

Designing citizenship. The “Jewish question” in the debates of the Romanian parliament (1866-1869)

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the debates in the Romanian Constituent Assembly of 1866 on article 7 of the Constitution that excludes non-Christians (notably Jews) from political rights. By drawing mainly on the parliamentary archives and the press, it also examines governmental regulations, legislation, questions to ministers and parliamentary deliberations on the discriminations and violence against Jews during the years 1867-1869. The legislative and administrative measures following the adoption of article 7 of the Constitution create the ‘Jewish question’, that is anti-Jewishness as expression of anti-alien sentiment and of national preservation, elevate it to an international issue, and account for much of the internal governmental instability of the period. Anti-Semitism in that period is as much about Romanians and how they can consolidate their nation-state, as it is about the Jews and those who hate them. The paper holds that during the 1860s-1870s, anti-Jewish sentiment, not yet coherent and programmatic, tells less about anti-Semitism, and more about the nature of Romanian nationalism, as a modern variant of state-led xenophobia, eager to demonstrate state capacity. Romanian politicians want to build very quickly both the state and a homogenous nation, and the Jews (and other foreigners) are there to show that none is yet ready.

1866 opens the period leading to the *de jure* recognition of the independence so much desired by the Romanian political class, and introduces major policies and institutional measures for the affirmation of the new state. In 1866 a constitution is adopted which will remain in force, with some modifications, until the Second World War; rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed; the principles of liberal constitutionalism are at the base of institutions; a new dynasty and the principle of inheritance of the throne are introduced, and a foreign prince, Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, is invited to the throne; the political, administrative, ideological and cultural bases of the Romanian nation state start to be consolidated. Until the Eastern Crisis of 1875 to 1878 which leads to independence, Romania is legally dependent on the Ottoman Empire. In March 1881, Romania becomes a kingdom.

The paper analyzes the debates in the Romanian Constituent Assembly of 1866 on article 7 of the Constitution that excludes non-Christians (notably Jews) from political rights. By drawing mainly on the parliamentary archives and the press, it also examines governmental regulations, legislation, questions to ministers and parliamentary deliberations on the discriminations and violence against Jews during the years 1867-1869. The legislative and administrative measures following the adoption of article 7 of the Constitution create the ‘Jewish question’, that is anti-Jewishness as expression of anti-alien sentiment and of national preservation, elevate it to an international issue, and

account for much of the internal governmental instability of the period. Antisemitism in that period is as much about Romanians and how they can consolidate their nation-state, as it is about the Jews and those who hate them.¹ The purpose of the paper is to expose the reasons for which the members of the various 'liberal factions' (notably the radical liberals and the Independent liberal fraction from Iași) come to defend strongly antisemitic and nationalist legislation and discourse in the parliament. The paper holds that the liberal MPs' xenophobia and antisemitism is rather the expression of nationalism as a modern way of understanding what binds a political community together, and not of medieval pogroms that persecute Christians and Jews because of religious differences. During the 1860s-1870s, anti-Jewish sentiment, not yet coherent and programmatic, tells less about antisemitism, and more about the nature of Romanian nationalism, as a modern variant of state-led xenophobia, eager to demonstrate state capacity. The 1860s-1870s are more about xenophobia and judeophobia (the latter quite traditional in its forms of expression based on economic and religious prejudice) and modernization: politicians are convinced that by defending the Romanian identity and state *against* foreigners (all foreigners are criticized since all have allegedly opposed interests to those of the Romanians), they are 'modern' because they are so eager to demonstrate that there is a state capacity (in Weberian terms). The weaker the state, the greater the obsession to form a solid national identity. Romanian politicians want to build up very quickly both the state *and* a homogenous nation, and the Jews (and other foreigners) are there to show that none is yet ready. During the 19th century, antisemitism and xenophobia reveal the political and social tensions within the states the Jews live in. They also reveal the difficult state- and nation building process of the recently formed Romania. They highlight the limitations of Romanian liberalism, its incapacity to endorse cultural diversity, and its willingness to define the nation as homogenous. Antisemitism and xenophobia also expose the way the Romanian state conceives its relationship to its subjects-citizens. The paper starts from the assumption that political modernity in Easter Europe was based on the idea of a state that legitimizes itself in front of its ethnic-nation and of an ethnic identity that binds individuals to one another and to the state they share.

The 1860s lay the basis for what is subsequently to become in the 1880s the more coherent and doctrinaire nationalist antisemitism, that incorporates antisemitism into the very nature of being a Romanian and into the Romanian national identity itself.² The peace of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin in

¹ I share this assumption put forward by Marcel Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation and the Jews. The Antisemitism Dispute in Bismarck's Germany*, (Lincoln&London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 3.

² William O. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism. Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1991); Dietmar Müller, *Staatsbürger auf Widerruf. Juden und Muslime als Alteritätspartner im rumänischen und serbischen Nationscode. Ethnonationale Staatsbürgerschaftskonzepte 1878-1941*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005);

1877-1878 conditions Romania's acquiring state independence by granting citizenship and political rights to Jews by amending art. 7 of the 1866 Constitution: foreign pressures on the Romanian government to address discrimination against the Jews create strong resentment and elevate antisemitism to the rank of state policy and to a matter of national pride and defense.

"The national sentiment is a barrier stronger than any laws"

If the members of the Constituent Assembly are more open to give civil rights to Jews (and to foreigners in general) – art. 11 of the 1866 Constitution deals with these issues – they are inflexible with regard to their exclusion from political rights, by their categorical exclusion of naturalization, despite some very few pro-naturalization opinions.

The views of some members of the Constituent Assembly in favor of the naturalization of Jews stress the fact that they are assets from an economic standpoint, and that they contribute to the general wealth primarily through capital. The second set of arguments places the problem of Jews in the sphere of rights (indeed, the arguments against come from the same direction, but reach different conclusions). Since the constitution consecrated freedoms and rights, the Jews cannot be excluded as they are part of "humanity," with the same rights, say some MPs. Since Jews have duties as all other citizens, they should be granted rights to the same extent. Moreover, by giving them political rights, they would no longer be perceived as "enemies" of the Romanians, and they thus could be integrated. While stressing that they do not want to harm national interests, these members of the Assembly are trying to give the debate a broader scope. Religion can no longer be an obstacle to naturalization, says N. Racoviță, because the constitution has already included the most extensive human rights and freedoms.³ The conservative D. Ghica-Comăneșteanu considers that the Jews have the right to ask to be included in citizenship as they have resided for a long time in the country and obeyed all the obligations of citizens (such as army recruitment); including them in the sphere of political rights would develop their patriotic feelings.⁴ And as the Romanians are more numerous, better educated and more civilized than the Jews, there is no risk that they "eat our nationality"; on the contrary, they represent a hard working population that is beneficial for any state or nation.⁵

Manolache Costache Epureanu, the president of the Constituent Assembly, is also developing economic arguments in favor of the Jews: they have capital,

Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of 'Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866-1918," *Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 8/2 (2001): 157-86.

