Considerations on Romanian Political Thought in The 19th Century

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ABSTRACT: In the first half of the 19th century, Romanian political thought was strongly influenced by the significant changes that took place in Europe and by the national movements that began to emerge. The period was marked by struggles for independence and modernisation, and Romania was still under Ottoman rule, despite sporadic attempts to gain autonomy.

Overall, the first half of the 19th century was a period of significant change and the emergence of ideas and movements that laid the foundations of the modern Romanian nation. Political thought during that period was marked by the struggle for autonomy, independence and modernisation, under the influence of progressive ideas circulating in Western Europe.

KEYWORDS: Political Thought; Orientations; Affiliations; European Influences.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political thought is an essential component of human thought that forges its identity and legitimacy in a lengthy process of searching for solutions for the organisation and management of colectivities. At the same time, it is inseparable from political institutions and action and appears, manifests itself and perpetuates itself in the context of power relations in social reality.

The origins of Romanian political thought must be sought in distant times, since antiquity. The political and administrative organisation, the mechanisms of functioning of institutions, the attributes of power, the methods of government, the relations between power and religion, etc. (Nicolau, I 2022) are indirectly revealed either in foreign writings of that period or later.

Ecclesiastical writings, chancery documents, chronicles and oral literature are further sources for reconstructing the trajectory, the ideological content and the relevance of the autochthonous creation in political terms. The changes occurring in Romanian society in modern and contemporary times stimulate the development of political thought, which must respond to new types of demands and imagine alternatives, strategies, concepts, reforming projects, etc. (Tanasescu, 2004).

A feature of the Romanian political thought is that it has asserted itself with valuable ideas even during the communist regime, despite this repressive regime. In this respect, especially after the withdrawal of the Soviet army of occupation from Romania (1958), the reaffirmation of some ideas from traditional Romanian thought and politics, the fight against some distortions of the historical truth regarding the development of the Romanian people and the affirmation of some ideas recognised as such at the time, regarding relations between states, the preservation of a climate of peace and security in the world, should be particularly mentioned, the peaceful resolution of conflicts between states, the increase of Romania's political role on the international arena, the development of its ties with the states of the world based on the principles of equal rights, respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, the increase of the role of the UN in maintaining order, stability and peace in the world.

II. ROMANIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Analyzing the changes that took place on the continent and their influence on the Romanians, historian Gheorghe Platon highlighted the Principalities' place in the general European social-political context of the 18th and early 19th centuries, concluding that the revolutions of 1821 and 1848 were an organic part of the cycle of general European phenomena (Platon, 1985).

A central element in Romanian political thought was nationalism, with its emphasis on the affirmation of national identity and unity. The struggle for national emancipation and the union of all the territories inhabited by Romanians were important objectives, reflected in events such as the 1848 Revolution, the Union of the Principalities in 1859 and the Great Union of 1918. Liberal ideas were promoted especially in the 19th century and were linked to the struggle for civil rights, constitutionalism and the rule of law. In the context of political and social emancipation, liberalism was an important force and leaders such as Mihail

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Kogalniceanu played a key role in introducing liberal reforms. Alongside liberalism, conservatism had a significant influence on Romanian political thought. Particularly in times of instability or in the context of major challenges, conservative currents sought to maintain the traditional social order and conservative values.

Political thought has a rich tradition in Romania, existing even where written documents are lacking, due to a complicated and rarely benevolent history. Reflections on the reign, the relationship of lords with the nobles and foreign powers, the role of the church among the powers of the state, etc. are common in ancient literature, in writings such as *Invățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab* ..., in *pravile and chronicles* (Popa, 2018). Political and cultural contacts with central and western Europe, with some travellers from the West, will give a new impetus to these reflections, which have, however, a relatively limited circulation in writing, given the few book connoisseurs in the Romanian Lands before the 19th century.

Beginning in the second half of the 18th century, in Moldova, in Wallachia and in Transylvania, in different ways, the first signs of social, political and cultural changes are felt, which can be classified as pre-modernity, announcing a first modernity that, in a few decades, will bring with it important changes in the three Romanian countries.

