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THE STRANGE DEATH OF ROMANIAN LIBERALISM

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1. The Master Myth of Romanian Liberalism

“To write the history of the National-Liberal Party is to write the history of the political, social, and economic history of Romania for the past 75 years; because no important steps toward the organization of the Romanian State have been taken without the National-Liberal Party playing the leading role in their accomplishment...” (*Istoricul Partidului Național-Liberal de la 1848 și până astăzi*)¹

Thus begins a quasi-official history of the Romanian National-Liberal Party² which essentially gives the National-Liberals credit for every significant landmark event in modern Romanian history – what may be called “the master myth of Romanian liberalism”. This enduring and successful myth is usually summarized with a litany of key dates in modern Romanian history: the Revolutions of 1848; the Union of the Romanian Principalities in 1859; the writing of the Constitution of 1866 and the bringing of Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to the Romanian throne; the proclamation of Romanian independence in 1877; the establishment of the Romanian Kingdom (the Regat) in 1881; Romania’s successful participation in World War I (1916-1918) and the 1918 unification of Transylvania, Basarabia, and Bucovina with the Regat; the coronation of King Ferdinand as sovereign of this Greater Romania in 1922; and the ratification of the Constitution of 1923 – all of which are depicted as part of a series of stunning successes for Romanian liberalism.³

¹ *Istoricul Partidului Național-Liberal de la 1848 și până astăzi*, București, Independența, 1923, p. 3.

² It should be noted at the outset that because of the extremely restricted franchise in Romania between 1859 and 1923, there were in fact no actual political parties in the modern sense. For the argument, see my *Conflict and Crisis: Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871*, New York, Garland, 1987, p. 37-39. This distinction is not crucial to the present paper, but when references are made here to parties, these should be understood as groups, factions, and/or personal cliques.

³ C. A. Rosetti advanced an early version of this in 1878 on the 20th anniversary of his newspaper, “Românul”. See “Românul”, Vol. 22 (1878), 1 January 1878, p. 1, as quoted in Marin Bucur, *C. A. Rosetti. Mesianism și donquijotism revoluționar*, București, Editura Minerva, 1970, p. 387. Interestingly, one can find a very similar “myth” in Traian Herseni’s account of the development of Romanian social thought, *Sociologia românească. Încercare istorică*, București, Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1940, p. 14-15. Herseni was at the time an adherent of the radical, anti-liberal Legionary Movement. Much the same emphasis and organization can be found in Dan A. Lăzărescu, *Introducere în istoria liberalismului european și în istoria Partidului Național Liberal din România*, București, Editura Viitorul Românesc, 1996. However, a recent history shows some signs of breaking away from clichés. Thus, Gheorghe Cliveti’s contribution, *Independența națională și modernizarea instituțiilor românești*, to Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, coordinator, *Istoria Partidului Național Liberal*, București, Editura All, 2000, p. 55-59, raises useful questions about the “chronological” paradigm.

In a piece published in 2005 in *Xenopoliana*'s theme volume on "Liberalismul românesc: tendințe, structuri, personalități", I assayed a periodization of the history of Romanian liberalism and critiqued its development.⁴ That study (and others in the same volume) demonstrated that a good deal of the master myth of Romanian liberalism is just that: a myth in the sense of being inaccurate. In this essay, I want to explore what may be called "the strange death of Romanian liberalism."⁵ This involves looking more closely at how Romanian liberalism went off the rails in the 1880^s in contrast with the rosy picture of cascading successes from 1848 to 1937 painted by the master myth of Romanian liberalism.

2. Prelude

By the late 1860^s, it appeared that Romania was on its way toward becoming a model liberal state in Southeastern Europe with a constitutional monarchy and a commitment to civil liberties and freedoms. Significant and prominent roles were played in this process (1848-1859-1866) by liberals, most importantly Ion C. Brătianu and C. A. Rosetti.⁶ This accords with the master myth of Romanian liberalism. However, in 1871, when an abdication crisis allowed a takeover of Romanian politics by Romanian conservatives, the liberals found themselves in the political wilderness for nearly a decade (the last liberal cabinet resigned in November 1868; Ion C. Brătianu became prime minister in July 1876). This loss of power proved significant in the evolution of the political worldview of Brătianu and Rosetti.

In 1876, the primary issues confronting Romania were the Balkan crisis of 1876-1878, independence, and war with Turkey. The liberals were rightly seen by Prince Carol as leaders who could with these problems. Brătianu indeed did preside over the Romanian declaration of independence in 1877, the war itself (in alliance with Russia), and the settlement of 1878 as recounted in the master myth, including the establishment of the Romanian Kingdom in 1881. What is not pointed out in the myth is that in the process, Ion C. Brătianu began to turn on his liberal principles.

What went wrong with Romanian liberalism? In contrast to the master myth, which depicts 1878-1888 as the solidifying triumph of Romanian liberalism, it was precisely in this critical era that classical liberalism in Romania died both as an ideology and as a political force. The two key players in the strange death of Romanian liberalism, ironically, were its two leading exponents throughout the 1840^s-1880^s era: Ion C. Brătianu and C. A. Rosetti.

In the formative period before 1848 during which the Romanian lands – Muntenia⁷, Moldova, and Transilvania – grew restive under the tutelage of the three neighboring empires that aspired to assimilate or destroy them, Romanian young people increasingly went to Western Europe, especially France where they were nurtured on liberal, national, socialist, and revolutionary ideas.⁸ One of these young people was Ion C.

⁴ Paul E. Michelson, *Romanian Liberalism, 1800-1947. Definition, Periodization, and a Research Agenda*, in "Xenopoliana", Vol. 13 (2005), p. 3-19.

⁵ The phrase is borrowed from George Dangerfield's *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, New York, Capricorn Books, 1961.

⁶ For a fuller account of political developments in the 1859-1871 era, see my *Romanian Politics, 1859-1871: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol*, Iași, Center for Romanian Studies, 1998.

⁷ Muntenia (or Țara Românească) was usually called "Wallachia" in European parlance.

⁸ On Romanian students in Paris in the 1840^s, see Cornelia Bodea, *Lupta românilor pentru unitatea națională 1834-1849*, București, Editura Academiei, 1967, p. 78-94; and Vasile Maciu, *Un centre*

Brătianu (1821-1891).⁹ Brătianu's education was sketchy at best and shallow at worst. He had been withdrawn from formal schooling at age 14 to enter the Muntenian militia and thereafter was more or less self-educated. In 1841, at age 20, he was sent to study mathematics in France at a military school. This meant that he developed a Francophile engineering mentality, the kind of worldview that disposes one to what F. A. Hayek has called rationalistic or constructivistic French-style liberalism as opposed to the evolutionary British variety.¹⁰ Brătianu returned home in 1844 when his father died, then went back to Paris in 1846 as something of a professional student, where he hooked up with C. A. Rosetti, Nicolae Bălcescu, and other Romanian nationalist students. They were not only involved in the crystallization of their own national desiderata, they were also immersed in the French ferment that led up to the European-wide revolutions of 1848.

