

## CRAIOVA – IMPORTANT CENTRE OF THE *PAȘOPTISM*

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**Abstract:** The *Pașoptism*-Forty-Eightism is the most important political current that influenced the political, economic, social, cultural life of Romania in the modern age, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1848 revolutionaries made a lot of plans, most of them applied after 1859. Craiova was the most important revolutionary town after Bucharest, but there was also an active counterrevolutionary party. That was due to the fact that the revolution started at Islaz, a small Danubian port from southern Walachia, but the revolutionary party had the main discussions in Craiova. A lot of Craiova's revolutionaries became, as it is shown in the article, members of the political governments after 1859, or members of the cultural, economic, educational institutions.

**Key words:** Craiova, revolutionaries, 1848, government, influence, measures.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The *pașoptist* ideology still represents the fundamental landmark for the modernisation of Romania. The progressive Romanian politic elite, formed under the ideals of the generation from 1821, would come at age, from the political point of view, in the period of 1840-1849, and, a decade later would put into practice all the innovative ideas, whose common purpose was represented by the Union from 1859, the basis of the Romanian modern unitary and national state.

The city of Craiova had been, for centuries, the centre of some important institution with a political, economic, social, and even juridical role, the institution of the Ban from Craiova, which had gradually lost its importance, especially after the move of its headquarters to Bucharest, disappeared in the age of the Organic Regulations.

The reputation of the greatest city from the west of Walachia, was placing Craiova among the urban settlements, meant to create and promote innovative ideologies, even revolutionary ones. First of all, in the support of this idea we can mention the high level of promotion that the education and culture was enjoying.

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Secondly, we can invoke the creation of an economic, political, military elite, and of an intellectuality capable to develop and promote the new ideas. Thirdly, the revolutionary ideas could find a fertile ground among the socmen from the estates of the boyars, whose residence was in Craiova, or in the nearby localities, the small landlords, the traders, the craftsmen, who wished the radical change of the economic life, which meant its modernisation. Around 1848, Craiova had a population of 20,000 dwellers<sup>1</sup>.

In 1845, two remarkable personalities, Gheorghe Magheru, former captain of the pandours, a trusty man of Tudor Vladimirescu and Costache Romanescu, son of Ioniță Romanescu (also a collaborator Tudor Vladimirescu), joined the secret society called “Frăția” (The Brotherhood), founded by Nicolae Bălcescu, Christian Tell, Ion Ghica.

At Craiova, in 1837, coming from Cerneți (after he had previously emigrated from Transylvania), arrived the history teacher Ioan Maiorescu, the father of the great literary critic and political man Titu Maiorescu. Ioan Maiorescu was a school inspector for Oltenia, and a headmaster of the Central School, the present Carol I National College, whose basis had been established in 1826.

## II. THE ROLE OF CRAIOVA IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ACTIONS FROM WALLACHIA

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, Nicolae Bălcescu, having connections with Oltenia himself, Gheorghe Magheru and Costache Romanescu secretly established a revolutionary government. Along with them, there was a real “revolutionary party”, which included: Ștefan Golescu, the son of the famous erudite boyar Dinicu Golescu, Nică Locusteanu, Iancu Obedeanu, Grigore Bengescu, Grigore Marghiloman, Constantin Lecca, Theodor Aman, Iancu Coandă, Petrache Cernătescu, Ioan Mihail, Ion Strâmbeanu, Costache Petrescu, Florian Aaron, Marin Petrescu, Eufrosin Poteca, Gheorghe Radovici, Gheorghe Chițu.

At first, the revolutionists were aware that the metropolis of Oltenia was representing a significant point in the development of the revolution. The remembering of Michael the Brave, or Tudor Vladimirescu, was contributing to the popularity of the city of Craiova. Moreover, the fact that this city was entirely dedicated to the idea of revolution, resulted in the adhering of the entire Oltenia to the *pașoptist* cause. There was not less true that the city had also become an important centre of the state authority. First of all, “the leader of Craiova” was none than Iancu Bibescu, the brother of the ruler Gheorghe Bibescu. Among the reactionary representatives, we also ought to remember Dimitrie Filișanu, Barbu

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Osiac, Ileana Petrescu, *Anul revoluționar 1848 în Oltenia*, “Scrisul Românesc” Publishing House, Craiova, 1973, pp. 11-12.