The 1848 Revolution in the Romanian Principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) was part of a revolutionary wave that swept across Europe that year. In the Romanian Principalities, it resulted in movements for social and political reform, as well as for autonomy and the removal of Ottoman rule. It was influenced by the liberal and nationalist ideas circulating in Europe at the time. Events in France and the revolutionary wave that swept across the continent stimulated the desire for change and emancipation in the Romanian principalities.

Although the 1848 Revolution did not lead to the immediate achievement of autonomy and independence, it had a significant impact on the political and national consciousness of Romanians. Revolutionary ideas continued to influence the evolution of society and contribute to the process of modernisation and independence that was to follow over the decades.

In the context of political and military events at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the Romanian Principalities came increasingly to the attention of the great powers; events which, moreover, were the subject of several projects to divide or rebuild the old "Kingdom of Dacia", obviously under the aegis of one or another of the interested powers (Andreescu, 1998).

The increasingly frequent and long-lasting contacts between Romanians in the Principalities and foreigners led to important changes in the attitude of Romanian political circles, especially of the nobility, towards the great European issues (Berindei, 1997). This change of attitude, which became more visible in social behaviour and political thinking, was not uniform, however. Conflicting socio-economic and political peculiarities emerged in the Principalities, expressing, in equal measure, internal political priorities and the nature of external relations and influences, without in any way denying the general interests common to the three states.

Historian Vlad Georgescu has studied more closely the political thought in the Romanian Principalities, Moldova and Wallachia, between 1750 and 1831 (Berindei, 1997), showing that in this period we witnessed a certain development of the critical spirit and the penetration of ideas from the west of Europe, the writings now written are characterized by rationalism, by certain liberal influences, but also by the class spirit of aristocratic conservatism, even by a debate, in a surprisingly modern spirit, on the idea of national sovereignty and the patriotic and national ideal (Georgescu, 1972).

In Transylvania, where the United Church has taken its role as the laminator of the people and defender of national interests seriously, being supported by the Aromanian emigration. The Ardelean School, through some of its representatives, showed different attitudes towards the national question and the origin of the Romanians. In the hope that Russia, considered the protector of Orthodoxy, would also support the cause of the Romanians in Transylvania, Ioan Budai Deleanu supported the origin of the Slavs from Thraco-Dacian times. On the other hand, he strongly emphasized the Latinity of the Roman people and the Romanian language. Hoping to obtain the widest possible support in the struggle for the national rights of the Transylvanian Romanians, the representative of the Transylvanian School tried to reconcile the theory of Slavism with that of the Latinity of the Romanians, but his attitude remained singular, the other representatives of the Romanian nation in Transylvania showing interest in finding the historical and legal arguments necessary to support their regional approach, thus putting the contemporary history of the Principalities on the second plane.

In the thinking of the representatives of the Transylvanian School are found political ideas of particular significance, such as the organization of Romanians in a state structure in the geographical perimeter of the country, with democratic republican forms of government in close connection with the interests of citizens, based on law as a guiding principle. Through their thinking and their vast culture, the representatives of the Transylvanian School fit into the European Enlightenment dimension, which opened the way to the democratic organisation and management of society and the establishment of the rule of law.

However, the ideas and influences of the Franco revolution facilitated the systematization and radicalization of the political thinking of Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania. In 1795 Samuil Micu presented the national programme as a unity between Church, nation and homeland. It was in line with European democratic-revolutionary and literary ideology, both in its national and revolutionary-democratic character and in its religious fanaticism manifested in psychological terms.

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The permanent ties of the nobles and lords of the mountains with the West facilitated the direct reception by the Romanian country of the ideas of the French Revolution through the emissaries of the Directory and Napoleon at the Porte. Some of them remained permanently among the Romanians, contributing to the affirmation of modern political thought in the Romanian Country and to the implementation of the reforms contained in the revolutionary programmes. Alongside the French, however, and even before them, Greek scholars had settled in the country in large numbers. As already noted, their more or less declared aim was to create a Hellenic or Hellenized Dacia between the Danube and the Carpathians, but through their works both the scholars who came from Istanbul and those who worked in Vienna contributed decisively to the development of national and European political thought in Wallachia (Iorga, 1938).

