

ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA'S ECONOMIC REFORMS REFLECTED IN THE ROMANIAN PRESS FROM TRANSYLVANIA: *TELEGRAFUL ROMÂN* AND *GAZETA TRANSILVANIEI* (1859-1866)*

Abstract: The Romanian press, from Transylvania in the period of Cuza's rule in the Romanian Principalities, managed to render aspects regarding the European context of the election and of the unification of Romanian Principates, the internal evolution of the new state, as well as the Transylvanians opinion.

I intend, through this study, to underline strictly the economical problems: economical projects, economical difficulties, reforms and their consequences. Their purpose was the unification of Moldavia with Tara Romaneasca, the organization of the new state and its modernization. Taking over and analyzing the throne's messages, fragments from Walachian and foreign press or law texts, the two main Transylvanian newspapers – *Telegraful Roman* and *Gazeta Transilvaniei* – formed a coherent image for all the levels of the society, behaving like an information source and an opinion shaper very important for the second half of the 19th century.

Keywords: Alexandru Ioan Cuza's reign, Transylvanian press, economic reforms, European context, the Transylvanians' attitude towards Cuza's reforms.

Motto:

*"We have everything to create: we have to start our public credit, open roads, make bridges, adorn and cure the towns, expand the harbours, let the trade flourish, encourage the industry, strengthen the army, dig canals, stretch iron road lines across the surface of our land in order to facilitate communication and, in one word, develop all the public establishments."*¹

In this study I want to capture the attitude of the press in Transylvania - more precisely of two Romanian newspapers - *Telegraful Român* and *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (1859-1866) - towards the economic reforms undertaken by A. I. Cuza in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The events in Europe and in the Romanian Principalities were of particular interest for the Romanian press in Transylvania, because the latter supported and popularised the cause of the election of a common ruler in the Romanian Principalities, thus providing valuable moral support to the unionist movement and the struggle for their progress and prosperity. Thus, the publications detailed the circumstances in which A. I. Cuza was elected in the Romanian principalities after the unionists had prevailed

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¹ The quotation is part of the Throne Message uttered by the ruler A. I. Cuza on 6 December 1859, published in *Principatele Unite. Monitorul Oficial al Ţerei Româneşti*, no. 148, from 8 December 1859, pp. 589-592; Grigore Chiriţă, "Din istoria legăturilor economice între Principatele Unite şi Transilvania între anii domniei lui A. I. Cuza," in *Studii şi materiale de istorie modernă*, no. 4, Bucharest, 1973, p. 10.

and after Vasile Alecsandri, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Costache Negri - also candidates to the reign - had voted in favour of A. I. Cuza.²

In the period we are focusing on, 12 periodicals were published in Transylvania, including 3 that were Romanian, 4 Hungarian and 5 German. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the most consecrated Romanian periodicals in Transylvania were *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, which appeared in Braşov, with the supplement *Foaie pentru minte, inimă şi literatură*, and *Telegraful Român*, published in Sibiu.

Gazeta Transilvaniei was a governmental periodical, having the Austrian coat of arms, representing the two-headed eagle, imprinted on its first page. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* published the official correspondence issued by the Austrian government. Despite the constraints imposed by the Austrian authorities on this periodical, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* advocated the Union of the Romanian Principalities, giving detailed information from the Conferences and Congresses organised by the Great European Powers for settling the Romanian matter. Some articles in this periodical were sent directly by the newspaper correspondents it had in Bucharest and Iaşi. Through their lenses, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* managed to capture in its columns the most diverse aspects concerning the reign of A. I. Cuza (1859-1866) and shaped the perception of the Romanians in Transylvania about it.³ This periodical appeared in Braşov on a weekly basis (12 March 1838 - 30 December 1842; 2 July 1858 - 30 December 1860; 13 October 1818 - 1 January 1945), as a biweekly (4 January 1843 - 17 March 1849; 1 December 1849 - July 1858; 7 January 1861 - 30 December 1879), three times a week (1 January 1880 - 1 April 1884), on a daily basis (4 April 1884 - 26 September 1917, 1938-1945; 1989). The most outstanding editors of this Transylvanian periodical were: George Bariţiu (1838-1849); Iacob Mureşianu (1850-1877); Aureliu Mureşianu (1878-1910); Gregoriu Maior (1890-1900); Traian H. Pop (1901-1907); Victor Branişte (1907-1937); Ion Brotea (1938-1939; Gavril Pop (1940-1941); Ioan Colan and Lucian Valea (1941-1945).⁴

Supplements were published too: *Foişoare pentru răspândirea cunoştinţelor folositoare şi a iubirii de carte*; *Foaie pentru minte, inimă şi literatură* (1838-1865). The periodicals were suspended by the Austrian authorities because of a series of articles signed by Bariţiu about the Revolution of 1848 and Avram Iancu's role in the revolution, and in February 1850 the management was taken over by Iacob Mureşan.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, *Telegraful Român* was a periodical publication publishing religious, social, political and cultural information, which appeared in Sibiu, as a biweekly⁵ (3 January 1853 - 30 December 1857; 4 January 1862 - 30 December 1872), as a weekly (2 January 1858 - 30 December 1861) and later as a bimonthly (4 January 1873 - 15 December 1989). Alongside *Telegraful Român*, the supplement *Foişoara Telegrafului Român* was published, a periodical printed in Cyrillic

² *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, no. 4, from 29 January, 1859, p. 15.

