# An Elite of Transition. The National Party from Wallachia (1838-1840)*

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## Abstract

*From the years of the Russian occupation (1829-1834), the power of words and the political rhetoric started to exceed the traditional framework, becoming in time the main horizon of affirmation, reproduction and legitimation of power in the Principalities. The traditional structure of the public space, of symbolical averment of the princely power, started to erode allowing the emergence of a public political language that 'freed' the political act from the narrow framework of boyar bargains, mediations, conspiracies. Being at the border of tradition and modernity, the practices of the National Party had features specific to both, combining new ideas with older practices and vice-versa. Unlike previous political groups, which extracted their power legitimacy through patronage over society and by managing the social relations (controlling offices), this group differentiated itself by using a public discourse, built on rational criteria (law, liberty), which offered the group a shared identity, appropriated in a political project.*

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## Introduction. Methodological aspects

The research of a theme of political history, of the National Party from Wallachia, in this case, offers all the ingredients necessary – documentary, methodological, analytical, contextual – for a better understanding of the transition to modernity in the Romanian case. The elements of factual nature, internal or external, insufficiently known, or biographical, prosopographical justify a new reading of the published sources and, of course, additional inquiries in the archives. In their turn, the discursive-ideological aspects or those concerning the modern public space, the new forms of political legitimacy guide the attention towards some methodological clarifications, regarding the political groups, especially.  Also, concerning the latter, today's historiographical context presumes a few conditionings and difficulties somehow discouraging at first glance. The study of political history went in a shadow cone for a while, its capacity to capture the features, the profile of an epoch was contested in a period (the 2000s) in which the Romanian historiography of the modern era was dominated by orientation that privileged the mentalities, the imaginary, imagology, the history of symbols and rituals or of mores (Mitu 2000, Boia 1997, Boia 1999, Nicoară 2001, Neumann 2006, Grancea 2003).

However, political history doesn't have to be perceived only as a series of facts, whose causal connections and consequences are empirical ordered by the historian, based on some interpretation schemes, usually of Marxist inspiration. In this regard, it's necessary to operate a separation from the approach of the Romanian historiographical current which appeared in the 1960s, prolonged until the 1990s, which reconfirmed to a certain degree A. D. Xenopol's conception regarding the importance of the cause-effect relation in understanding the political history. Under the influence of his observations regarding the national character of the opposition of the great boyars towards the 'Turkish pressure', the 'Greek and Russian elements', despite the 'narrow spirit' of the boyar elite in the case of social aspects, the historiographical landmarks of the relation between social and national arose (Xenopol 1920: 7). In this interpretation key, the emergence of the National Party was considered a reflection of a historical process of growth of the Romanian society, generated by the need of emancipation. From this point of view, the political history was understood as an organic evolution process (Platon 1995). The political acts were, from this perspective, determined by social forces, meaning the conjugated efforts of some individuals with common feats, from a certain social category, based on an alleged strategy of political ascension, legitimated through an ideology.

From this methodological point of view, the National Party was a historical given, an instrument of the political struggle for national emancipation, whose emergence was dictated by the economical and ideological evolution of the Romanian society. In its turn, the latter was the object of a modernisation process, linked, in the view

of some historians, to the wish of state consolidation, accomplished by its separation from the Ottoman political system and the reformation of institutions, manifested by a part of the boyars in early 19th century. This type of approach excludes from the start alternative variants of the historical course, subjecting it to an objective evolution, of a path to progress, in which tradition is instrumentalized by modernity and assimilated through a process that excludes historical discontinuities. Or, the National Party from 1838-1840 represented a moment of rupture from the political practices of early modernity. It can't be explained through an evolutional and implacable process of modernisation of the Romanian society, which would've determined changes in the political act. It's necessary to analyse the activity of the National Party in the internal and external context in which it took place, taking into consideration the human element, the aspirations, visions and interests of its members and leaders, and not as an episode in an eventual historical series. The political history cannot be seen as a flow of events in a single direction, an 'accumulation of facts and ideas animated by the obsession of sense […] a cursive and coherent narrative' (Barbu 2001). Thus, the political actions of the National Party members led by Ion Câmpineanu cannot be organised teleological because they maintain their 'autonomy' and have their own meaning.