³ *Dezbatările Adunării Constituante din anul 1866 asupra constituțiunii și legii electorale din România*, publicate din nou în edițiune oficială de Alexandru Pencovici (thereafter *D.A.C.*) (Curtea Șerban-Vodă: Tipografia statului, 1883), 94.

⁴ *D.A.C.*, 96-7.

⁵ *Idem.*

and it is only capital that brings “prosperity in a country,” that creates “a strong Romanian state,”⁶ he says. In his view, the prominent role of Jews in trade in Moldova can be explained by the fact that Romanians have not dealt with savings, they have failed to treat money as a commodity, and have progressively moved from business to hunting privileges and public employment (“*le venea mania de a se face boier?*”), while the Jews have formed a class of traders and exporters in an agrarian country.⁷ Epureanu adds that isolating of Jews amidst the Romanian population and their political exclusion will nourish the Romanians’ hatred against them and transform the two populations into enemies; “all humanity has the same right,” concludes the president of the Constituent Assembly.⁸

The idea that the emancipation of the Jews would cure the Jews of their ‘exclusive spirit’ is in the end rejected.⁹ The prevailing arguments reject the possibility for the Jews to be included in the political nation, while the will to transform them into ‘good citizens’ is hardly discussed at all.

The *rapporteur* of the committee on art. 7 of the Constituent Assembly, Aristide Pascal, explains the position of the majority of the MPs. Reaffirming the egalitarian and liberal spirit of all Romanians, Pascal states in his report that “the Romanian people, very jealous of its nationality, has always been reluctant to any legislation that would have jeopardized its nationality.”¹⁰ It is the reason art. 6.1 (“The quality of Romanian is acquired, retained and lost in accordance with rules established by the civil laws”) and art. 6.2 (“Religion can no longer be an obstacle to naturalization”)¹¹ of the draft constitution have been radically amended by the committee, which recommends that a special law regulates the gradual admission of Jews to naturalization.¹² But the final wording of the article on the naturalization of Jews (art. 7 in the final text, “The quality of Romanian is acquired, preserved and lost according to rules determined by civil law. Only foreigners belonging to the Christian faith can gain naturalization”) is unequivocal. The chronicler of Charles I in his memoirs recorded the restrictive vote with this comment: “It became impossible for the Romanian Jews to receive political rights, even in the harshest of conditions.”¹³

Jews were excluded from political rights, continues the *rapporteur*, Aristide Pascal, because they are “the cause of diseases” of the Romanian nation, its “enemies from within,” and “they are hostile to its beliefs, religion and independence.”¹⁴ To forbid by law any naturalization of Jews (“who form an

⁶ *D.A.C.*, 104-5.

⁷ *D.A.C.*, 104-6.

⁸ *D.A.C.*, 103-4.

⁹ Unlike in Britain prior to the 1880s, Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 150.

¹⁰ Arhivele Naționale, Bucharest (thereafter Arh. Naț.), file 354/1865-66: 25; *D.A.C.*, 25.

¹¹ *D.A.C.*, 2; Arh. Naț., file 354/1865-66: 30.

¹² *D.A.C.*, 34.

¹³ *Memoriile regelui Carol I al României de un martor ocular*, vol. I, 1866-1869, ed. Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Scripta, 1992), 79.

¹⁴ Arh. Naț., file 354/1865-66: 25; *D.A.C.*, 25.

uneducated population totally lacking the lights of the century's civilization") and any access to political and civil rights "means that Jews do not injure our national development."¹⁵

To give political rights to Jews would amount to accept "dualism" in national representation. MPs also emphasize that, according to tradition, representation is one and indivisible, and that there is the risk that Jews form "a state within the state." This is what Nicolae Ionescu, leader of the Independent liberal fraction, states during the debates in the committee (prior to the opening of the plenary discussion). He just summarizes the views of the majority. While stressing the highly liberal character of the Constitution, Ionescu says that the government, in formulating art. 6 of the draft constitution (which becomes art. 7 in the final text), should not have separated "freedom and the homeland. We can lend freedom, just as we lend ideas or religion [...], but what we cannot lend, is the homeland. Because, gentlemen, in the traditions of the homeland, there is [illegible] one indivisible representation."¹⁶ The sphere of political rights includes only those who share the same tradition, says Ionescu. Moreover, there are inalienable and unchanged rights of the Romanian nation, inherited from its ancestors.

Art. 6 is discussed in the plenary meeting on June 18, 1866. The discussion is interrupted because a large crowd gathers at the gates of the Constituent Assembly and protests against the admission of Jews to political equality (as envisaged in the draft submitted by the government to the Assembly). Faced with these pressures, the government withdraws art. 6. Ion C. Brătianu, the Minister of Finance, reads to the Assembly the government's decision.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the crowd moves to the synagogue and destroys it.¹⁸ After the intervention of the National Guard, peace is restored during the night. The next day, the Council of Ministers issues a call to the people of Bucharest where the negative consequences of anti-Semitic movements are explained, while Charles offers a significant sum from his personal resources for the restoration of the synagogue.¹⁹ Stimulated by art. 6 of the constitutional draft, the "Jewish question," to quote *Trompeta Carpaților*,²⁰ is born during the months of May to June 1866, primarily because the Jews of Romania seek the support of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, an organization, *Trompeta Carpaților* underlined, with headquarters in Paris. The president of the *Alliance* himself, Isaac Adolphe Crémieux, arrives in Romania, but without any success in obtaining firm assurances from the government in the benefit of the Jews.²¹

¹⁵ Idem.

¹⁶ Arh. Naț., file 355/1865-66: 524, 525.

¹⁷ D.A.C., 58.

¹⁸ "Memoriile regelui Carol I", 78; Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România (1866-1919). De la excludere la emancipare*, (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), 69-72.

¹⁹ Ibid., 78-9.

²⁰ *Trompeta Carpaților*, n. 432, July 2, 1866, 1722.

²¹ Sorin Liviu Damean, *Carol I al României*, vol. I, 1866-1881 (Bucharest: Paideia, 2000), 172-4. After the final vote on art. 7, Crémieux writes in *Le Siècle* on July 28, 1866: "En Roumanie, le

Edda Binder-Iijima convincingly suggests that, through the popular demonstrations of June 18, the Jewish problem was instrumentalized mainly by the liberal radicals from Wallachia, as a weapon against the prince. The author stresses that the two camps, the radical liberals and the conservatives, differently take advantage of the manifestations in the streets: the first strategically delimit themselves from the openly anti-Semitic Moldavian party, the Independent liberal fraction; while the conservatives take the popular events as a reason for postponing the vote on the Constitution and for prolonging the debates.²² The main lines of these strategies are confirmed during the subsequent years. What is initially presented in June 1866 as a political maneuver later becomes a major political and social mortgage for the Romanian political class.²³

Although art. 6 is withdrawn by the government on June 18, many members of the Constituent Assembly continue to combat this article and to express their negative views about the Jews. It is striking that these MPs are mainly liberals representing Wallachian and Moldavian constituencies. The conservatives are not absent either in the debate when it comes to vote against the rights of the Jews. The Jews constitute a threat to “national interest,” say all these MPs, because they have captured all branches of economy and trade, and they are engaged in various “speculations;”²⁴ because they defend their own interests against the interests of the Romanian nation.²⁵ The most important reason why they represent such a danger is the fact that they bought “our lands” (“*moșiile noastre*”).²⁶ Some liberal MPs even propose an amendment that expressly prohibits them the right to own land.²⁷ Exclusive ownership over the national territory is stressed again, because, say these MPs, it is the national land which allowed the conservation of the Romanian nationality over the centuries: without property over its own land “the nationality dies” and the nation becomes a “fiction.”