Știrbei (brother of the ruler Gheorghe Bibescu and Iancu Bibescu), Ion Vlădoianu, Mihai Coțofeanu, Ion Socoteanu, Ilie Roșianu, Ion Bălăceanu, Vasile Căpățână, Manole Jianu.

It is cert that the revolutionists considered Craiova a starting point for the revolution, but the fact that, here, the leader was the brother of the ruler himself, and that his controls had become worse, determined them to try a diversion. First, the important revolutionists, as Ioan Maiorescu and Nicolae Pleșoianu, were holding key positions. Ioan Maiorescu had been appointed the prefect of Romanați County, while Pleșoianu was commanding a foot-soldiers company. Thus, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, it was decided the reading of the Revolutionary Proclamation at Islaz, a small Danubian port, at that point belonging to the former County of Romanați (today the County of Teleorman, where the river Olt meets the Danube). The county was led by a prefect, who was faithful to the revolutionists, while the commander had to guard the port, for stopping the eventual debarking of some revolutionists, Nicolae Pleșoianu was also a *pașoptist*.

At Islaz, the priest Radu Șapcă, prepared the people's assembly, communicating its preparation in a codified manner, under the name of "wedding", and the wait of the signal was "the arriving of the bride".

The provisory government was made of Ioan Maiorescu, Ștefan Golescu, Gheorghe Magheru, Nicolae Pleșoianu, Radu Șapcă, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Christian Tell. The secretary was Costache Romanescu, from Craiova. This means that the government from Islaz was created on the structure of that established at Craiova.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, the ruler Gheorghe Bibescu signed "The Proclamation of Islaz", which became "The Constitution" of Wallachia, but pressed by the Russian consul, who was menacing with the invasions, the ruler abdicated, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, leaving the country.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, the revolutionary government reunited at Craiova, because the group of opposition was continuing there its existence. Colonel Ion Vlădoianu tried to form a point of resistance, with the help of the foot-soldiers from his subordination. Yet, Iancu Bibescu, realising the great sympathy for the revolution, and knowing that his brother had abdicated, decided to not encourage the violence and the human lives losses. Therefore, he chose to auto-exile himself, beyond Turnu-Severin, at Orșova, then under the domination of the Habsburg Empire. Ion Vlădoianu made the decision to give up the counterrevolutionary plan.

The people from Craiova assured the triumphal entering of the provisory government, and Ioan Maiorescu looked for a place where to read the text of "The Proclamation from Islaz". Because he could not find a tribune tall enough, Ioan Maiorescu climbed a nearby tree and, in this manner, the people from Craiova heard the text of the most important programmatic document of the revolution.

The second day, in the morning, a delegation of the reactionaries requested to be met by Ion Heliade Rădulescu. Rather naive, he accepted the meeting with the

delegation. Meanwhile, the foot-soldiers of Vlădoianu took advantage on the lack of people, early the next morning, from the streets of the city (The Central School was not too far from the “Main Crossroad”, the Old Market, which back then was the main commercial centre of Craiova), and forced the entrance in the house where there was the provisory government, ordering the arresting of some of its members. Ioan Maiorescu, helped by Gheorghe Magheru, Iancu Obedeanu, Grigore Bengescu, Nică Locusteanu succeeded in mobilising the local people and the foot-soldiers, adepts of the revolution, surrounding the reactionaries. Thus, the first try was passed, the provisory government accepting the compromise to appoint Dimitrie Filișanu as a prefect, an adept of the reactionary group.

Taking into account that the Ottoman Empire and the Tsarist Russia were “the suzerain power” and “the protective power”, their diplomatic representatives took the decision, that day, to have a military intervention, because the idea of a revolution was not tolerated. Russia decided to invade Moldavia, while the Ottoman Empire had to invade Wallachia.

This can be the explanation for the fact that, at Craiova, as it would also be noticed at Bucharest, it was tried the establishing of a connection with the reactionaries, so that to try the calming down of the external attitude, as regarding the disavowal of the Romanian revolution.