Relevant for the methodological orientation of our paper is the distinction which Pierre Rosanvallon makes between the history of politics that operates 'the recovery of the chronological unfolding of events, analyses the functioning of institutions, unravels the mechanisms of public decision making'(Rosanvallon 2013: 39) and the history of the political, focused on the power confrontations in the society, taking into account the personal rivalries, some 'intellectual confusions' and the struggles that follow the diffusion of ideas, symbolic representations and practices, specific in the transition to modernity (Rosanvallon 2013: 12). Unlike the classical history of the political ideas, in which the political programs and actions are seen as the expression of gradual, progressive, cultural, social and institutional accumulations, of what the old historiography calls 'the spirit of the age', the new history of the political accentuates two factors: the power and the politics through which it can be conquered maintained and legitimated. Starting with a series of elements from the sphere of politics, illustrated in the Romanian historiography by the studies of some authors like Barbu (1997), Antohi (1999) and Alexandrescu (2011), our paper searches to establish to what extent the motivations of the political group led by Câmpineanu were ideological, as well as to discern the manner in which new principles served to legitimate a project of renewal of the political power.

Thus, the study of this political group from Wallachia, active between 1838 and 1840, had as starting point the interest concerning the manner in which solidarity was built around a small number of deputies from the General Assembly, whom, in 1837, vehemently opposed the adoption of the additional article to the Organic Regulation. This stated that any change of the Organic Regulation had to be preapproved by the

suzerain and the protective Courts, thus cancelling the statue of autonomy granted to the Principalities by the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Adrianople (14 September 1829). Our research starts from a few important questions: what kind of group was this, one specific to boyar politics, a secret society, a parliamentary group or modern political party? Or, maybe a synthesis of all these? Did it have an ideological identity and promoted a regime of ideas, a policy of principles shared by its members or their motivations were dictated by interests, opportunism or political ambitions? To reach some conclusions in this regard, we will analyse the political practices of the group and their manifestation in the public space.

The documentary sources reveal a political group, whose program was drafted in November 1838 in *Actul de unire și independență* [*Act of union and independence*] and in *Osăbitul act de numirea suveranului rumânilor* [*Different act for the appointment of the Romanians' sovereign*], different, in its political practices, from the ones specific to early modernity. The articulation of ideas in a public discourse, with certain ideological insertions, individualizes it in relation with the boyar political act, conducted in solidarity, usually outside the public place, through scheming, conspiracies, petitions, deals, avoiding individual political responsibility.

Starting from these preliminary observations, we aim to clarify the extent to which the features of traditional boyar politics blended, in the case of the National Party, with elements of political modernity. In order to explain the manner in which this group tried to legitimize itself, searching a validation in society and, implicitly, support for its discourse, we analyse the relations between politics and public space in Wallachia. The extent to which the public space offered possibilities for open manifestations, prestige, notoriety and, eventually, support and legitimacy, can be determined by analysing the conduct of those implicated and the reactions of the Romanian society.

## 'The political men' of the National Party and the public space

The way in which a modern public space was structured in the Principalities (starting from the years of the Russian occupation of 1829-1834) influenced the political practices of the Wallachian deputies engaged, from 1837, in a struggle to defend the rights of the country, trying to legitimate themselves in the society through a certain type of discourse. In the study of this connection between politics and public space, two methodological approaches are especially useful: the sociological one and that proposed by the 'new cultural history'. The sociological perspective, illustrated by Jürgen Habermas (2005), assigns to the public space the meaning of a 'public political sphere' in which a critical rational exercise of the institutionalized power is manifested by informed citizens. This space of

dialogue and exchange of ideas is defined, in his vision by intellectual, rational and critical practices based on two types of communication: direct, in salons, cafes, reading cabinets, libraries, theatres and indirect, mediated by text, through reading (Habermas 2005: 91). On another hand, the methodological suggestions coming from the 'new cultural history', focused on the analysis of symbols, representations and the social, cultural and political practices of the society, warn about the fact that the great political themes can remain 'captive' in the sphere of an elite. Also, in the case of the public critical debate, mentioned by Habermas, one can observe the influence of mores, habits, traditions that generate a certain social conformism. This perspective is structured around two major concepts: representation and political culture. Roger Chartier (1989), one of the initiators of this direction, places the notion of representation (the way in which people perceive and represent through words the world they live in) in the centre of a re-evaluation of the relation between social structures and cultural practices. At the same time, it follows the links between the book production (the author accentuates the importance of the representations and cultural practices built around the books and the circulation of the printed word instead of the simple book circulation) and the exercise of power (Chartier 1989: 1505-1520). Another author whose work fundaments this methodological approach, Keith Michael Baker (1990), starts from the premise that 'people are aware of their existence through language and are, to a certain extent, constrained by it', in order to show that the notion of political culture is constituted in the field of the discourse and political language, elaborated during the political action. Unlike Habermas, for Baker the notion of public has valences of common interest a common good, represented by those who assume to speak in the name of the entire community, using expressions as 'common will' or 'public conscience'.