C. A. Rosetti (1816-1885)¹¹ was all his life a Francophile, an "1848^{er}", one for whom 1848 was almost a religion. This meant that he was a nationalist and a romantic liberal at the same time. His education was even less formal than that of Brătianu: Bucur claims that Rosetti had "an organic repulsion toward learning,"¹² a disposition not untypical for your average romantic poet. After an early career as military cadet, poet, *bon vivant*, and pioneer publisher, he began to spend more and more time in Paris in the mid-1840^s, where he was active among radical Romanian students and became close to Brătianu. Rosetti was even more heavily influenced by the French variety of liberalism than Brătianu and absorbed a heavy dose of French socialism as well. It is no surprise to find that a contemporary, Ion Bălăceanu, noted that in the 1840s Brătianu and Rosetti "did not conceal their opposition to the ideas of English constitutionalism..."¹³

That Brătianu and Rosetti were in constant contact with and heavily influenced by the prophets of national and social reform, Michelet, Quinet, and Mickiewicz, at the *Collège de France* is usually emphasized.¹⁴ What is less often remembered is that he and Rosetti became admirers and friends of the ultra-radicals P. J. Proudhon¹⁵ and Louis

révolutionnaire roumain dans les années 1845-1848: La Société des étudiants roumains de Paris, in idem, *Mouvements nationaux et sociaux roumains au XIX^e siècle*, București, Editura Academiei, 1971, p. 41-70.

⁹ The principal biography is Apostol Stan, *Ion C. Brătianu. Un promotor al liberalismului în România*, București, Editura Globus, 1995. On the young Brătianu through 1866, see E. Garrison Walters, *Ion C. Brătianu: The Making of A Nationalist Politician, 1821-1866*, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Ohio, The Ohio State University, Columbus, 1972.

¹⁰ For details, see Michelson, *Romanian Liberalism*, 2005, p. 5-6. On the hubris of the engineering mentality and its origins in France, see F. A. Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science. Studies on the Abuse of Reason*, second edition, Indianapolis, LibertyPress, 1979, especially p. 183 ff.

¹¹ The principal biographical treatments of Rosetti oddly enough appeared in the same year: Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970; and Vasile Netea, *C. A. Rosetti*, București, Editura Științifică, 1970. The former is generally critical, the latter rather sympathetic.

¹² Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 15-16; Netea, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 11 ff. is less harsh on Rosetti's education and temperament.

¹³ Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 49.

¹⁴ Toward the end of his life, Rosetti referred to them as "notre sainte trinité du Collège de France." C.A. Rosetti to Armand Lévy, 29 iv 1884, in C. A. Rosetti, *Correspondență*, edited by Marin Bucur, București, Editura Minerva, 1980, p. 356-357.

¹⁵ Rosetti referred to Proudhon as a "genius", and defended him against the criticisms of Ion Strat, one of Romania's few genuine classical liberal economists. See Ion Strat and C. A. Rosetti, *Polemica cu C. A. Rosetti, asupra principiului 'Laissez Faire, Laissez Passer'*, in Victor Slăvescu, ed., *Ion Strat. Economist – Financiar – Diplomat, 1836-1879*, București, 1946), Vol. II, p. 36-42, an exchange between Strat and Rosetti published in "Românul", 13.II.1864, in which Strat defended liberal economic principles and Rosetti called

Blanc, and were members of a militant French republican masonic lodge.¹⁶ From France they returned home to spearhead the Romanian 1848.¹⁷ In June of 1848, the duo paid this tribute to Quinet and French radicalism: "France raised us and taught us. The spark which warms our country we took from the French hearth."¹⁸

In 1848, as a European conflagration of revolutions triggered by the French revolution of February 1848 spread across the continent, the sparks of freedom and national affirmation also fell on the Romanian tinderbox. This led to an abortive plot in Moldova, quashed in April 1848 by Prince Mihai Sturdza before it even started; a full-fledged armed uprising in Muntenia between June and September 1848, which was suppressed by a Turkish invasion; and a broader scale revolution in Transylvania between May 1848 and August 1849, which fed off of and reacted against the concurrent Magyar revolution of March 1848-August 1849, eventually crushed by Russian intervention.¹⁹

Out of the revolutionary carnage and exile, came the first leaders of Romanian liberalism. In Moldova, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Costache Negri, Vasile Alecsandri, Al. I. Cuza, and others were among those who continued to work for the overthrow of the *Réglement Organique* system imposed by the Russians in 1834. These men were to become the moderate liberals of the future. In Muntenia, the leaders included Ion C. Brătianu, Nicolae Bălcescu, C.A. Rosetti, Dumitru Brătianu, and the Golescu brothers, and others. With the exception of Bălcescu, who died in 1852, they became the leaders of what became the National-Liberal Party in Romania and the bearers of the Romanian Liberal master myth.²⁰

The work of the Romanian liberals between 1851 and 1856 was critical in placing "the Romanian Question" on the agenda of the European powers and then achieving a de facto unification of Muntenia and Moldova in 1859 through the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as prince of the two principalities. Cuza proved to be insufficiently unaccommodating to the Muntenian liberals who eventually joined with Romanian conservatives (who had their own reasons for opposing Cuza) to oust the prince in 1866, draw up a mostly liberal constitution, and bring Prince Carol to Romania.²¹

Rosetti and Brătianu, thus, worked well together between 1848 and 1878, the former as the thinker, the man of ideas, the idealist, the latter as the activist, the implementer, the realist. Rosetti was interested in intellectual renown; Brătianu in political power.²² Along the way, however, they had demonstrated a willingness to

them into question. Strat wrote that "One can only smile when one hears Proudhon referred to as a great authority on political economy." Rosetti's contempt for Strat reflected his disdain for Strat's liberal ideas. See also Slăvescu, *Strat*, 1946, Vol. I, p. 60-61.

¹⁶ Details in Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 24 ff. See also Olimpiu Boitoș, *Raporturile românilor cu Ledru-Rollin și radicalii francezi în epoca revoluției dela 1848*, București, Cartea Românească, 1940. On Conte and Brătianu's "sociology," see Herseni, *Sociologia românească*, 1940, p. 26-27.

¹⁷ Details in Walters, *Brătianu*, 1972, *passim*.

¹⁸ Ion C. Brătianu and C. A. Rosetti to Edgar Quinet, 26 June 1848, in [Vintilă Brătianu, C. Banu, and G. D. Creanga, eds.], *Din scrierile și cuvântările lui Ion C. Brătianu, 1821-1891, Part I: 1848-1868*, București, Göbl, 1903, p. 12-14.

¹⁹ On the Romanian 1848, see Cornelia Bodea, *1848 la români*, second edition, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1998, three volumes; and Apostol Stan, *Revoluția română de la 1848*, București, Editura Albatros, 1992.

