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---

**OAMENI, FAPTE ȘI IDEI  
DIN DOMNIA LUI ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA**

— *Editori* —

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# PRINCE ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA, 1859-1866: A DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT\*

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But the dead are not always completely dead,  
they live through the consequences of their  
deeds, consequences which live in time [...]<sup>1</sup>.

## I. Introduction

It will soon be 200 years since the birth of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1820-1873), the first prince of modern Romania. This seems like a

\* The following discussion is largely derived from research done for the following: Paul E. Michelson, *Conflict and Crisis: Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871*, New York, Garland Press, 1987; idem, *The Modern Age*, in Kurt W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, third edition, Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997; idem, *Romanian Politics, 1859-1971: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol*, Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998; idem, *Romania (History)*, in Richard Frucht (ed.), *Encyclopedia of East Europe: From the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000, p. 667-690; Additional publications involving Cuza, include Paul E. Michelson, *Rumanian Unity*, in William E. Echard (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of the French Second Empire, 1852-1870*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1985, p. 582-584; idem, *Romanian Unity, 1859, 1918, 1989: Beginnings, Opportunities... And Illusions*, in Kurt Treptow (ed.), *Tradition and Modernity in Romanian Culture and Civilization, 1600-2000*, Iași, Center for Romanian Studies, 2001, p. 47-64; idem, *Alexandru Ioan Cuza and the Polish Question: The Costangalia Incident of 1863*, in Veniamin Ciobanu (ed.), *Romanian and Polish Peoples in East-Central Europe (17th-20th Centuries)*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 2003, p. 97-110; idem, *A fost Alexandru Ioan Cuza un dictator?*, in "Historia", Vol. 9 (2009), No. 96, p. 11-15; and Gerald J. Bobango and Paul E. Michelson, *Cuza, Alexandru Ioan (1820-1870)*, in James Chastain (ed.), *Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions* (2005), on line at <https://web.archive.org/web/20070211010736/http://www.ohiou.edu/~Chastain/ac/cuza.htm>, last consulted 25.X.2019. In addition, I have had the privilege of working with portions of the manuscript notes compiled by Constantin C. Giurescu when he was charged by the Institute of History in București with systematically studying the Cuza Archive at the Romanian Academy in connection with the 1959 centennial, which are in my possession. The Cuza archive had been impounded by D. A. Sturdza in 1866 and was not open to researchers until 1928, which also slowed work on the Prince of Union. See Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, revised and expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, București, Editura Științifică, 1970, p. 23.

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<sup>1</sup> N. Iorga, *Statuia lui Cuza-Vodă 1903*, in idem, *Oameni cari au fost*, Vol. 1, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol II, 1934, p. 125.

very long time ago, and yet the Prince of Union still seems fresh in historical memories. Perhaps this is because since World War II, Cuza has been a relatively safe historical reference in Romanian culture, which meant keeping him alive through frequent anniversaries and celebrations of key events<sup>2</sup>. Whereas the foreign dynasty that followed him became politically incorrect subject matter between 1948-1989, Cuza continued to be *persona grata*. His reign was important and symbolic for Romanian nationalists and for Romanian development, and was the subject of numerous publications, movies, and television dramas<sup>3</sup>. And, in general, Cuza and Cuza commemorations were not viewed as provocative to neighboring nations, nationalities, or ideologies or liable to elicit various taboos.

On the other hand, the flourishing of hagiographical treatments of Cuza have made it difficult to deal forthrightly with his reign<sup>4</sup>. The historiography of the Romanian modern era has been very

<sup>2</sup> See Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, revised and expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, București, Editura Științifică, 1970, p. 462-467; and Al. Zub, *Posteritatea lui Cuza Vodă*, in L. Boicu, Gh. Platon, and Al. Zub (eds.), *Cuza Vodă in memoriam*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1973, p. 581-628, which uses the controversy connected with the 1912 Cuza memorial statue in Iași as a mirror in which to reflect conflict over Cuza's memory. On the Cuza statue, see Andi Mihalache, *Contribuții la istoria ideii de patrimoniu. Surse. Evoluții. Interpretări*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2014, p. 119 ff. On the general issue of monuments and memory, see Andi Mihalache, *Pentru o istorie culturală a ideii de patrimoniu*, in idem, *Contribuții...*, p. 7 ff; and Andrei Pippidi, *Mormintele ca repere ale identității naționale*, in idem, *Despre statui și morminte. Pentru o teorie a istoriei simbolice*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2000, p. 11-38.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent bibliographical treatments, see Virginia Isac, *Contribuții la o biobibliografie Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, Iași, Muzeul Unirii Iași/Editura Junimea, 2005; and Dan Prodan, *Etapele bibliografiei binomiale Alexandru Ioan Cuza – Unirea din 1859 (I, II, III)*, in "Acta Moldaviae Septentrionalis", Botoșani, Vol. 7-8 (2008-2009), p. 157-167; Vol. 9 (2010), p. 146-187; and Vol. 11 (2011), p. 112-142. For a candid and still useful commentary on Cuza studies, see Gerald J. Bobango, *Recent Historiography on the Cuza Era, 1859-1866*, in "Balkanistica", Vol. 7 (1981-1982), p. 121-132.

<sup>4</sup> Augmented by a considerable folk tradition. Cf. Vasile Adăscăliței (ed.), *Cuza-Vodă în tradiția populară. Antologie de literatură folclorică*, compiled with notes and a postface, București, Editura Eminescu, 1970.

unbalanced, with the result that minor details of the Cuza era have been explored while major issues connected with subsequent aspects of the modern era have been neglected, deliberately ignored, or avoided for political and ideological reasons. This lack of proportion was one of the reasons why I first became interested in the early years of Cuza's successor, Prince Carol I. As a graduate student under Charles and Barbara Jelavich at Indiana University in the late 1960s, I perused ~~the~~ recently appeared Vol. 4 of the Romanian Academy's *Istoria României*<sup>5</sup> in search of possible research topics. I was struck by what seemed to me to be a wildly incommensurate treatment of the varied components of the 1848-1878 era.

