gheorghe D. Iscru, *Revoluția română din 1821*, 1982, 61-69.

ready to sacrifice himself for the country and “justice,”¹¹³ but reproaches him for showing too much confidence in the boyars. More than Xenopol, Tudor’s movement and *Etairia* are presented by Vîrtosu as fundamentally different, the first “in direct connection with the immediate and eternal realities of the nation,” and the other foreign, which “represents the aristocratic spirit,” Phanariot.¹¹⁴ The idealization of Tudor’s motivations and actions clearly emerges, as does the exaggerated Phanariotization of the *Etairia*, an approach used by other historians in the following decades.

The figure of Tudor acquired heroic dimensions and the embodiment of all the virtues of the nation not only to Emil Vîrtosu, but also to Dumitru Bodin, the “great oltean” being the personification of the mission entrusted to him by the people and which history had destined for him.¹¹⁵ Moreover, Dumitru Bodin attributes to the Serbian and Romanian “revolutions” an eminently national character, originating in internal necessities, in the unbearable state of oppression and chaos, but he also attributes to *Etairia* “imperialist and messianic tendencies,” promoted by Capodistrias and Al. Ypsilanti, encouraged in this respect by “pro-Hellenic” Russian officials, an orientation that could generate a conflict within the movement for the emancipation of the Orthodox peoples from the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁶

This last trend, though not without exaggerations, tending to make Tudor a mythologized personification of the national virtues of a peasant world untouched by the plague of Phanariotism, has been the most intensely exploited ideologically by the authoritarian and totalitarian political regimes of the 20th century.

In a relatively recent study, one of the few dedicated to Vladimirescu in recent years, Radu G. Păun concluded that Tudor, once arrived in Bucharest, “had already lost the symbolic dispute against the traditional power, even if it was absent; he had also missed any chance to replace it with a new power, for lack of means to systematically put into practice the principles he had announced at the beginning of the revolt.”¹¹⁷ We completely agree with the author’s conclusion, but we wonder if Tudor was trying to propose a different type of political legitimacy. An affirmative answer would place us without hesitation at *the epicenter of a genuine modern revolution*, according to most possible definitions, on the road to

¹¹³ Emil Vîrtosu, *1821. Date și fapte noi* (Bucharest: “Cartea Românească,” 1932), XIII.

¹¹⁴ Emil Vîrtosu, *1821. Date și fapte noi*, XIV.

¹¹⁵ Dumitru Bodin, “Tudor Vladimirescu,” in *Figuri revoluționare române. Cinci conferințe ale Universității libere*, ed. Nicolae Iorga et al. (Bucharest: “Cartea Românească,” 1937), 45-46.

¹¹⁶ Dumitru Bodin, “Elemente naționale și influențe străine în revoluțiile din Sud-Estul Europei dela începutul secolului XIX,” *Revista istorică română* 15, fasc. 2 (1945): 141-144.

¹¹⁷ Radu G. Păun, “Scenă și simbol,” 117.

the “conquest of a new Citadel.”¹¹⁸ Was Tudor Vladimirescu a man of the Romanian Old Regime or did he go beyond his epoch, launching new ideas and political practices in society, coherent enough to propose a *new type of political legitimacy*, coming from a *political community with historical personality (the nation)*, not (or not only, as in many European states of the period)¹¹⁹ from God?

A fundamental question, in my opinion, whose answer will allow a critical approach to the vast Romanian historiography on the subject, as well to a new history of the 1821 moment, detached from the endless dispute on the affiliation (or not) of *Tudor of Vladimiri to Etairia*. I tried to answer that question in my book, where I argued that the configuration of his discourse, by which was contaminated for a short time (until 1826) also the boyars rhetoric, and the practices of political propaganda he used, justify a new reading of the sources, in an attempt to understand the features of this truly exceptional personality of the beginnings of Romanian modernity.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Bronislaw Baczko, *Les imaginaires sociaux. Mémoires et espoirs collectifs* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1984), 117.

¹¹⁹ Markus Prutsch, *Making Sense of Constitutional Monarchism in Post-Napoleonic France and Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3-6; Jacky Hummel, “La Charte française de 1814 et le Deutscher Konstitutionalismus: le inflections d’une réception durable,” *Jus Politicum* (Ebook), no. 13 (2014): 1-3; Philippe Lauvaux, “Les monarchies: inventaires des types,” *Pouvoirs*, no. 78 (1996): 32-36.

¹²⁰ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile “partidei naționale”* 565-640.