According to the majority of the anti-Jewish MPs, the “Jewish question” is in fact a national issue and not a religious issue. Ion Strat, for example, says with conviction that the aversion of Romanians against Jews is not religious (in Romania there has never been religious persecution, he says, an idea supported

parti libéral, qui proclame avec bruit les opinions les plus avancées et qui sympathise le plus avec la révolution de 1848, ce parti – je dois le dire – se trouve encore, en ce qui concerne les questions religieuses et sociales, au XV^e et au XVI^e siècles,” see Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 73.

²² Edda Binder-Iijima, *Die Institutionalisierung der rumänischen Monarchie unter Carol I. 1866-1881*, (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), 69.

²³ Ibid., 70. See also Paul E. Michelson, *Romanian Politics, 1859-1871. From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol*, (Iasj, Oxford, Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 184-5.

²⁴ Ion Strat, *D.A.C.*, 98-100; Ion C. Brătianu, *D.A.C.*, 108.

²⁵ P. Buescu, *D.A.C.*, 101-2; D. Tacu, 114-5.

²⁶ Voinescu, *D.A.C.*, 110-12; T. Lateș, 128-9.

²⁷ On June 22, 1866, amendment signed by I. Leca, Lateș, Lupașcu, Plesnilă, D. Tacu, D. Racoviță (*D.A.C.*, 126), finally rejected (*D.A.C.*, 132).

by all his colleagues²⁸), but it arises from the fact that Jews have taken over trade and industry and they exploit the Romanians.²⁹ Finance Minister Ion C. Brătianu, a former 1848 liberal and militant republican, summarizes the key argument in the Assembly. The Jews are a “social scourge for the Romanians,” they are the causes of their “social suffering” and they form a poor proletariat;³⁰ which is why “our citizenship is threatened by the Jews and when the nation is threatened, it wakes up and it becomes preemptive, instead of tolerant.”³¹ The government had to withdraw art. 6 of the draft constitution, explains the minister, in order “to stop the immigration of all proletarians, not only of Jews,” so that “our country does not become a colony for all the lazy people [...], for all proletarians of Europe.” In his opinion, the government and the Assembly have the task of encouraging “the arrival of science” and of “individuals who would become the initiators of agriculture and commerce;” it is only by raising barriers to the “foreign proletariat” that a Romanian middle class will form and then “we will become strong, and when we will be strong, then you can be sure we will be as tolerant as all nations are.”³² Just as the Minister of Finance, Voinescu warns: since in Moldova all properties are mortgaged to the Jews, “a nation that has no territory, no properties is no longer a nation, it is a fiction, and we have become a fiction, while the Jews have become a powerful nation on our ancestral land.”³³

On June 22, Brătianu intervenes again to reassure the MPs that “the sense of national conservation” is “so powerful” that the art. 16 of the Civil Code – article that regulates the naturalization of all foreigners – “has no application” because “the national sentiment is a barrier stronger than any laws.”³⁴ A group of Moldavian liberal MPs even proposes an amendment that prohibits the establishment of the Jews on Romanian territory,³⁵ supported also by N. Ionescu and A. Sihleanu.

The MPs’ arguments against the political rights of Jews are echoed by the two main liberal newspapers, *Românul* and *Trompeta Carpaților*. Foreigners, writes *Românul* without naming them, have violated “the most vital interests of Romania;” Romanians are not to be blamed for the violence on June 18, they have been victims of hostile foreign “instigators.” *Românul*, the official newspaper of the radical liberals, makes a distinction between religion and political rights, a distinction that will become a stereotype among the liberal radicals for years to come. To confuse the two areas, writes the newspaper, is the source of misunderstandings fed by the foreigners and the enemies who

²⁸ See also Voinescu, *D.A.C.*, 110; Nicolae Voinov, *D.A.C.*, 52.

²⁹ *D.A.C.*, 98-100.

³⁰ *D.A.C.*, 107-8.

³¹ *D.A.C.*, 107.

³² *D.A.C.*, 109.

³³ *D.A.C.*, 110-2.

³⁴ *D.A.C.*, 116.

³⁵ Signed by Lateș, Negură, D. Tacu, P. Cernătescu, I. Heliad, Nicolae Voinov, I. Leca (*D.A.C.*, 120), finally rejected (*D.A.C.*, 125-6).

“stop [our] nation in its glorious walk,” since there is no question of religious intolerance in the Romanian population; the Jewish question is only a constitutional and legal matter, and “of our social and national interests.”³⁶ As such, the journal defines itself as a defender of civil liberties and of nationality, against “the sworn enemies of freedom and of the Romanian nationality.” *Românul*, as most radical liberals, avoids religious arguments, since it strongly believes that religious tolerance is one of Romanians’ key virtues.

Trompeta Carpaților is outspokenly anti-Semitic.³⁷ It does not spare degrading qualifiers. It accuses the Assembly and the ministers for having created panic on June 18, while the violence at the synagogue in Bucharest is understandable and justifiable by “the hatred of the people:” the Jews are the real enemies. Art. 6 of the draft constitution is an “ultra-cosmopolitan proposal” and a proof of the desire to denationalize the Romanian nation. *Trompeta Carpaților* gives the same meaning to the Jewish question as *Românul*: it is not a “religious issue,” but “a matter of blood, a question of race,” as “Romanianness” and the Romanian lands are in danger. The paper repeatedly recommends the expulsion of the Jews. It also publishes many petitions from Moldova. Their terms are similar to those used by the press. The Constituent Assembly receives such petitions as well, such as the one of May 1866 signed by many inhabitants of Iași and of other Moldavian cities.³⁸ Their arguments are identical to the MPs’ economic and social arguments against the admission of Jews to political rights.

The accusation that the Jews represent a threat to the nationality of Romanians because of their significant demographic presence, because of their social and economic activities and because of their differences from the indigenous population is constantly repeated by the MPs. Jews are viewed as a source of national degeneration and they are cast as the antithesis of authentic “Romanianness.”³⁹ After the adoption of the constitutional article excluding Jews from political rights, the administrative measures during the 1860s-1870s issued by the government and the prefects for the expulsion of Jews are justified by the same arguments – expulsion is completely justified because it is seen as an effective way to defend the nationality of the Romanians.

