

THE JEWISH QUESTION 'RESOLVED'. THE MORPHOLOGY AND PURPOSE OF ANTI-SEMITIC DISCOURSES IN ROMANIA AFTER THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN (1878-1879)

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Abstract: *In the light of the recent theoretical developments on 19th-century anti-Semitism, this article aims to offer a synthesis and a critical reconsideration of the corpus of Romanian anti-Semitic discourses of the late 1870s, mainly focusing on the public and political debate on the legal situation of Romanian Jews following the Congress of Berlin. Building on a wide range of Romanian sources pertaining to the Jewish question – including newspaper articles, pamphlets, parliamentary and electoral speeches – the study offers a thorough contextualization of the main discursive strategies employed in the public debates and attempts to outline the roles played by anti-Semitic discourses in shaping the local political balance of power, the sense of national cohesion as well as the specific cultural representations of Western Europe and the modern values it represented.*

Keywords: anti-Semitism; nationalism; Jewish question; modernity; politics

In the case of the newly emerged states of 19th-century Europe, the rapid advancement of modernizing efforts coincided with the intense nation-building processes. In a matter of decades, states like Greece, Serbia and Romania enacted constitutional political systems, set the basis for the national economy and culture and took measures to codify legally a new citizenship. Under these circumstances, the emancipation of the Jews was also brought up on the political program, especially since it represented a heated issue on the international political agenda at the time. In the case of Romania, undoubtedly a latecomer to modernization, this issue encountered serious setbacks culminating with unprecedented outbursts of anti-Semitism in public and political discourses whenever the circumstances imposed a reappraisal of the legal status of the Jewish population residing in the country.

In their attempt to theoretically integrate the outburst of anti-Semitic discourses in the second half of the century into a broader explanatory narrative concerning modernism, many contemporary scholars are inclined to consider it as an outstanding derogation from the principles of modernization. Therefore, anti-Semitism is linked to irrationalism and, in a broader sense, to anti-modernist and illiberal attitudes. In an influential study about the rise of political anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria, Peter Pulzer concluded that the anti-Semitic stances, already present in 1870s, were triggered

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by the rejection of liberalism as it was politically and socially practiced at that time¹. Shulamit Volkov similarly argued that 19th-century German anti-Semitism acted as a cultural code, integrating several discursive strategies which emerged as reactions to a competing liberal, bourgeois, dynamic model of modernization². Similarly, Steven Beller recently pointed out a “quite strong link between German cultural irrationalism and anti-Semitism”³. In the case of Romanian anti-Semitic discourses of 19th century, usually analyzed separately from its western counterpart, the researchers reached a comparable conclusion: being anti-Semite almost necessarily involved the rejection of modernity and an illiberal as well as extreme nationalist stance⁴.

Without contesting these findings as regards 19th century anti-Semitism, one may easily point out that they rely extensively on contemporary meaning of the considered notions. As William Hagen cautioned, the historian should not reduce the historical representations of modernity to its current liberal democratic sense⁵. Claiming that anti-Semitism is a reflection of anti-modernism and irrationalism – as these notions are currently understood – does not necessarily advance the historians’ insight on the context and nature of the examined phenomena. In the light of these theoretical concerns, the purpose of this article is to offer a survey and a critical reconsideration of the corpus of Romanian anti-Semitic discourses during the period the independent Romanian state emerged. The focus will be mainly set on a specific historical moment which occasioned unmatched discursive anti-Semitism, namely the public debate on the legal situation of Romanian Jews following the 1878 Congress of Berlin. The article encompasses an attentive study of Romanian sources as regards the Jewish question – including newspaper articles, pamphlets, parliamentary and electoral speeches – and a thorough contextualization of each discursive strategy employed in the public debates.

When, in 1878, at the Peace Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers conditioned Romanian independency on the political and civil emancipation of the sizeable Jewish

¹ Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria*, London, Peter Halban, 1988², p. 27-30. Todd M. Endelmann supports the same idea in his article *Comparative Perspectives on Modern Anti-Semitism in the West*, in David Berger (ed.), *History and Hate. The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society, 1986, p. 95-114.

² Shulamit Volkov, “*Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code*”, “Leo Baeck Institute Year Book”, 23, 1978, p. 45-46. For a recent reassessment of the concept, see Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews and Antisemitism. Trials in Emancipation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 67-158.

³ Steven Beller, *Antisemitism. A very short introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 55-56.

⁴ “In surveying the 19th century intelligentsia’s development of an ideology of anti-Semitism, we will be struck by how illiberal even the most magnanimous (by Romanian standards, that is) supporters of Jewish rights sound to modern ears”, in William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism. Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth century Romania*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1991, p. 100. More or less, these are also the conclusions of the other (few) books dedicated to the problem of Romanian anti-Semitism in the 19th century: Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie, 1866-1919. De l’exclusion à l’émancipation*, Aix-en-Provence, Éditions de l’Université de Provence, 1978; Beate Welter, *Die Judenpolitik der rumänischen Regierung, 1866-1888* Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Peter Lang, 1989; Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence*, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1995 etc.

⁵ William Hagen, *Before the “Final Solution”: Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland*, “The Journal of Modern History”, 68, June, 1996, p. 378.

population living in the country, the Romanian Jewish question, that is the debate whether the Jews should be granted citizenship or not, took on added momentum. Although, initially animated by romantic nationalist and liberal feelings largely similar to their western counterparts, the Romanian intelligentsia was soon to discover that the *Realpolitik* of the Great Powers flagrantly contradicted its own national aspirations. Anti-Semitism and, to a certain extent, xenophobia, became endemic in newspaper articles, public debates and parliamentary discourses. The proposed solutions to the big question on the political agenda codified a reassessment of Romanians' relationships with Western Europe and its perceived paradigm of modernity, and left a deep imprint on the subsequent evolution of the national ideology. The political instrumentalization of the Jewish question in that period offers the researcher a clue about the particular manner in which the fragile political balance of power was maintained. Furthermore, the Romanian response to the Jewish question is illustrative for the way the Romanian intellectual elite of 1870s defined the nation. Ultimately, given the position and the level of development of Romania in the second half of 19th century, the study of the public and political discourses occasioned by the Jewish question provides a relevant case in point for the local appropriation of the abrupt modernization process and may refine the general theories concerning the functions of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Anti-Semitism in the public debates

As explained elsewhere⁶, the Romanian Jewish question gained momentum as the theoretical emancipation of the Jews was stipulated by an earlier draft of the 1866 Constitution. Due to the violent opposition of a considerable part of the political elite and of the public opinion, hastily instigated by a hitherto unmatched press campaign, the final form of the article 7 of Romanian Constitution, adopted in 1866, denied non-Christians access to naturalization, permanently barring Jews from citizenship on religious grounds. Subsequently, the strategy of politicking adopted by the liberal leaders in search of necessary parliamentary support in a time of chronic political instability, determined a recrudescence of governmental anti-Jewish measures. Ultimately, this triggered the reaction of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and of the Western cabinets who exercised a powerful pressure on the Romanian governments, thus increasing even more the instability of the domestic political system. The climax of the Jewish question was reached in 1878, when the Great Powers, under the influence of prominent Jewish lobby groups, refused to officially recognize the independence of Romania until it revised the 1866 Constitution in order to grant full access to political and civil for all the inhabitants of the country irrespective of their religious creeds.

