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ABSTRACTS

TRADE ROUTES AND STATE-BUILDING. THE EARLY COMMERCIAL POLICY OF MEDIEVAL WALLACHIA AND MOLDAVIA

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During the second half of the fourteenth century, Central Europe and the Baltic Sea were connected with the Black Sea, “the crossroads of international commerce,” by two great trade routes, one passing through Hungary, Transylvania and Wallachia and reaching the Danube and the Black Sea ports, and the other stretching from Silesia and the Baltic ports towards the Black Sea, through Moldavia. Given their paramount importance, the sections of these routes controlled by the two Romanian polities became the source of a permanent rivalry between the regional powers and particularly between Hungary and Poland.

After several failed attempts, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to impose its direct control on the final section of the first route, Hungary was forced to come to terms with Wallachia, which had no intention of giving up a part of its territory, nor the great revenues resulting from the taxation of the Black Sea trade. The compromise resulting from this conflict of commercial interests created an unequal rapport between the merchants of Brașov, the Hungarian city situated at the Wallachian border, and their Wallachian counterparts: while the first were able to move freely towards the Danube and Black Sea ports, as well as in the overseas territories and within Wallachia, given the extremely favourable customs regime, the Wallachian merchants were not allowed to travel beyond Brașov and Burzenland, because of the staple right granted to the city by the kings of Hungary. A similar rapport was established between Moldavia and the city of Lviv, Poland’s commercial outpost to the Black Sea, although the Moldavian customs regime was far more advantageous than the one in Wallachia. This unequal rapport between the two Romanian polities and the Kingdoms of Hungary and Poland was the commercial expression of the political hegemony of the two Catholic powers and lasted until the second half of the fifteenth century, when their influence declined; it was at this moment that Wallachia and – soon afterwards – Moldavia tried to assume an intermediary trade function between the Black Sea and Central Europe. However, the victories of Sultan Suleyman II and the ensuing Ottoman hegemony over the region between the Carpathians and the Danube put an end to this new tendency of the Romanian polities’ trade policy, which had to give way to the interests of Turkish trade.

As a conclusion, the author reopens the debate on the rapport between the foundation of the Romanian states and the disappearance of the international trade

routes that crossed their territory, presenting the merits and limitations of the original thesis, advanced by Nicolae Iorga 50 years earlier.

“DURING THE LIFETIME OF MY LORDSHIP ...”: AN OLD CHANCERY FORMULA FROM WALLACHIA IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

LIVIU MARIUS ILIE

The documents issued by the Wallachian chancery can offer abundant information about the way that the medieval voivodes imagined and exercised their power. An interesting chancery formula that can be found in Wallachian charters is introduced by the syntagm “do jivota ...,” an expression that can refer to the voivode’s lifetime or to the lifetime of his relatives (sons or, more rarely, brothers). Charters containing this formula were granted both to ecclesiastical and to lay persons, the monasteries being very often found among the beneficiaries of the voivodes’ donation deeds. This formula appeared during the reign of Mircea the Old and evolved during the fifteenth century, until Radu the Great. At the end of the fifteenth century, the charters referred not only to the lifetime of the voivode or his relatives, but also to their reign; this new transformation took place during the reigns of Vlad the Monk and Radu the Great. This diplomatic expression was also important for foretelling the succession to the throne. By mentioning in his charters that the donations were also granted during the lifetime of his sons or brothers, the voivode was transmitting the idea that one of these relatives – some of them already designated by the title of voivode – could be his successor to the throne.

“DE DRAGULE CRUDELITATE”: VLAD III THE IMPALER’S LAST RULE OVER THE LANDS OF GREATER WALLACHIA

ALEXANDRU SIMON

The cruelties of Vlad the Impaler (Dracula), former ruler of Wallachia, were already famous in the 1470s. He resumed his old habits in 1475–1476, despite years of detention. Gabriel Rangoni, bishop of Eger, wrote in detail about them to Pope Sixtus IV in early 1476. Rangoni clearly viewed Vlad as unfit to rule again over Wallachia, notwithstanding the support received by Vlad from the bishop’s suzerain, King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (who had renewed his matrimonial alliance with Vlad, married to Matthias’ maternal cousin, Jusstina Pongrácz). Furthermore, an important faction of the Wallachian boyars, the Transylvanian Saxons, as well as Stephen III the Great of Moldavia were deeply hostile towards Vlad. After the successful Hungarian and Moldavian anti-Ottoman campaigns in late autumn 1476, these clashes of interest ultimately led to a “joint rule” of Wallachia: Basarab IV, as lord, and Vlad III, as <royal> captain.