²⁰ On Romanian liberals generally, see my *Romanian Politics*, 1998, p. 39-43, and p. 297-303, 324-329 (for bibliography).

²¹ Michelson, *Romanian Politics*, 1998, p. 27-150.

²² Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 346-358.

compromise some of their principles that would not bode well for the future. For example, early on they put republicanism on the back burner. As Rosetti wrote in 1863, "We want the republic. But because to want the republic when all Europe is in constitutional monarchy is to be deranged... we were, we are, and will be for constitutional government until France, Germany, Austria will be republics."²³

On another issue, Ion Brătianu equivocated, suggesting in 1863 the postponement of discussion of agrarian reform until the regeneration of Romanian was complete because it was simply too divisive.²⁴ Sometimes this is defended as "realism", but the boundary between "realism" and abandonment of principle is not always easy to discern or defend.²⁵

3. The Strange Death of Romanian Liberalism, 1878-1884

This key era in the evolution of Romanian liberalism followed the bitter sweet experiences connected with the winning of Romanian independence in the Russo-Romanian-Turkish War of 1877-1878.²⁶ Promised her territorial integrity by the Russians in return for a significant (and perhaps decisive) contribution to Russian military success over the Ottoman Empire, the Romanians were rudely shocked when their erstwhile Tsarist ally demanded and got portions of Bessarabia it had originally seized in 1812 and lost in 1856.²⁷ In return, the Romanians got recognition of their independence and the northern Dobrogea. The Romanians were excluded from the Congress of Berlin that decided the final outcome of the war and were required to modify Article Seven of their 1866 constitution to allow Jewish citizenship.²⁸

In short, after the war was won, the Romanians were once more treated as second-class participants and supplicants and forced to do the bidding of the great powers through a series of humiliating events.²⁹ Indeed, it appeared in many respects that the Romanians had had greater freedom of maneuver prior to independence – when they had executed more than a few highly successful *fait accomplis* in the face of great power opposition – than they did afterward.

²³ C. A. Rosetti in "Românul", 16.XI.1863. This was confirmed in a later (possibly 1883) statement by Rosetti that to create a republic "while Austria and Russia were monarchies would be extremely imprudent..." Quoted by A. Ștefănescu-Galați, C. A. Rosetti 1816-1885, in [A. Ștefănescu-Galați, ed.], *Lui C. A. Rosetti (1816-1916). La o sută de ani dela nașterea sa*, second edition, București, n. p., 1916, p. 57.

²⁴ Parliamentary Debate of 11.II.1863, in Ion C. Brătianu, *Din scrierile lui Ion C. Brătianu*, 1903, Part I, p. 285-286.

²⁵ Walters concludes that the principal characteristic of Brătianu's development after 1856 was a slow abandonment of principle for pragmatism. Walters, *Brătianu*, 1972, p. 219.

²⁶ On this era, see V. Cristian, *Diplomația României în slujba împlinirii idealului național*, in Gh. Platon, et. al., *Cum s-a înfăptuit România modernă. O perspectivă asupra strategiei dezvoltării*, Iași, Editura Universității Al. I. Cuza, Iași, p. 223-296; Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence*, West Lafayette IN, Purdue University Press, 1995, p. 112 ff.; Gheorghe Cliveti, *România și crizele internaționale 1853-1913*, Iași, Editura Fundației Axis, 1997, p. 211 ff.; and Edda Binder-Iijima, *Die Institutionalisierung der rumänischen Monarchie unter Carol I, 1866-1881*, München, R. Oldenbourg, 2003, p. 361 ff.

²⁷ Count Ignatiev is said to have told the Romanians: "Of course we guaranteed integrity... against Turkey, but not against other powers, and in any case, not against ourselves." Cited in Gh. I. Brătianu, *Bismarck și Ion C. Brătianu*, in "Revista Istorică Română", Vol. 5-6 (1935-1936), p. 90.

²⁸ Cf. Apostol Stan and Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România de la origini până la 1918*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1996, p. 232-248 for the liberals and foreign policy issues in the 1878-1888 era.

²⁹ The British Prime Minister, Disraeli, actually told Brătianu in Berlin in 1878 that "In politics, ingratitude is often the recompense for the greatest sacrifices." See Carol I, *Aus dem Leben König Karls von Rumänien*, Stuttgart, J. G. Cotta, 1894-1900, entry for 20.VI.1878. The leaders of the great powers were able tutors in *realpolitik*.

Among the most stung and embittered by all of this was Ion C. Brătianu, the architect of Romanian independence and the Russo-Romanian alliance. By 1878, Brătianu was mad as hell and wasn't going to take it any longer. He was tired of being pushed around by the great powers (which further included being forced to make good on West European – especially German – railroad investments; being coerced by Austria-Hungary over the changes in the Danube Commission; having to cave in to Russia and Austria in connection with “revolutionary” exiles in Romania)³⁰ and decided that the only solution was to pursue Romanian economic development at all costs: “Prin Noi Însine,” that is to say “Do it by Ourselves.”³¹ This entailed, of course, bailing out on classical liberal principles and policies, as Brătianu and his collaborators (especially P. S. Aurelian) bought into the protectionist vision of Friedrich List. After 1878, “Brătianu withdrew into the practical direction of liberalism. Rosetti remained the ideologue.”³² Slowly Rosetti would come to realize after the Romanian war for independence that Ion Brătianu was not the same man he had worked with for so many years.³³ The seeds of the differences between Brătianu and Rosetti had been planted and taken root in the period between Romania's declaration of independence in 1877 and the disillusionments of 1878. In November of 1877, when the news came to București that the Romanian-led Russo-Romanian forces at Plevna had triumphed, effectively ending Turkish chances in the war, a celebratory crowd gathered at Rosetti's residence. He came out on the balcony and declared: “We have taken the external Plevna, it is true. Now, however, it remains for us to take the internal Plevna.”³⁴ It would eventually become clear in the early 1880s that for C. A. Rosetti the “internal Plevna” meant furthering revolutionary 1848-style social and political reform, while for Ion C. Brătianu it meant cementing his hold on power.

Ion C. Brătianu's internal political tactics after 1878 reflected his new mission. For one thing, he began to extend his control of the levers of Romanian politics through the expansion, firstly, of a centralized, bureaucratic, oligarchical state and, secondly, of a state-controlled economic system.³⁵ The fact that Bismarck's Imperial Germany had apparently thrived doing the same thing did not go unnoticed in București.³⁶

These steps included the creation of the Banca Națională (1880),³⁷ and a state administration of the railroads (1880, which became in 1883 the Căile Ferate

³⁰ On Prussia/Germany and Romania, see Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire*, New York, Vintage Books, 1979, p. 351 ff. and Brătianu, *Bismarck și Ion C. Brătianu*, 1935-1936, p. 95-101. On Romania and Austria-Hungary, see E. R. von Rutkowski, *Österreich-Ungarn und Rumänien, 1880-1883, de Proklamierung des Königreiches und die Rumänischen Irredenta*, in “Südost-Forschungen”, Vol. 25 (1966), p. 150-284. For the Danube issue, see Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *Dunărea, Marea Neagră și Puterile Centrale, 1878-1898*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1982. On Russian pressure, Gheorghe Nicolae Căzan and Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *România și Tripla Alianță 1878-1914*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979, p. 57-58.