The approaches of the 'new cultural history' and the concept of political culture prove their methodological utility for the study of the National Party from Wallachia because they offer a grid of interpretation through which we can better understand the objectives, the intentions and also the manner in which this group politically represented (understood) the Romanian society.

Unlike the period previous to the Organic Regulation, when the main political practices of opposition to the Prince were the memoirs addressed to the Great Powers, anonymous petitions thrown in the court of the Metropolitan church of the foreign consulates (Păun 2008: 157) or communicating the objections in the Divan by a person of moral authority and prestige (the Metropolitan or the great ban), who justified his position by drafting a document (Ploscaru 2013: 279), the critique that the group led by Ion Câmpineanu addressed to the Prince Alexandru Ghica (1834-1842) came out of the confines of these petitionary demarches, entering an emerging public space.

Without being a fully functioning social reality, the public opinion slowly was becoming a referent for the political act (Ploscaru 2013: 75) and was the *milieu* in which the National Party built its legitimacy. Of course, the meaning of these two concepts – modern public space and public opinion – has to be correlated with the specific of the Romanian society, in which public communication through words with public addressability was a rather recent inurement.

In this period, the discussions and debates from the General Assembly were not publically presented through press, which is the mirror of the power's official discourse. In a modern parliamentary regime, the press has the role to present to the community of citizens the debates of those elected, a decisive aspect in the formation of an informed and advised public opinion, the only one capable to rationalize the formation and expression of the common will (Saminadayar-Perrin 2007: 15). As a French contemporary, close to the National Party, Felix Colson, observed, the Wallachian deputies had ‚a special parliamentary language', in which eloquence was of secondary importance because the decisions were prepared in advance in secret meetings and in the meetings of the Assembly they only voted for or against a resolution (Colson 1839: 86). The great issues, continued the French, were approached with great reluctance in public, a Wallachian exposed an opinion only after 'long nights of meditation and many delays' (Colson 1839: 87).

The manner in which the discussions took place in the Assembly was similar to a sitting room conversation, as Edouard Thouvenel, traveller in 1839 Wallachia, noted:

> 'the room where the Assembly met is small; in the back, the chair of the president rises; the great boyars occupy the places on the benches on his right and the deputies of the counties those on his left. Orators do not go up to a tribune to express their opinions, among them a familiar conversation is established rather a solemn discussion' (Bușă 2006: 820).

Thus, there were no discourses to print in the official journal. However, information about some attitudes in various issues discussed in the Assembly reached the public space, especially through the deputies that, in 1837, fought against the additional article. Renouncing the old practices, the members of the National Party were accused of 'making propaganda on the population' by using 'the great words – nationality and independence', reaching more and more 'sensible ears' (Nesselrode, 21 March 1839, *Letter to D. Tatișcev*: 86).

Understanding the transformations in the political communication after the application of the Organic Regulation is easier with a methodological approach coming from the sphere of the 'new cultural history' of the political, which suggests the study of the political horizons of persuasion in correlation with the relation between the spoken word (political rhetoric, discourses and debates in

the Assembly, writings (proclamations, political programs) and images (paintings, heraldry) (Escudier 2010: 64).

Defined as a fundamental unit of the political action, 'meaning to say something about something, addressing it to someone, to an individual or to a group, in order to determine it to take action towards a specific finality' (Escudier 2010: 64), the political persuasive capacity had, in the period we analyse, an important role, because it became decisive in creating solidarities around the project of the National Party. In close connection with the ideologization of the political language, a process specific to the transition to political modernity (Arend 2000: 175), the political persuasion was channelled, in the case of the National Party, through a series of arguments transposed in a national discourse, but also through the cultivation of the image of the 'political man', selfless fighter for the political awakening of his motherland and for the political affirmation of the nationality, with which Ion Câmpineanu identified himself. The Wallachian deputy ,took in his hand' the mission to defend the country's rights, and his words were 'the substance that awoke Romanians from the lethargy state they were in'[2].