A cursory analysis of Vol. 4 looks like this<sup>6</sup>:

Table 1. *Istoria României* (1964)

| Period       | Nature of Chapter             | Space Allocation |        |                                |
|--------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| 1848         | political                     | Ch. 1, 2, 3      | 179 p. | 23.5%<br>of total <sup>7</sup> |
| 1848-1864    | economic & social development | Ch. 4            | 41 p.  | 5%                             |
| 1848-1859    | political                     | Ch. 5, 6         | 72 p.  | 9.5%                           |
| 1859-1865    | political                     | Ch. 7, 8         | 98 p.  | 13.4%                          |
| Transilvania | political                     | Ch. 9            | 44 p.  | 6%                             |
| 1864-1878    | economic & social development | Ch. 10           | 39 p.  | 5%                             |
| 1864-1878    | social movements              | Ch. 11           | 35 p.  | 5%                             |
| 1866         | political                     | Ch. 12           | 16 p.  | 2%                             |
| 1866-1876    | political                     | Ch. 13           | 50 p.  | 7.3%                           |
| 1876-1878    | independence                  | Ch. 14           | 57 p.  | 7.5%                           |
| Transilvania | political                     | Ch. 15           | 41 p.  | 5%                             |
| Culture      |                               | Ch. 16           | 90 p.  | 12%                            |
| TOTALS       |                               | 16 chapters      | 762 p. |                                |

From Table 1, it can be seen that the 1848 episode occupied 23.5 % of the volume, 13.4% was devoted to the seven years of the

<sup>5</sup> P. Constantinescu-Iași (ed.), *Istoria României*, Vol. IV, *Formarea și consolidarea orânduirii capitaliste (1848-1878)*, București, Editura Academiei, 1964, XL + 860 p.

<sup>6</sup> For purposes of comparison, the preface, a preliminary chapter on sources and indices are omitted.

<sup>7</sup> Numbers have been rounded and will not total 100%.

Cuza regime, while the first decade of the reign of Carol I was given only 7.3%<sup>8</sup>. (More appropriately, for a Marxist interpretation, the volume took 15% to cover the economic and social development of the period under consideration.) Chapters are quite unbalanced, ranging from 16 to 98 pages.

For comparative purposes, I recently did the same analysis with the Romanian Academy's current *Istoria Românilor*<sup>9</sup>. Here are the results:

Table 2. *Istoria Românilor* (2003)

| Period  | Nature of Chapter | Space Allocation |        |       |
|---|-------------------|------------------|--------|-------|
|   |                   | Ch. 8            | 87 p.  | 15%   |
| 1848 <sup>10</sup>  | political         | Ch. 10, 11, 12   | 89 p.  | 15.5% |
| 1848-1859   | political         | Ch. 13           | 76 p.  | 13.2% |
| 1859-1866   | political         | Ch. 14           | 42 p.  | 7.3%  |
| 1866-1876   | political         | Ch. 15           | 37 p.  | 6.5%  |
| 1848-1877   | social & economic | Ch. 16           | 75 p.  | 13%   |
| 1877-1878   | independence      | Ch. 17           | 104 p. | 18%   |
| Transilvania,<br>Bucovina,<br>Basarabia,<br>Dobrogea, and<br>S. Danube<br>Romanians,<br>1849-1878 |                   | Ch. 18           | 67 p.  | 11.7% |
| TOTALS  |                   | 10 chapters      | 577 p. |       |

<sup>8</sup> The percentages aren't completely comparable since part of the chapter on 1866 is Cuza-related, part is Carol-related, and part covers the brief interval between the two, so the chapter was excluded from both Cuza and Carol. However, this does not seem to undermine the thesis being advanced here.

<sup>9</sup> Dan Berindei (ed.), *Istoria Românilor*, Vol. 7, Part I, *Constituirea României moderne (1821-1878)*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 2003, XLVI + 974 p. + 48 plates + 6 genealogical tables. The chronological framework remained political, though coverage of the 1821-1848 era was combined with 1848-1878. It is also noteworthy that Berindei was the author of substantial portions of both the 1964 and the 2003 volumes. The preface, the preliminary chapter on sources, as well as a chronology and a number of concluding lists (p. 881-974) are omitted in these calculations.

<sup>10</sup> Skipping 1821-1848 and beginning with 1848.

Table 2 shows that the 2004 volume is indeed more balanced, with the chapters generally running between 11% and 18% of the space, with the notable exception of first decade of the reign of Prince Carol I which gets a measly 7.3% (the same as in 1964). Social and economic history was dramatically cut from 15% in 1964 to 6.5% in 2004<sup>11</sup>. And, of course, 2004 could deal directly with Bucovina and Basarabia, whereas 1964 wouldn't have dared tweak the nose of the Russian bear so openly.

The bottom line is that in the 1964 edition, Prince Cuza was allotted 13% of the text; in the 2004 version, he was given virtually the same space (13.2%). Carol's allocation also remained the same at 7.3% in both volumes. The result was that Cuza's seven years garnered nearly twice the space that Carol's first decade did with nearly two pages on Cuza for every page on Carol. My contrarian instincts were aroused by this disparity: what was going on here? Why was the Carol I era being given short shrift? It seemed obvious that further exploration was necessary. It appeared that treatment of the modern Romanian past was being distorted by nationalist presuppositions on the one hand, and by the forcing of Romanian history into the straight jacket of the Marxist interpretations of history on the other.

This is not to deny the importance of Cuza's reign for the development of modern Romania. In fact, I have recently argued elsewhere<sup>12</sup> that his double election in 1859 can be conceptualized as one of the five most pivotal events in modern Romanian history, since, apart from itself, it set off a series of important events which included the 1862 union of Moldova and Muntenia into what came to be called "Romania", the 1866 coming of Carol to Romania, the achievement of Romanian independence in 1877, and the formation of the Romanian kingdom in 1881. 160 years

<sup>11</sup> In fairness, some of this material is incorporated into the chronological sections and not omitted entirely.

<sup>12</sup> See Paul E. Michelson, *The Modern History of Romania in Five Postage Stamps (or Key Turning Points in Modern Romanian History)*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «A. D. Xenopol»", LXI, 2019, forthcoming.

ago Cuza's double election kickstarted the emergence of modern Romania. Perhaps it is time for a new assessment of Prince Cuza's work.

The purpose of this paper will be to evaluate the internal political development of the modern Romanian state under Cuza's stewardship from 1859 to 1866. The limitation to internal development is not to suggest that external development was unimportant: indeed, it could be argued that Cuza's diplomatic efforts were perhaps the most significant part of his achievement and legacy. However, for reasons of space, we are going to ignore the *Primat der Innenpolitik* and *Primat de Aussenpolitik* debate, and focus on Cuza's internal policies.