³¹ This became the liberal mantra of the interwar era, but as Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 207 ff., show in a chapter entitled “Conceptul ‘Prin Noi Însine,’” the concept was born in the 1880s. Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 379-380, credits Brătianu, though he sees this as a tactic not a principle.

³² Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 346-358.

³³ Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 256.

³⁴ Constantin Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată, 1871-1884*, second edition, București, Universul, 1935, Vol. I, p. 240. Bacalbașa amplified: “The internal Plevna was the definitive defeat of reaction and the achievement of democratic reforms.” Bacalbașa was an experienced journalist and a useful eyewitness to the events of the 1870s and 1880s.

³⁵ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 374-380, 394-410.

³⁶ Something suggested by Gh. I. Brătianu, *Bismarck și Ion C. Brătianu*, 1935-1936, p. 86-103.

³⁷ See Victor Slăvescu, *Istoricul Băncii Naționale a României (1880-1924)*, București, Cultura Națională, 1925.

Române),³⁸ as well as the reorganization of the Societatea de Credit Funciar Român (founded 1873, modified 1882) – all of which expanded patronage opportunities and the political base of the ruling Liberals.³⁹ The initial directors of the CFR were liberal loyalists, most of the shares of the Banca Națională were held by Liberals, and the dominant figure in the bank was Brătianu's long-time friend and collaborator, Eugeniu Carada.⁴⁰

In 1885, the free trade-promoting commercial convention with Austria-Hungary of 1875 was revoked and in 1886, Romania adopted a new protective customs tariff. This led to a seven year customs war with Austria-Hungary (1886-1893).⁴¹ (Paradoxically, in the same era, Brătianu sought to end Romania's diplomatic isolation by moving into a secret alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1883, and, eventually in 1888, with Italy.)⁴²

In 1887, a highly protectionist law to stimulate national industry was passed.⁴³ All of these actions should have come as no surprise. Brătianu had publicly abandoned the liberal principle of free trade as far back as 1876. In a parliamentary debate, Brătianu had asserted that while free trade economic liberalism might be defended in theory, in practical politics "the facts are against it".⁴⁴

³⁸ For a history, see C. Botez, D. Urmă, and I. Saizu, *Epopeea feroviară românească*, București, Editura Sport-Turism, 1977.

³⁹ Beyond, of course, the clientism possibilities provided by expanding governmental bureaucracies, such as the creation new and expanded ministries. To the best of my knowledge, there is no detailed study available on the expansion of government in pre-World War I Romania.

⁴⁰ Ion Mamina and Ion Bulei, *Guverne și guvernanți (1866-1916)*, București, Silex, 1994, p. 48-49. On Carada, see Mihail Gr. Romașcanu, *Eugeniu Carada (1836-1910)*, București, Cartea Românească, 1937.

⁴¹ For coverage: C. I. Băicoianu, *Istoria politicii noastre vamale și comerciale de la Regulamentul Organic și până în prezent. Relațiunile noastre comerciale cu Germania, Austro-Ungaria, Anglia, Franța, Italia și Rusia de la 1871-1902*, București, n.p., 1904, Vol. I, Pt. 1; and Uta Bindreiter, *Die diplomatischen und wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen zwischen Österreich-Ungarn und Rumänien 1875-1888*, Wien, H. Böhlau, 1976.

⁴² See Căzan and Rădulescu-Zoner, *România și Tripla Alianță*, 1979, on this and other matters dealing particularly with Austro-Romanian relations. The fact that Brătianu cozied up to the conservative, Germanophile, P. P. Carp, to bring this off, was undoubtedly irritating to Rosetti. It is probably at this time that the Germanophile and Russophobe moderate liberal leader D. A. Sturdza became one of Brătianu's closest allies... and eventual successor. His selection as foreign minister in 1882 was a blow to Brătianu and Rosetti's relationship. Sturdza also became an intimate of King Carol. In 1882-1883, he met frequently with Carol (sometimes two or three times a day) and often had dinner with the King. On the other hand, Rosetti, who met frequently with the King in 1881-1882 and regularly dined with him, met with him hardly at all in 1883-1884. See Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007, *passim*. Bismarck was impressed by the strength of anti-Russian sentiment on the part of the Romanians. Brătianu, *Bismarck și Ion C. Brătianu*, 1935-1936, p. 97.

⁴³ Cf. Anastasie Iordache, *Primele măsuri legislative pentru protejarea și încurajarea industriei naționale. Legea din 1887*, in "Studii", Vol. 25 (1972), p. 97-110. A recent economic history, N. N. Constantinescu, ed., *Romania's Economic History From the Beginnings to World War II*, București, Editura Academiei, 1994, p. 200, remarks that opponents of free trade included "important Romanian intellectuals such as B. P. Hasdeu, P. S. Aurelian, A. D. Xenopol, etc." not just business people. Interestingly, Aurelian is the only actual economist in this group and his speciality was agrarian economics. For a summary of liberal industrial policy, see Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 219-222.

⁴⁴ Debate of 14.VII.1876 in Ion C. Brătianu, *Discursuri, scrieri, acte, și documente*, Vol. II: 23 Aprilie 1876 - 30 Aprilie 1877, Pt. I, București, Independența, 1912, p. 22. For a summary of Brătianu's economic policies, see Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 374-380, 394-402. For reasons of space, this subject cannot be pursued further here, but that Brătianu was not an economic liberal is clear. On the subject of economic liberalism in Romania (which makes for depressing reading for actual liberals), see Eugen Demetrescu's two books: *Influența școlii economice liberale în România în veacul al XIX-lea*, București, Bucovina, 1935; and *Liberalismul economic în dezvoltarea României moderne*, București, Cartea Românească, 1940. Brătianu's economics are not mentioned in either book. For P. S. Aurelian, the leading promoter of protectionism in Romania, see Petru S. Aurelian, *Opere economice. Texte alese*, edited by Mihai C. Demetrescu, București,

Secondly, it became obvious after 1878, that Ion Brătianu had begun to mentor the next generation of Romanian politicians, mostly people who were not veterans of the 1848-1868 era, but who were up and comers for various reasons. This alienated, of course, many of his previous supporters.⁴⁵ The younger group was more technocratically-inclined, most were trained in France where they absorbed many of the collectivist tendencies of French technocrats.⁴⁶ Among the new players were P. S. Aurelian (1833-1909), A. D. Xenopol (1847-1920), Vasile Conta (1845-1882), and Eugeniu Stătescu (1836-1905).