³ Aurelia Bunea, "Ecoul Unirii Ţării Româneşti şi Moldova în presa din Transilvania," in *Studia U.B.B., seria "Historia,"* no. IV, 1959, pp. 95-99.

⁴ Ion Hangiu, *Dicţionarul presei literare româneşti (1790-2000)*, Bucharest, Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2004, p. 394.

⁵ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVI, no. 120, from 28 December, 1863, p. 471.

in the years 1853-1859 and with Latin characters after 1860, with spelling uninfluenced by etymologisms.⁶ Launched at the initiative of Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, as the official publication of the Orthodox Metropolitan See of Transylvania, *Telegraful Român* was, after *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, the most ancient Transylvanian publication, its first issue being published on 1 January 1853.⁷

In the second half of the nineteenth century, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* and *Telegraful Român* poignantly rendered events from both Transylvania and the Romanian Principalities. Through their pages, both periodicals boldly supported the Romanians' unionist projects. In this respect, we may mention that *Gazeta Transilvaniei* was present in the great turmoil of the struggle for the Union of the Romanian Principalities - the first step in the political unification of the Romanian state.⁸ The reproduction of rich material with information and comments from the Romanian Principalities and from abroad on the issue of the Unification of the Romanian Principalities was a reflection of the Transylvanian Romanians' vivid interest in the unity of the Moldovans and the Wallachians. The information from the periodicals in the Romanian Principalities was concisely but favourably commented on in *Gazeta Transilvaniei*. The election of A. I. Cuza as ruler of Moldova, as well as its twofold election in Wallachia drew the attention of the Romanian press. Thus, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* became the Transylvanian publication that was most favourable to the Union, being also the most informed periodical in Transylvania about the events across the Carpathians.⁹

Gazeta Transilvaniei was seconded by *Telegraful Român* in describing the events from 5/ 24 January 1859 in Bucharest, when the Elective Assembly adopted the only solution consistent with the interests of the Romanian nation, namely: the twofold election of A. I. Cuza as ruler of the Romanian Principalities.¹⁰ This act was seen by Austria as a violation of the Paris Convention from 1858. Austria and Turkey led the Great Powers to convene International Conferences with a view to debating A. I. Cuza's double election. Taking over information from the foreign press of those times, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* concluded that the events from the Romanian Principalities had to be related to the Romanians interests, both internally and externally, for maintaining peace in the East.¹¹

A. I. Cuza's double election in the Romanian Principalities was the starting point of social, economic, political and cultural reforms. These reforms were aimed at the unification and standardisation of Moldova and Wallachia, the organisation of the new state, its modernisation and the removal of the old traditional systems. The enforcement of these reforms was impeded by the incompleteness of the Union in early 1859 and by the subsequent restrictive provisions of electoral stipulations adopted by

⁶ Ion Hangiu, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

⁷ Constantin Diaconovich, *Enciclopedia Română*, Tome III, Sibiu, Editura și Tipografia lui W. Krafft, 1908, p. 1073.

⁸ Dan Berindei, "Gazeta Transilvaniei și Unirea Principatelor," in *130 de ani de la apariția Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Brașov, 1969, pp. 67-68.

⁹ Anton Mesrobeanu, "Ecoul Unirii Țărilor Române în presa transilvăneană," in *Studii și Cercetări Științifice-Istorie*, no. 1-2, Iași, 1959, p. 180.

¹⁰ *Telegraful Român*, year VII, no. 7, from 12 February, 1859, p. 26.

¹¹ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXI, no. 15, 9 April, 1859, pp. 59-60.

the Paris Convention of 1858, which limited the political power of the two Romanian Principalities. To these was added an economic factor, namely the consequences of the economic crisis of 1857-1858 and the commercial crisis.¹² *Telegraful Român* was not concerned to debate the economic situation of the Romanian Principalities at the beginning of A. I. Cuza's reign. By contrast, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* reported on the economic situation of the Romanian Principalities through the Foreign Chronicle column, which commented that the country had been facing a budget deficit since as early as 1856, amounting to 5,343,256 lei, which had been accrued during the reign of Barbu Știrbei. This was aggravated during the reign of Al. D. Ghica, reaching the amount of 6,195,827 lei¹³ in November 1858, according to the designated committee. The budget deficits from the years 1857-1858 were also felt in the economy of the Romanian Principalities in 1859, because the *trading houses*¹⁴ were constantly on the brink of insolvency.

Taking over information from the journal *Naționalul*, a moderate reformist newspaper, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* reproduced the outline the former had proposed towards solving the commercial crisis. It suggested that the Minister of Finance - D. Barbu Catargiu¹⁵ - should propose to the Chamber a project for granting financial support to the traders after the loan of 8 million lei was voted by the Chamber. The journal further suggested that the finance minister should request the amount of 200 thousand ducats from the government; 70,000 ducats of these should be taken from the public revenues and the rest up to 200,000 ducats should be borrowed. The commission accredited for the project should be composed of 5 merchant members and in order to obtain the loan, the money should be returned to the state with interest at 8 to 10% for covering the expenses. The loan guarantees should be issued policies and mortgages or the borrowers' mortgage-secured debts.¹⁶ The journal *Naționalul* wanted the aforementioned draft to become a bill of law, to be approved by the House and implicitly by A. I. Cuza. The project was a proof that the Romanian society was interested in the smooth running of the Romanian Principalities' economy, proposing various redressing projects, especially since it was necessary to recover from the economic crisis of the previous years.