⁶ See Octavian Silvestru, *Opportunistic politicking versus liberalism in Romania. The Governmental anti-Semitic policies between 1866 and 1868*, “Studia Universitatis Petru Maior. Series Historia”, 8, 2008, p. 103-126.

The Romanian public reactions to the stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin manifested in the press articles and pamphlets published on this occasion. Since the number of sources available for the analysis of these reactions is considerable, a selection based on the criterion of representativeness was inevitable. Among the numerous newspapers of the time, this article focuses for the most part on the liberal official gazette *Românul* and its conservative counterpart *Timpul*, both very influential and illustrating articulate and pertinent opinions on the topic. As for the published materials dealing with the Jewish question after 1878, the analysis builds on a large variety of pamphlets, covering the whole spectrum of political opinions.

In the summer of the 1878, the Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin seems to have taken by surprise all the members of the Romanian elite. Already embittered by the loss of Southern Bessarabia, annexed by Tsarist Russia by dint of another controversial resolution of the Congress, Romanian intellectuals expressed their dismay as regards decisions reached in Berlin on various tonalities. The first hasty reactions oscillated between anger and denial. Emmanuel Crezzulesco, a former Romanian diplomat in Paris with liberal sympathies, bluntly expressed his bewilderment apropos of the Article 44 in a pamphlet entitled *Les Israélites en Roumanie*: "It is impossible for the European cabinets to demand the Romanian state to let itself drown by the evermore invasive flood of a foreign population"⁷. Already at the end of the Congress, *Românul* emphatically declared: "The Jewish question was solved in the same way as the question of Bessarabia. The Jews were placed in a position similar with that of the Russians, as domesticators of the wish of Romanian nation. If the European Areopagus believes it made a service to the Jews of Romania, it makes a big mistake"⁸. The conservative at that time, I. Tanoviceanu, added in reply to the actions of the Great Powers and *Alliance Israélite Universelle*: "There was never a people such unjustly and harshly insulted!"⁹

Gradually, Romanian intellectuals accepted the result of the Congress of Berlin as a *fait accompli* determined by the *Realpolitik* of the Great Powers, even if this also meant coming to terms with their own nation's lack of power. Em. M. Porumbaru, a liberal young intellectual and future minister and senator on the lists of the National Liberal Party, openly admitted this, in a work suggestively entitled *Un Pêché du Congrès de Berlin*¹⁰. Vasile Boerescu a centrist who became, from the summer of 1879, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Brătianu's liberal cabinet, concluded, after his diplomatic voyage in all the European capitals: "Romania remains in the way like a poor spiny hedgehog, which any kid dares to roll with his foot..."¹¹.

In addition to this self-pity attitude, the intellectual elite also developed arguments countering the logical solidity of the decision taken at Berlin. First,

⁷ Emmanuel Crezzulesco, *Les Israelites en Roumanie*, Paris, Dentu, 1879, p. 57.

⁸ "Românul", XXII, July 3, 1878.

⁹ J. Tanoviceanu, *La Question Juive en Roumanie au point de vue juridique et social*, Paris, Imprimerie Saint Michel, 1882, 16.

¹⁰ Em. M. Porumbaru, *Un Pêché du Congrès de Berlin*, Vienne, Imprimerie W. Heinrich, 1879, p. 6.

¹¹ "Românul", XXIII, September 5, 1879.

Romanians spotted incongruence between the principles preached by the Great Powers and their own domestic policies. They pointed out in numerous occasions, the affinities between the Jewish question and the contemporary problem of massive Chinese immigration in California. While American politicians took drastic measures to stop this immigration, Romanians were not allowed to do the same¹². Furthermore, in the context of the economic crisis affecting all European states from 1873 onwards, Germany and France enacted protectionist measures, which limited commerce and the free circulation of persons. However, Germany and France were not accused of being illiberal and anti-modern as it was now the case with the Romanian state¹³.

In these circumstances, the Romanian public discourse contested even the right of intervention of the Great Powers in the domestic affairs of the country. This idea was argued by the fact that the domestic, religious and civil matters were, according to the embryonic international norms the exclusive prerogative of the states¹⁴. For instance, in a moment of nationalist bravado more determined by wishful thinking rather than a clear-cut perception of the international balance of powers, the publicist of *Românul* wrote: “Here, we are the only masters. Romanians dominate the situation. We may do as we please!”¹⁵ Furthermore, since Romania won its independence on the battlefields of 1877, it should not be humiliated and obliged to change its internal law in order to enjoy the rights it already *de facto* possessed¹⁶.

Another point of convergence of all the public discourses concerning the Jewish Question is the exposure of the alleged defamatory practices of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, who deliberately would have disseminated calumnies as regards the policy of Romanian cabinets toward the Jewish population living in the country and, synchronously, has speculated the ignorance of the Great Powers as regards Romania, thus giving the impetus for the emergence of the Jewish question¹⁷. Gheorghe Adrian, a liberal¹⁸ and a former minister of War in the governments which first enacted anti-Jewish legislation in the late 1860s, considered these “contemptible calumnies” a mere stratagem to distract the western public attention from the real characteristics of Romanian people. In his viewpoint, Romanians are “heroic on the battlefield”, “the most hospitable”, “the most tolerant” and “the most sociable” and also possess “the finest customs”¹⁹.

This reconsideration of the hierarchy of values and the discursive attempt to place Romania at an equal level of civilization with the Western states is a constant of the public attitudes toward the Jewish question and Europe. Perceiving the alleged

¹² Cf. for instance, *La Question Israélite en Roumanie par un ancien député*, Geneva, 1879, p. 17-20.

¹³ *La Question Israélite en Roumanie par un ancien député*, p. 20-21.

¹⁴ E. Crezzulesco, *Les Israélites en Roumanie*, p. 4.

¹⁵ “Românul”, XXXIII, August 22, 1879.

¹⁶ Cf. Porumbaru, *Un Pêché du Congrès de Berlin*, p. 22-23.

¹⁷ See, for example, Gheorghe Adrian, *Quelques mots sur la question Israélite en Roumanie*, Paris, A. Parent, 1879, 4-5, p. 8.

¹⁸ Cf. Mihai Sorin Rădulescu, *Elita liberală românească* [The Romanian Liberal Elite], București, Edit. All, 1998, p. 42.

¹⁹ Cf. Adrian, *Quelques mots sur la question Israélite en Roumanie*, p. 5.

injustice of the Western policy towards Romania, the local elite reacted by questioning the normative values of the Great Powers and by developing an alternative, more comforting hierarchy of values. Accordingly, “the press [in Romania] is as free as in England, the freedom of association is practiced as easily as in Berne or Geneva; the citizens of the Principality are as equal as the French citizens as regards the law and the taxation; the electoral laws are at least as liberal as in Italy and Belgium, and there is no aristocracy – as in Austria – nor privileged classes – as in Germany”²⁰. Such assertions necessarily called forth the idea of equal status of Romania, among other European states. In this line of thought, it was illegitimate for the Great Powers to impose on Romanians the precepts of a law that had already been observed in the Principality, even more strictly than in Western Europe²¹. The tendency to create a distinct normative identity observed in the public discourses of the Romanian elite immediately after the Congress of Berlin testifies to the quasi-unanimous²² local irritation induced by the reactivation of the Jewish question.