The internal political development of Romania will be evaluated by asking the question: "How well did Romania do under Alexandru Ioan I in dealing with the problems of development?" Historically, these problems were: 1) the problem of Romanian national identity, the national problem; 2) the problem of establishing regime legitimacy in modern Romania, and 3) the problem of political participation in the new Romanian state. Two remaining developmental issues – economic development and political penetration – are not dealt with here for reasons of space, though some components of them will be included where they overlap with identity, legitimacy, and participation<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The "developmental crises" approach is adapted from the work of Lucian W. Pye and his colleagues, including two now-classic volumes: Leonard Binder *et al.* (ed.), *Crises and Sequences in Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971; and Raymond C. Grew, ed., *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978; For an introduction to the issues, see Leonard Binder, *The Crises of Political Development*, in Leonard Binder *et al.* (ed.), *Crises and Sequences...*, p. 52 ff.; and Raymond C. Grew, *Crises and Their Sequences*, in idem, *Crises of Political Development...*, p. 15-28; Romanian economic development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is superbly analyzed in a European context by Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2010, p. 103 ff. For economic development in the Cuza period, see Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă...*, p. 392-409.

On the basis of this analysis, the paper will conclude by drawing up a balance sheet, the pluses and minuses for the abortive reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza in the internal sphere<sup>14</sup>. There are, of course, other ways in which such an assessment might be made, and it is not the intention of this paper to exclude other analyses<sup>15</sup>.

## II. Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1820-1873)<sup>16</sup>

Alexandru Ioan Cuza was born in the undistinguished Moldovan city of Bârlad, son of an honorable second tier noble

<sup>14</sup> At the same time, this paper deliberately keeps much the same framework as my assessment of Cuza's successor: Paul E. Michelson, *Carol I of Romania, 1866-1914: A Developmental Assessment*, in "Studii și Articole de Istorie", București, Vol. 31 (2014), p. 59-78, so that this study can contribute to the comparative analysis of Cuza and Carol. I am hopeful to be able to do the same for Ferdinand and Carol II in the near future.

<sup>15</sup> For example the modernization approach, which overlaps somewhat with the approach taken here. See C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization. A Study in Comparative History*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1967, for Black's "Modernization Syndrome" (p. 1 ff.). For modernization in the Romanian lands, see the papers in Bogdan Murgescu (ed.), *Romania and Europe. Modernisation as Temptation, Modernisation as Threat*, București, Editura Alpha, 2000; and Mirela-Luminița Murgescu and Bogdan Murgescu, *Tranziție, tranzitii: conceptualizarea schimbării în cultura română*, in Victor Neumann and Armin Heinen (eds.), *Istoria României prin concepte. Perspective alternative asupra limbajelor social-politice*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2010, p. 419-446.

<sup>16</sup> The following were particularly helpful from the welter of material available on Cuza: A. D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza-Vodă*, two volumes, Iași, Tipografia Editore Dacia P. Iliescu & D. Grossu, 1903; Alexandru Lapedatu, et al., *Alexandru Ioan Cuza 1859-1866. Patru conferințe istorice ținute la Fundațiunea Carol I*, București, Cartea Românească, 1932; Andrei Oțetea, et al. (eds.), *Studii privind Unirea Principatelor*, București, Editura Academiei, 1960; Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă...*; the comprehensive collection of essays in L. Boicu, Gh. Platon, and Al. Zub (eds.), *Cuza Vodă in memoriam...*; Gerald J. Bobango, *The Emergence of the Romanian National State*, Boulder CO, East European Quarterly, 1979, which, despite its title, is a first-rate biography of Cuza; Dan Bogdan and Viorel Știrbu, *Pe urmele lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, București, Editura Sport Turism, 1985; two works by Dan Berindei: *Epoca unirii*, revised and expanded edition București, Editura Corint, 2000, and a collection of his varied articles on Cuza and his times, *Constituirea României moderne: 150 de ani de la Unirea Principatelor*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2009; Dumitru Ivănescu (ed.), *Unirea Principatelor. Momente, fapte, protagonisti*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 2005; and the extensive chronology in Virginia Isac, *Contribuții la o biobibliografie Alexandru Ioan Cuza...*, p. 7-81.

family (among his ancestors: the daughter of the esteemed chronicler Miron Costin). His father, Ioan, was a public official, the pârcălab of Covurlui county, the highest administrative post in Moldova outside of Iași. He received an excellent education for the time (both in Moldova and Paris, including a baccalaureate in letters from the Sorbonne where with other revolutionary Romanian students he imbibed the nationalism of Michelet and Quinet while studying law and administration). He spoke both Italian and French. Returning to Moldova, he served in the military briefly and then assumed a judgeship in Covurlui. In 1844, he married Elena Rosetti, a member of an important Romanian noble family<sup>17</sup>.

Despite his governmental position, Cuza was actively associated with other idealistic young Moldovans who wanted reform during the repressive regime of Prince Mihail Sturdza, including Costache Negri, Vasile Alecsandri, Constantin Mavrocordat, and Mihail Kogălniceanu (possibly the leading Romanian intellectual of the time). He was deeply involved in the events of the revolutionary year 1848 in Moldova (where he was arrested, wounded, and managed to escape custody with British help), Transilvania (where he likely assisted at the famous Blaj meeting), and Bucovina (where the Moldovans formed a revolutionary committee to promote unrest in Moldova)<sup>18</sup>. Despite the failure of 1848, Cuza and his associates thereafter regarded themselves as "Romanians", not Moldovans or Muntenians.

Fortunately for Cuza and his moderate liberal, nationalist friends, the reactionary Moldovan Prince Sturdza retired in 1849 and was replaced by the moderate unionist Prince Grigore Ghica.

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<sup>17</sup> Her brother, Theodor Rosetti, was a founding member of the Junimea literary group, Prime Minister in 1888-1889, and governor of the Banca Națională in the 1890s.

<sup>18</sup> Cuza was a signatory to the Bucovina appeal "Unire și bărbătie", June 1848, along with Costachi Negri, the Alecsandri brothers, Alecu Russo, Manolache Costachi, and N. Ionescu. Text in Cornelia Bodea, *1848 la Români. O istorie în date și mărturii*, Vol. I, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1982, p. 622-624, Document no. 175.