The above was completed by the Message of the ruler, A. I. Cuza, from 6 December 1859, which I chose as the *motto* of this study. This outlined a vast program of reforms and measures aimed at all the fields of activity. This program that was so complex and ambitious required huge funds, and they could be procured only by attracting foreign capital through the adoption of free trade policies. All this was achieved only to a small extent, leading instead to the creation of a new political-economic framework, able to stimulate the development of all the sectors of economic life.¹⁷ According to

¹² Dan Berindei, *Constituirea României moderne*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 2009, p. 276.

¹³ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXI, no. 2, from 15 January, 1859, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Idem*, year XXI, no. 13, from 26 March, 1859, p. 50.

¹⁵ *Idem*, year XXI, no. 6, from 5 February, 1859, p. 23.

¹⁶ *Idem*, year XXI, no. 12, from 19 March, 1859, p. 47.

¹⁷ Gheorghe Zane, "Politica economică a Principatelor în epoca Unirii și capitalul străin," in *Studii*, no. 1, year XII, 1959, pp. 223-258.

Telegraful Român, the goal of the message was to attract real capital in the Romanian Principalities and use it according to the needs of the domestic economy, while respecting the provisions of the Paris Convention from 1858. This periodical also noted that A. I. Cuza wanted to heal *the pathetic and painful past of the Romanian Principalities*¹⁸ by replacing the old feudal system with a new one, and the Chamber promised the ruler that it would debate, approve and implement laws and decrees for reorganising the country. Completing those stated in *Telegraful Român*, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* emphasised that through the message of the throne from 6 December 1859, A. I. Cuza envisaged the good of the country, requesting that the Chamber should join forces for developing and renewing all the economic and social sectors.

Thus, to revive the trade, the Romanian press in Transylvania, and especially *Gazeta Transilvaniei* took over information from *Naționalul*, claiming that for the economic recovery of the Romanian Principalities, a series of measures had to be taken, such as commercial laws on the dowry of a merchant, on policies, the bankruptcy, and that they should be enforced consistently in the Romanian Principalities. Although the boyars did not approve of the commercial reform, they had to be assimilated to the merchants who owned value goods justified, for instance, by holding one or more policies. Analysing the economic realities, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* commented that only by establishing a precise regulation and concrete commercial laws would the economic rehabilitation of the country be possible. It went on to say, taking over information from *Wiener Zeitung*, that a company in Paris financially supported the merchants from Iași, crediting the Romanian Principalities with the sum of 10 million francs.¹⁹ However, citing the same newspaper, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* stated that in 1859, for some Romanians, the rule was dead, unensured and unrecognised, distrust being extended, like a disease, in all the areas of the state, the trade declining, the credit being cancelled and the peasants' problem remaining unresolved.²⁰ These realities were the result of the restrictive provisions of the electoral stipulations reached by the Paris Convention from 1858, which limited political power both internally and externally, and, after all, the organisation of the new state. On the other hand, the Austrian press was really interested in rendering the unstable situation in the Romanian Principalities, to show Europe that they were not sufficiently prepared for achieving unity and independence. Besides Austria's hostile attitude towards the Romanians in the Principalities, there was social unrest, precarious economic conditions, all of these being coupled with the intertwined repercussions of the economic crisis from the years 1857-1858 and the commercial crisis.

For the country's financial recovery, projects had to be designed for capitalising on the foreign currency that represented another economic problem of the Romanian Principalities. In this regard, the Government proposed assessment programs of the state's general assets in order to redefine the national economy. Thus, at the beginning of 1860, the *law of patents* was decreed, whereby all the Romanians were forced to pay increased taxes and duties. This law was enacted at a financially unstable time, being

¹⁸ *Telegraful Român*, year VIII, no. 11, from 17 March, 1860, p. 43.

¹⁹ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXI, no. 11, from 12 March, 1859, p. 44.

²⁰ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXI, no. 43, from 17 September 1859, pp. 181-182.

complemented by a series of urban unrest and agitation,²¹ which made it impossible to enforce it.

However, *Telegraful Român* wrote that A. I. Cuza had received the *Draft Constitution* from the Central Committee, in which it was mentioned that the Romanian Principalities needed the reorganisation of finance, justice, culture, the military and the administration.²² In turn, the Ministries tackled projects for the Chambers, which targeted the introduction of road customs, of stamp duty, the request of a state loan from abroad and the improvement of transport routes. In this respect, the Romanian Principalities received a provisional customs law, which was published in the Official Gazette of the United Romanian Principalities,²³ but A. I. Cuza rejected it by a princely decree from the late 1859 and the early 1860. Even if the provisional customs law was rejected, customs offices were established in Bucharest and Iași to collect customs revenue and they were implicitly intended to preserve links between the General Directorate and the merchants.