In order to escape the accusations of religious intolerance and to further legitimize their reluctance to grant civic and political rights to the Jews residing in the country, Romanian intellectuals employed the same explanatory strategy that was used since the emergence of the Jewish question in 1866. It should be noticed here that, although Romanian Constitution barred Jews from political and civil rights on religious basis, religion in itself was not an important point of concern in the subsequent public debates regarding the Jewish question at the time, although it also occurred in some circumstances. Instead, it may be claimed that religion represented only the legal device, “an inventive but illiberal utilization of a local juridical practice, inserted into a Westernized legal framework”²³ that permitted the politicians to enact an anti-Jewish attitude with deeper and broader roots. In this respect, for the liberal Crezzulesco, “the article 7 [...] was inspired by purely political preoccupations and a concern for social preservation”²⁴.

²⁰ Crezzulesco, *Les Israélites en Roumanie*, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibidem*. Cf. also, *La Question Israélite en Roumanie par un ancien député*, p. 21.

²² It should be noted, though, that not all Romanian intellectuals adopted a defensive, anti-Semitic attitude. For example, Vânav Liteanu, the Romanian diplomatic agent in Berlin at the time, considered that a full Jewish emancipation would be beneficial and would close the ties between Western Europe and Romania. Cf. Carol Iancu, *Bleichröder et Crémieux. Le Combat pour l'émancipation des Juifs de Roumanie devant le Congrès de Berlin. Correspondance inédite, 1878-1880*, Montpellier, Centres de Recherches et d'Études Juives et Hébraïques, Université Paul Valéry, 1987, p. 100.

²³ Cf. Constantin Iordachi, *The Ottoman Empire. Syncretic Nationalism and Citizenship in the Balkans*, in Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (eds.), *What is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 142.

²⁴ Crezzulesco, *Les Israélites en Roumanie*, p. 51. The only consulted source where the religious difference appears as the ultimate justification of anti-Jewish policies is written by a certain Necolaie Cozirescu, *Constituanta viitoare sau triumful creștinismului în contra jădanilor*, Botoșani, Imprimeria V. Buzilă, 1881. A passage from this work, which otherwise would deserve a thorough study, illustrates the ludicrous reasoning of its author: “The Jews revengefully and evilly provoked the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the fall of Rome by calling in the pagan Germans (...) and they frightened and astonished the whole world at the 1878 European Congress in Berlin where they asked for the mastery of the world...”, *ibidem*, 10-12.

This justification of a non-emancipatory policy as regards the Jews was socially motivated by the apprehension of an exceptionally high percentage of Jews living in certain regions of Romania, especially in Moldova. At the time, the Jewish population reached approximately 250.000²⁵. However, the public discourses on the Jewish question speak constantly of 400.000-500.000 Jews residing in the country. In spite of this exaggeration, the demographical comparison provided by these intellectuals remain valid, since even with a population of 250.000, Romania still had the highest percent of Jews per total population in Europe. Therefore, a comparison between the Jewish question of Serbia or Bulgaria with the Romanian case is untenable since, as Tanoviceano argued, only in the city of Iași, the capital of Moldova, lived seven times more Jews than in all Serbia²⁶. Definitely, their number scared Romanian intellectuals, especially Moldavian ones, but there were other perceived Jewish “traits” which made the public discourse to shift on an anti-Semitic stance.

Jews, especially those from Moldova, were considered total outsiders to the nation “because of their origin, beliefs, language, customs and habits”²⁷. Moreover, they constitute a “state within state” and pay no respect to the institutions nor the laws of Romania under the subtle guidance of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*²⁸. The public discourse concerning the Jewish question preserved two distinct and very difficult to juxtapose images of the Jew living in Romania. The first envisaged the Jew as a social menace who is not only a “filthy outsider” but also a mentally retarded, « excessivement arriéré » as Tanoviceano claimed, generally not knowing to read or write. At the same time, the Jew was viewed as an imminent economic threat for the nation, who already seized the vast majority of the mortgage and commercial loans²⁹. By specula and usury, this type of Jews would ultimately get hold of the entire country, degrading the Romanian nation.

Building on the tradition of previous anti-Semitic discourses developed since the 1860s, the Romanian intellectual elite, irrespective of the political allegiance, adopted a more or less radical anti-Semitic stance. This attitude permeated all the cultivated strata of the society, thus determining a genuine collective obsession on the Jewish question and its political resolution. A simple survey of the press of the 1879 testifies the public frenzy as regard this issue. All major newspapers wrote daily about the Jewish question from January until October, analyzing the continual changes of the state of affairs from the political, national, economical and social perspective. This outburst of public passion testifies the incessant media coverage and the influential impact of anti-Semitic messages during the period. The Jewish Question reactivated by the stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin was the culmination of an extensive and pervasive discursive tradition pertaining to anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

²⁵ See Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie...*, p. 142 and Beate Welter, *Die Judenpolitik der rumänischen Regierung*, p. 216-220.

²⁶ Tanoviceano, *La Question Juive*, 37.

²⁷ Adrian, *Quelques mots sur la question israélite*, 9.

²⁸ Tanoviceano, *La Question juive en Roumanie*, 33.

²⁹ *La Question Israélite en Roumanie par un ancien député*, 11.

An 1874 textbook dedicated to the instruction of future elementary teachers offers a good example of the recurrence and compelling character of anti-Semitic discourses. The Jew is depicted as the perfect impersonation of the dangerous stranger: “In Romania, the outsider is most predominantly and deleteriously represented by the Jews, who are completely segregated from Romanians, because of their ignorance and vicious life. Therefore, we not only have no benefit from this cohabitation, but we started to be disadvantaged”³⁰. Conversely, the Jews may ameliorate their condition through compulsory education in Romanian state-sponsored schools, hereby learning “the Romanian language, the Romanian history and the Romanian customs”. Moreover, the textbook stated that the Jews should be given political and civil rights in Romania, on the condition that they “romanianize” through education³¹. Even before the Congress of Berlin, anti-Semitism was already comprehensively disseminated in all the cultivated strata of the society by means of similar messages.

In the context of the 1879 revision of the article 7, these discursive resources were recuperated and channeled in the public sphere. The liberal Vasile Conta, for instance, a university professor and former member of *Junimea*, emphasized in his speeches and brochures of 1879 all the anti-Jewish tenets of his time. As a philosopher, he was well acquainted with the scientific corpus of his epoch and could claim therefore that his own anti-Semitic views, as well as the article 7 of the Constitution, accorded with “the modern science and ideas of our time”³². Accordingly, he deployed the most virulent racial anti-Semitism, considering the Jews a distinct, unamenable and horrible race, with physical and psychical flaws. The same ideas were on the lips of other prominent personalities. The Romanian Transylvanian writer Ioan Slavici shared with Conta the same quasi-racist views, when he claimed that the Jews are not a nation but a different world with its own physical and psychological traits, utterly different from Romanian society³³. In this logic, he insists on the already asserted idea of Jewish ‘unassimilability’ and considered them a social disease – nevertheless “caused by our own weakness”³⁴. Therefore, to accept them inside the nation equated with a social and national suicide for Slavici³⁵. Still, the concern with complying with Western standards of ethics were present thus far, since

³⁰ George Melidon, *Manualul învățătorului sau elemente de pedagogie practică pentru usul școalelor populare* [The elementary teacher's manual. Elements of practical pedagogy for the use of popular schools] (București, 1874), 120. apud. Mirela Luminița Murgescu, *Între „bunul creștin” și „bravul român”. Rolul școlii primare în construirea identității naționale românești* [Between the “Good Christian” and the “Brave Romanian”. The role of the Primary School in the Romanian National Identity Building], (Iași: Edit. A ’92, 1999), 219.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Vasile Conta, *Cine sunt jidanii? Primejdia jidovească* [Who are the Jews? The Jewish danger], București, Librăria Românească, 1879, p. 2.