Internal public law and “nation’s law”

Three highly controversial episodes in the late 1860s reveal that the debates do not differ from those in the Constituent Assembly during the summer 1866: questions to ministers in the Lower Chamber by A. Georgiu on March 24, 1868, by P.P. Carp on April 26, 1868, and by I. Codrescu on December 16,

³⁶ *Românul*, June 12-13-14, 1866: 369; June 15, 1866: 373; June 19-21, 1866: 373-4; June 23, 1866: 381.

³⁷ *Trompeta Carpaților* n. 424, May 31, 1866, 1693; n. 425, 4 June 5, 1866, 1693; n. 426, June 7, 1866, 1702; n. 431, June 28, 1866, 1721; n. 432, July 2, 1866, 1722-3.

³⁸ Arh. Naț., file 356/1865: 5-7.

³⁹ Unlike in Britain prior to the 1880s, Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 153.

1869. I followed, above all, the causes the MPs identify for the “evil,” as they call it; the type of measures in favor or against the Jews; and the arguments by which they justify them. The key to the “Jewish question” remains deeply national. The attitudes and the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the MPs’ highlight the way the law and administrative regulations are supposed to define and defend the Romanian nation, identify and remove foreigners (specifically, the Jews), and prove the effectiveness of administration and government control over the territory and its population – all discursively packed in arguments borrowed from the history of Romanians. It is mainly the radical liberals and the Independent liberal fraction who continue to oppose the granting of political rights to Jews in order to preserve the ethnic “Romanianness” perceived as homogeneous.

The most controversial document, which triggers the “Jewish question” after the relative calm following the adoption of the Constitution, is the circular sent by the liberal Minister of Interior, Ion C. Brătianu, to the prefects on March 21, 1867.⁴⁰ The minister calls for measures to ensure that authorities forbid vagabond aliens, undocumented, homeless or persons without occupation to settle in the villages of Moldova, or to rent inns and taverns.⁴¹ This circular is preceded by measures with fewer echoes.⁴² Similar documents – none of which uses explicitly the word “Jew” – addressing the “vagabonds” multiply during the spring of 1867. These restrictive measures are followed by several waves of expulsions and violence against Jews during March-July 1867. The international governments and press react.⁴³ Government actions in the spring of 1867 also create internal discontent. Fourteen conservative politicians from Moldova, including D.A. Sturdza, Vasile Pogor and Manolache Costache Epureanu, ask the government to withdraw the circular of March 21.⁴⁴ The conservatives denounce the government’s abuses invoking reasons of humanity, but also ask for Brătianu’s resignation.⁴⁵ Under such pressures, the government also publishes a statement to justify the measures imposed to the prefects by that circular. It explains that they are aimed at all vagrants and are taken for reasons of security and public order. The *communiqué* rejects the accusations of persecution against the Jews.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ See also Paul E. Michelson, *Romanian Politics*, 212-21 on the external implications of the events.

⁴¹ Apostol Stan and Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România. De la origini până la 1918*, (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1996), 129; Anastasie Iordache, *Instituirea monarhiei constituționale și a regimului parlamentar în România. 1866-1871* (Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1997), 165.

⁴² Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 74.

⁴³ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 74-8; Apostol Stan and Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România*, 129-31.

⁴⁴ Ion Mamina and Ion Bulei, *Guverne și guvernanți (1866-1916)* (Bucharest: Silex, 1994), 19.

⁴⁵ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, vol. X (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia “Datina Românească,” 1939), 42.

⁴⁶ *Monitorul. Jurnal Oficial al Principatelor Unite Române* (thereafter M.O.) n. 112, May 19/31, 1867: 673.

Following the press campaign in Western Europe, prince Charles and the authorities are under pressure to stop the restrictions. Brătianu's resignation is also demanded. The minister is criticized not only for the measures against the Jews (even if the government continues to say they are within the law and not religious persecutions), but also because he is suspected of maintaining relations with the revolutionary and Mazzinian circles of Europe.⁴⁷ Brătianu resigns on August 16, 1867, and Ștefan Golescu becomes president of the new Council of Ministers, but the circulars are not revoked. According to the historian Carol Iancu (he cites, among others, Emile Picot's testimony, Charles' secretary), it seems that the prince, convinced by Brătianu, considers that the government's harsh measures are appropriate to the situation.⁴⁸ Expulsions continue in Moldova during autumn 1867, and during spring and summer 1868. Anti-Jewish revolts take place in other cities of Moldova, in Bârlad, Galați, then again in autumn 1868 in Galați.⁴⁹ From the legislative point of view, the climax is the draft bill signed by thirty-one members of the Moldovan Independent liberal fraction presented to the Assembly in March 1868. The bill⁵⁰ proposes that the Jews be excluded from civil rights: they are allowed to settle in towns only with the consent of the municipal councils; they are prohibited from establishing, under any pretext whatsoever, even provisionally, in the countryside, to acquire property in the city or the countryside, to rent or work land, vineyards, taverns, inns, distilleries, mills, etc., and have contracts with the state or with municipalities for supplies – and all these measures would have retroactive effects. The bill is not debated in the parliament, but the topic is addressed in the interpellation to the government by A. Georgiu in March 1868. Following pressures from the diplomatic agents of the great powers, who accuse the government of actions against the Jews, two radical liberal governments are forced to resign.⁵¹ Foreign interventions, with immediate consequences on government instability, do not stop the anti-Semitic policies which continue until 1879.⁵²

The subject of A. Georgiu's interpellation on March 24, 1868 is the National Guard from Iași. The Interior Minister Brătianu, in answering it, comments the bill of the thirty-one signed also by A. Georgiu. The minister does not provide new arguments in his answer: vagabonds and especially foreign Jews are an

⁴⁷ Apostol Stan and Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România*, 103; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, 42.

⁴⁸ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 80-95; Catherine Durandin, *Istoria românilor* Liliana Buruiană-Popovici (Iași: Institutul European, 1999), 131-2.

⁴⁹ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 94, 96-8, 103-5.

⁵⁰ The bill is reproduced in Dumitru Ivănescu and Cătălin Turliuc, *Modernizare și construcție națională în România. Rolul factorului alogen, 1832-1918*, (Iași: Junimea, 2002), 187-8. See also Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 98-9; Edda Binder-Iijima, *Die Institutionalisierung der rumänischen Monarchie*, 179.

⁵¹ Ion Mamina, *Monarhia constituțională în România. Enciclopedie politică. 1866-1938*, (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2000), 193, 300-1.

⁵² Catherine Durandin, *Istoria românilor*, 132-4.