Cuza soon resumed his career as district judge of Covurlui, advanced to *pârcălab*, followed by a post at the Ministry of Interior in 1851. In 1857, he was elected to the interim legislature, the Divans Ad-hoc, where he was a noteworthy advocate of the union of Moldova with Muntenia. By 1858, he had been promoted to colonel and was named interim Moldovan minister of war. Cuza's judicial and military service were exceptional for the time and his rapid advancement is evidence that his later success was no accident<sup>19</sup>.

Though the Principalities had been prohibited by the 1858 Convention of Paris from uniting, the Romanian unionists hit on the ploy of electing the same person as prince of both Moldova and Muntenia. This person was Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who became Prince of Moldova on January 5, 1859<sup>20</sup>, and, with the help of some timely street protests, Prince of Muntenia on January 24, 1859.

The powers were peeved, but since the double election of Cuza did not actually violate the letter of the 1858 Convention of Paris (which was now the constitution of the principalities), the Romanian *fait accompli* was allowed to stand<sup>21</sup>. In September 1859, the representatives of the guaranteeing powers agreed to recognize the double election of Cuza, though they insisted this was valid only for the duration of his reign. Cuza's election became a symbol of the Romanian elite's desire for unity. In the words of Anastase Panu "The union of the Principalities is achieved. Romania, great and full of power, advances toward the future. Romania is now on

<sup>19</sup> This is a point that Bobango is at pains to emphasize, along with his emergence as a "liberal, progressive, pro-union [...] man of the future rather than of the past". At the same time, "he had never sought positions – they had been laid upon him" (Gerald J. Bobango, *The Emergence of the Romanian National State...*, p. 72-73).

<sup>20</sup> All dates are old-style, Julian calendar dates, which were nearly two weeks behind the Western, Gregorian calendar, which Romania did not adopt until after World War I.

<sup>21</sup> This initial success led to other successful *fail accomplis* on the Romanians' part, so much so that Gheorghe Cliveti's chapter on the diplomacy of the Union, Cuza's reign, and the coming of Carol I to Romania in 1866 is entitled *Sub zodia faptului împlinit*, Gheorghe Cliveti, *România modernă și apogeul Europei, 1815-1914*, București, Editura Academiei, 2018, p. 305-373.

the road to salvation and the destiny which awaits it among the other civilized nations of Europe [...]”<sup>22</sup>. The developmental problem of national identity had achieved its first major political resolution.

What was this founding father of Modern Romania – this George Washington of his people – really like<sup>23</sup>? At 38, he was relatively young and yet he had already had a long administrative and military career. Physically, he was of modest stature, but had a confident, “distinguished manner”<sup>24</sup>. He loved horses, looked like a prince, and proved to have princely gifts. He was highly intelligent and a quick study. He was an excellent conversationalist, yet incisive, and completely lacking in pretension<sup>25</sup>. He apparently was quite the joker, fond of laughter and pranks, sometimes giving the impression to many as not taking life seriously enough. He, indeed, did not like work; “his indolence and boredom with matters of day-to-day business”<sup>26</sup> allowed his personal clique more scope than was healthy. And his dissolute personal life, though not unusual, was doubtless a drawback and a poor example for others that contributed to his declining health and premature aging<sup>27</sup>.

In contrast, everyone remarked that Cuza was in many ways quite atypical for Romanians of his class in his honesty<sup>28</sup>, and for his fellow politicians in that he seems to have been politically unambitious, being sought out rather than seeking power<sup>29</sup>. Paradoxically, though he was lazy in personal matters, he had a high sense of public duty and integrity and fearless *vis-à-vis* his opponents

<sup>22</sup> Anastasie Panu, Speech to the Moldovan Assembly, “Monitorul Oficial al Moldovei”, 7 February 1859.

<sup>23</sup> For a useful sketch, see C. C. Giurescu, *Personalitatea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, in L. Boicu, Gh. Platon, and Al. Zub (eds.), *Cuza Vodă in memoriam...*, p. 7-22.

<sup>24</sup> A. D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, Vol. I, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> N. Iorga, *Statuia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, p. 126-127.

<sup>26</sup> Gerald J. Bobango, *The Emergence of the Romanian National State...*, p. 74.

<sup>27</sup> N. Iorga, *Statuia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă...*, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> According to Xenopol, his conduct after his ouster in 1866 demonstrated his disinterest in power for powers sake (A. D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, Vol. II, p. 255).

("pieptul înaintea dușmanilor")<sup>30</sup>. The French consul in Iași, Victor Place, described him in 1857 as "one of the most capable, most honest, and most energetic functionaries in the country" while administrating the most important county in Moldova<sup>31</sup>. Cuza was very headstrong<sup>32</sup> with "a strong unwillingness to compromise"<sup>33</sup>. This had its obvious positive and negative aspects. He was personally proud and kowtowed to no one; in the diplomatic circumstances of the times, this stood him well<sup>34</sup>. It made him less popular domestically. He disliked pomp and luxury and was not very interested in money: unlike most Romanian princes, Bolintineanu wrote, he left office no richer than when he started<sup>35</sup>. As with most good leaders, he made good choices in his political subordinates (talented men like Mihail Kogălniceanu, Costache Negri, Vasile Alecsandri, Nicolae Kretzulescu, Ion Em. Florescu, and Ludovic Steege)<sup>36</sup>. On the other hand, he made remarkably bad choices in his circle of cronies, the notorious "camarilla", that, probably unbeknownst to Cuza, stole the country blind<sup>37</sup>.

Politically, Cuza was a 'fiery nationalist'<sup>38</sup>, a Western-educated moderate liberal in his approach and inclinations, deeply hostile to

<sup>30</sup> N. Iorga, *Statuia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, p. 127.

<sup>31</sup> Ghenadie Petrescu, Dimitrie A. Sturdza, and Dimitrie C. Sturdza (eds.), *Acte și documente relative la istoria renascerei României*, Vol. V, București, Tipografia Carol Göbl, 1890, p. 53-54 (Victor Place to Count Walewski, 6 July 1857, No. 1437). Place personally vouched for Cuza's character.

<sup>32</sup> C. C. Giurescu, *Personalitatea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza...*, p. 10, emphasizes his "voința de a le realiza. În această privință, Cuza se distinge în chip deosebit".