According to *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, during that period, projects were proposed for the rehabilitation of the railways, roads and telegraph lines, and general projects for the economic development of the country were advanced.²⁴ Under the princely decree of 9/21 July 1860, a bill proposed by the Chambers was sanctioned, providing that the state revenues should include: customs revenues, the returns from the mines, the exports and imports of cereals, all kinds of cattle, the taxes on sheep- and cattle-breeding levied from the drovers. This law was not well regarded in the European political circles, a fact that was reported by the foreign press, which suggested, through various articles, subsequently taken over by the Transylvanian press, that the Romanian Principalities should build proper warehouses for the storage of clearance.²⁵

At the end of 1860, A. I. Cuza, in a message before the legislative Chamber, required the cooperation and mutual understanding between party members for drafting bills and laws that would be favourable to the farmers and landowners. He also stated that "if a nation quietly develops its powers, it is respected more abroad."²⁶ Alongside *Telegraful Român*, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* detailed in different issues the tensions that existed between the political groups and concluded that this state of things hindered the enforcement of the reforms. In issue 58 of 10 December 1860, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* reproduced the last throne speech that A. I. Cuza gave after his return from Constantinople, in which he had specified the importance of enforcing the electoral law in the Romanian Principalities. The newspaper reproduced that speech in full, without commenting on it too much; however, it was noted that the Romanian Principalities had to present Europe with a the image of a state that had completed the period of transition.

The beginning of 1861 fared no better because, as *Gazeta Transilvaniei* showed, taking over information from the journal *Naționalul*, the greatest desires of the

²¹ Constantin Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Voda*, Bucharest, Editura Curtea Veche, 2000, p. 88.

²² *Telegraful Român*, year VII, no. 52, from 24 December 1859, p. 207.

²³ *Monitorul Oficial al Principatelor-Române-Unite*, no. 2, from 4 January 1860, p. 5

²⁴ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXIII, no. 9, from 1 March 1860, p. 36.

²⁵ *Idem*, year XXIII, no. 32, from 3 August 1860, p. 129.

²⁶ *Idem*, year XXIII, no. 58, from 10 December 1860, p. 241.

Romanian Principalities were to have a foreign prince for life, and the realisation and recognition of the Union by the Great Powers of Europe. These were possible if the two Chambers from Bucharest and Iași debated and voted the *rural law*.²⁷ To achieve and have the Union recognised, it was necessary to enforce the *rural law* in the Romanian Principalities, especially since it had also been mentioned in the revolutionary programs from 1848. Its application represented an important step towards independence, but the Chamber and the Government did not understand the significance of this national act and therefore delayed the enforcement of the reforms in the Principalities.

Throughout 1861, A. I. Cuza continued to advocate the *electoral law* proposed at the end of 1860.²⁸ Citing foreign media reports, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* noticed that “chaos prevailed in Moldova because the Romanians did not want to advance on the constitutional path shaped by the seven major European powers and for three years they had taken no steps for a new constitutional life. The majority of the legislature and the Chamber was composed of the privileged from the past who did not wish to broaden the electoral law, without which national happiness could not be achieved. These legislative state powers also counterbalance the third power to slow down the achievement of autonomy for the Romanian Principalities, and A. I. Cuza does not want to debate this progressive legislation in international conferences.”²⁹

However, in 1861 the tax reform was materialised through the introduction of personal tax and the contribution for the roads, generalised on all the men of age under the law of the patents. These and other measures taken at the end of 1861, with a view to ensuring the full administrative and political unification, were proof that the United Romanian Principalities needed a modern tax system whereby any contribution should serve the public. It was necessary that the Revenue Office should impose the direct contribution of all the inhabitants according to their income; it was also necessary that every asset the state took from and donated to the taxpayers should be done in compliance with the law.³⁰ In the Romanian Principalities, a modern tax system was needed to represent the interests of both the state and the Romanian citizens. The implementation of the tax reform brought the necessary money to the state budget for initiating other reforms and encouraging economic development. However, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* concluded in its columns that the year 1861 had brought about no political, national, cultural and socio-economic rights for the Romanians in the Romanian Principalities.

The Romanian historiography and the Transylvanian press from the second half of the nineteenth century attested that the beginning of 1863 was characterised by the reorganisation of the Romanian Principalities both internally and externally. Thus, in January 1862, Vasile Alecsandri achieved the recognition of the economic independence of the Romanian Principalities and, implicitly, the collapse of the economic Turkish suzerainty thereof,³¹ even though at the end of 1862, the economic situation of the

²⁷ *Idem*, year XXIV, no. 29, from 8 April 1861, p. 125.

²⁸ *Idem*, year XXIV, no. 93, from 23 November, 1861, p. 394.

²⁹ *Idem*, year XXIV, no. 99, from 15 December, 1861, p. 413.

³⁰ Gheorghe Zanc, *Obiectivele economice ale revoluției de la 1848 în Țările Române. Progresul economic în România*, Bucharest, Editura Polirom, 1977, p. 47.

³¹ Constantin Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, Bucharest, Editura Curtea Veche, 2000, p. 97.

Romanian Principalities was not much better than that of the previous years. In this sense, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* noted the interest of the foreign press, which highlighted in its columns the fact that the estates of the monasteries were obliged to support the treasury of the country because the country was ruled by parvenus who did not want the progress and welfare of the Romanian Countries.³² There were no funding sources because the material goods of the Romanian Principalities had been amortised. The economic realities clearly revealed that economic independence was directly linked to financial independence.

At the end of 1863, Cuza demanded once again that the Legislative Assembly should present projects and bill for the "Organisation and strengthening of Romania," encompassing the rural law, the election law, the law on the union of the Romanian Church, the law guaranteeing civil liberties, communal and municipal law, the law on free and compulsory basic public education, the law for the unification of the Civil, Criminal and Commercial Code of Romania.³³ *Telegraful Român* concluded that from the beginning of his reign, A. I. Cuza had presented to the country and the assemblies in Iași and Bucharest projects for improving and reorganising the Romanian Principalities. They were meant to balance the country morally and materially, but the projects were postponed from one session to another without any explanation and solution. The fact is that without the support of the Chamber and the government, A. I. Cuza was unable to enact and pass laws for the reorganisation of the Romanian Principalities at the end of 1863.