³³ Ioan Slavici, “Soll” și “Haben”. *Cestiunea ovreilor din România* [Soll and Haben. The Jewish Question in Romania], București, 1878, p. 10-11.

³⁴ *Ibidem* p. 25, 46.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

the main objective of Slavici's pamphlet was to say that any refusal to accept the conditions of art. 44 of the Berlin Treaty should be justified according to *modern* principles, accepted by the Great Powers³⁶.

In a text, which astonishingly anticipated by one year the tone and the arguments of Wilhelm Marr's *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanentum*, published in 1879, a Romanian liberal, D. Rosetti-Tezcano, employed a violent, quasi-medical jargon to characterize Jews and their influence. Accordingly, the Jew was perceived as an “unhealthy germ, bearer of epidemics”, a “real social virus that spread cancer in the midst of the nation”³⁷. In addition, drawing on the theory of the organic character of the nation, he compares the Jews living in Romania with the feared parasite phylloxera, seriously menacing back then the vineyards of Europe, thus calling them *Roumanoxera*, a “hostile and very dangerous race”³⁸.

Mihai Eminescu, the greatest poet of Romanians up to contemporary standards, also a rabid conservative and anti-Semite, codified in his late-1870s' writings a certain defensive regard reflecting the frustration caused by the sudden political and social mutations affecting the country expressed in a very clear anti-Semitic form. His obdurate opposition to “even the most insignificant juridical or economic concession to all Jews” was motivated by a long list of arguments. By 1879, Eminescu was of the opinion that “there are no Romanians of Israelite rite because there are no Israelites who speak Romanian in their families or engage in marriages with Romanians; in other words, because the Jew is a Jew, feels himself as a Jew and, until this moment, has not wanted to be anything but a Jew”³⁹. Language, religion and distinct customs foremost prevented the Jews to integrate in Romanian society of the time. The conclusion he drew was that they were a parasitic population, which would eventually ruin the peasants and middle class of Romania. “Jews do not deserve rights anywhere in Europe simply because they do not work, since traffic and usury are not work. (...) The Jew is always a consumer, not a producer. If legislative circumstances, as it is the case in Romania, compel him to produce, he does a damaging and superficial work. His slogan is “cheap and flimsy” until he ruins the Christian craftsman. The slogan changes to “expensive and bad” when he finally remains the sole master of the market”⁴⁰. Moreover, Jews represent “an economic army, a race of associates against everything non-Jewish”⁴¹. His portrayal of the Jewish population is thus completely

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

³⁷ « Le juif est un germe malsain, un porteur d'épidémie. (...) Voyez ces plaques livides qui s'étalent sur notre territoire : ce sont les repaires du juif, groupés en noyaux serrés. Elles poussent, se rapprochent, se donnent la main et finissent par transformer ce corps vivant en un amas de pourriture. Il n'est pas un village, un hameau qui ait échappé à la contagion. », D. Rosetti-Tezcano, *La Roumanie et le Juif devant l'Europe*, Bacău, Imprimerie de „l'Indépendance”, 1878, p. 22.

³⁸ D. Rosetti-Tezcano, *La Roumanie et le Juif devant l'Europe*, 35-40.

³⁹ M. Eminescu, *Dacă proiectul majorității*, “Timpul”, IV, July 7, 1879, reprinted in *idem., Opere*, Vol. X, București, Edit. Academiei, 1989, p. 291.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 304.

negative. For that reason, instead of granting Jews emancipation, Eminescu urges for a more drastic policy concerning them⁴².

The anti-Semitic ideas developed in the context of the debates around the Jewish Question by subsequent important personalities of Romanian culture fully reveal the extreme forms reached by public discourses and the dramatic passion of its agents. The public sphere extensively conveyed and tested the various discursive strategies associated with the debates around the Jewish question. Anti-Semitism from its mildest forms to the most radical was almost unanimously adopted thus leading to a tense backdrop for the political debates around the revision of Article 7 of the 1866 Constitution.

The Jewish question in political context

For the Romanian political class and especially for the liberal government in power the Article 44 of the Congress of Berlin came as a shock. The fact that two of the most ardent enactors of anti-Jewish legislation of the late 1860s – Ion C. Brătianu as Prime Minister and M. Kogălniceanu as Minister of Foreign Affairs – were now asked by the Great Powers to enforce the civil and political emancipation of the Jews adds more irony to the situation. Indeed, the liberal government of Brătianu was once again in a very delicate position, which supposed a double risk. On the one hand, to accept the conditions imposed at Berlin implied the adoption of a positive legislation concerning the Jews. This would have left the cabinet without the support of the Moldavian *Fraction* and of diverse conservative groups who *a priori* rejected any alleviation of the status of the Jews. Furthermore, given the state of the public opinion, analyzed above, such a legislative measure, if at all possible, might have led to serious popular dissent menacing the social stability of the country and the already highly unstable balance of power. On the other hand, refusing to comply with the decisions of the Great Powers would have entailed the full deterioration of the already poor image the liberal government had in Western Europe. In either case, the cabinet and its allies risked again, as it had happened already in 1868, to lose the power. For that reason, the instrumentalization of the Jewish question required diplomacy, address, and patience from the part of the politicians in power.

Under these circumstances, the tactics employed by Wallachian liberals were complex and very effective. Initially, the government tried to postpone as much as possible the parliamentary demarches concerning the revision of article 7 and avoided systematically to offer any official suggestion for revision. At the same time, the gazette of the liberal party was pleading the cause of this deliberate delay which supposedly offered the necessary time for the public to make out “the danger represented by the claims of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*” and to realize that “the

⁴² “Jews do not even deserve the rights they have.” Mihai Eminescu, *Evreii și conferința*, “Curierul de Iași”, X, No. 2 (January 9, 1877), in idem, *Opere*, Vol. IX, p. 302.

reasons for exclusion are not religious, but economic”⁴³. Ultimately, this strategy proved successful. As it has been shown, the public discourse concerning the Article 44 and the Jewish population residing in Romania became vituperative and unanimous by the time the Jewish question was put on the political agenda of the Parliament.

The politicians irrespective of their doctrinal affiliation adopted almost entirely the public point of view. In the passionate parliamentary debates on the Jewish question, this fact stood out with clarity. The reactivation of the Jewish question scandalized the entire political class. The first reaction of the politicians was to vehemently condemn the Great Powers for what they perceived as an unjust demand. For instance the moderate Kogălniceanu, viewed the decision taken at Berlin as a “significant encroachment on Romania’s sovereignty and a major inquiry to her dignity”⁴⁴. Titu Maiorescu, at the time a conservative deputy who passed as a philo-Semite, was of the opinion that the lobby of *Alliance Israélite Universelle* has been very unusual, and the pressure exercised by the Great Powers was simply revolting. That is why he considered a defensive stance in the Jewish question as “the best solution against the illegitimate and unjust requests which violate the will of the country”⁴⁵. The liberals were also outraged by the attitude of the Great Powers as regards Romania. The concessive ones laid the blame for the Article 44 on the calumnies continuously launched by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* who surprisingly managed to deceive all the cabinets of Western Europe⁴⁶. The most virulent protesters, like the liberal Aristide Pascal qualified the demand of Europe as a joke. In his words, Western Europe “has a guilty conscience because of the numerous persecutions it inflicted on the Jews, and now tries to make a clean breast of the whole thing”⁴⁷. In a parliamentary motion advocating the preservation of the Article 7 of the 1866 Constitution in an unaltered form, eight deputies qualified the decision of the Treaty of Berlin as illegal. In conformity with all accepted international norms, they argued, the right to legislate in domestic affairs, the citizenship policies included, was the exclusive prerogative of the state, be it autonomous or independent. Consequently, the unrevisionists considered that Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin contradicted all established juridical norms and motivated on this as well their own radical stance vis-à-vis the Jewish question⁴⁸.