<sup>33</sup> Gerald J. Bobango, *The Emergence of the Romanian National State...*, p. 73.

<sup>34</sup> C. C. Giurescu, *Personalitatea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza...*, p. 8 ff.

<sup>35</sup> A. D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, Vol. I, p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> C. C. Giurescu, *Personalitatea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza...*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> One of them, Cezar Librecht, reportedly owned a £15,000 house and a small country estate along with £50,000 in negotiable funds, "singular savings on a salary of about £100 a year for 6 years", the British consul wryly noted. Quoted in Paul E. Michelson, *Romanian Politics, 1859-1971: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol*, Iași, The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998, p. 135.

<sup>38</sup> C. C. Giurescu, *Personalitatea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza...*, p. 12 ff., outlines and stresses Cuza's consistent and persistent defense of "the autonomy and dignity" of the Romanians.

the conservative nobility of the days and equally deeply interested in the well-being of the vast majority of the population, that is the peasantry, and convinced that this was also the key to Romanian development. On the other hand, he was indifferent to many of the things that preoccupied the political classes of the day. Interestingly for a man with his cautious approach, he rather liked bold and unexpected steps. This, as might be expected, had numerous plusses and minuses. In the end, according to Iorga, Cuza was "a typical Moldovan noble of his time with the qualities and shortcomings of the type"<sup>39</sup>, and nonetheless quite remarkable<sup>40</sup>.

### III. Developmental Problems and Issues, 1859-1866

The reign of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza began the first truly free internal development of the Romanians in centuries. Modernization became a principal objective, with reforms pursued in the economic, educational, cultural, and social sectors as a consequence<sup>41</sup>. Cuza's reign falls into three periods: 1859-1862, during which the Prince focussed on diplomatic questions, aiming to turn a *de facto* personal union into a *de jure* union and cement the unionists' gains; 1862-1864, during which he pursued agrarian and constitutional reform aimed both at modernization of Romania and at addressing staggering social inequities; and 1864-1866,

<sup>39</sup> N. Iorga, *Statuia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, p. 127.

<sup>40</sup> It will be noted that we seem to know a lot more about Cuza's personality and character than that of his successors. Apart from the familiarity that a native prince would have over a foreign one, this might reflect Cuza's greater transparency and "what you see is what you get" persona.

<sup>41</sup> For internal Romanian political development in this era, see the thorough work of Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între unire și independență* (1859-1877), București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979; and *Putere politică și democrație în România, 1859-1918*, București, Editura Albatros, 1995; as well as Paraschiva Câncea, Mircea Iosa, and Apostol Stan, *Istoria parlamentului și vieții parlamentare din România până la 1918*, București, Editura Academiei, 1983. For the external picture, see Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence*, West Lafayette IN, Purdue University Press, 1995; and Gheorghe Cliveti's massive *România modernă și apogeul Europei...*

during which he tried (unsuccessfully) to resolve the resulting political and social conflict and impasse by authoritarian means<sup>42</sup>.

As already mentioned above, according to Pye and his colleagues, there were five developmental crisis issues that confronted modernizing regimes: the problem of national identity, the problem of regime legitimacy, the problem of political participation, the problem of economic development, and the problem of political penetration. Three of these will be our focus below.

The first developmental crisis for the Romanians was the problem of identity<sup>43</sup>, that is, the difficulties involved in establishing for all the three of the major Romanian lands – the two Danubian Romanian Principalities and Transilvania – a common national identity and political community<sup>44</sup>. This primarily involved a shift of “the cultural basis of identity away from religion toward nationalism”<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> This is borne out by analyzing the programs the prince outlined in his periodic messages opening the parliament.

<sup>43</sup> For an elaboration, see Lucian W. Pye, *Identity and the Political Culture*, in Leonard Binder et al. (ed.), *Crises and Sequences...*, p. 101-134.

<sup>44</sup> I have dealt extensively with these issues in the following: *Unity and Continuity in Romanian History*, in “Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism”, Vol. 8 (1981), p. 29-69; *Bibliography; Romanian Perspectives on Romanian National Development*, in “Balkanistica”, Vol. 7 (1981-1982), p. 92-120; *Romania*, in Gale Stokes (ed.), *Nationalism in the Balkans*, New York, Garland Press, 1984, p. 38-45; *Myth and Reality in Rumanian National Development*, in “International Journal of Rumanian Studies”, Vol. 5 (1987), No. 2, p. 5-33; *Themes in Modern and Contemporary Romanian Historiography*, in S. J. Kirschbaum (ed.), *East European History*, Columbus, Slavica Publishers, 1988, p. 27-40; and *Identitatea națională românească și specificul național. A fi sau a nu fi: mai este aceasta întrebarea?*, in Vasile Boari (ed.), *Cine sunt românii? Perspective asupra identității naționale*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2019, p. 95-101. Three recent collections of studies are also relevant here: Vasile Boari and Natalia Vlas (eds.), *Cine sunt românii? Perspective asupra identității naționale*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2009; Vasile Boari, Ștefan Borbely, and Radu Murea (eds.), *Identitatea românească în context european. Coordonate istorice și culturale*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2009; and Vasile Boari (ed.), *Cine sunt românii? Perspective asupra identității naționale...*

<sup>45</sup> L. Binder, *Crises*, in Leonard Binder et al. (ed.), *Crises and Sequences...*, p. 54. For further discussion, see Paul E. Michelson, *Carol I of Romania, 1866-1914...*

The Romanians' situation was rendered problematic by the fact that the three Romanian lands were part of or under the domination of three surrounding empires: Tsarist Russia, the Habsburgs, and the Ottoman Empire. Being located at the crossroads of South-eastern Europe, and surrounded by expansionistic empires and peoples was a long term impediment to Romanian development<sup>46</sup>. The precariousness of their geopolitical situation was a major factor in Romanian political culture. As a result, the Romanian elite (mostly intellectuals) tended to be "philosopher-patriots"<sup>47</sup>. The Romanian intellectual was "always the man of the fortress, whose work was bound up in the citadel's destiny. His own destiny [...] could not be freed from the vicissitudes of the moment. This destiny nourished the *cearta pentru istorie*" that typified modern Romanian development<sup>48</sup>.