The Transylvanian Press and the Romanian historiography attested that the period from 24 January 1862 until 2 May 1864 represented the years of constitutional battle in the reign of the A. I. Cuza. Through constitutional means, he attempted to implement the Romanians' goals expressed in the 1848 Revolution, by proposing and passing political, economic and social reforms in the House and the government. The impossibility of enforcing them internally led to the *coup* of 2 May 1864.³⁴ A. I. Cuza concluded that by that act, the Chamber had been dissolved, and "the sympathy of Europe had been won because the latter also wanted the overthrow of the oligarchic constitution which had not allowed the Romanian nation to develop freely."³⁵ After the *coup*, the new cabinet was elected and thus were completed the projects for each ministry, the Ministry of Public Works merging with the Ministry of Interior under the name: the Ministry of Interior, Agriculture and Public Works.³⁶

Telegraful Român concluded that the *coup* of May 2 1864 was the result of the disputes and conflicts between the Government and the Chamber, or between the executive and the legislative powers of the country. The Chamber took no steps to settle them and, even more, it boycotted the voting on the bills proposed by the government for the reorganisation of the country. *Telegraful Român* stated that the dissolution of the Chamber meant saving the country, because after the Union it had become essentially

³² *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXV, no. 99, from 19 December, 1862, p. 396.

³³ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVI, no. 107, from 9 November, 1863, p. 419.

³⁴ Constantin Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, Bucharest, Editura Curtea Veche, 2000, p. 112.

³⁵ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 36, from 6 May, 1864, p. 144; *Concordia*, year IV, no. 39-239, 14/6 May, 1864, p. 155.

³⁶ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 60, from 7 August/20 July, 1864, p. 242.

worthless and illegal. This Chamber had been against the Romanians' freedom and equality before the law, as suggested by its attitude and actions. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* also noticed that A. I. Cuza had shown, both internally and externally, through several commendable actions, the possibility that the nation may progress, eclipsing the bad mouths of the Monstrous Coalition. As shown above, the two Romanian periodicals supported Cuza's cause and his *coup d'état*, considering the events of 2 May 1864 represented the salvation of the country.

During the years 1862-1864, lengthy debates were held for approving the *Rural Law*. This was eventually approved and adopted by the State Council in August 1864 and published in the *Official Gazette of the United Romanian Principalities*. This was taken over by *Gazeta Transilvaniei* and *Telegraful Român*, and the proclamation given by A. I. Cuza *To the Corvée Villagers* was immediately broadcast in all the Romanian villages.³⁷ This law abolished the feudal obligations of the peasants - who become free - to the boyars. What was abolished once and for all throughout the country were the tithes, cartage, *meremet* (corvée for repair works) days, cartloads of wood and other services rendered in kind or cash to the owners of estates.³⁸ Ownership monopolies were dismantled for the: butchery, bakery, beverages and other goods of the hearth. According to statistics, "the total number of corvée workers who were allotted land under the rural law of 1864 was 408,119; 59,721 became the owners of their own plots in the village, and by 1878 48,342 young spouses had been granted land ownership."³⁹ Although it had a limited character, the reform created favourable opportunities for the penetration of capitalist relations in agriculture, ending the regime and dependence of other feudal types of serfdom, the peasants becoming free citizens.

Initially, the space *Telegraful Român* allocated to debates on the *rural law* was on the last pages, later publishing them in a very limited space on the last page. The periodical debated the draft law taking information from *Convențiune* [Convention], noting that the Chamber had also not completed it by the end of it March 1864. In issue no. 33 of 26 April 1864, *Telegraful Român* stated that this law had not been passed by the deputies who wanted to overthrow the Ministry. In issue no. 66, of 23 August/ 4 September 1864 - taking over information from the journal *Buciumul*, signalled that the promulgation of the rural law had been printed in red in its pages. Further on, based on the article taken from *Buciumul*, *Telegraful Român* added that the Romanian ploughmen had been allotted land and taken out of serfdom. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* completed the information in *Telegraful Român*, concluding that the draft law had abolished any branch of serfdom in Romania and the peasants had received land ownership along with the corvée labourers. Practically, by enforcing the law, the State was bound to buy land for the allotment thereof to those who did not own any. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* commented that the enforcement of the law had bestowed happiness, life, and humanity upon the country and had strengthened the Romanian nation. Both periodicals regarded

³⁷ Diana-Mihaela Pociovălișteanu, *Liberalismul economic în România modernă (1859-1918)*, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, 2008, p. 35.

³⁸ *Telegraful Român*, year XII, no. 26, from 29 March, 1864, p. 104.

³⁹ Constantin Murgescu, *Mersul ideilor economice la români*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1989, p. 101.

this reform as a breakthrough for the prosperity of the Romanian Principalities, supporting the actions of the Romanian ruler.