Condemning the way in which the Porte and Russia violated for centuries 'the most holy liberties' of the country, which they declared in public, the members of Câmpineanu's political group tried to mobilize the political men to support a project that aimed to achieve a 'free and independent country' (Bodea 1967: 216). The invocation of the motherland, a concept that galvanized the spirits (Mihai 2010: 83) and allowed the transgression of social borders, legitimized the political association of men from different social categories, whom the tradition placed in a certain social and power hierarchical relation, strengthening the hypothesis that this group was one attached to a patrimony of ideas, representative for a new type of solidarity, eminently political (unlike the model of social solidarity specific to the traditional community) (Ploscaru 2013). For adopting this strategy, the members of the National Party were accused of making 'propaganda in the society' by using the 'big words of nationality and independence' to address the more and more numerous 'sensible ears' (Nesselrode, 21 March 1839, *Letter to Tatişcev*: 86). The issue also drew the attention of Pavel Kiselev, who, in 1838, warned the Prince about the deputies that, using the public credulity, made 'declamations which propagated subversive ideas' in the capital and in the districts (Ghica, 7 July 1838, *Letter to P. Kiselev*).

The traditional 'father, pillar of the country' and exemplary patriot, who ensured protection for the community, was being replaced in the perception and conscience of some people with the 'political man', characterized by the courage, determination, boldness, willingness to sacrifice that he showed in his fight for

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[2]  The effect of Câmpineanu's 'words' was observed by Ion Ghica, his nephew and collaborator, who, towards the end of 19th century, noted that many young people who lived and 'idleness and dissolution, and I could cite illustrious names today, left the parties and the novels and ran under the banner of Câmpineanu, started to study seriously and brought important services to the country' (Ghica, 1881, 167).

the political awakening of the motherland. The modern patriot was orientated towards political activism and assumed the idea of personal sacrifice. Besides these features, the men of the National Party were known for their interest in literature, translations, theatre and Câmpineanu was perceived as a true patron of arts, which were means of accumulating prestige and legitimacy.

The traditional, 'official' profile of the patriot is scketched by the Prince in an Address to the General Assembly from 2 July 1840. On this occasion, he appreciated the 'special epoch for the community' and draw the attention to the path that the deputies had to follow in their work, because the common good could only come from 'hearts permeated by the sanctity of truth' and not from the 'bad impulses of the crafted patriotism' (*Address to General Assembly* 1898: 94). Alexandru Ghica insisted on the true qualities of a good Romanian, who pursues the 'happiness and praise of his kin', conducts his activities with 'all the necessary tranquillity and impartiality' (*Address to General Assembly* 1898: 89), and cherishes the interest shown always by the two Courts for the 'protection of our institutions, whose precious keeping was entrusted to us'. From this point of view, it was valued the patriotic collaboration of the deputies who fulfilled their duties responding to the trust that the government placed in their characters. The Prince opposed this image to the model of 'political man' illustrated by some deputies, especially by Ion Câmpineanu, who, despising the 'undeniable uses and good things' established by the agreements of the two Courts, produces turmoil in the Assembly and 'without shame, called themselves abroad organs of Wallachia' (*Address to General Assembly* 1898, 94).

Unlike the model of the patriot defined by the Prince, for the members of the National Party to be a good Romanian meant to assume the political fight for the national emancipation, ignoring the inconveniences that could appear, accepting the personal sacrifice for the motherland, as it is mentioned in *Act of union and independence*: 'from now on we will sacrifice our life and status for the independence of the nation' (Bodea 1967: 218). However, this feature of the modern political man is strengthened by the members of the group through a ritual formula that reminds us of the boyar brotherhoods from previous times, by taking on oath on the bible in the presence of a bishop (Bodea 1967: 218).