The developments of 1848-1866 demonstrated that this issue had been more or less resolved, even though Romanians continued to be preoccupied (perhaps even obsessed) with their national identity as such<sup>49</sup>. Questions such as "Where have we come from? And where are we going?" engendered fierce debate. The April 1866 Moldovan separatist incident was a glitch, but appears to have been a last ditch effort of those few who opposed the union of Danubian Principalities. Nevertheless, fearmongering in connection

<sup>46</sup> For the difference that this made, see my *Perceptions on Imperial Legacies in the Balkans: The Romanian Lands*, in "Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes", Vol. 36 (1998), p. 65-77.

<sup>47</sup> For the philosopher-patriot, see Alexandru Duțu, *Cultura română în civilizația europeană modernă*, București, Editura Minerva, 1978, p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Al. Zub, *Adevăr și militantism*, in idem, *Biruit-au gândul (note despre istorismul românesc)*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1983, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> See Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2001; idem, *De ce este România altfel?*, expanded second edition, București, Editura Humanitas, 2013; Vintilă Mihăilescu (ed.), *De ce este România astfel. Avatarurile exceționalismului românesc*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2017; and the papers in Vasile Boari's (ed.), *Cine sunt români? Perspective asupra identității naționale...*

with separatism was a convenient pretext for promoting the unfortunate centralist mind-set in Romanian politics and culture.

The twin developmental crises of legitimating the new system and of arriving at a satisfactory degree of participation in the new system now constituted the primary agenda of the Romanian elite. Cuza's election had provided the Romanians with a single ruler for the first time in the modern era along with real autonomy, but the fact that the two principalities initially remained separate in most important aspects resulted in chaos and stalemate. Between 1859 and 1862 there were no fewer than fifteen separate cabinets, most union-wide legislative actions died in conference (only six joint laws were enacted during the entire period).

With the support of the French, Cuza was able to bring the "United Romanian Principalities" into official existence on 4 December 1861. The capital was now situated in Bucureşti, the assemblies of Moldavia and Muntenia were reconvened in January of 1862 as a single national assembly. It is at this point that the development of the modern Romanian political system really began, allowing the focus to shift to 'participation issues<sup>50</sup>'. At the same time, the 1861 establishment of a unitary Romanian state – which had its origins in part in the dominant French tradition and in part in 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist centralism (the Piedmont example) – became inextricably linked to the not-entirely trivial phobia of disunion that has characterized Romanian thought since.

Ironically, the principal result of the unification of 1861 was increased internal political turmoil. During the struggle for union, the fact that unionists often pursued diverse and incompatible aims had been generally obscured. Now these divisions came to the fore. The new system did not alter the electoral regime established by the Convention of 1858 nor any of its mandates for social reform. This guaranteed conflict for Prince Cuza, since the system ensured a parliamentary majority automatically opposed to reform,

<sup>50</sup> For an elaboration, see Myron Weiner, *Political Participation: Crisis of the Political Process*, in Leonard Binder *et al.* (ed.), *Crises and Sequences...*, p. 159-204.

foregrounded the developmental problems of political participation, and reopened the developmental problem of regime legitimacy. The electorate established by the Paris Convention was an exceedingly narrow body of less than 4,000 voters. The vast majority of the population, that is the peasants, simply did not count. Though occasionally their interests and demands were given lip service, the political role of the peasant was nil. Real political power during Cuza's reign was in the hands of a very small number of people, perhaps no more than several dozen<sup>51</sup>.

Because of this oligarchical situation, no political parties in the modern sense formed during Cuza's reign. There were groupings, factions, and personality cliques, but nothing that can seriously be called a political party. Romanian politics were from the outset less "a means of accomplishing the public good" and more "the means for accomplishing personal interests"<sup>52</sup>. The main displays of the Romanians' considerable entrepreneurial skill unfortunately came to be channeled into politics. A governmental post, however modest or useless, was the career objective of far too many educated Romanian youth and the educational system itself was too often seen mainly as preparation for service as a state functionary.

In the end, the masses were never brought into the political system, and politics in Romania remained an aggregate of purely personal interests. What Caragiale observed later on was true in 1859-1866, "Political parties in the European sense of the word [...] do not exist in Romania. The two so-called historical parties which alternate in power are in reality nothing more than two great factions, each having only clients, not partisans"<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> This seems to have obviated voting fraud, given that the shenanigans involved the initial restriction of the franchise.

<sup>52</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Cultura română și politicianismul*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, București, Editura Socec, 1904, p. iii.

<sup>53</sup> Ion Luca Caragiale, *1907 din primăvară până în toamnă. Câteva note*, in Ion Luca Caragiale, *Opere*, vol. V, edited by Șerban Cioculescu, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol II, 1938, p. 171-173.

All of this raised and raises obvious questions about the legitimacy of the system throughout the Cuza period. Among those who carried any political weight, very few seem to have "bought into the system" during the Cuza era, both before and especially after 2 May. Secondly, the lack of honest effort to resolve the problem of political participation was beginning to call the entire edifice into question. Cuza and Kogălniceanu's coup of 2 May 1864 made the regime more authoritarian, farther from participatory than ever. This problem was not solved by Cuza, but he did no worse than his successors.

Cuza's domestic reforms were significant. One might fairly say that they were an attempt "within the limits set by the Paris Convention [...] to carry out the programme of the revolution of 1848. During his brief reign of only seven years, he accomplished a vast amount of work. Those were dynamic years during which a deep-going revolution took place and modern Romania emerged, with solid foundations for its internal development"<sup>54</sup>.

Cuza's reforms fall into several categories<sup>55</sup>:

1) Educational reform, which included the founding of the Universities of Iași (1860) and București (1864); various professional schools: conservatories (1860, 1864), fine arts (1860, 1864); a veterinary school (1861); a school of forestry (1863), a bridges-roads-mines-architecture school (1864); a national library (1864); a theater school (1864); a national museum of antiquities (1864-1865); the București Botanical Garden (1860); a Society of Natural Sciences (1865); the creation of the Romanian Athenaeum cultural society (1865); and the adoption of a comprehensive law on public instruction (1864).

2) A series of reforms of the military, using the French model.

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<sup>54</sup> Gheorghe Platon, 1859. *The Union of the Romanian Principalities*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978, p. 65-66.