Finally, in 1878, Brătianu was 30 years older than he had been in 1848; his youthful idealism had definitely succumbed to his growing pragmatism,⁴⁷ and by 1884, he was defining liberalism as a pragmatic attitude mostly concerned with the efficient solution of social problems.⁴⁸ This was coupled with a growing resentment at persistent European disregard for Romania (and, of course, himself), and a continued personal quest for ever greater power. By 1883, he was fixing elections, riding roughshod over all opposition, and had acquired the nickname "The Vizier."⁴⁹ To adopt the periodization suggested by Gheorghe Cliveti: from 1881-1883, Brătianu consolidated his power; then spent two years pursuing a transition to authoritarian rule, 1884-1885; ending with an authoritarian regime in 1886-1888.⁵⁰ Clearly Lord Acton's dictum that "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely"⁵¹ is borne out in this case.

For Rosetti, the "internal Plevna" signified something quite different. It meant social, political, and civil reform, particularly reforms that had been delayed because of Romania's lack of formal independence prior to 1878.⁵² As time went on, these reforms seemed increasingly drawn from the utopian ideals of his youth, especially as he lost contact with Brătianu and was more and more influenced by the radical ideas of his wife and sons.⁵³

Editura Academiei, 1967, which contains reprints of most of his protectionist tracts. On Friedrich List, the ideologue of German protectionism, see Ion Răducanu, *Ideea națională în gândirea economică a lui Friedrich List*, in "Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice", Seria III (Vol. 23), 1941, p. 499-520, especially p. 517-520. Aurelian was responsible for the appearance in Romanian of List's primary work.

⁴⁵ Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 369. The most noticeable split was between Brătianu and his older brother, Dumitru Brătianu, partly owing to temperament and partly to Dumitru's sense of betrayal in connection with his short lived prime ministership. See Bacalbașa, p. 295-299; Anastasie Iordache, *Pe urmele lui Dumitru Brătianu*, București, Editura Sport-Turism, 1984, especially p. 306 ff.; and Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 253-256.

⁴⁶ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 357-358, 428-429; and Titu Maiorescu, *Istoria contemporană a României (1866-1900)*, București, Socec, 1925, p. 219-220.

⁴⁷ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 411-412. Brătianu took advantage of virtually every occasion in the 1880s to stress the pragmatic nature of liberalism as well as his disdain for "theories" and "a priori" systems. See Stan's analysis of his speeches, pp. 418-422. This is defended by Gh. I. Brătianu, *Bismarck și Ion C. Brătianu*, 1935-1936, p. 86, as a "fortunate" blend of idealism and realism.

⁴⁸ Liviu Brătescu, P. N. L. (1876-1888). *O guvernare eficientă sau diferența între teorie și practică*, in "Xenopoliana", Vol. 12 (2005), Nr. 1-4, p. 80.

⁴⁹ Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 332-334.

⁵⁰ Rădulescu-Zoner, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 84.

⁵¹ Acton to Mandell Creighton, 5 April 1887, in Lord Acton, *Essays in the Study and Writing of History*, edited by J. Rufus Fears, Indianapolis, Liberty Classics, 1985, p. 383. Garry Walters argues that this was a dominant trait of Brătianu's political personality already by 1866. Walters, *Brătianu*, 1972, p. 219.

⁵² For an analysis of most of these issues, see P. Căncea, *Disidența liberal-radicală condusă de C. A. Rosetti (1878-1885)*, in "Studii", Vol. 18 (1965), p. 363-381.

⁵³ Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 300, believes that Mircea Rosetti's influence was key in reviving Rosetti's radicalism and in contributing to the split between Brătianu and Rosetti. See also Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 445; and Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 423. Mircea's death in June 1882 (he was only 31 years old) and the destruction of the Rosetti home (and most of his papers) by fire in January 1884 were personal tragedies that undoubtedly deeply affected the aging radical. Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*,

Of course, the new “front” couldn’t be fully opened until 1881 because of issues raised by Romanian independence, including the accession of northern Dobrogea (which, for all the fuss made by nationalists, was of far greater strategic and economic value than the miserably poor southern Basarabian counties lost), the modification of the constitution of 1866 to allow Jewish citizenship (which was evaded in practice by making it extremely difficult for Jews to become citizens, including approval by the Council of Ministers on an individual basis), satisfying foreign concessionaires and governments, and, finally, gaining approval of the elevation of Romania to a kingdom in May, 1881.⁵⁴ Indeed, in 1880, in a letter to his wife, Rosetti argued that Maria and their son, Mircea, were “more than unfair” toward Brătianu, who he passionately defended as the only one capable of leading Romania at present.⁵⁵ The external Plevna was not quite complete.

And even when it appeared that external issues were settled with the proclamation of the Kingdom in 1881, the precariousness of Romania’s position was revealed with the reopening of the Danube Question: debate over the role which would be played by the great powers in the legal regime of the Danube, particularly Austria-Hungary, which had pretensions to far more control over the lower Danube than was justifiable. Brătianu was disposed to support concessions to Austria-Hungary; Rosetti was not. Romania’s choices here seemed to be, he had written bitterly in *Românul*, “Either the Russians or Austria-Hungary, but never the Romanians!”⁵⁶ He attempted to resign from the Senate in protest in late May 1881, though he was talked out of it.⁵⁷

It was not that Brătianu was happy with all of this, but he was determined to end Romania’s isolation, an isolation that had Austria-Hungary micro-managing responses to internal Romanian politics, such as their exaggerated protests over the 1881 parliamentary message to the throne and speeches given at the inauguration of the statue of Ștefan cel Mare in Iași in 1883.⁵⁸ Austria-Hungary, he fumed, “demands that we

1935, Vol. I, p. 339-340. The fire left the Rosetti’s destitute. Also influential was Rosetti’s young chief of staff, Gh. Panu, who subsequently became more and more radical (and then wound up a conservative!). See Corneliu Mateescu, *G. Panu și radicalismul românesc la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1987, p. 41 ff. On Rosetti and Romanian socialists, see Căncea, *Disidența*, 1965, p. 378-380. Ion Brătianu’s wife blamed Maria Rosetti and Vintilă Rosetti for the split. See Pia Brătianu to Ionel Brătianu, 17/29 April 1885 in Ion Nistor, ed., *Din corespondența familiei Ion C. Brătianu*, Vol. II: 1884-1885, București, Independența, 1934, p. 176-177.

⁵⁴ See Paraschiva Căncea, *Viața politică din România în primul deceniu al independenței de stat*, București, Editura Științifică, 1974, p. 81-89; and Suzana Bodale, *Acțiunea politico-diplomatică pentru realizarea actului proclamării Regatului României (1878-1881)*, in “Revista Arhivelor”, Vol. 85 (2008), p. 177-189.