The European ideas of justice and freedom, first developed by the Montenegrin nobles through the Greeks and French alike, were rapidly affirmed during the events of 1804-1812 and especially during Tudor Vladimirescu's revolution, when the motto justice and freedom expressed a general European revolutionary creed.

Unlike in Transylvania, where political thinking was aimed at winning the national rights of the Romanians in the complex framework of Habsburg rule and in the context of a Serbian-Orthodox offensive supported by Russia, political thinking in Wallachia had broader goals. Although it resolutely rejected the claims and projects of the Greeks, Russians and Austrians, the nobility of the mountains did not definitively separate from them. Adhering to the ideas of European revolutionary democratism, it pursued its own goals and contributed to the definition and realisation of the national-revolutionary aims of neighbouring peoples, especially those of the Balkans (Ciachir, 1968). Knowing very well the suspicions existing between the great powers and their interests in the region and the sympathies shown towards some Balkan peoples, the nobles and revolutionaries of the mountains manoeuvred diplomatically to diminish, as the case may be, the fears of Turkey, Austria or Russia towards the aims of the Romanian Country and to obtain their support.

The close ties of the revolutionaries in the mountains with those in Western Europe, especially with the French, as well as the general attitude of the population towards Russian protection, led the government in Petersburg to keep a close eye on events in Wallachia and to block any attempt at a programme or reform that could have led to the emancipation of the country and its union with Moldova and Transylvania.

In Moldova the situation was quite different from that in Wallachia and Transylvania. Here the close ties between the Moldovan nobility and the Polish-Russian-Ukrainian nobility influenced political thinking, which remained moderate-conservative for a long time. For a long time the Moldovan nobility considered the reforms carried out with Russian support and at Russia's insistence as privileges and favours granted to them because they did not jeopardise their interests and their social-economic and political positions, increasing pro-Russian feelings. Nor did the conflicts between the old conservative boyars and the young boyars, more receptive to liberal ideas, pose a danger to Russia's positions in Moldova, as both sides were in fact Russophiles. The pro-Russian sentiments of the Moldovan boyars began to gradually diminish in the period 1812-1818 and especially after 1822, thanks among other things to the failed actions of the Etheria and the new Russian occupation (Ciachir, 1968).

Although after 1818, when Bessarabia lost its autonomy, contacts between young Moldovan nobles and democratic and revolutionary spirits in Poland and Transylvania became frequent, they were not likely to radically change the political mentalities of Moldovan society. This aspect was highlighted even during the failed Carvunar movement. The situation was due to the conservatism of Moldovan society, which also had negative repercussions on political ideology and revolutionary programmes.

The ideas of change and renewal had a different meaning in Moldova than in Wallachia. They were perceived not in the sense of European liberalism and democratism, but in the sense of Russian conservatism and modernism, which was a late enlightened despotism. Moldovan political thought was not dominated to the same extent by resentment of foreigners that was manifest in the Montenegrin political class.

For a long time, Moldovan political thinking remained hesitant and moderate-conservative. This thinking also dominated the Moldovan revolutionary programmes up to 1848, which led to their failure. Even after young men like Russo, Kogalniceanu, Alecsandri and Negri - who had close links with European revolutionaries - returned from their studies, inspired by the desire for democratic reforms, they were unable to imprint the same revolutionary dimamism on political thought in Moldova as in Wallachia and Transylvania. Sustained efforts were needed in order to achieve a certain change of mentality. It was not until the unionist movement after 1848 and the adoption of its programme that the situation changed. Under the impetus of the revolutionaries in the mountains, the Moldovan patriots managed to break the state of inertia that had dominated political thinking in Moldova until then and to overcome the conservative and Russophile attitude of the old nobility and the undecided (Berindei, 1979).