## Ideological identity and legitimacy issues

In the first years of the Organic Regulation, the internal political context allowed Russia to exert an ideological control in the Principalities, but, as the reforms projected were being applied, and the imperfections of the system started to be perceived, a certain interest towards the ideological influences from Western Europe gradually appeared. The attempts of the Russian officials to gain the sympathy of the

'cultured opinion' and to prove that under the protection of the Petersburg Court the Principalities were 'on the path of civilization and integration in the modern world, were only partially successful (Cornea 2008, 372). The discontent of a part of the political elite with the system, which bore the signs of a classicist modernity and was strongly influenced by the political culture from Russia, became more and more prominent as the diffusion of ideas got better and the connections with European cultural environments multiplied, after 1834 (Antohi 1999: 51-64). Ideas of the moderate liberalism started to permeate 'the young spirits' despite the authorities' efforts to block their infiltration, unfolded through gazettes, theatre, cultural societies and through other forms of culturalization which the state, under the watchful eye of the Russian officials, initially encouraged. Although censorship functioned, foreign gazettes still reached some readers through the foreign consuls from the capital. Of course, this interest for European ideological influences was also due to the fact that many boyar sons were sent abroad to study (especially in France), where they usually came in contact with the cultural and sometimes even with political environments.

This situation can be observed in the case of the National Party. For example, changing the name of the General Assembly into National Assembly in the *Act of union and independence* represents an element that, put in relation with the use of the phrase 'Romanian sovereignty', can suggest the fact that the members of the National Party claimed to have a representative character, articulating their agenda of the requested political rights in strong connection with the principle of collective sovereignty (Escudier, 2010, 65). Representing a loan[3], without equivalent in the Romanian political culture of the period, the concept of national sovereignty was acclimatized and used in their political program to ensure a character of legitimacy for the demarches of Câmpineanu in front of the governments from Paris and London, in 1839. The reports of Robert Colquhoun, the British general consul from Bucharest, who supported this demarche, sustain the hypothesis according to which the members of the group mandated Câmpineanu to present the 'perpetual interference of Russia, on every occasion, until the destruction of any shadow of autonomy in the Principality. They also considered themselves representatives of the country, a quality derived from their status as 'members of the National Assembly' (Bodea, 1967, 216). Besides, the constitution programme drafted on 5/17 November 1838 stated the principle of national representation, mentioning that 'all the Romanians without distinction are represented', and the members of the 'national representation' enjoyed immunity.

The analysis of the political persuasion used by the National Party reveals, however, some contradictory features. So, the leaders of a political group that

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[3]  In the first half of the 19th century, words and concepts from the western Europe cultures that did not have a semantic equivalent in the Romanian language started to be used in the Principalities, a phenomenon specific to the processes of linguistic transformation that took place in this period (Antohi, 1999, 152).

constructed their legitimacy in the name of modern political principles, used, during the electoral campaign of 1837 for the General Assembly a few arguments that placed them in the proximity of traditional practices.

In order to obtain the votes of some boyars from several counties for their candidates, the members of the group tried to convince them in private conversations and not in electoral meetings (Rückman, 10 January 1837, *Letter to A. Ghica*), that the Prince and his government intended, at Russia's suggestion, to eliminate some indemnities they received and to free their Gypsy slaves without any compensations (Ghica, 1 July 1838, *Letter to P. Rückman*). They tried to win votes by promising that the men they supported will not accept the smallest violation of the boyar rights (Ghica, 7 July 1838, *Letter to P. Kiselev*). This inadvertence between the national discourse, transposed, in 1838, in a project of emancipation based on the natural and imprescriptible rights of the nation, and the promise, in a private conversation during an electoral competition, to protect the 'boyar rights' that could have ensured the votes of certain wealthy land owners, anchored in tradition, show a political group specific to the transition to modernity, with its particularities and incoherencies, for which the traditional methods of politics coexist with modern political principles.

The criticism of the Prince and his administration, followed the older coordinates of the social vices of the boyars, pride and corruption, of which the 'fathers of the country' were accused before (Ploscaru 2013: 253), but was articulated on a new perception, that of the citizen's duty to unselfishly serve his motherland, dedicating all his energy and sacrificing his wealth, tranquillity and even his life in its name. The accusations the members of the National Party brought to the Prince were, first of all, regarding the neglect of the administration, in which he introduced the members of his family and all his 'creatures', entrusting of the leadership of some counties to some inexperienced young men and the establishment of arbitrary in the justice system (Colquhoun, 22 April 1839, *Letter to Palmerston*: 45). The old and condemnable sin of embezzlement was illustrated in the case of Alexandru Ghica by the hoarding of some monastery estates, which 'grabbed' by him, were illegally leased. Members of the National Party had information about an estate of a monastery dedicated to Mount Sinai initially leased for 25 000 Turkish piasters a year, was later subleased by the Prince's men for 384 000 Turkish piasters a year for 15 years (Colquhoun, 22 April 1839, *Letter to Palmerston*: 45).