⁵⁵ C. A. Rosetti to Maria Rosetti, 13/25.II.1880 in Ion Nistor, ed., *Din corespondența familiei Ion C. Brătianu*, Vol. V: 1890-1891, București, Independența, 1935, p. 525-527. Mircea was at this point apparently something of an anarchist (“in principle against all governments”). It is amusing to read the elderly Rosetti pointing out to him that it is easier to “wear a gown and make speculative politics” than to actually be involved in politics. Mircea’s error “is to be preoccupied with principles, with truths, when the fatherland is in eminent danger of being lost.”

⁵⁶ Maiorescu, *Istoria contemporană*, 1925, p. 179-181. King Carol noted in his journal a visit on 15/27.IV.1882 from Brătianu who told him that “the stance of Rosetti... puts Brătianu in an enormously difficult position.” Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007, p. 142.

⁵⁷ Mamina and Bulei, *Guvernanți*, 1994, p. 51.

⁵⁸ Căzan and Rădulescu-Zoner, *România și Tripla Alianță*, 1979, p. 77 ff. for 1881 and p. 108 ff. for 1883. N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, București, n.p., 1939, p. 233-237, devotes considerable space to these two episodes. Rosetti was present at the Iași festivities, as president of the Chamber of Deputies, and gave a speech concluding “Long Live their majesties, the King and Queen of the Romanians,” which, of course, was designed to provoke the Habsburgs as was a reference by another speaker to “missing jewels” from Ștefan’s crown. The text of Rosetti’s speech is given in N. A. Bogdan, *Regele Carol I și a doua sa capitală*, București, C. Sfetea, 1916, p. 290-291.

humble ourselves.”⁵⁹ Rosetti, on the other hand, was simply getting tired of “compromising”.⁶⁰ This was another small crack in the foundation of the Rosetti-Brătianu partnership.

Rosetti was briefly⁶¹ minister of interior in 1878 (between March and October) and in this period he attempted pursue the “internal Plevna” by advancing some of his ideas regarding better treatment of and more rights for the peasantry.⁶² He continued to pursue improvement of the situation of the peasantry between 1878 and 1884 (he was again minister of interior between June 1881 and January 1882), without a great deal of success both because of his short tenure as a cabinet officer and because of a general lack of enthusiasm shown for these projects by virtually everybody, including King Carol and Ion Brătianu. Probably his most demoralizing defeat was in connection with his 1882 proposal to reform the agricultural contract laws, which passed, but suffered significant modifications along the way. (In this issue, he was supported by Brătianu.)⁶³

Carol’s *Jurnal* has numerous unflattering references to proposals that formed Rosetti’s “internal Plevna”: “Rosetti has proposed yet another bill that will provoke agitation in the countryside,”⁶⁴ “Elections for the Chamber were excellent, only Rosetti still makes propaganda for ideas that are too new.”⁶⁵ On the other hand, the King came to rely fully on the more pragmatic Brătianu, telling D. A. Sturdza in 1886 that Brătianu’s resignation “would be a calamity.”⁶⁶

In 1881, Rosetti’s attempts to reform provincial administration politically and morally met with opposition from Brătianu, who realized that this would undermine his political base. Indeed, Rosetti was seen as something of a figure of fun for his efforts to promote moral reform.⁶⁷ Such was all too often the fate of real reformers in Romanian politics. Both this and the agrarian reform efforts isolated Rosetti and his adherents in the National-Liberal Party.⁶⁸

Between 1882 and 1884, relations between Brătianu and Rosetti continued to cool and then ruptured definitively.⁶⁹ He was unpleasantly surprised to be opposed in so many instances by members of his own National-Liberal Party; he was dismayed by Romanian foreign policy’s tilt toward Germany and Austria-Hungary; he was

⁵⁹ Entry for 10/22.XII.1881 in Carol, *Jurnal*, Vol. I: 1881-1887, edited by Vasile Docea, București, Editura Polirom, 2007.

⁶⁰ At the end of 1881, he was complaining to the King about Austrian pressures. Entry for 18/30.XII.1881 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007. He followed this with another threat to resign, which he did in January 1882. Entries for 22.XII.1881/3.I.1882 and 12/24.I.1882 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁶¹ Netea notes that none of Rosetti’s ministerial appointments (1860, 1866, 1878, 1881) ever lasted longer than seven months, which prevented him from doing much. Netea, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 343-344.

⁶² For the history of these laws between 1864 and 1882, see Gh. Cristea, *Contribuții la istoria problemei agrare în România. Învieșile agricole (1866-1882). Legislație și aplicare*, București, Editura Academiei, 1977. For a summary of the parliamentary discussions, see Paraschiva Căncea, Mircea Iosa, and Apostol Stan, eds., *Istoria Parlamentului și a vieții parlamentare din România până la 1918*, București, Editura Academiei, 1983, p. 255-260.

⁶³ On the “internal Plevna,” see Netea, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 331 ff.

⁶⁴ Entry for 7.IV.1882 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁶⁵ Entry for 9.V.1883, Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁶⁶ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 436.

⁶⁷ Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 299-300. In 1884, when a former minister of war, Gh. Slănăceanu, died, the authorities found a large envelope among his effects captioned “Evidence of the Morality of the Powers of the Day.” “This envelope,” Bacalbașa writes, “disappeared. Who knows what highly interesting things were in this mysterious envelope?” (p. 374).

⁶⁸ Mamina and Bulei, *Guvernanți*, 1994, p. 56-57.

⁶⁹ For a survey, see Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 392-450.

undoubtedly shocked when Brătianu felt it necessary to caution him in 1882 against “frightening people.”⁷⁰ A Rosetti attempt in 1883 to re-affirm the liberalism of 1848-1866 by republishing the 1863 liberal program in *Românul*, 16.VII.1883 was a failure.⁷¹

Another ruckus occurred in February 1883, when Clemenceau gave an address to Romanian students in Paris which both Carol and Germany found offensive. Carol accused Rosetti, who was in Paris at the time, of approving of the address.⁷² He added that Brătianu was equally “indignant” over the matter.⁷³

In 1883-1884, Rosetti became heavily committed to a variety of proposals for modifying the Romanian constitution of 1866.⁷⁴ He had begun to press for revision in 1882 (with an article in *Românul*), with the goal of dramatically widening political participation in Romania, which in turn would cut back on the degree of “legalized corruption” of the system.⁷⁵ Rosetti wanted reforms in the press laws, broadening of the franchise, and the creation of a unicameral legislature (a proposal he had sustained in 1866, but which had been opposed by Prince Carol).