Gazeta Transilvaniei also presented in its columns the opinion of the Hungarian press regarding the enforcement of the rural law. Regarding the *rural law*, the Hungarian press concluded that the Moldovan-Wallachian peasants did not want land ownership under the law. The peasants did not need land because for 116 years they had been free to go on any estate they wanted and had the money to buy them, which meant implicitly that they could leave the country for the city whenever they wanted. It also noted the intention of the Plutocrats' Chamber *ever since 1859 to draft rural laws copied after that usurping and spoliating Transylvanian urbarium of 1847*. Further on, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* reported that thousands of peasants had been able to own land without state aid, through their own forces, and those who had money, cattle and others could live like the *farmierii* [farmers]⁴⁰ in England. In the concluding passages taken from the Hungarian press, it was concluded that the condition of the Moldovan-Wallachian peasants had been worse than slavery in Russia. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* took a firm stand towards the attitude of the Hungarian press in specific columns, defined as *Political Reforms in the United Principalities*, noting that the Hungarian press presented the events from neighbouring countries according to Austria's international interests. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* noticed that the Paris Convention of 1858 on the autonomy of the Romanian Principalities included several contradictory formulations: "Although the United Principalities may, in the future, alter or modify the laws concerning their internal administration with the legal contribution of all the statutory powers and without any intervention, it is nonetheless well understood that this faculty may not be extended to the links that unite the Principalities with the Ottoman Empire, or the treaties between the Sublime Porte and the other Powers, which are and remain binding for these Principalities."⁴¹ This quote clearly defined the internal autonomy and also the union of the Principalities in the true sense of the word; another important note of the quoted fragment was rendered through the fact that the Principalities had been closely related to Turkey because they were not allowed to negotiate and conclude treaties of commerce, navigation, postal and telegraph service, to wage war and conclude peace without the consent of the Ottoman Empire. The Convention and its stipulations entitled the Romanians to fight for their recognition before Europe.

The agrarian reform of 1864 had a significant economic impact, because it allowed there to be progress, including as regards the development of internal and external communication channels. Their development was a key factor of overall economic growth. In the mid-nineteenth century, land roads did not meet the economic needs. Postal connections were slow, railways were non-existent and transport costs were high.⁴² *Telegraful Român* captured through his columns the need for the railways in Transylvania to develop trade with the Romanian Principalities. In 1865, taking over information from *Hermanstädter Zeitung*, *Telegraful Român* reported that railroads in

⁴⁰ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 40, from 1 June/20 May, 1864, p. 162.

⁴¹ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 62, from 13/1 August, 1864, p. 250.

⁴² Dan Berindei, Nichita Adăniloie, Nicolae Bocșan, Liviu Maior, Simion Retegan, *Istoria românilor*, Vol. VII, Tome I, *Constituirea României moderne (1821-1878)*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. 614.

Romania had been leased to some English company. This promised the insurance, financing and development of railways from Moldova to Giurgiu, Varna, and Constantinople.⁴³ These details reflected the fact that the Romanian periodical from Transylvania was interested in the bills the Chamber proposed for railway development in Romania. During the reign of A. I. Cuza, numerous efforts were made to build communication routes. For this purpose, in 1864, in its issue no. 29, from 11 April, under the heading *Cronica externă* [Foreign Chronicle], *Gazeta Transilvaniei* stated that the Romanian Principalities had debated the bill of law on leasing the iron road on this side of the Milcov. The lease was awarded to Messrs W. H. Ward, Th. Bartlett and the company that would build and operate the roads under the terms stipulated by contract. The leased railroad line began in Giurgiu and passed through Bucharest, Ploiești, Buzău, Brăila and ended at the Siret line. Another line was designated for the route Bucharest - Vâlciorova via Craiova and Slatina. The two Romanian periodicals in Transylvania captured the realities of communication routes in the Principalities, but also in Transylvania, implicitly highlighting the need of leasing them and the state's benefits from contracts with foreign contractors.

An important step for the economic recovery of the Romanian Principalities was taken by applying the *Law on the secularisation* of monastic estates. Along with its supplement *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* covered in its columns the bill on the secularisation of monastic assets. The enforcement of the law brought to the State patrimony assets such as arable land and forests, buildings, various companies, books, religious objects, sacred vessels and documents. In essence, the law increased the agricultural area destined to the agrarian class and thus reduced considerably the traditional material basis of the Romanian Orthodox Church. During Cuza's reign, some monasteries and convents were abolished completely or converted into parish churches,⁴⁴ thus establishing a 10% tax on the net revenues of monasteries, churches, certain seminaries and social care centres.⁴⁵ Taking over information from *Armonia* and other sources it did not mention, *Telegraful Român* stated that the secularisation of monastic assets had been the first direct step towards obtaining independence. However, from its point of view, in an article devoted to the law, it asked the question whether its enforcement included the compensation of the Greek monks, as the British and the French had done, since the enforcement of this law had been a heavy blow for the Orthodox Church, whose possessions had been confiscated. Still, it is interesting to see that the *Telegraful Român* covered, among others, the opinion of the Austrian liberal media on the secularisation of monasteries. Thus, the journal *Ost und West* said that the monasteries had been built in the fifteenth century for benefits and had in time become the asylums of poverty and squalor. Many of them were subordinated to Jerusalem and Constantinople, and their possessions were large estates, representing a fifth of the territory of the Romanian Principalities. Analysing the interests of the state and the economy, A. I. Cuza decreed and enforced the *Law on the secularisation* of monastic estates. From the point of view of the Austrian liberal press,

⁴³ *Telegraful Român*, year XIII, no. 9, from 31 January/ 12 February, 1865, p. 34.

⁴⁴ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 19, from 7 March, 1864, p. 74.