“economic harm” to the Romanians; persecuted in neighboring countries, the Jews took refuge in large numbers in Romania known for its tolerant spirit.⁵³ He asserts that it is legitimate to take the necessary measures “to satisfy our moral and material interests” and to “ensure our nationality”; he also argues that the government, through its circulars, controls the situation; but he does not reject the philosophy of the bill, he only accuses the signatories not to have had prior consultation with the government and introduced some “barbarian” measures that raised international protests.⁵⁴ Ion Codrescu, a signatory of the bill, does not hesitate to justify even its harshest measures by using very strong words against the Jews, because it is “a matter of national survival,” since “our nation degenerates from day to day under their evil influence”; he also reminds that this is an economic issue, not religious persecution.⁵⁵ The signatories A. Georgiu and I. Codrescu are very unhappy that the government does not agree that the bill should follow the usual parliamentary procedure (sections, plenary session, debate, vote).⁵⁶

In November 1868 a coalition government composed of conservatives and moderate liberals is the successor of the two cabinets dominated by the liberal radicals. But until January 1869, the houses are dominated by the liberal radicals, the president of the Lower House being no other than Brătianu until May 1869. Given the composition of the government and the parliament, the tensions between the two institutions are frequent until the elections of March 1869, which are the consequence of the dissolution of the Assembly on January 29. Following the elections coordinated by the Minister of Interior Mihail Kogălniceanu, the moderate liberals who support him win the majority of the mandates.⁵⁷ For the radical liberals, these elections are a failure.

In the Lower House on December 16, 1869, I. Codrescu has the opportunity to display in great detail his vehemently anti-Semitic arguments, by asking questions to the government. On this occasion, other MPs of the Moldovan Fraction (all of the signatories of the bill) take the floor to highlight the anti-Semitic arguments they proudly defend. The conservative MPs will not have time to take the floor.

Ion Codrescu’s intervention describes in detail the arguments by which the Moldovan MPs justify their antisemitism and consider it as legitimate. All those who take the floor note the equivalence between “the Jewish question” and national interest. An important part of Codrescu’s intervention discusses the activity of the *Alliance Israélite* in Paris and in Romania. He bluntly accuses the Alliance to pursue its interests against the interests of the Romanian nation and

⁵³ M.O. n.75 March 30/April 11, 1868, session of March 24, 1868: 498.

⁵⁴ M.O. n.75 March 30/April 11, 1868, session of March 24, 1868: 498; M.O. n.76 March 31/April 12, 1868, session of 24 March, 1868: 504.

⁵⁵ M.O. n.76 March 31/April 12, 1868, session of March 24, 1868: 504.

⁵⁶ To their great disappointment, the debate stops and the discussion on the national guard is continued.

⁵⁷ Ion Mamina, *Monarhia constituțională în România*, 197-8, 301; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, 101-3.

to resort to illegitimate interference in the affairs of the Romanian government. He has no doubts: the *Alliance* and the Jews want to conquer and subjugate the Romanian nation; the Jews accuse Romania of religious persecution, whereas in truth there is no such thing. As a good inheritor of the 1848 generation, Codrescu stresses that Romanians have the right to a stable and independent state due to their centuries-long history on this land, and that their role “in the Danube valley has been [the creation] of an eminently national and Christian state” based on common origin, ancestors, language, and religion. He also formulates the idea of the homogeneity of the nation, expressing, in fact, the desire to have this homogeneity, despite apparently contrary evidence. The national unity and homogeneity will no longer be valid in the future, he goes on, when “the great class of trade and industry” will be composed of “not assimilated and impossible to assimilate foreigners.”⁵⁸

After having emphasized in detail the illegitimate interference of the Alliance in domestic politics and its negative effects on the prestige of the Romanian state, Ion Codrescu continues his anti-Semitic accusations by mentioning figures to give an image of the scale of the demographic evolution of what he calls “the great threat.” He is convinced that the existing official figures are inaccurate compared to the much larger number of Jews, especially in Moldova. He is also concerned about the electoral consequences of this demographic presence: in his view, the third Electoral College (mainly an urban college) is threatened in its existence, especially in Moldova, because in some cities, according to him, the ratio is one Romanian to four Jews.⁵⁹ What worries Codrescu most is the legal status of Jews: since “the principle of conservation has always been the fundamental doctrine of the Romanian state,” the Romanian laws of all time have prohibited the naturalization of non-Christians because of the “instinct to keep unchanged the national and Christian character of the state,” and not because of religious intolerance.⁶⁰

Naturalization cannot be granted to foreigners for the same reasons: “Whatever the period of residence of a foreigner in the country, he cannot be considered before the civil and political law anything else but a foreigner. Because there is no such category in the ‘nation’s law’ (*drept național*)!”⁶¹ He rejects any territorial definition of citizenship. It is to him a privileged status reserved for the members of the ethno-national community and based solely on *jus sanguinis*. What Codrescu also says, is that the “nation’s law” and national consciousness are *supra legem*, and that civil and political rights depend on nationality.⁶² The meaning of the term “nation’s law” may well have its source in Simion Bărnuțiu’s writings who in his lectures at the University of Iași⁶³

⁵⁸ M.O. n. 281 December 21, 1869/January 2, 1870, session of December 16, 1869: 1298-9.

⁵⁹ *Idem*.

⁶⁰ *Idem*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1299-1300.

⁶² *Ibid.*: 1300.

⁶³ Published as *Dreptul public al românilor*, (Iași, 1867). He is an émigré from Transylvania. G. Panu (in his *Amintiri de la “Junimea” din Iași*, vol. I, ed. Z. Ornea (Bucharest: Minerva, 1971)

during the 1850s-1860s sees the “the law of nations” (*drit al ginților*) as another branch of law aimed and preserving and defending the collective rights of the Romanian nation. All the liberal politicians from the mid-19th century Moldova are Bărnăuțiu’s disciples.

It is only at the end of his speech that Ion Codrescu asks the government specific questions. He requires an explanation on the results of the government policies regarding the expulsion of Jews from the villages; he wants answers concerning the land, buildings and taverns leased to the Jews, since the laws prohibit it; he accuses the Jews of slowing down the government’s attempts to cancel the consular jurisdictions to which the country is still subject.⁶⁴ The Interior Minister, M. Kogălniceanu, defends the administrative measures of the government and he adds that the latter is in control of both the internal situation of the Jews and the relations with foreign powers in this matter, while dismissing Codrescu’s charges regarding the government’s submission to the requirements of the *Alliance Israélite*.⁶⁵ The MPs who speak after Ion Codrescu only develop his ideas and accuse the government to take partial or inadequate measures against the Jews.⁶⁶

The terms of the interpellation addressed by the young conservative P.P. Carp in the Lower House on April 26, 1868 are very different compared to those used by A. Georgiu and Ion Codrescu. And not just in the language. Carp only uses the word *evrei* to speak of the Jews, while the two Moldavian MPs (and the majority of the MPs) use a pejorative synonym, *jidani*. According to Carp, “the Jewish question” should not be transformed into a nationality issue. The government, through its administrative decisions, fails to protect a series of rights – this is the most important accusation the young member of the “Junimea” literary and philosophical circle makes. He is the only one of the MPs from Moldova to denounce the harassment of the Jews. Hence his strident tone against the government and the radical liberal MPs. The latter and the members of the Independent fraction, who form the majority in the Assembly, close ranks when faced with Carp’s accusations.