<sup>55</sup> Primarily drawn from Dinu C. Giurescu (ed.), *Istoria României în date*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised and expanded edition, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2007, p. 197-213; and Virginia Isac, *Contribuții la o biobibliografie Alexandru Ioan Cuza...*, p. 27-63. This listing is suggestive and not meant to be comprehensive.

3) Modernizing reforms, including moving from the transitional Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin one (1860); organization of a bureau of statistics (1860); reorganization of the courts (1861); founding of an orphanage (1862); establishment of a general state archives (1862); establishment of a state salt monopoly (1862); organization of a national bridge and road system and nomenclature (1862); adoption of new French-style penal code (1864) and the Napoléonic Civil Code (1864); creation of a modern patent law (1864); moving from the old system of weights and measures to the metric system (1864 adopted; implemented 1866); establishment of a chamber of commerce (1864); founding of a national savings bank (1864); creation of public sanitation councils and new hospitals (Colentina, 1864); creation of state horse and fruit farms (1864); the first "Romanian" postage stamps (1865) and reorganization of the postal and telegraph system (1865); founding of a State Bank of Romania (1865); the building of a central market, Hala Unirii (1865); following the catastrophic flood of 1865, measures to modernize the Dâmbovița; establishment of a state tobacco monopoly (1865); an abortive attempt to establish a national currency; building of the first railroad lines; and the first exploitation and export of oil.

4) Church reform which included dealing with the secularization of the lands of the so-called dedicated Orthodox monasteries in 1863, which not only brought church wealth under state control, but provided the state with vast new resources. These were lands that had been dedicated over the centuries to the assistance of the Holy Places (such as Mount Athos, the Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople) and comprised 25% of the Principalities' territory<sup>56</sup>. In 1864, a new church synod law strengthened state control of the Orthodox Church and asserted autocephaly, that is independence from the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

<sup>56</sup> For this story, see Sorin D. Ivănescu, *Secularizarea averilor mânăstirești în timpul lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, in Dumitru Ivănescu (ed.), *Unirea Principatelor...*, p. 21-34.

5) The two major reform projects, which had induced to Cuza and Kogălniceanu to carry out the Coup of 2 May 1864, were agrarian reform and electoral reform. The former freed most of the peasantry from feudal constraints<sup>57</sup>. Cuza's strong personal sense of justice coupled with his moderate liberal prudence provided the motivation, but the reform of August 1864 was poorly conceived and even more poorly executed, and must be judged a failure. It did not take long for the peasantry to see that his actual material position had worsened. That there was a severe drought in 1864-1865 was, of course, hardly Cuza's fault, but by 1865-1866, rural strikes were proliferating and peasant discontent was escalating<sup>58</sup>.

6) Electoral reform hastily cobbled together and sanctioned by a plebiscite in May 1864, which gave a "mandate" to Cuza by a 682,621 to 1,307 margin. It was argued that the new statute was a working out of the provisions of the Paris Convention, but in reality it was another slight of hand *fait accompli*. Nearly universal manhood suffrage was instituted, but the adoption of a Prussian-style collegial system and indirect voting for those paying low taxes (i.e. the vast majority) blunted this reform as well.

The Prince assumed more and more power in a system that allowed more participation but also facilitated authoritarian behaviour. Cuza seems to have not been by nature an authoritarian, but he was not a man of a party as such, did not suffer fools gladly, and too self-assured to function well in a political atmosphere of give and take<sup>59</sup>. Coupled with renewed press censorship, his post-1864 policies eventually drove Cuza's conservative and liberal

<sup>57</sup> Kogălniceanu was a strong supporter of agrarian reform, as he made clear in his powerful May and June 1862 speeches "Îmbunătățirea soartei țăranilor", and "Îmbunătățirea soartei țăranilor. Al doilea cuvânt", reprinted in Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Opere*, Vol. III, *Oratorie I. 1856-1864, Partea a II-a, 1861-1864*, edited with notes, and commentary by Vladimir Diculescu, with an introduction by Dan Berindei, București, Editura Academiei, 1987, p. 162-231.

<sup>58</sup> See Paul E. Michelson, *Romanian Politics...*, p. 112 ff. and 133 ff. for the argument.

<sup>59</sup> N. Iorga, *Statuia lui Cuza-Vodă...*, p. 128.

opponents into what was termed a “monstrous coalition” that resulted in his forcible ouster in early 1866.

These reforms were breathtaking in scope and number, but bound to be flawed given the minuscule personnel base which Romania in 1859-1866 had to operate with. Of course, calling something a conservatory or scholarly journal doesn't make it so, as Titu Maiorescu acidly pointed out in 1868:

Supposedly based on statistics, Romania today has almost all of Western civilization. We have politics and science, we have journals and academies, we have schools and literature, we have museums, conservatories, we have theatre, we even have a constitution. But in reality, all these are dead productions, pretensions without a basis, entities without a body, illusions without truth, and therefore the culture of the elite is null and void... [this is because] before we had village teachers we had village schools, before we had capable professors we opened high schools and universities [...]. Before we had even a shadow of original scientific activity we created the Romanian Academic Society [...]. Before we had the required artists we created music conservatories; before we had a single painter of value, we created schools of belle-arte; before we had a single play of merit, we founded a national theatre – we deprecated and falsified all these forms of culture<sup>60</sup>.

In the end, Maiorescu charged, Romanians “have falsified all the forms of modern civilization”. This was his famous “forme fără fond” argument<sup>61</sup>.

And in 1872, he continued to hammer the point home:

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<sup>60</sup> Titu Maiorescu, *În contra direcția de astăzi în cultura română*, 1868, in Titu Maiorescu, *Critice 1866-1907*, ediție completă, Vol. I, second edition, București, Editura Minerva, 1913, p. 168-169.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Adrian Marino, *Din istoria teoriei ‘formă fără fond’*, in “Anuarul de Lingvistică și Istorie Literară”, Vol. 19 (1968), p. 185-188; and Constantin Schifernet, *Formele fără fond, un brand românesc*, București, Editura Comunicare.ro, 2007.

When someone asks about our literary and artistic progress, we cite statistic after statistic, so many schools of fine arts, so many music conservatories, so many newspapers [...]. Why is Mr. X learned? Because he is a professor at the university. A healthier situation would be one in which it was required that one be learned to become a university professor [...]. scientific activity and primary research in almost every branch of science is lacking or non-existent or is too little or too sparse. But solving these lapses cannot be done through improvisation or through governmental commissions<sup>62</sup>.