### **III. CRAIOVA AND THE REGULATION OF THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM OF ROMANIA**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, at Craiova, there was established the form of the tricolour, as the revolutionary flag of Wallachia, with the colours blue, yellow and red, first horizontally (and later vertically), having the inscription “Justice for the Brotherhood”, with Cyrillic alphabet. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, the provisory government, along with the troops of foot-soldiers, led by Nicolae Pleșoianu, headed towards Bucharest. At Craiova, Gheorghe Chițu was appointed the commander of the people’s revolutionary guard from Craiova.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, at Bucharest, there was a redefinition of the revolutionary government. Thus, the leadership was entrusted to the Metropolitan Neofit, who had direct and very good relations with the Patriarchy from Constantinople, and who had also become famous after refusing to grant the divorce of the ruler Bibescu, from his wife, and of Maria Ghica, from his husband. Moreover, he had not agreed to marry the ruler with Maria Ghica, after the divorce had been pronounced, through the Patriarchy from Constantinople.

The members of the government were: Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Ștefan Golescu, Gheorghe Magheru, Christian Tell, Nicolae Bălcescu, C.A. Rosetti and Ion C. Brătianu.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, at Bucharest, the colonels Odobescu and Solomon tried to arrest the provisory government, but Ana Ipătescu managed to mobilize the population of the capital city, who assaulted the place where there were the members of the government. Therefore, the provisory government faced the second major ordeal, but it succeeded in maintaining the control of the power.

It followed a month in which the provisory government tried to materialise the political platform projected at Craiova, and made public at Islaz. The most urgent issue was the agrarian reform, which had been expected by the peasants, who also had adhered in large numbers to the cause of the revolution.

The revolution of Wallachia was the highest point of the Romanian accomplishments, from 1848. The 22-point Platform, drawn up at Craiova, made public at Islaz and consecrated at Bucharest, on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, announced a liberal-democrat regime, based on a set of individual and group freedoms, along with the abolition of social-economic privileges, announcing explicitly the emancipation, and the land appropriation of the socmen. Through the founded institutions, there was expected the introducing of a republican form of government, with a rigorous separation of the state powers, and a legislative department, chosen through universal suffrage. During the three months of government, despite the menacing of Russia, some of the provisions from the platform became true: the introduction of a new provisory administration; the organisation of the army, of national guards and a military camp; the abolition of the feudal privileges, and the summoning of a Commission of property; the beginning of an electoral campaign for a Constituent Assembly; the abolition of censorship and a full freedom of press and printing; relations with the governments of the European revolutionary states etc.<sup>2</sup>

Another aspect of the revolution was represented by the tolerance towards the diversity of ideas, including those of the adversaries. The winner was the idea to enjoy the freedom of expression, and nevertheless converted and neutralised in a democratic manner. It was a new conception, although hardly applicable, due to the adversity shown by the former privileged people. The leadership of the revolution had created, since the moment from Craiova, the appropriate environment for the expression of the different political opinions, although the reaction, taking advantage on the idea of tolerance, did not hesitate to unleash two counterrevolutionary complots, in June 1848, which failed because of the people's intervention. The revolution never resorted to censorship, or to the stopping of the political reunions, organised by the adversaries: "We do not judge the people who do not have the same ideas as ours, because [when] we sworn freedom, we thought that each person is free to think in his best interest, because this is one of the rights of freedom, which is called "the freedom of thought", is what "Poporul suveran" wrote on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June. "Pruncul roman" was even making popular comments,

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<sup>2</sup> Apostol Stan, *Revoluția română de la 1848*, Bucharest, 1992, pp. 203-225.

ideas that belonged to some conservative people, although they were obviously in contrast with the liberal-democrat ideology of the revolutionary government from Bucharest<sup>3</sup>. Through the political propaganda, there were popularised a series of liberal notions, even among the population. In the preamble of “The Proclamation” from the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, there were mentioned “*the freedom of printing, the freedom of speech, the freedom of meetings, of speaking, of writing everything is necessary for showing the truth*”. The affirmation and the defending of this belief in an environment of complete freedom, were representing an almost mystical confession of the beliefs. The truth, the ideas and the knowledge could be useful to all the people, so they didn’t need to be taken by one of the revolutionary sides, because they were inspired by God. The freedoms could be harmful only for “the children of the dark”. The excess of freedom, without the supervision of the laws, was representing “the staggering and deranging twirl”, such is the chaos, which could only lead to the dissolution and the self-destruction of the country and the people in it<sup>4</sup>.