An additional effect of these local and regional tensions was the deepening of the internal divisions of Wallachia (Țara Românească), usually designated as Greater

Wallachia, as opposed to Lesser Wallachia (Moldavia). Since 1476, Greater Wallachia was used to designate part of the territory east of the river Olt (commonly named “terra Transalpina” or “regnum Transalpinum” by the Hungarian administration), while Lesser Wallachia was employed for the lands west of the river Olt (Oltenia). These divisions had a major impact on future pro- and anti-Ottoman actions in the Lower Danube area and on Wallachian princely rules. They might also help explain why, even though both Matthias Corvinus, the “suzerain of the crusade,” and Stephen III, the athlete of the Christian faith, were in dire need of a major anti-Ottoman success, they failed to mention Mehmed II’s return to Wallachia in October 1476, exactly at the time of the victories that led to Vlad III’s short-lived return to power.

REALISM AND COMPROMISE VS. IDEALISM AND INTRANSIGENCE: GHEORGHE I. BRĂȚIANU ON DIPLOMACY AND HISTORY

PAUL E. MICHELSON

The present paper is a study of the twentieth century Romanian historian Gheorghe I. Brătianu’s worldview on realism versus idealism in diplomacy and history, a dichotomy which became an active motif throughout his life and work. The chronological analysis begins with his memoirs of World War I, *File rupte din cartea războiului*, and traces these themes in his writings between 1916 and 1943.

Trying to find the unifying thread of Romanian foreign policy, Brătianu examined the history of Romania through the lens of the opposition between compromise/ opportunism and intransigence, two stances that, according to him, constituted constants in Romanian diplomacy, and provided an element of continuity in its foreign policy. Brătianu’s lines of thought transitioned from strongly contrasting the two in the beginning, with an inclination towards prudence/realism, to favoring, especially after 1936, a “synthesis” of pragmatism and idealism, blended into what could be called a “new realism.” This “new realism” acknowledged that Romania’s complex historical and geopolitical situation called for a conciliatory attitude where necessary, but also required intransigence, especially in fundamental issues governing “the future of the nation,” despite potential negative short run consequences.

His growing belief that Romania’s survival and rise to an independent and sovereign state had required intransigence on critical issues also shaped the historian’s stance in life. In the turmoil of WWII, Brătianu, a WWI veteran, spoke against the acceptance of the Vienna Diktat, preferring “the enmity of the Reich to the contempt of the Reich,” although fully acknowledging that this would bring certain defeat. On the heels of the dismemberment of Greater Romania, the abdication of Carol II, and the establishment of the National Legionary State dictatorship, Brătianu became the continuer of Nicolae Iorga’s militant historian tradition, taking upon himself to promote national consciousness and defend an embattled Romania. His reward, unfortunately, was the Romanian Gulag and death.

THE INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH OF THE ACADEMY OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF ROMANIA, 1952–1965: BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS AND IDEOLOGICAL PROPAGANDA

CRISTIAN VASILE

In 1948, after the communist takeover, Romanian economic research was included in the vast domain of the social sciences. The official economic research goals required immediately a specialized institute within the newly established Soviet type academy (the Academy of the People’s Republic of Romania). However, the establishing of the Institute for Economic Research took place only in 1952 mostly due to the lack of human resources. Between 1948 and 1952 the political power, that is the Politburo of the communist party (Romanian Workers’ Party – RWP), did not identify the politically adequate scientific direction for this type of institute – Belu Zilber and Barbu Zaharescu, some of the most influential economists within the party, lost the confidence of the top communist leadership.

Using several categories of historical sources (archival documents, oral history interviews, memoirs, etc.) the aim of this study is to outline the history of the Institute for Economic Research (Institutul de Cercetări Economice – ICE) of the Romanian Academy during the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej period, highlighting the beginnings of the institute, the thematic directions, the composition of the research teams, and the intellectual profile of its main academic journal, “Probleme economice” (Economic Affairs).

In general, ICE was an extremely politicized research institute that did not allow many conceptual innovations. However, some young researchers excelled, despite the ideological constraints imposed by the political regime. The academic trajectories of these young researchers were extremely different. For example, Egon Balas ended his career after he was fired in the spring of 1959, being a victim of an ideological purge ordered by the Politburo. On the other hand, his colleague N.N. Constantinescu was promoted and co-opted by the party organs within the ideological team which received the task to clarify the economic implications of the April 1964 Declaration of the RWP.