The maturity of Romanian political thought in the mid-19th century would find its relevance in the creation of all the institutions of the rule of law in the following period, including the political parties that would assert themselves in the arena of political life. It is well known that in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Romanian political life was dominated in the old kingdom by the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, and in Transylvania by the Romanian National Party and the Transylvanian Social Democratic Party, parties which in one form or another were also active in the interwar period.

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In the last decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries, political thinkers of particular value with European resonance emerged. Among them, a special place is occupied by Mihail Eminescu, who, besides being the greatest poet of the nation, the lighthouse of Romanian poetry, also distinguished himself as a great political thinker, whose work, linked especially to the articles published in the newspaper 'Timpu', is a successful fresco of the political realities of Romanian society at that time, still highly relevant today. The timelessness of M. Eminescu's political thought lies in the affirmation of perennial ideas such as national freedom and independence, social freedom, defence of democratic values, respect for human personality, political responsibility for the destiny of the people and the citizen.

We also recall, for the time, the political thinking of Titu Maiorescu, his work as a politician, with great implications in the consolidation of modern Romania and the completion of its state unity.

Among the leading Romanian thinkers and politicians, of European and even worldwide recognition, we mention in particular the great historian and scholar Nicolae Iorga, as well as the great diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, whose concerns also concerned the development of political science. Nicolae Iorga's vast work also includes valuable studies on political doctrines and parties, in which ideas that enrich the content of political science are developed.

Nicolae Titulescu's work also contains numerous studies on the political realities in Romania as well as in Europe and the world. Thus, we find ideas of great theoretical and practical value formulated such as: the affirmation of nation states and their active participation in world politics, relations between states based on the principles of international law, the resolution of differences between states by peaceful means, the achievement of collective security in Europe and the world, including through international bodies such as the League of Nations, whose presidency was held for two terms by Nicolae Titulescu, as an expression of his value as a thinker and politician. His main motto in all his theoretical, political and diplomatic activity was the triumph of the force of law and not the force of law in international relations between states.

After the War of Independence, the 19th century was dedicated to the consolidation of Romania's unitary nation state, including the territorial expansion and integration of regions inhabited mainly by Romanians, such as Transylvania (which became part of Romania in 1918, at the end of World War I). During this century, various political ideologies took shape, such as conservatism, liberalism and nationalism. These currents influenced the development of political institutions and helped to establish a Romanian political identity.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Romanian political thought in the first half of the 19th century was generally in line with European liberal and democratic-revolutionary thought. Romanian democrats and revolutionaries were influenced by European democrats and revolutionaries, especially the French, either through direct contacts or in other ways. But Romanian political thought has always had to take into account the internal and external social-economic and political context in which the Principalities evolved, as well as the balance of power between conservatives and liberals, when drawing up its programmes and setting its goals.

On the other hand, for tactical-diplomatic reasons, the interests of the great neighbouring powers were also protected to a certain degree, without renouncing the fundamental national goals of the Romanian people. Hence the differences that emerged in the thinking and political programmes of the revolutionaries of the three Romanian principalities.

In Romania, concerns for political science became more prominent after the First World War due to the new requirements that arose following the creation of the unitary national state, concerns that were part of the overall European political thought.

Among the major problems that have preoccupied political thought and, as such, political science, have been those relating to the affirmation of unitary nation states, to relations between them, to the maintenance of the new international order established by the system of the Versailles Treaties, to the establishment and maintenance of peace at European and world level expressly linked to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

Although it was formed and crystallized under the influence of European democratic-revolutionary and liberal political thought, Romanian ideology up to the mid-19th century showed a certain originality. It occupied a clearly defined place in the broad framework of European political thought and in turn influenced the political thinking of neighbouring states and peoples, especially after 1859 and beyond. In this respect, it can be said that the Romanians were perfectly integrated into both the European thinking of the Age of Enlightenment and the democratic-revolutionary thinking of the 19th century, contributing to the unity and democratisation of the entire continent and, above all, to the affirmation of the Romanian national spirit and the creation of a unitary state.

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