The abolition of censorship that had been introduced by the Organic Regulations, and the proclaiming of the freedom of press, led to a new situation in the Romanian Principalities. “Pruncul roman”, “Poporul suveran”, “Naționalul” transformed themselves into a tribune of the free ideas. Although they were promoting the vision of the provisory government, they became the exclusive promoters of the power, representing more the tendency of the public opinions. By popularising the ideas of the revolution, presenting the policy of the government and opting for an educative attitude, the revolutionary press contributed decisively to the birth of a modern public opinion.

The liberal-democrat atmosphere, created by the new regime in Romania, imposed a moderate, but also a modern attitude, of the political factors of decision<sup>5</sup>.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1848, Gheorghe Magheru returned to Craiova, where he established the foundation for the military defence of the revolution, in case of external invasion. In a similar manner, as that from 1821, Oltenia was going to be the point of resistance, in front of the foreign intervention.

Dissatisfied with the administration of Dimitrie Filișanu, some discontented revolutionaries as Eufrosin Poteca, Ioan Mihail, Iancu Coandă, Marin and Costache Petrescu, forwarded a letter of complaint, signed by 36 of the prominent revolutionaries, from the total number of 60, active in Craiova, requesting his replacement. Noticing that their approach was grounded, Gheorghe Magheru would appoint Florian Aaron as a prefect, who took the control of the position, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, he succeeded in removing all the reactionaries from the county administration. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, he read “The

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 245-247.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup> Gheorghe Platon, *Geneza revoluției române de la 1848: Introducere în istoria modernă a României*, Iași, Junimea Publishing House, 1980, p. 63.

Proclamation from Islaz” again, in front of the peasants’ representatives, from Dolj County.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1848, a delegation of the revolutionary government moved to Giurgiu, where the headquarters of the Turkish troops had been installed, led by Soliman Pasha. Here, the Romanian delegation managed to gain the trust of Soliman Pasha, who enjoyed a special welcoming at Bucharest. He had requested the dissolving of the government, and the revolutionaries found the compromise solution, appointing a group of ad-interim rulers, made of Ion Heliade Rădulesu, Christian Tell and Nicolae Golescu. This did not represent a drawback for the other members of the government, not losing entirely their attributions. Costache Romanescu was again the secretary of this group. The effect was the expected one, because Soliman Pasha acknowledged the new ruling from Bucharest, as an expression of the moderate vision. Thus, except for Russia, the European states were acknowledging the existence of the revolutionary government, a situation that made Russia start the measures for forcing the Porte to change Soliman Pasha.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1848, the Commission of Property, whose vice-president was Ion Ionescu de la Brad, started the works by militating for the agrarian reform (the appropriation of the socmen), by giving them compensations. A month later, in which there were lots of useless talks, due to the misunderstandings between the radicals and the moderates, the commission dissolved, without creating anything noticeable. It was evidenced the fact that neither was the external context favourable for some definitive decisions.

If at Bucharest it was maintained the line of a moderate governing, Craiova continued to play the role of “the second capital city” of the revolutionaries. Here, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1848, Ion Strâmbeanu and Petrache Cernătescu published “Naționalul”, the most important *pașoptist* revolutionary newspaper.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, under the circumstances of the hastened events (Fuad Pasha, a radical, had taken the position of Soliman Pasha, for the leadership of the Ottoman troops of intervention), Ioan Maiorescu, Costache Romanescu, Theodor Aman and Eufrosin Poteca delivered public speeches in front of 10,000 peasants who came from all the localities of Oltenia.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1848, at Craiova, on the location where “The Open-air Fair” (the area between the University and Hagi Enuș Church) was taking place, the revolutionaries burned copies of the “Organic Regulations”, also expressing their adversity towards the old regime, which had been removed in June 1848<sup>6</sup>.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1848, when at Bucharest the Ottoman troops intervened, generating the battle from Dealul Spirii, when the fire-fighters of captain Zăgănescu resisted heroically, causing numerous damages for the Ottoman troops, having to lay down the arms, in Craiova there were also manifestations showing solidarity with the heroes from the Capital.

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<sup>6</sup> *Istoria Românilor*, Vol. VII, tom I, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2001, pp. 342-346.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, Hussein Pasha, leading 10,000 Ottoman soldiers entered in Craiova, where few hundreds of people, dwellers of the city and of other localities, showed opposition with guns, pitchforks, axes, spears, being defeated by the more numerous and better equipped Turks.

From obvious considerations, the army from Râureni, led by Gheorghe Magheru was demobilised, considering that the life of the soldiers had been sacrificed in vain, and the armament, the ammunition, could have been used in another, more favourable context<sup>7</sup>.