⁴⁵ *Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, no. 1, from 2 January, 1864, p. 2.

the law had been correctly applied, and it concluded that the major European powers had no right to interfere in the implementation of reforms in the Romanian Principalities. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* nonetheless wondered: *what will make our boyars do with the monasterial revenues?, what amount levied by this law was reimbursed to the state treasury and what amount into the pockets of individuals?*, adding that "great foulness" had been found in the dioceses. It further noted that neither the Porte, nor the major European powers were entitled to interfere in solving the internal affairs of Romania as they had done 20-30 years before. As for the millions earned through the enforcement of secularisation, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* concluded in an article dedicated to the law that its application would lead to a recovery of the country's national economy only if the monastic assets were not stolen, robbed or - worse - used by the nobles and the elected representatives of the country.

Although some laws were enforce, in its articles published in 1864, *Telegraful Român* presented the fact that Romania was still facing economic problems due to foreign currency. For example, Russian money was speculated as Russia bought good Austrian and French currency, and placed its own in Romania. In this context, the major European powers were wondering when Romania would beat its unique currency and when it would establish its budget. Financially, the critical state of Romanian finances could also be explained on account of the public treasury, compromised by a significant shortage because the state's expenses were higher than its revenues. The journal pointed out that the financial deficit had been caused by the poor administration of domestic assets, by the poor enforcement of laws and by the stagnation of trade; on the other hand, however, with a view to its economic development, Romania had entered into negotiations with the Austrian government as regards the conclusion of international postal agreements.⁴⁶

Still, completing *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, *Telegraful Român* concluded that "A nation secures its national economy, finances, its future and progress when it is reborn of itself, being helped by its mind and arms. Romania had better regulate its monetary course definitively by introducing perfect uniformity; theft and false oath should be punishable with bushel and imprisonment because public and private credit will thus increase, and the country will strengthen without foreign aid."⁴⁷ According to *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, the social, commercial and financial crisis in the Principalities had been caused by the country's precarious and insecure policy. Thus, the party struggle had compromised the public credit - the money no longer had circulation power - and determined the loss of gained capital; customs revenues had not been centralised; cash shortages in the country were caused by the different exchange rates in Moldova and Wallachia and, implicitly, by the resistance of the boyars, monks, Greeks, Jews and internal and external speculators to the standardising reforms. To overcome the crisis, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* suggested that the Principalities should avoid heavy foreign borrowing and foreign capital. However, at the end of 1864, A. I. Cuza presented in the

⁴⁶ *Telegraful Român*, year XIII, no. 40, from 23 May, 1864, p. 157.

⁴⁷ *Idem*, year XIII, no. 48, from 21 June 1864, p. 194; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 90, from 23/11 November, 1864, on page 362, presented and supported the importance of accounting rendered for that period by (*Condiții comerciale pentru reglarea comerțului din Principatele Române*).

throne speech the fact that the metric system had been adopted, that projects had been proposed for organising the Chamber of Commerce, and he talked about the importance of agriculture, adding that it was the sole strong source of a national economy. He went on to say that commercial and political needs required the building of a harbour by the Black Sea and he mentioned that as regards the building of railways, he expected external funds by leasing them, and that the financial crisis was also felt in Europe, not only in Romania.⁴⁸ Completing *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, *Telegraful Român* concluded that the development of communication routes would bring the country: trade, industry, economy, material and spiritual power, things that were necessary for an industrialised country. The development of the economy reduced the amount of theft, and public and private credit strengthened the country financially without the help of foreigners. With financial support, industry would bring profit to the state from its own production, doubling the internal capital.

Romanian historiography, seconded by the Transylvanian press of the second half of the nineteenth century, argued that after the *coup* of 1864, A. I. Cuza's personal reign began. At that time 33 laws were promulgated, and 40 decrees were implemented, of which mention should be made of: the Criminal, Civil Code; the agrarian Reform; the establishment of the Chamber of Commerce; the allotment of land to the peasants and the election law. In a letter to Emperor Napoleon III, A. I. Cuza wrote: "I was quite happy to achieve the union, the Romanians' century-old dream, to retrieve for my country one fifth of its territory usurped by foreign monks; I turned one million corvée labourers into one million owners and citizens. I promulgated codes copied after Napoleon's Code, which truly established the equality of all before the law and equal rights for all in the family, imposing civil marriage and staving off divorce."⁴⁹ In the lines above it was noticed that the reforms had encapsulated all the domains and that the Romanian society had gradually achieved the establishment of the modern Romanian state among the states in Western Europe.⁵⁰

In issue no. 49 of 1865, *Telegraful Român* remarked that the railroads advanced at a rapid pace, the Romanian government drawing the line from Giurgiu to Bucharest, the Bulgarian and the Romanian tracks being linked by a bridge across the Danube at Giurgiu. The development of communication routes between Transylvania and the Romanian Principalities was essential for the development of trade, for product distribution and the free exchange thereof. The establishment of economic schools, of schools for bridge and road constructors aimed to train people who would contribute to the development of projects for the consolidation of roads, highways and railways. In its issue no. 88 of 16/ 4 November 1864, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* stated that A. I. Cuza had granted an English company the lease to build 16 iron bridges across the larger rivers with a deadline of three years.

⁴⁸ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVII, no. 99, from 25/13 December, 1864, p. 397.