These goals differed from those of Ion Brătianu, who merely wanted to weaken the conservatives and solidify his position in power. And as a frequent target of journalists, he was not enthusiastic about more freedom of the press; the fact that during 1883-1884 there was considerable student unrest and activism made loosening of press laws seem inopportune to both Brătianu and the conservatives.⁷⁶

Indeed, Titu Maiorescu could now argue in connection with the prime minister’s opposition to press law reform, “Ion Brătianu, with seven years of experience in governing, had begun to be very conservative” while his new close associate, D. A. Sturdza “never was a liberal.”⁷⁷ In October of 1883, in a visit with the King, Brătianu told the King that he “fears that a break will occur with Rosetti, who is influenced by his crazy son and is too radical on the Danube Problem.”⁷⁸ Brătianu’s strategy in dealing with these proposals was to study and stall, debate and delay.

At the same time, the parliament took up the question of providing a crown domain to provide financial support for the King. Brătianu supported the measure, arguing that only “collectivists, communards, anarchists, socialists, [and] nihilists” could oppose the chief of state being a property holder.⁷⁹ Rosetti took a public stance

⁷⁰ Bucur, *Rosetti*, 1970, p. 418, quoting a letter from Mircea Rosetti to Vintilă Rosetti, 28 April 1882.

⁷¹ This certainly made obvious the transition from what I have called elsewhere the “pragmatic liberalism” of 1848-1866 to the “realpolitik liberalism” of the post-1866 era. See Michelson, *Romanian Liberalism*, (2005), p. 7-10.

⁷² Entry for 14/26.II.1883 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁷³ Entry for 16/28.II.1883 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁷⁴ See Gr. Chiriță, *Modificarea constituției în 1884. Desprinderea grupării liberal-radical conduse de C. A. Rosetti din Partidul Liberal*, in “Studii”, Vol. 23 (1970), p. 739-768, which includes statistical details; and Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 222 ff. King Carol was of the opinion that “with the exception of Rosetti, hardly anyone is interested in revision.” Entry for 19/31.VIII.1883 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007. For coverage of the parliamentary debates, see Căncea, et al., *Istoria Parlamentului*, 1983, p. 252-255.

⁷⁵ Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 224.

⁷⁶ Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 348-349. See p. 344-352, 364-368, and 370 ff. for details on student agitation (of which Bacalbașa was a part). See also entries for 9/21.V.1884 and 12/24.V.1884 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007 about nationalist student protests in connection with the “Transylvanian problem.” Interestingly, Austria-Hungary apparently took little notice.

⁷⁷ Maiorescu, *Istoria contemporană*, 1925, p. 215. Maiorescu was a leading conservative.

⁷⁸ Entry for 13/25.X.1883 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁷⁹ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 427-428.

against the plan anyway.⁸⁰ The proposals passed.⁸¹ The scuttlebutt on the street was that Brătianu had thereby bought the support of the King for his continued grasp of power.⁸²

Needless to say, Brătianu's views triumphed on all of these issues, though the actual votes took place only in mid-1884.⁸³ The irony of this was that the debate was not liberal against conservative, but liberal against liberal.⁸⁴ Rosetti resigned as president of the Chamber in 1883⁸⁵ and as a deputy in 1884 before the final passage of very modest constitutional reforms in June 1884.⁸⁶ The "friendship between C. A. Rosetti and Ion Brătianu was finished."⁸⁷ As Rosetti wrote in *Românul* on June 20, "What do I care if the conservatives skin me alive when even those with the national-liberal banner flay me alive?"⁸⁸

King Carol also noted that this was a turning point, writing in his journal, "The Liberal Party is finished."⁸⁹ Indeed, in the summer of 1884, Brătianu began to explore the idea of collaboration with the conservative Junimist faction and was deeply disappointed when this fell through.⁹⁰ Though, of course, the National-Liberal Party continued, it was no longer really liberal in any of the significant senses of the word.⁹¹

The break between Rosetti and Brătianu signified the end of classical liberalism in the National-Liberal Party, though the master myth of Romanian liberalism ignored or obscured this fact (the editor of a 1916 commemorative volume on Rosetti explicitly denied that there had been any rift between Rosetti and Brătianu).⁹² Brătianu continued to aggressively pursue the decidedly unliberal "prin noi înșine" developmental policies that would become a staple of Romanian political economy, and which, in my view, did a lot to actually retard Romanian development. His illiberal trade policies accompanied equally illiberal autocratic rule, undemocratic politics, and restricted civil liberties. Clearly the primary responsibility for the strange death of Romanian liberalism lies with

⁸⁰ Mamina and Bulei, *Guvernanți*, 1994, p. 55.

⁸¹ Carol's journal noted with approval that Brătianu had been "very energetic and skillful in the whole affair." Entry for 5/17.VI.1884 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁸² Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 368.

⁸³ Stan and Iosa, *Liberalismul*, 1995, p. 232 characterize the modification of the constitution in 1884 favorably as "exceptional" and in accord with "national realities."

⁸⁴ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 425.

⁸⁵ Just days before Romania's secret adherence to the Triple Alliance. Căzan and Rădulescu-Zoner, *România și Tripla Alianță*, 1979, p. 122-123. King Carol subsequently noted that "the revision of the Constitution is now on a better path." Entry for 3/15.XII.1883 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007.

⁸⁶ Rosetti's electoral reform proposals were able to muster only 35 out of 132 votes in a Brătianu-dominated parliament. Daniel Barbu, *Hainele cele noi ale statului. Liberalismul românesc între două revoluții, 1848-1917*, in "Xenopoliana", Vol. 13 (2005), p. 65. Rosetti's adherents were systematically purged from communal councils, national guard posts, and so forth. Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 337-338.

⁸⁷ Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 341. One sign of this was that having lost the voice of Rosetti's "Românul", the Brătianu group had to start its own newspaper organ, "Voința Națională" (p. 368).

⁸⁸ Căncea, *Disidența*, 1965, p. 366.

⁸⁹ Entry for 5/17.I.1884 in Carol, *Jurnal*, 2007. The King went on to note "Rosetti finds himself isolated with his views. The majority is for three colleges and against universal suffrage." In the entry for 20.I/1.II.1884, the King reported that the chamber president, Gen. Dimitrie Lecca, was promoting "social propaganda" in the countryside, especially through "Românul". Given the low levels of literacy, it is hard to believe that this would be very effective. On 18/30.IV.1884, the King further noted that "Rosetti was carrying out some agitation in the countryside for a single electoral college, with, however, absolutely no response."

⁹⁰ Stan, *Brătianu*, 1995, p. 429.

⁹¹ For a review of the definition used here, see my *Romanian Liberalism*, 2005, p. 3-6.

⁹² Ștefănescu-Galați, C. A. Rosetti, in *Lui C. A. Rosetti (1816-1916)*, 1916, p. 59.

Brătianu's deliberate abandonment of liberal principles in favor of nationalism and *realpolitik*.