Gheorghe Magheru and Nicolae Pleșoianu, the main performers of the military structure of the revolution from Craiova, exiled themselves at Vidin. The exile represented a solution for all the revolutionaries, in this period of time being made great efforts for impressing the European diplomacy, as regarding the Romanian cause. During the past years, there had been flourishing the idea of a new European revolution, much better organised, especially after the revolutionaries had become aware of the power of the reactionary force. Yet, it was considered, by the reactionaries, that the Ottomans were protecting them, and they were continuing allowing them even a political activity. The two of them decided to go to Paris. Finally, the Turks retreated from Craiova, whose leadership was taken by Barbu Știrbei.

## CONCLUSIONS

The provisional government did not make any attempt to seize the power, considering themselves only a vector of the power, with only a transitory position, towards more elaborated and legal constituted instances. Due to the extremely unfavourable political environment, they had to delay the applying of some provisions from the platform, subjecting them to the debates and approval of a national representation, which had to be decided after elections, an incomplete work, due to the invasion of the Porte, at the insistence of Tsarist Russia.

As regarding the revolutionists from Craiova, they brought their contribution to the materialisation of the *pașoptist* ideas.

Ioan Măiorescu (1811-1864) became, during 1853-1856, a civil servant for the Ministry of Justice from Vienna. In 1859 he was the headmaster of Eforia Școalelor.

Gheorghe Magheru (1802-1880) came back from the exile in 1857, where he had got involved in the diplomatic fight. In 1860, he was elected deputy of Gorj, and in 1864, he was a Commissary for Oltenia, for the application of the Rural Law for the peasants.

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<sup>7</sup> Constantin C. Giurescu, Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria Românilor din cele mai vechi timpuri și până astăzi*, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House, 1971, pp. 587-592.

Ștefan Golescu (1809-1874), after returning from the exile, activated as a secretary of the Ad-hoc Assembly from Bucharest. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1859, he was appointed President of the Central Commission from Focșani, which had a role in the institutional and legislative unification of Romania. He was a prime-minister in the Government of Wallachia (in 1861) and Prime-Minister of Romania (1867-1868).

Gheorghe Chițu (1828-1897), in exile, studied the law. After an experience as a magistrate, mayor of Craiova, he dedicated himself to the political life, being the Minister of Cults and Public Instructions, Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice, Minister of the Internal Affairs.

Costache Romanescu (1821-1877) was confined at Giurgiu, then exiled, until 1851. He continued his career as a magistrate, then he activated as a member in the electoral committee for the deputies from the Ad-hoc Assemblies in 1857, and as a deputy in the Constituent Assembly from 1866.

Eufrosin Poteca (1786-1858), a learnt monk, activated as a revolutionary ideologist, being remembered for his radical views.

Petrache Cernătescu (1825-1892) left in exile, in 1848, returning in 1854, and committing himself to the unionist activities. After the arriving of Prince Carol of Hohenzolern-Sigmaringen, Cernătescu became a counsellor of the Ruler, teaching him Romanian and the History of the Romanians.

Grigore Bengescu (1824-1881) was the sub-prefect during the ruling of Barbu Știrbei, a Minister of the Cults, and after 1859, during the governing of Mihail Kogălniceanu, he was appointed Minister of Justice (1865), then a director in the Ministry.

Florian Aaron (1805-1887) came back from the exile in 1857, working as a professor, until 1856, and then as a member of the Superior Council for Instruction, contributing decisively to the adopting of the Law for the Public Instruction.

Nică Locusteanu (1821-1900) returned from the exile in 1857. He completed his studies abroad, becoming a frontier engineer, fact that helped him work in the field for the management of the agricultural real estate. He was many times a deputy of the Romanați County, until 1895.

Constantin Lecca (1807-1887) carried out, before the revolution, an intense activity in the press, running “Mozaicul”. He was the Art teacher of Theodor Aman and Costache Petrescu. After the revolution, he made a career from teaching drawing and painting.

Theodor Aman (1831-1891) activated in the artistic area, militating for the founding of a school of belle-arte. He painted important scenes from the historical past of Romania. He painted “Hora Unirii” – Hora of the Union – from Craiova.

Costache Petrescu (1829-1910) painted numerous churches from Oltenia, contributing to the spreading of the revolutionary ideas.