During the debates of 1879 concerning the Jewish problem, politicians were not divided, as today one would imagine, between anti-Semites and adepts of emancipation, but between radical anti-Semites and anti-Semites that seemed more

⁴³ “Românul”, XXIII, February 15, 1879.

⁴⁴ W. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

⁴⁶ This was the point of view of the deputy Gheorghe Missail: “The Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin is the exclusive effect of the calumnies launched by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*”, in *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, Paris: Typographie Ch. Marechal, 1879, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Cf. “Românul”, XXIII, April 28, 1879.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Moțiunea nerevisioniștilor în chestiunea israelită* [The Motion of the Unrevisionists on the Jewish Question], București, Tipografia Curții, 1879, p. 3-8.

moderate. The differences lied only in the degree. In order to thwart the exact application of the Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin, politicians put forth a series of counterarguments, exposing their anti-Semitic views. First, the Jews were unanimously perceived as strangers to the Romanian nation, with different customs, traditions and aspirations. In this sense, the unrevisionists considered the Jews “a nation which, although scattered around the world, has nevertheless its own past, customs and aspirations to which it clings”⁴⁹. The liberal leader, Dimitrie Ionescu asserted the same idea during an electoral meeting in April 1879: “Neither Europe, nor a Romanian can claim that 500,000 strangers from the country, as regards their language, mores, habits and aspirations, can become all of a sudden Romanian citizens”⁵⁰. Since all politicians adhered to a specific exclusionary idea of the nation, which supposed a community sharing the same origin, language, beliefs, mores and aspirations, the Jew was from the outset perceived as the embodiment of the outsider.

Second, with few exceptions, the politicians were convinced that the Jews were unassimilable and represented a *nation within nation* in Romania. Vasile Conta expressed this idea in a quasi-racial form during a speech in the Constituent Assembly⁵¹ while the *fractionist* Nicolae Voinov emphatically declared: “Irrespective of the country they reside in, the Yids remain Yids and do not assimilate. They make a nation within nation and remain in an immobile state of Barbarism”⁵². The Jew was also considered a traitor of the nation, who chose to address to the Great Powers although he knew this would create trouble for the whole country. Therefore, the Romanian diplomatic agent in Paris, Nicolae Callimachi-Catargi publicly answered to an accusatory letter of Adolphe Crémieux by admitting that “one of the most important accusations the Romanians made as regards the Jews is that they obey an authority hostile to their own country”⁵³, that is the *Alliance Israélite*.

Furthermore, prolonging the ideas already in the air in the public discourse, the politicians considered the Jewish population a great menace from the perspective of its considerable size, level of culture and economic potential. In their discourses, all Romanian politicians spoke of the consistent number – ranging between 400,000 and 550,000⁵⁴ – of Jews living in the country. This exaggeration almost doubling the actual size of the Jewish population strengthened the fears and the reticence of the Romanian politicians as regards the Jewish question.

⁴⁹ *Moțiunea nerevisioniștilor în cestiunea israelită*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ “Suplement al Românului”, April 28, 1879.

⁵¹ *Moțiunea nerevisioniștilor în cestiunea israelită*, p. 24-26.

⁵² *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 52.

⁵³ “Le Temps”, October 5, 1879.

⁵⁴ At the end of a phantasmagoric calculus, the unrevisionist Vasile Alecsandri concluded that in 1879 there were 335,800 Jews in Romania, a number which is rounded to 400,000 for rhetorical ends (*Moțiunea nerevisioniștilor în cestiunea israelită*, 160). The Prime Minister I. C. Brătianu believed the correct number was between 4 and 500,000, while the *fractionist* Andrei Vizanti advanced a total of 550,000 (cf. *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 11, 31).

As for the economic and social threat the Jews represented, the Moldavian liberal Nicolae Voinov put it bluntly: “Because of the Jews and their disloyal competition, the beginning of Romanian economic development was repressed”⁵⁵. The *fractionist* I. Codrescu also pointed out the social and economic peril represented by the Jew, and rhetorically linked the political resolution of the Jewish question with the public anti-Semitic agitations: “Bearing in mind the perspective of the emancipation of Jews *en bloc*, bearing in mind the perspective of seeing the Jews, who already exploit our peasants with their taverns, exploiting them as mayors and taxmen, how could we not find well founded and legitimate the anxieties of the people?”⁵⁶

In fact, the most extreme apprehension of the Romanian politicians was that *Alliance Israélite Universelle* would plan to transform Romania into a new Palestine, a completely Jewish country. This fear was expressed by Nicolae Blaremburg in the Parliament⁵⁷ and was in all appearances sustained by the liberals in power. In their official gazette, the Jews were systematically equated with a “foreign solvent” endangering Romanian nationality⁵⁸. In the context of obsessive media coverage of the Jewish question, these rhetorical practices must have become evident even for the most versatile politician. While the alarming proportion of the Jewish population, its ruthless economic practices and the imminence of a national catastrophe were vividly and obsessively asserted, anti-Semitic attitude was purportedly not an option, but a necessary reaction to facts.

The strategy of temporization, although relatively secure for the liberal government, was not understood very well in Moldova, where politicians feared the worst: “Our capital has already become a Jewish town. Now the Wallachians want to grant citizenship to Jews, in spite of our will. (...) Moldova is fed up with the red administration”⁵⁹. Such radical discourses, which could be heard even in the halls of the Parliament, made explicit the possible disintegration of the recently created Romania. The conservative press organ *Timpul* bitterly observed: “The Deputy Chamber is not anymore divided between the opposition and the governmental supporters, but between Moldova and Wallachia. (...) At least in that question, the Wallachians should let themselves led by the Moldavians – since the Jewish question is a Moldavian question”⁶⁰. Later on, in a discourse in the Constituent Assembly, M. Kogălniceanu admitted that the Jewish question divided the country: “A civil war takes place at the moment through letters, journals and petitions. It is in our power to prevent it in the streets”⁶¹. The liberals in power answered with a series of articles and public speeches, which accredited the idea that the Jewish question is of national

⁵⁵ “Românul”, XXIII, March 2, 1879

⁵⁶ *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 52.

⁵⁷ *Moțiunea nerevisioniștilor în sesiunea israelită*, p. 41.

⁵⁸ Cf. for instance “Românul”, XXIII, June 3, 1879.

⁵⁹ “România Liberă”, January 3, 1879.

⁶⁰ “Timpul”, July 10, 1879.