P.P. Carp accuses the radical liberals and the members of the Independent fraction to have created “the Jewish question,” as the nation does not show anti-Jewish feelings, he says. It is Brătianu and his colleagues in government, the radical liberals, indicts Carp, who turned “the Jewish question” into a social

recorded Bărnăuțiu’s strong influence on his students in Iași, being perceived as an exemplary defender of the Romanian national cause and of the cultural development of Romanians, and as a defender of their Latin origins.

⁶⁴ M.O. n. 281 December 21, 1869/January 2, 1870, session of December 16, 1869: 1300.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 1300-1; M.O. n. 281 December 21, 1869/January 2, 1870, session of December 17, 1869: 1302.

⁶⁶ Nicolae Voinov, M.O. n. 281 December 21, 1869/January 2, 1870, session of December 17, 1869: 1302; Cezar Bolliac, M.O. n. 282 December 23, 1869/January 4, 1870, session of December 17, 1869: 1308; G. Chițu, M.O. n.282 December 23, 1869/January 4, 1870, session of December 17, 1869: 1309; Ion Heliade Rădulescu, M.O. n.283 December 24, 1869/January 5, 1870, session of December 18, 1869: 1317-9.

issue, by exploiting popular prejudices and, above all, by encouraging the creation of the Moldovan Fraction since the radical liberals had no support in Moldova. Carp accuses Brătianu and the liberal radicals to have played a double game, the result of a calculated political and electoral strategy: they left the openly anti-Jewish discourse and measures to the Fraction, while ensuring their support in the government, in the legislative and during elections; in parallel, the government continued the persecution by its “barbarian” administrative circulars, and it denied them when the European powers reacted. In his view, it is the government officials who are accountable for fueling social unrest and for the intensification of the population’s anti-Jewish feelings. The radical liberals used to their own advantage the situation in Moldova where, indeed, trade is dominated by Jews and where there is a real social and commercial rivalry between Jews and Romanians, he explains. Carp provides numerous examples of abuses committed against the Jews by the government and its representatives by “anarchic administrative measures.” The bill of the thirty-one MPs had, Carp says, Brătianu’s consent, the draft being nothing else but the translation of the measures enclosed in the government’s circulars⁶⁷. He asks the government to cease the administrative measures against the Jews which only reinforce the popular disorder and upset the European states. He asks this in the name of civilization, the perfectibility of human nature and natural law (although the latter term is not stated as such).⁶⁸ Even if Carp’s voice is isolated in the liberal majority of the Assembly during the session of 1867-1868, comparable views are expressed by representatives of the great powers.⁶⁹

The Minister of Interior, Ion C. Brătianu, rejects Carp’s accusations, and he underlines his national and peaceful credo.⁷⁰ In his view, Carp is profoundly wrong because a national issue is at stakes: the Jews and the foreigners have taken the place of the Romanians, tolerant and hospitable by nature, in many sectors of economy. He also repeats the idea that the economic and social aspects must be kept separated from the religious aspects. “The Jewish question” is a social, economic and security question.⁷¹ The minister also defends the administrative circulars that are legal, he says, being inspired by older Romanian regulations. He admits however that there were some “exaggerations” in their application.⁷²

“The Jewish question,” as indicative of Romanian nationalism

⁶⁷ M.O. n. 95 April 28/May 10, 1868, session of April 26: 595-6; Frédéric Damé, *Histoire de la Roumanie contemporaine depuis l'avènement des princes indigènes jusqu'à nos jours (1822-1900)*, (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1900), 190.

⁶⁸ M.O. n. 95 April 28/May 10, 1868, session of April 26: 596.

⁶⁹ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 75, 101.

⁷⁰ M.O. n. 95 April 28/May 10, 1868, session of April 26: 596.

⁷¹ *Idem.*

⁷² *Ibid.*: 597. f

The debates in the Constituent Assembly in 1866 on article 7 of the Constitution, the parliamentary questions to ministers and the administrative measures during the years 1867-1869 attest the nature of the antisemitism of that period, and illustrate the reasons the various 'liberal factions' come to defend strongly anti-Semitic and nationalist legislation in the name of progress. The antisemitism the majority of the MPs defend is a form of strong official xenophobia and judeophobia. The issue is less a form of antisemitism *per se*, than a form of official nationalism. "The Jewish question" is not the work of demagogues or political agitators, but a state policy of mainstream politicians whose aim is, already in 1866, to demonstrate that there *is* a state, with state-capacity, based on a homogenous nation.

Article 7 launches the discourse on the Romanian national identity based on anti-Semitic elements.⁷³ Until June 1866, the "Jewish question" is latent.⁷⁴ Public unrest on June 18, 1866 caused around art. 6 of the draft constitution is its founding violent episode. During the late 1860s and then during the 1870s, administrative decisions restrict the civil rights of Jews; it is also a time of anti-Jewish revolts and violence. As a consequence, from 1866 to 1878, the urban concentration of Jews increases, mainly because of their deportation from rural areas, which exacerbates the impoverishment of large segments of the Jewish population. Moreover, Jewish artisans, highly demanded during the 1860s, are gradually replaced by workers from Germany, Austria or France who are encouraged to settle in Romania.⁷⁵

The MPs underline that the Jews are a significant presence from a demographic and economic point of view, threatening to "denationalize" the Romanians, i.e. to endanger some rights and privileges that they consider to belong exclusively to the Romanians. Indeed, Jewish immigration intensified in the late eighteenth century, and during a short period of time the number of Jews increased significantly, especially from 1834 to 1847⁷⁶ (although the figures are contradictory and often inaccurate) mainly in urban areas where Jews were active in trade, industry, manufacturing, and money lending.⁷⁷ The MPs translate their contemporaries' fear of this recent influx of Jews, perceived as a rival population. The liberal MPs refer especially to these recently arrived

⁷³ Edda Binder-Iijima, *Die Institutionalisierung der rumänischen Monarchie*, 70.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷⁵ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 74-117, 167.

⁷⁶ The figures in Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 49, 161-4; Lloyd A. Cohen, "The Jewish question during the period of the Romanian national renaissance and the unification of the two Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, 1848-1866," eds. Stephen Fischer-Galati, Radu F. Florescu and George R. Ursul, *Romania Between East and West. Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu* (New York: Boulder, Columbia University Press, 1982), 198; Alexandru-Florin Platon, *Geneza burgheziei în Principatele Române (a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea – prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea). Preliminariile unei istorii*, (Iași: Ed. Universităţii "Al.I. Cuza", 1997), 314-7.

⁷⁷ Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română. Studiu de imagologie în context est-central european*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 132-76; Alexandru-Florin Platon, *Geneza burgheziei în Principatele Române*, 318-21.