As for Rosetti, late in 1884, he announced in *Românul* that he no longer considered himself a member of the National-Liberal Party.⁹³ Less than a year later, in 1885, Rosetti died and along with him what little there remained of the Romanian liberal tradition. His responsibility for the demise of Romanian liberalism is less than that of Brătianu, and he deserves some credit for the pursuit of principle and bucking Brătianu and his less than liberal majority between 1878 and 1884. However, his commitment to economic liberalism was non-existent (there is no record of his opposing *prin noi înșine*) and the foundations of his civil libertarian liberalism owed more to his utopianism than to classical liberalism (there is no evidence that he was familiar with either French or British liberal thinkers).

4. Conclusion

The master myth of Romanian liberalism was enduring because of the political successes of its founding generation and their successors into the interwar era. Even when the National-Liberal Party was permanently ousted from power in 1937, the circumstances (a radicalizing fascist-antisemitic regime followed by a royal dictatorship succeeded by the National Legionary State leading to the Antonescu military dictatorship and finally ending with the Communist takeover), the master myth of heroic Liberalism was left intact in the public consciousness. The post-1937 regimes in effect legitimized the illusions of the myth. And when the last of these fell in 1989, elements of the myth were able to surface in post-Communist Romania.

Unfortunately, the peculiar development of liberalism in Romania resulted in the discrediting of classical liberal ideas and principles. Why? Because, even though by the 1880s, the Romanian National-Liberal Party had abandoned virtually all essential liberal principles in the name of realism and pragmatism;⁹⁴ and even though the "national" element repeatedly trumped the "liberal" element in its policies, the National-Liberal Party remained identified in people's minds with liberalism. This caused the classical liberal tradition to be completely misunderstood in Romania.

In addition, as R. W. Seton-Watson acerbically noted, it is "not enough to pass enlightened laws; it remained to enforce them and to imbue public opinion and the governing class with respect for the principles they embodied."⁹⁵ The gap between principle and practice was significant, though this was not necessarily greater than the gaps found elsewhere.

Of course, the failures of Romanian liberalism were not unique. Guido de Ruggiero has described how continental liberalism fell prey to protectionism in the second half of the 19th century, learned "to consider the state as an instrument which they can control to secure their own selfish interests." This leads to losing "their character as a disinterested and governing general class; their sense of autonomy and their power of criticism diminish; and the idea of power takes in their minds the place

⁹³ Căncea, *Disidența*, 1965, p. 366.

⁹⁴ Amusingly, *Istoricul Național-Liberal*, 1923, p. 137, has the audacity to assert that the National-Liberal Party during Ion C. Brătianu's long domination between 1876-1888 was based on the ideal that "the man passes, but the principles which lead a party are permanent. Therefore, the liberal idea and the conservative idea will never die..."

⁹⁵ R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians*, Hamden CT, Archon Books, 1963, p. 319.

of the idea of freedom.”⁹⁶ In the final analysis, these people, whatever and wherever they were, were not liberals.

De Ruggiero argues that eventually what most European parties followed was not liberalism, but a new kind of nationalism that assumed “an authoritarian and despotic character in order to subject the entire nation to the will of a handful of politicians,” in effect inverting “the original relation between nation and State.”⁹⁷ Romania was no different in this regard as well.

Why then is the death of Romanian liberalism a “strange death” if much the same thing happened elsewhere? It is because the demise of Romanian liberalism came at the hands of its two most prominent leaders, Ion C. Brătianu and C. A. Rosetti, not its political enemies. Secondly, the death of classical liberalism in Romania was strange because it occurred while it was at the height of power, not in decline or faltering electorally.

The unhappy result was that, “In place of the primacy of the economic over the political – proclaimed by the classical liberal school – the national state has dominated political economy in our day. But the exaggerations of neo-mercantilism, as well as the mystique of collectivism, would offer Adam Smith sufficient material for criticism and needed rectifications...”⁹⁸

It has been suggested,⁹⁹ that we might usefully distinguish between economic liberalism and political liberalism. But in the end, the two cannot be separated. Without economic freedom, political freedom languishes. In the words of F. A. Hayek: “economic freedom... is the prerequisite of any other freedom.” Indeed, “Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends.”¹⁰⁰

Milton Friedman agrees, arguing that “there is an intimate connection between economics and politics... Economic arrangements play a dual role in the promotion of a free society. On the one hand, *freedom in economic arrangements is itself a component of freedom broadly understood*, so too, economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom... Historical evidence speaks with a single voice on the relation between political freedom and a free market... capitalism is a necessary condition for political freedom. Clearly it is not a sufficient condition.”¹⁰¹

Part of the blame for the demise of Romanian liberalism goes to the strength of French traditions in Romania, particularly the engineering mentality and the devotion to centralization. The former has been alluded to above. As to the latter, one can do no better than de Tocqueville: “In France there is only one thing we cannot make: a free government; and only one that we cannot destroy: centralization. How could it perish? The government’s enemies love it, and the rulers cherish it.”¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Guido de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1959, p. 418.

⁹⁷ Idem, *European Liberalism*, 1959, p. 407-416, in a chapter entitled “Freedom and Nationality.”

⁹⁸ Ion Răducanu, *Adam Smith. O comemorare*, in “Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice”, Seria III (Vol. 22), 1940, p. 474.

⁹⁹ By Liviu Brătescu, *P. N. L. (1876-1888)*, 2005, p. 80 ff., among others.

¹⁰⁰ Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, 2007, p. 127.

¹⁰¹ Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 6-10. Emphasis mine. He goes on to discuss “the market as a direct component of freedom, and then the indirect relation between market arrangements and political freedom.”

¹⁰² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, edited by J. P. Mayer and A. P. Kerr, Garden City NY, Anchor Books, 1971, p. 211.

This raises one final question. Both Brătianu and Rosetti reverted in the 1880^s to their youthful, non-liberal proclivities, when they had been the admirers of Proudhon, Blanc, and Comte. Were they ever really “liberals” in the classical sense? At the least this may be doubted. Rosetti never was an adherent of classical liberal economic principles though he was strongly civil libertarian. Brătianu supported private initiatives in the 1850s and 1860s, but certainly was not an advocate of classical economics in the 1870s-1880s. Nor did civil liberties seem as gripping an issue for him as it did for Rosetti (whose livelihood, of course, depended on his publication outlets). As Garry Walters has written: “The only truly consistent thread in Ion Brătianu’s philosophy was his nationalism, and this one factor was dominant to the extent that it shaped his other views as well.”¹⁰³ Walters stresses that this was coupled with a strong desire for personal political power in the 1859-1866 era.

In the end, nationalism and the lust for power clearly triumphed in Brătianu’s political philosophy, while Rosetti, influenced by his wife and radical sons Mircea and Vintilă, returned to the utopian radicalism of 1840s France with its stress on equality. In both cases, liberalism’s primary values of freedom and liberty were sublimated or lost and classical liberalism was gone.

¹⁰³ Walters, *Brătianu*, 1972, p. 219-222. See Gh. I. Brătianu, *Bismarck și Ion C. Brătianu*, 1935-1936, p. 102, for a defence of Brătianu’s “political realism”.