⁴⁹ Mihail Oprețescu, "Economia românească între Orient și Occident 1859-1866," in *Studii de istoria economiei*, Bucharest, Editura ASE, 2005, p. 368.

⁵⁰ Mircea Gălcă, "Reformele și politica externă din perioada domniei lui A. I. Cuza," in *Studii și Comunicări-seria Istorie*, no. 7, Pitești, 1995, p. 121.

The Transylvanian press also announced that as of 1/ 13 August 1865, the state monopoly on tobacco⁵¹ would come into force; the country was hit by another economic crisis, which accentuated the price increase, as well as the financial deficit, an acute lack of food products being registered on the market, but the modernisation and reorganisation of the country continuing.⁵² By royal decree, the new government of Romania empowered Cesar Liebrecht to conclude agreements and postal *regulations* with Austria, Russia and Serbia.⁵³ *Telegraful Român* stated in the various comments that the tobacco monopoly was a serious blow to the country's industry and that the government had not anticipated the effects of this law on trade.

At the end of 1865, A. I. Cuza presented before the Chamber and the Romanian Government House the treaties concluded with the European states. Among them was mentioned a Telegraph Convention between Romania and Russia in 1860. In 1865, Romania joined the International Telegraph Convention, asserting itself as a subject of international law together with the sovereign states.⁵⁴ Taking over information from *Trompeta Carpaților*, *Telegraful Român* showed the fact that by the royal decree of 7/19 April 1865, a loan of 616,680 lei had been promulgated for the establishment and maintenance of the international postal service as of 1 June 1865.⁵⁵ It had signed a Postal and Telegraph Convention with Serbia, accredited by an International Conference,⁵⁶ and it had finalised the Danube borders with Russia and Turkey, with the help of a commission;⁵⁷ there had also been meetings between the representatives of the governments of Romania, Austria and Russia for negotiations regarding navigation on the Prut.⁵⁸ A careful analysis of the above allows me to conclude that the Transylvanian press was involved in reporting all the steps taken by the new Romanian unitary state to enforce the economic reforms internally and externally.

In conclusion, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was a ruler who accomplished significant changes, through the reforms he promoted, in most economic sectors, allowing Romania to open towards the European economy.

In *Telegraful Român*, the space allocated to the Romanian Principalities was justified by the subject covered. Generally, the events from the Romanian Principalities were rendered on the last page of each issue. It should be noted that A. I. Cuza was not in amicable relations with the Orthodox Church from the moment when the Law on the secularisation of monastic estates was enforced, which influenced the attitude of the Transylvanian newspaper towards these issues. Thus, in March 1865, *Telegraful Român* justified the fact that it had not received information about the resolutions reached by the Chamber of Romania in their editorial correspondence.

⁵¹ *Telegraful Român*, year XIII, no. 41, from 27 May/8 June, 1865, p. 162.

⁵² Dan Berindei, *Constituirea României moderne*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 2009, p. 282.

⁵³ *Telegraful Român*, year XIII, no. 2, from 7/19 January, 1865, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Iosif Adam, "Premise economice ale cuceririi independenței de stat a României," in *Muzeul Național*, no. 4, 1978, p. 154.

⁵⁵ *Telegraful Român*, year XIII, no. 31, from 22 April/4 May, 1865, p. 124.

⁵⁶ *Concordia*, year V, no. 15-374, from 21 February/5 March, 1865, p. 60.

⁵⁷ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, year XXVIII, no. 27, 15 December, 1865, p. 405.

⁵⁸ *Telegraful Român*, year XIII, no. 51, from 1/13 June, 1865, p. 132.

Gazeta Transilvaniei covered in its columns all the events in the Romanian Principalities from the second half of the nineteenth century, under the heading of both *The Romanian Principalities* and *The Foreign Chronicle*, regardless of topic. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* also captured the attitude of the Hungarian press to the events from Moldova and Wallachia. The Hungarian press - including the periodical *Kolozsvár Közlöny* - and the liberal Austrian press watched with interest the double election of A. I. Cuza in the Romanian Principalities and its recognition by the great European powers; the enforcement of the political, social and economic reforms and, last but not least, the dispute between the political groups represented in the Chamber and the Government of the country. Thus, the Hungarian press, quoted by the Romanian periodicals in Transylvania, concluded in 1859 that the Romanian Principalities had violated through the national will the Treaty with the Porte, the Organic Statute of 1830, the Paris Peace Treaty of 30 March 1856, and the Paris Convention of 19 August 1858, which defined European diplomacy and regulated the position of the principalities in relation to Turkey. The double election of A. I. Cuza led to one ruler being sanctioned instead of two; gradually were established only one army, one minister, one legislative chamber, and the Central Committee in Iași was like a House of Lords imposed by the Convention. These - the comment went on to say - were completed by the reforms of Cuza's government, which was too *democratic*; Cuza adopted France as a model in organising the country and obtained a European Commission to finalise the issue from the mouth of the Danube, and Europe was tired of waiting for the Romanian Principalities to comply with the stipulations of the Paris Convention from 1858.

In conclusion, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the two major Romanian periodicals in Transylvania, namely *Gazeta Transilvaniei* and *Telegraful Român*, represented, regardless of their affiliation, the informative source of the political, socio-economic and cultural events from the Romanian Principalities for the Transylvanian Romanians. Both periodicals followed with interest the issuing, debate and enforcement of the laws and political, economic and cultural reforms from the Romanian Principalities and their effects on the Transylvanians.