Jews. The protectionism they all manifest illustrates their fear of the economic and social competition of the Jews, particularly in urban areas, while they claim to respond to popular demands in Moldova. As in Russia, the Romanian government tries to take explicit measures in order to isolate Jews from contact with sections of the Romanian society considered too weak to resist their alleged depredations, and in order to limit Jewish economic activities.⁷⁸

Restrictions against the newly arrived Jews are not a novelty during the late 1860s. From the time of the Russian protectorate during the 1830s, restrictive measures were taken against them.⁷⁹ Following the model of the tsarist legislation, they were forbidden to settle in villages, to rent properties or to create industrial properties in cities.⁸⁰ The restriction of civil and political rights of Jews was justified by the same economic protectionism, since many Jews of the recent immigration chose to remain subjects of a foreign power in order to avoid tax and legal arbitrariness of officials in the Principalities⁸¹. For a short period of time, from 1859 to 1866, the Jews established in the Principalities for centuries (called “native” Jews) enjoyed full civil rights and some political rights subject to strict conditions. In the same period, Jews of the recent immigration were completely denied political rights, as well as some civil rights (the right to purchase property was a privilege reserved only to Christian foreigners). The idea that Jews are pernicious for the economy was widespread in the literature of that time.⁸²

The “Jewish question” is not understood in cultural terms. The language of cultural and religious differences is certainly present in the parliament, but it is rather a strategy to cast-off the economic, demographic, political and social competition. Significantly, knowledge of the Romanian language by the Jews or their level of mastery of the Romanian written culture are elements that are missing in the MPs’ speeches. They express only general considerations on the ignorance or the “barbarianism” of the Jews. Similarly, the MPs mention the difference in religion, but they do not even envisage the possibility of converting (mainly the newly arrived) Jews to Christianity, as a condition to help them acquire political rights and, implicitly, become Romanians, and they are not interested in their degree of integration and/or assimilation.

Since article 7 of the Constitution is, until the granting of independence in 1877-1878, the main reason for foreign pressures on the Romanian government, the anti-Semitic arguments of the various liberal MPs become associated with the rejection of foreign interference in the domestic affairs of

⁷⁸ For Russia, see Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 129.

⁷⁹ In 1821, there were three categories of Jews: native (established for centuries), *brisoveliți* (more recently arrived and established on the basis of a princely decision), and *sudiți* (subject to a foreign protection), Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 43; Catherine Durandin, *Istoria românilor*, 130-4.

⁸⁰ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 50.

⁸¹ For the legal status of the Jews and their rights from 1800 to 1866, see Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 43-69; Lloyd A. Cohen, “The Jewish question during the period of the Romanian national renaissance.”

⁸² Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 63-4, 138-9.

the Romanian state. The MPs are ready to take all the necessary decisions to assert the Romanian nation among the other European states. They are concerned above all about the respect of internal political autonomy in the name of what they call “the nation’s law,” as an expression of the ancestral phobia to foreign intervention. As in I. Codrescu, A. Georgiu or G. Brătianu’s⁸³ arguments, “the Jewish question” is strictly a matter of domestic public law and of internal administration, and its transformation into a theme of relations with other states is illegitimate. In the name of the “nation’s law,” Jews should be excluded from the sphere of rights, but the “nation’s law,” despite its name, is a non-legal space. This law stems from Romanianness (*românism*) and from the Christian character of the Romanian nation, according to the Moldavian MPs, that has always been a paramount condition for the existence of the Romanian state. By invoking this law, they justify what they believe to be the traditional refusal to grant citizenship and political rights to non-Christians. They argue that rights and the state’s existence – i.e. all that can be described in political and legal terms – are conditioned by the characteristics of an ethnic body (Romanianness and Christianity), for the sake of national conservation. Foreigners, especially Jews, cannot have access to the sphere of civil and economic (and even less political) rights, if they do not belong to the Romanian nationality. Since foreigners are different in some aspects (especially religious), they cannot be accepted and integrated because of the supreme imperative, the conservation of the nation on which depends the state’s existence. Political, civil and economic rights are thus conditioned by nationality understood as belonging to the homogenous nation.

Nationalist debates play a role in generating and legitimating antisemitism. The parliamentary rhetoric on other ‘non-Romanians’ is indeed similar to that on Jews. For politicians, the issue is both nation formation and antisemitism. Liberal MPs and the liberal press criticize during the 1860s-1870s the various foreigners (not necessarily seen as “other” in popular imaginations) and their intrusion in domestic policies and in economy, hence the restrictive naturalization rules that are adopted as of 1866.⁸⁴ From 1866 to 1918 the elites use Romanian citizenship as an effective instrument of social closure in order to create national integration, to control social change and to reduce competition for resources from competing economic elites.⁸⁵

The liberal MPs do not hesitate to be anti-Semitic and xenophobic in the name of their wish to have a homogenous Romanian nation, which seems to them the most desirable model of political community both normatively and politically. In the name of the homogeneity of the nation, they have difficulties in conceiving political and social pluralism. They do not defend an

⁸³ George Brătianu supports Codrescu and Georgiu’s arguments, M.O. n. 281 December 21, 1869/January 2, 1870, session of December 16, 1869: 1301.

⁸⁴ Silvia Marton, *La construction politique de la nation. La nation dans les débats du Parlement de la Roumanie (1866-1871)*, (Iași: Institutul European, 2009), 184-224.

⁸⁵ Constantin Iordachi, “The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship”, 157-86.

individualistic understanding of citizenship since they reject plurality.⁸⁶ To prevent the permanent settlement of ethnically and religiously undesirable immigrants, it is essential to them to continue to prevent their naturalization. Their ethno-national assumption makes it impossible to consider the granting of nationality by *jus soli*. All the liberal MPs try to protect the indigenous people against the foreign Jew, and thereby they understand the modern nation as homogenous. This attitude shows them as the authors of the nationalist discourse, as direct followers of the 1848 narrative that stressed the continuity of the Romanian nation since time immemorial by the retroactive application of the idea of nation.

The MPs, whatever their political orientation, agree that the priority is to defend the “national interest,” for which they must formulate a restrictive legislation, avoiding at the same time criticism from the European powers. From this point onwards, however, the political cleavage appears: all the liberals are in favor of discriminative social and economic and political legislation against foreigners, particularly the Jews, while the conservatives oppose such radical policies. What unites them is the way they see the role of the unitary state, as well as the definition of the modern nation as homogeneous, hence their desire to protect nationality, i.e. the indigenous element confronted to the ‘others’ and notably to the Jewish otherness. All the politicians conceive the state as the agent of the nation and the creator of a political community and a political culture which must erase the cultural differences and the heterogeneity of the population.