This critique struck nerves and seems to have wrong-footed Romanian intellectuals ever since, placing them in a perpetually defensive stance and leading to ever more absurd counterclaims which eventually resulted in the insanities of the protochronist school<sup>63</sup>. Of course, one should not take Maiorescu's polemical hyperbole literally and assume that there were no learned Romanian academics (as certainly Maiorescu himself was), no skilled politicos, no sublime musicians and writers, or no talented artists. How to affirm without pandering to the powerful or wealthy, or engaging in unseemly boasting, on the one hand, and to critique the mediocre and the second-rate without destroying the good are skills which are uncommon, and in Romanian culture – where excess and intemperance seem to be the mode – equally rare.

Unduly influenced by the camarilla, which played off of Kogălniceanu's popularity, Cuza's downward spiral was perhaps begun when he dismissed his able but also polarizing Prime Minister in January 1865. Administrative ineptitude had led to financial disaster. State income had grown from 18 million lei in 1858 to 55 million lei in 1865, but expenditures rose even faster and a

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<sup>62</sup> Titu Maiorescu, *Direcția nouă în poezia și proza română*, 1872, in Titu Maiorescu, *Critice...*, Vol. I, p. 196-197.

<sup>63</sup> See Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1991, especially p. 167 ff.

2 million lei deficit in 1858 had become an 8 million lei deficit in 1865. The overall deficit by 1866 was 20 million lei. And it is impossible to know how much of this was due to mismanagement and how much owed to kickbacks and embezzlement<sup>64</sup>.

And the Prince himself seems to have deteriorated both physically and psychologically by mid-1865, not the least of which owed to the strained relationship his prolonged adultery produced with his long-suffering wife. Ironically, he was contemplating abdication, a decision that was preempted by the February 1866 coup which ended his reign.

Bobango's summary of the developmental crises under Cuza is to the point:

May 2 temporarily solved the problem of parliamentary obstruction and irresponsibility, but thereafter neither the prince nor his associates demonstrated the capacity for ameliorating, let alone, eliminating, any of the other difficulties facing the young nation<sup>65</sup>.

On the other hand, Kogălniceanu's eulogy for Cuza in 1873 is also mostly on target:

What did the nation want when it elected him? The nation wanted new laws and new men. Cuza was that new man who made new laws, who made a new world, because the world of 1873 is other than it was in 1859. Today, the Romanian state is no longer the vassal provinces of Moldova and Muntenia. That's what Alexandru Ioan I accomplished [...]. it was not by his faults that he was overthrown, but by his great deeds<sup>66</sup>.

The reign of Prince Cuza for all its shortcomings, the noted historian Gheorghe Platon wrote:

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<sup>64</sup> See Paul E. Michelson, *Romanian Politics...*, p. 136.

<sup>65</sup> Gerald J. Bobango, *The Emergence of the Romanian National State...*, p. 192-193.

<sup>66</sup> Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Discurs la înmormântarea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, 7 June 1873, reprinted in idem, *Opere*, Vol. IV, *Oratorie II. 1864-1878, Partea a III-a, 1870-1874*, edited with an introduction, notes, and commentary by Georgeta Penelea, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1982, p. 495-497.

[...]. created a favourable framework for the country's development the capitalist road, on the road of progress. It enabled the programme of the revolution of 1848 to be put into execution and a modern Romania to appear, and this task devolved on Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the prince of union, who has the merit of having laid solid foundations for it<sup>67</sup>.

#### IV. A balance sheet

Because we are dealing with a much shorter period for Cuza than for Carol I, and because a considerable amount of evaluative commentary has already been made above, we can bring assessment of the three areas of political development under Cuza to a more succinct conclusion.

1) With regard to the developmental crisis of National Identity, the process seems to have weathered the conflict and crisis of 1859-1866. Conservatives, moderate liberals, and liberals alike were supporters of union and affirmed Romanian national identity. The United Principalities were, after all, pretty homogeneous from an ethnic point of view, with a 95.2% Romanian population in 1860<sup>68</sup>. Naturally, these three strains of unionist views differed considerably on their social, political, and economic desiderata, but the problem of national identity appeared resolved. Cuza gets a strong grade here for maintaining and expanding this aspect, which could have been seriously undermined.

2) The developmental crisis of legitimacy, that is the establishment and legitimization of a new political order was, evidently, another matter. Cuza initially had a warm response, but the honeymoon was soon over as he made clear his commitment to liberal values that the conservatives found anathema. At the same time, he alienated the more radical Muntenian liberals by asserting his

<sup>67</sup> Gheorghe Platon, 1859. *The Union of the Romanian Principalities...*, p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> For a discussion, see Lucian Boia, *Cum s-a românizat România*, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas, 2015, p. 13 ff.

own identity and refusing to become a cats-paw for them. This led to the 2 May 1864 Cuza – Kogălniceanu coup against the Paris System, which was followed by the 11 February 1866 coup that led to Cuza's forced abdication and yet another constitutional change. Cuza did seem to maintain a warm place in the hearts of the masses, but at this stage of Romanian development this actually counted for little. The situation by 1866 was still in turmoil, but Cuza's refusal to take the fight to the masses or other extremes (noted by almost everyone) deserves recognition<sup>69</sup>. He merits a passing if not very positive grade.

3) Participation was dismal, and, of course, was a problem that Romanian politics might be said to have never actually resolved before 1989. Narrow electorate, indirect participation for the vast majority of those allowed to participate, and electoral hanky-panky all guaranteed that the developmental crisis of participation would continue long after 1866. Elections revealed more about who was conducting them than about public opinion. Constitutions were often mere scraps of paper. Ministerial instability and clientelism persisted, and the agrarian question continued to be dealt with mainly by talk. As with Carol I, too many chances were missed by the Romanian elite between 1859 and 1866, complicated by their hostility to Prince Cuza and difficult circumstances. However, an astonishing amount was accomplished or at least set underway. This leads to an overall more positive assessment of the Cuza years than I had had two decades ago. Perhaps this is because he had less time to work with. Perhaps it is a reflection on the failures of his successors who had a lot more going for them than he did and didn't do as much with it. His personal shortcomings remain an obstacle to a higher evaluation, but overall Cuza gets a strong passing grade.

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<sup>69</sup> It is also worth noting that he was elected to parliament twice in 1870, which he unambiguously refused.