⁶¹ “Românul”, XXIII, September 29, 1879.

importance, beyond any party interest and strategy of politicking. In this logic, there existed no Moldavian economic and social problems, but national ones⁶². The Jewish question was the perfect occasion for the liberals to demand the unity of all those patriotic politicians preoccupied by the fate of the country and to consolidate discursively the national cohesiveness.

The political process that led to the revision of the Article 7 in the Constitution was complex. It began in February/March in the Parliament with a long debate over the means to comply with the stipulations of Treaty of Berlin. At that moment, Romanian politicians had to choose between modifying the constitution, and completely defying the will of the Great Powers by preserving the same restriction as regards the access of Jews to citizenship. Finally, the perspective of obtaining the independence prevailed and the Parliament voted for the revision of the Constitution but not without a fierce dispute. In the general eagerness to solve once and for all the Jewish question, on March 25/April 6, 1879, Prince Carol dissolved the legislature thus opening the way for the election of a new Constituent Assembly⁶³. The electoral process was expectedly characterized by a multitude of discourses on the Jewish question. Since the public opinion did not favor the Jewish emancipation, the politicians promised at this point not to grant Jews civil and political rights out of a strategy of politicking or personal conviction⁶⁴. Ultimately, in autumn, the different proposals for the revision of the Constitution were discussed and a new version of the Article 7 was adopted. From the point of view of the employed political strategies and anti-Semitic standpoints, the types of discourses delivered throughout that period by different political groups practically maintain the same logic.

Both during the parliamentary debates on whether Article 7 from the Constitution should be revised or not – in February and March 1879 – and in the period of the actual debates on the revision – September and October 1879 – the appeals to the patriotic feelings and the unity of the political class became recurrent in the discourses of the officials. For instance, after the proposal of the revision of article 7 was voted by the Deputy Assembly, the following message was published in an issue of *Românul* from February 1879: “This question is not a party question, but a national one, on which all the parties in perfect agreement should meet. Their unity would be also a message to those abroad who want to make laws in our country without consulting us”. As Prime Minister, Ion C. Brătianu employed a similar discourse in front of the Parliament⁶⁵. This strategy must be interpreted in

⁶² *Ibidem*, cf. also “*Românul*”, XXIII, January 8, 1879.

⁶³ “*Românul*”, XXIII, March 29, 1879.

⁶⁴ Cf. Constantin Bacalbaşa, *Bucureştii de altădată*, vol.1 (1871-1884) [Bucharest in the former days], Bucureşti, Edit. Albatros, 2007, p. 316. “The country was against the political emancipation of the Jews and the revision of Article 7 as it was demanded by the executive and the Treaty of Berlin. Therefore anybody who promised to vote against the revision was likely to be elected”.

⁶⁵ *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 52.

two complementary ways. First, the Jewish question, by the drastic opposition it determined between Romania and Western Europe, put a great burden on the cabinet. By appealing to the unanimity of the political class, the government was thus trying to remove a part of the responsibility from its shoulders. Second, the manifest unanimity of the political class on this issue prevented open conflicts and legitimized better the governmental actions, enabling the liberals to remain in power.

Later on, in July 1879, when in spite of all efforts, unanimity on the Jewish question seemed improbable, the government resigned. Without hesitation, Carol nominated as Prime Minister the same Brătianu. In his viewpoint, the Wallachian liberals and especially their leader, were the only capable of solving the Jewish question and therefore benefitted from all his support⁶⁶. In the attempt to ensure the support of the Parliament, Brătianu co-opted the two leaders of the moderate conservatives into the new cabinet formed in July 1879. Thus, Vasile Boerescu and Nicolae Krețulescu were appointed as Minister of the Foreign Affairs, respectively, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction⁶⁷. At the same time, as the liberals from Moldova, especially those from the *Fraction* were opposing any change in the Constitution, the cabinet insistently advocated the compromise between the different liberal groups, in order to save the country from “serious internal and external threat”⁶⁸. All these efforts and discourses envisaged to create the necessary support for the liberal government, in a moment when its remaining in power seemed improbable.

Likewise, since the Jewish question was considered of national interest and the opinions converged in assigning to Jews a catastrophic image, any discourse favoring in the slightest way the Jews living in Romania was vehemently labeled as anti-national. In the context of the political struggle of 1879, anti-Semitic discourses became a norm and the Jewish question an electoral weapon. Philo-Semitism was the gravest accusation against political enemies while anti-Semitism and promoters of anti-Semitic actions were perceived as great patriots and defenders of the national interest. All parties blamed the others of being philo-Semites. The liberals in power accused the conservatives that in their attempt to seize the power were willing to make concessions for the Jews adding that “it is not a secret that the conservatives opened the borders of Moldavia for the Jews, colonized their domains with them, thus creating Jewish towns, and attempted to make them the middle class of Romania”⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ In his private letters Carol noted “Thank God that the conservatives are not in power, because they would have been incapable of solving the Jewish question as they have been incapable to wage the war.” Cf. Sorin Cristescu (ed.), *Carol I. Corespondența personală (1878 – 1912)*, București, Tritonic, 2005, p. 66.

⁶⁷ Cf. Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, p. 167.

⁶⁸ “Românul”, XXIII, October 4, 1879.

⁶⁹ “Românul”, XXIII, June 24, 1879. Such accusations are constant in this journal throughout the whole year 1879. Nevertheless, there were also liberal owners who used to invite the Jews to settle on their domain, like M. Kogălniceanu, the actual Minister of Interior (see Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, 42), but the liberals of course minimized this aspect.

Besides “opening Moldova for the Jews”, the conservatives were also accused of having protested against the measures taken by the liberal governments in 1867/1868, thus overthrowing the liberals from power and allowing the Jewish invasion in Moldova⁷⁰. At the same time, conservatives blamed the liberals for similar actions. Through their official gazette, they accused that “the liberal cosmopolite organization has transformed Romania into a gutter in which all the social ordure of the West and of the East flows”⁷¹. In reaction, liberal gazettes published *in extenso* the 1866 anti-Semitic discourses of I. C. Brătianu, in which the Jews were portrayed as a plague for the country, having economic dominance over the Romanian economy and literally invading the country, especially Northern Moldova⁷². By bringing in the public memory the anti-Semitic past of their leader, the liberals wanted to create for Brătianu a vivid image of a rabid anti-Semite which would help the party in the domestic political struggles. On the other hand, outside the country, Brătianu and his collaborators were trying to abstain from any anti-Semitic excess, acting only as true nationalists concerned by the future of the country.

Although not officially, the liberals adopted a strong anti-Semite position coupled in a demagogic way with rabid nationalist stances. During the electoral meetings of May 1879, prominent liberals asserted these views in total agreement with the audience⁷³. Nicolae Fleva, exemplifies the hostility toward the Jews: “I am against the Jews. As for granting them rights *en masse*, like all the Romanians, I would rather prefer to die fighting than to suicide ourselves”⁷⁴. Brătianu himself acknowledged in a Parliamentary discourse that he would not have advocated the revision of the Article 7 if the stipulations of Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin would not suppose a danger for the country⁷⁵. Furthermore, the Prime Minister insisted that he would never naturalize the Jews *en masse*, because this equated national suicide⁷⁶. The conservatives made use of the same type of anti-Jewish discourse. “Romania has no debts to the Jews other than a good rope and some posts, especially designed for certain local members of the *Alliance Israélite*”⁷⁷.