The MPs use general cultural qualifiers when they talk about the Jews. They rather emphasize the unitary character of the Romanian nation, and they insist less on the description of the ‘enemies’ of the nation. Romanians, because they form a unitary people, must exclude the Jews, the most visible foreigners – they are too different and disturb the cultural and ethnic homogeneity of Romanians – from acquiring political rights. It is the dominant view in the parliament, although the idea that a foreigner could become Romanian by law is present, but it is an isolated idea. MPs are thus aware that the codification of the rights and obligations of all those who qualify to become citizens is a core element of state- and nation building.⁸⁷

During the 1860s-1870s, antisemitism is not yet a coherent ideology⁸⁸ and it is not a “cultural code” of a specific ideological milieu⁸⁹. Liberal MPs repeat an idea that is not new at all: the Jews are the indigenous’ competitors in the field of trade and crafts and they are thus detrimental to progress, and to the

⁸⁶ Unlike the American understanding of citizenship, see Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Jews and the Nation: Revolution, Emancipation, State Formation, and the Liberal Paradigm in America and France*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁸⁷ Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-building & Citizenship. Studies of Our Changing Social Order*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 90.

⁸⁸ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 151.

⁸⁹ I rely on the term “cultural code” as explained by Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 110-16.

national prosperity. This conviction was already present in a paragraph of the Organic Regulation of Moldova.⁹⁰ Jewish competition manifests chiefly through the fact that the Jews occupy – illegitimately, say the MPs – the place that is normally due to the national bourgeoisie. Moreover, the interior ministers justify the economic discriminations as directed, so they claim, against all foreign vagabonds, not just against Jews, in order to stop unwanted new immigration. The MPs and ministers express a strong social and economic antisemitism that includes the more traditional hatred against Jews based on economic and religious prejudice. Their speech is full of xenophobic attitudes and words, to which they add the painful (to them) awareness of obvious economic and social divisions between Romanians and Jews that they formulate as being a “national” issue. In this regard, they are not original; they often merely repeat the xenophobic arguments present in the vocabulary of the intelligentsia.⁹¹

The government continues to refuse to describe the “Jewish question” as a religious affair, despite strong accusations from abroad. They express a strong xenophobia against all foreigners and an ethnic and economic frustration. This is nationalism in its most modern understanding, as a means to protect ethnic homogeneity, not medieval pogrom (as described by Adolphe Crémieux and European governments). MPs intend to demonstrate that the Romanian state is sovereign domestically. The state must demonstrate that it is capable of ensuring internal order and stability and protecting ‘its’ nation-ethnic against unwanted new immigrants. One finds the same rejection of *jus soli*, the same ethno-national restrictive policy of naturalization, and the same desire to preserve nationality in the late nineteenth century in Eastern Prussia, when faced to what is perceived as the immigration of “undesirable elements,” the Poles and the Jews (“undesirable” in ethno-cultural terms). Very similar arguments to those of the Romanian government are raised by members of the Prussian government: in order to justify the highly restrictive naturalization, they dismiss the charges of antisemitism and religious persecution, and they rely on national arguments for the “conservation of the German nationality.”⁹² However, antisemitism as expression of political violence against a traditionally discriminated population starts to become an ideology of mobilization and political integration as of 1866. At the onset of mass politics, antisemitism is one of the key elements to trigger incipient popular support: liberals do not attempt to mobilize their electorate in the name of social or economic policies, but in the name of xenophobia and antisemitism. While peasants from the rural regions are still excluded from the political sphere, the majority of the

⁹⁰ Catherine Durandin, *Istoria românilor*, 131.

⁹¹ Dinu Bălan, *Național, naționalism, xenofobie și antisemitism în societatea românească modernă (1831-1866)*, (Iași: Junimea, 2006).

⁹² Rogers Brubaker, *Citoyenneté et nationalité en France et en Allemagne*, transl. Jean-Pierre Bardos (Paris: Belin, 1997), 209-11.

urban population starts to be politically aware. The earliest actions⁹³ specific to grass roots politics are conducted by the radical liberals in 1866, the first to demonstrate the will to create a liberal party by taking advantage of the 1848 progressive idealism. Supported by the press (especially by *Românul*), they create the “Society of Friends of the Constitution,” which organizes public debates open mainly to the (small) bourgeoisie in towns and villages about the nature of the constitutional regime. The Society’s activity and its public or secret⁹⁴ meetings, and the other political manifestations of the radical liberals – electoral gatherings, public banquets, speeches in the street or in cafes – try to awaken the middle class and to mobilize it, and thus to help them electorally in Moldova (where their success is still limited in 1866). There is evidence of this type of political activities frequented by young people, as well as of the less orthodox ways (i.e. street fights) to convince voters in cities.⁹⁵

The radical liberals would like to achieve social unity in the country in order to consolidate their (desired) political hegemony. This wish is not without similarity to the liberals’ strategy in the Hapsburg monarchy: the nationalist discourse allows them to move from the traditional elitist liberal politics to a controlled form of mass politics under their careful supervision.⁹⁶ Like the Austrian liberals, Romanian liberals justify their claim to govern by describing themselves and the social groups they represent as the vanguard of economic, social and political progress, since they appropriated the 1848 popular idealism and the subsequent bureaucratic pragmatism during the 1850s-1860s.⁹⁷ In a period of reduced political participation and limited voting rights,⁹⁸ anti-Semitic and xenophobic discourse does not expect to form a movement, but it is a means for the liberal politicians to refine their ‘state philosophy’, their vision of the state and of the Romanian national identity.

Radical liberals advocate policies of homogenization. As such, they are modern in the sense that they are aware that modern politics requires an idea of the state which should justify its existence in the eyes of the nation and which should provide an identity in order to unite people and link them to the state

⁹³ Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între Unire și Independență (1859-1877)*, (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979), 186-90.

⁹⁴ Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România*, 191-6; Apostol Stan and Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România.*, 116-7.

⁹⁵ C. Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altădată*, vol. I, 1871-1877, ed. Aristița and Tiberiu Avramescu (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1987), 21-2f, 101, 114-5.

⁹⁶ Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries. Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 69-115.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹⁸ On voting rights and the limited role of public opinion in electoral campaigns, see Silvia Marton, “‘Faction’? ‘Coterie’? ‘Parti’? L’émérgence des partis politiques roumains au XIX^e siècle,” *L’État en France et en Roumanie aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, eds. Silvia Marton, Anca Oroveanu and Florin Turcanu, Actes du colloque organisé au New Europe College – Institut d’études avancées les 26-27 février 2010 (Bucharest: Colegiul Noua Europă. București, Institut Français, 2011)

they share. The liberal discourse also shows that the national machinery has to be able to hold it all together and that, at the same time, it produces many differences. The liberals integrate the broader political and cultural reflection of the first half of the nineteenth century on the difference between the indigenous Romanians and ‘the foreigner’ – the comparison to otherness as a fundamental mechanism for building national identity under the impact of modernization. The priority is for them both the development of the state and its constitutional and institutional framework, and the definition of the nation, which exists through the state and its institutions. But modernization is exclusively conceived by the liberal MPs as an organization of the state placed under the rationale of the unity of territory and of the ethnic nation. They are all “modern” in that anti-Semitic discourse serves as a platform for social unity.

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