As it is stated in *Act of union and independence*, one of the responsibilities which the members of the group assumed was to ensure if the state's finances are used for the good of the state. Thus, they observed how the faulty and interested use of the state funds, as a consequence of the corruption in the administration encouraged by the Prince, had direct consequences on the works of public interest. In the entire Principality, the roads and bridges were totally neglected, and the wood pavement constructed on the most circulated streets of the capital during Kiselev's

administration was in a deplorable state. Also, they reproached the Prince that for seven years, important funds were allocated for building schools in counties, but the education was in equally bad state as it was previously (Colquhoun, 22 April 1839, *Letter to Palmerston*: 45).

Besides the critique assumed by the National Party and expressed in the Assembly, in speeches and documents, another way through which it tries to weaken the Prince's legitimacy was through anonymous pamphlets, with larger circulation in a developing public space. Persuasion is now being added to some traditional forms of solidarity, gaining more members to a group that did not extract its power from the control of administration, for example. A means through which the National Party reached a larger number of people was, as mentioned above, the pamphlets. One of these, entitled *Du prince de Valachie, de sa famille, de son election et des appuis qu'il a en Russie* (1838) attacked the Prince contesting his legitimacy, his capacities and those of the members of his family places in high offices. Although in more categorical words, the anonymous text follows the coordinates of the National Party's discourse against Alexandru Ghica, bringing forward, in an ironic key, his main 'sins': pride, incompetence, cupidity, lack of integrity and nepotism (*Du prince de Valachie…*, 1838).

The text reveals some arguments used by the National Party to weaken the legitimacy of the Prince, written in a satirical tone and included in a depiction full of spicy details, true or not, in order to discredit Alexandu Ghica in the public space. First of all, his brothers are being ridiculed, Mihail, great vornic (minister of interior), was called 'a *parvenu* nobody' and was nothing more 'comical than to observe his incompetence', although he considered himself 'a universal man'. Costache, great spatar (commander in chief of the local militia), 'lacking in talent and character, is always pleased with himself, full of vanity and prejudices, considers himself an accomplished warrior'. In his turn, the Prince was criticised for his arrogance, 'often sitting quietly on his throne, in the middle of his Court, without saying a word', 'incapable to admit his mistakes', correlated with his lack of education, 'although he considers himself an educated man', and with his weakness for flattery, 'he loves to be admired […] completely lacking in integrity and spirit of justice' (*Du prince de Valachie…*, 1838).

If, in the case of his brothers, the pamphlet questioned their capacity to exert their high offices, for Alexandru Ghica the text questions his right to occupy the throne. In this regard, the circumstances in which he obtained the support of Kiselev for this position are depicted. Kiselev preference for him is explained, according to the pamphlet, by the fact that he knew Ghica's character and by the influence of Catinca Ghica, the beautiful and spiritual wife of his brother Mihail, with whom the Russian official was *en liaison* during the time he administered the Principalities.

Thus, the idea that Alexandru Ghica was an illegitimate Prince, 'appointed through a Firman' and not elected by an Extraordinary General Assembly, as the Organic Regulation stated, who cannot be recognised and a 'legal and national Prince', as the *Actul de unire și independență* mentioned is expressed in an ironical key, through a simple, accessible language, suggesting that he own his position to an adultery. The Prince was also accused of 'wining on his side' the 'incorruptible consul of Russia, Piotr Rückman' by meddling in the 'foul intrigues of his marriage, which cost him many thousands of ducats'(*Du prince de Valachie …*, 1838). Again, the anonymous author of the text uses real, known information for which he offers an explanation meant to discredit the Prince. In this case, Rückman who was well passed the years of youth fell in love with the young and beautiful wife of a local boyar, and the Prince allegedly intervened with all his power and influence in her divorce process and ensured a quick new marriage.

Real or only presumed, the implication of Alexandru Ghica in a marriage that astounded and produced unrest in the society could only damage his public image. This matrimonial alliance accomplished with the Prince's support was seen by contemporaries as the main reason for which Piotr Rückman, 'untamed lion' until then, 'became a lamb' towards Ghica[4], and would generate some inconveniences for the Russian official culminating with his relocation from the post in Bucharest, in 1839 (Cernovodeanu 1997: 249).