In the eve of the revision of article 7, anti-Semitism has become a real virtue for the Romanian politicians and the Jewish question the main fixation and political weapon of those interested in politics. Nevertheless, the politicians agreed that the Constitution needed revision for two reasons. First, by modifying the Article 7, Romania would finally be recognized as independent, the ideal of every Romanian

⁷⁰ “Românul”, June 15, 1879.

⁷¹ “Timpul”, IV, February 27, 1879. The article was written by Mihai Eminescu.

⁷² Cf. “Românul”, April 26 and 28, 1879.

⁷³ Cf. “Suplement al Românului”, May 13th, 1879.

⁷⁴ Cf. “Românul”, April 28th, 1879.

⁷⁵ “Monitorul Oficial”, February 12, 1879.

⁷⁶ *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 31.

⁷⁷ “Timpul”, IV, June 19, 1879.

patriot. Second, barring Jews from citizenship on religious basis was now perceived as an obsolete and ineffective error. The politicians unanimously admitted that the Article 7 did not solve the Jewish question. This was plainly acknowledged by the conservative Titu Maiorescu: “In 1866, the Article 7 of the Constitution was an anachronism. At that time, it defended the Romanian nationality and not the orthodoxy”⁷⁸.

Under these circumstances, the more or less emphasized anti-Semitism circumscribed the alternative answers to the Romanian Jewish question. In the name of the national preservation, absolutely all Romanian politicians envisaged solutions that did not supposed the immediate, *en masse* political and civil emancipation of the Jewish population in Romania. While conservatives like M. K. Iepureanu favored only the granting of civil rights, provided that they would be barred from acquiring the *demesne*⁷⁹ – *i.e.* the landed property of the peasants and the domains of the elite – moderate liberals like the former 1848 revolutionary Gheorghe Magheru suggested the emancipation of certain categories of Jews only⁸⁰. Titu Maiorescu considered that given the situation, a gradual and individual naturalization based upon individual request, under the auspices of the Prince and the Parliament was a fair solution. If the prominent conservatives deemed emancipation – albeit gradual – as necessary only in order to keep the pace with European liberalism, other politicians adopted intransigent anti-Semitic stances. As it has been shown, an important part of the Moldavian parliamentarians did not support a revision of the Article 7, arguing that the Jews endangered Romanian nationality and economy.

The Liberal Party saw the Jews as incurable aliens to the nation⁸¹ and therefore considered all of them foreigners. In this quality, they could become citizens only upon individual request submitted to the prince and accepted through vote by the Parliament. In addition, special legislative measures would prevent foreigners in general from buying landed property in Romania. Through similar official means the peasants’ land would be declared inalienable. This additional legislation was intended to make sure that the Jews could not acquire land in the rural areas⁸². The new version of the Article 7 proposed by the government to the debate of the Parliament took up a good deal of the aforementioned ideas. Gradually, after a harsh political struggle in which the

⁷⁸ “Monitorul Oficial”, February 25, 1879.

⁷⁹ Cf. *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 66. For the most part, this was also the solution proposed by the moderate conservative, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vasile Boerescu. See *ibidem*, p. 61.

⁸⁰ See “Românul”, XXIII, June 19, 1879.

⁸¹ “Suplement al Românului”, May 13, 1879.

⁸² This type of solution was already hinted by Ion C. Brătianu in February 1879. He refuted even the emancipation of a small number of Jews – 5,000 – because this might represent “a real Trojan horse inside the national citadel”. Cf. “Monitorul Oficial”, February 28, 1879.

rhetorical manipulation reached a peak, the Constituent Assembly adopted the revised Article 7 in the form proposed by the cabinet⁸³.

The revised Article 7, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin, removed the religious allegiance from the prerequisites of naturalization. However, this liberalization was illusory since the Jews residing in Romania were *en masse* declared foreigners who had to pass a long, bureaucratic, and restrictive procedure of individual naturalization, equating with a modern secular 'expiation'⁸⁴. In addition, all foreigners were barred from buying rural properties in Romania, a clear manifestation of nationalism and economic protectionism. An important question referring to the way in which foreigners could take up domicile in the country was deliberately imprecisely addressed in paragraph 4. In this way, Romanian politicians left the door open for future legislative persecutions of the Jewish community, as well as of other unwanted categories of legally ascribed foreigners.

In addition to the revision of Article 7, Romanian parliament conceded, after another intense debate, the immediate emancipation of a list of 888 Israelites, former combatants in the recently finished war with the Ottoman Empire under the flag of Romanian Army⁸⁵. Envisaged as a sign of the intention to fully comply to the stipulations of Article 44, this singular gesture did not remove the general impression that Romanian politicians were only parading the loyal application of the decision made at Berlin, without enforcing any substantial change in the condition of the Jews living in Romania⁸⁶. The new article 7 of the Romanian Constitution, by avoiding the immediate emancipation of all Jews living in Romania,

⁸³ In its new form, the article was as follows: "Distinction of religious belief or membership will not constitute in Romania an obstacle to the acquisition in Romania of civil and political rights and their exercise.

1. A foreigner, whatever his religion and whether he stands under foreign protection or not, can be naturalized under the following conditions:

a) He sends his request to the government, stating his capital, the profession, or industry in which he works, and his desire to establish a domicile in Romania.

b) Following such a request, he must reside in the country for ten years and prove by his actions that he is useful to the country.

2. The following may be excused from this period of probation:

a) Those who have brought industries or useful inventions into the country or who have outstanding talents; those who have established large business or industrial enterprises.

b) Those who, having been born and raised in the country, were never under foreign protection.

c) Those who served in the armed forces during the War of Independence; these may be naturalized collectively at the request of the government, by a single law and without other formality.

3. Naturalization can only be granted by a law on an individual basis.

4. A special law will determine the manner in which foreigners may take up domicile in Romania.

5. Only native or naturalized Romanians may acquire rural property in Romania. Rights already acquired will be respected. International agreements which already exist remain in force with all their clauses until the expiration date" from Carol Iancu, *Jews in Romania 1866-1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation*, English translation by Carvel de Bussy, Boulder, East European Monographs, 1996, p. 105-106.

⁸⁴ For a concise study of the revised form of Article 7, see Constantin Iordachi, *The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship...*, art. cit., p. 170.

⁸⁵ "Românul", XXIII, October 14, 1879.

⁸⁶ See W. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism*, p. 73.

satisfied the covert anti-Semites of the time and testified the rise of an internal conception on the nation, privileging exclusionism, defensiveness, and protectionism.

By defying the request of the Great Powers, by granting instead only an individual access to naturalization without any substantial consequences, the Romanian anti-Semites won the diplomatic battle of 1879. Moreover, the the Liberal Party’s instrumentalization of the Jewish question in Romanian public life of 1879 proved successful from the specific political point of view of its initiators but also from a national perspective. First, the liberal government managed to remain in power. Second, the last voices contesting the union of Wallachia and Moldova were silenced as all the politicians finally united their efforts to escape Moldova from an alleged “sure death”.