Also, the text approaches the situation of the deputies that opposed to the adoption of the additional article in the agitated sessions from July 1837, which Alexandru Ghica presented as 'revolutionaries', assuming the merit of maintaining order in Wallachia, in the eyes of the Emperor (*Du prince de Valachie …*, 1838). Al these arguments lead to the conclusion that the text was written by someone close to the National Party with the purpose of spreading a set of ideas, exposed in an accessible yet vehement language that condemned the Prince.

Finally, the contesting attitude manifested in the political confrontation with the Prince of a group of men who proposed an alternative discourse had as main goal the access to the state's institutions. In this regard, Ion Câmpineanu affirmed on many occasions his intention to leave behind the conflict with the Prince if he would listen to the advice of those from the National Party and would allow him to 'lead the country's administration' (Colquhoun, 19 December 1838, *Letter to Palmerston*: 174). If they would have reached this understanding, Alexandru Ghica would have had the support of the 'weight and influence' of the National Party, working together to prepare the means necessary of his liberation from his state

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[4]   The effect of Câmpineanu's 'words' was observed by Ion Ghica, his nephew and collaborator, who, towards the end of 19th century, noted that many young people who lived and 'idleness and dissolution, and I could cite illustrious names today, left the parties and the novels and ran under the banner of Câmpineanu, started to study seriously and brought important services to the country' (Ghica, 1881, 167).

of 'slavery' towards Russia (Colquhoun, 19 December 1838, *Letter to Palmerston*: 174). The proposition of a political man who saw 'the fall of the system established by Russia, who felt the 'chain with which it was bound to the Principalities' and was prepared to do whatever was in his power to destroy this chain met the Prince's weakness of character.

Thus, the image of Alexandru Ghica was antithetic to that of Câmpineanu, defined by courage, determination, firmness, valour and willingness to sacrifice with which he tried to accomplish the assumed national objectives. In other words, the members of the National Party claimed to be 'men who renounced honours for militating only for independence and liberty' to form, through their energy, the public opinion (Bodea 1982: 136). For Câmpineanu and his group to form the public opinion meant also the cultivation of new forms of communicating with society – press, literature, saloons, theatre, cultural associations, through which they gain prestige and, finally, legitimacy.

## Conclusions

The members of the National Party used ideological elements to legitimize the right to a free political and social life, going beyond the stage where the origin of the language and the people, the existence of the ancestors' borders and the treasure of their glorious facts were the main arguments. This 'community of ideas' of a group that tried, in the legal framework of the Assembly, to fulfil 'its holy duties', was the base of the development of an ideological identity for the National Party, later transposed in a political program through which Ion Câmpineanu was mandated, in 1839, to present the situation of the country to the governments of Paris and London.

Despite the coexistence of old and new political practices, subjected to a thorough analysis that does not compare it with the national project from 1848, the program of the National Party led by Ion Câmpineanu represents a moment of rupture, an important stage in the edification of the modern Romanian political culture, especially through its attempt to rearticulate the political system according to a set of principles, taking into consideration the power relations in society. Certain traditional political practices (invoking the capitulations, defending the rights of the boyars, spreading rumours, secret meetings, oaths on the Bible in the presence of a high-priest) were combined, in this case, with elements of modernity (publicly protesting against the violation of the country's rights, invoking the concept of nation in a political sense and the use of ideological arguments, drawing the attention on the need to respect the international law). By the means through which they carried out their activity and the principles invoked, the members of

the national party showed their capacity to act in the sense of modern politics, but, on another hand, they used elements of the political vocabulary specific to the boyar memoirs (without modern discursive and ideological elements).

However, unlike the political groups specific to early modern period, the National Party was formed around a patrimony of ideas, which were the base of a program with national objectives, that legitimated their attempt to obtain power. This involved the adoption of a new body of laws, 'public and civil', as an alternative to the Organic Regulation instituted by Russia, through which they tried to rearticulate the political system in effect. The attempt to weaken the legitimacy of those who controlled power – the Prince and the Russian consul – through 'inherited' or modern means, represented key elements in the public discourse of the National Party, along with the ideas and principles that substantiated their political project.

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