The solution given to the Jewish question satisfied nearly every political group in the country. The conservative Titu Maiorescu concluded in the last days of the parliamentary debates on the Jewish question: “We accept the proposal of revision – that is the adopted version of the new Article 7 – as it is the only one possible”. Addressing to the Jews, he reasserted his true feelings: “Do not carry it too far! (...) I consider that their [the Jewish] attitude is damaging, as it upsets the national feeling”⁸⁷. A month later, *Timpul* enthusiastically claimed that “the revision of the article 7 of the Constitution was made in a conservative spirit. In order to remain what we are, that is Romanians, and to accomplish the historical mission God gave us from the day emperor Trajan set foot on the left bank of Danube, we need to make sure that all the members of our state are native Romanians or at least fully Romanianized. This theory is entirely conservative”⁸⁸.

Faithful to his own plan and strategy of politicking, Brătianu himself expressed several times his satisfaction with the solutions adopted: “The Jewish question is an economic, social and national question which can only be solved in accordance with the national interests. By acting unanimously we will be stronger in front of Europe”⁸⁹. Likewise, after the final vote on the Article 7 in October 1879, the gazette *Românul* proclaimed in a triumphal manner: “This country has a great and bright future in front of her, if it managed to solve such a burning issue as the Jewish question calmly, liberally, by the union of all [politicians], including the most embittered enemies”⁹⁰. Ultimately, the unanimity of the politicians on the Jewish question is fully demonstrated by the results of the voting. In the Deputy Assembly, 133 out of 144 deputies voted the new Article 7, while in Senate 56 out of 58 supported the revision⁹¹.

⁸⁷ Cf. “Monitorul Oficial”, September 12, 1879.

⁸⁸ “Timpul”, IV, October 14, 1879.

⁸⁹ *La Question Juive dans les Chambres Roumaines*, p. 36.

⁹⁰ “Românul”, October 7, 1879.

⁹¹ Cf. “Românul”, XXIII, October 7 and October 13, 1879. The few politicians who did not support the revision of the Constitution (including N. Blaremburg, D. Rosseti-Tețcanu, P.P. Carp, V. Alecsandri, N. Voinov) also represented all the political spectrum: conservatives, liberals, *fractionists* and centrists.

In the context of the intense parliamentary debates on the Jewish question, having patriotic feelings corresponded with manifesting anti-Semitic views. The slightest remark in favor of Jews was on the contrary labeled as anti-national to the discredit of its author. Indeed, at this point it may be argued that in 1879 manifest political anti-Semitism has become a mark of Romanian nationality or, in the line of William Oldson, “being fittingly anti-Semitic had become identified with acceptability as a Romanian nationalist”⁹².

Concluding remarks

How can the turn of events as regards the Romanian Jewish question be interpreted? The fact that the anti-Semitic discourse was employed on a large scale by intellectuals from various political traditions – liberals, as well as conservatives – undermined its ties with specific political agendas and, on the other hand, underlined the importance of its strong nationalist and politicking foundations. Under these circumstances, the Romanian solution to the Jewish question functioned as a tool of identity assertion. The imperative nation-building agenda of Romanian intellectuals triggered the problem of self-defining. Therefore, Romanian politicians felt the need to assume a satisfactory posture vis-à-vis the West⁹³. Consequently, when the conflict of opinions on the Jewish question emerged, the situation escalated and reached the proportions of a real scandal between the “will of Western Europe” and the specific national aspirations of Romanians. Although educated in the West and cherishing the western values, Romanian politicians and intellectuals rejected the decisions taken at the Congress of Berlin, because they perceived them as a flagrant immixture in the domestic affairs. Xenophobia and anti-Semitism were among the results of this attitude. To a large extent, Romanian intellectuals and political elite situated, at least in the problem of anti-Semitism, in a distinct position as compared to a recognized western center. Their anti-Semitic stance had an identitary purpose and a *relationable* function, that is it acted as means to ascribe distinct positions in various – cultural, intellectual, political – systems of relations.

The Jewish question divided between the Great Powers, who advocated an inclusive, liberal and emancipatory type of nationalism and Romanian politicians who were in turn the proponents of a defensive, exclusive and organic form of nationalism – which was determined by and determined anti-Semitism at the same time. This conflict soon translated into resentment and disillusionment with the normative role of Western Europe.

Under these circumstances, the ostensible set of ‘modern’ values advocated by different Western European countries was appropriated through the bias of multiple

⁹² Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism*, p. 103.

⁹³ This is, in fact, a typical reaction for intellectuals of economically backward countries. See Mary Matossian, *Ideologies of Delayed Development* in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 218.

ideological operations – *relativisation*, *inversion* respectively *negation*. For instance, P.P. Carp relativized the stipulations of Europe by claiming that they were pernicious, if not impossible, in the context of an undercivilized 1870s Romania: “The modern ideas are a nice thing, but they can not change a social situation in 24 hours, therefore we can not apply abruptly the modern ideas because this would lead to a crisis that will surely put into peril the very basis we envisage for these modern ideas. All we can do is to erase the art. 7 from the Constitution and then, gradually, to search for means to change the sixteenth century with the nineteenth”⁹⁴.

A much tenser opposition is determined by the deliberate inversion of the ideas enforced through the Treaty of Berlin. A part of the Romanian political elite was convinced that it represented an advanced outpost of modernism, even compared with the more developed states of the West. Through the voice of Vasile Alecsandri, yet another poet of the Romanian romantic-classicist literary pantheon, in the epoch also an active moderate liberal senator, the accusation regarding the discrimination of the Jews was only a calumny, while the whole dialectic center / periphery needed a reevaluation: “Here we are, stigmatized in the eyes of the world based on simple calumnies! Stigmatized! For article 44’s stipulations contain an implication: they qualify us as an intolerant, barbarian and persecuting nation. Who is being called with this insulting name? Us! The Romanian people! Us, who can rightfully claim the title of the most liberal, the most emancipatory of all the peoples in the modern world!”⁹⁵.

The last way of negotiating the Jewish question scandal and the values conveyed by Article 44 was to totally negate their sense. Yet again, *Românul* offered a relevant illustration of this ideological operation. Referring to the stipulations contained in the Article 44, the newspaper concluded: “All these injustices and nonsense, as the Treaty of Berlin in general explain themselves by the words of Beust: ‘I do not see Europe anymore!’”⁹⁶

Exactly at the moment when the country obtained the independence, the Jewish question of 1878-1879 determined these disillusioned stances and a reevaluation of Romania’s rapport with the European states. More importantly, the Jewish question and the ensuing diplomatic and political agitations caused the reemergence of anti-Semitism, non-inclusive nationalism, and xenophobia, which from the beginning, stood in a relation of mutual interdependence. In the Romanian case, the mixture of ethnic nationalism and defensiveness, made anti-Semitism a part of being a

⁹⁴ Cf. P.P. Carp, *Discursuri parlamentare* [Parliamentary Speeches], București, Edit. “Grai și suflet – Cultura națională”, 2000, p. 77.

⁹⁵ *Moțiunea nerevisioniștilor în cestiunea israelită*, p. 164-165.

⁹⁶ Cf. “Românul”, XXIII, October 13, 1879. Friederich von Beust was at the beginning of the 1870s the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria-Hungary. These words were said after the Franco-Prussian war, in the context of the emergence of a new balance of powers in Europe. See David Wetzel, *A Duel of Giants. Bismarck, Napoleon III and the Origins of the Franco-Prussian War*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2001, XI.

nationalist. Espoused by the cultural elite, anti-Semitism became soon normal and fully justified for the intelligentsia⁹⁷.

Undoubtedly, Romanian anti-Semitism, inasmuch as part of the nationalist tenet, acted in the late 1870s as a specific cultural code, in the sense attributed by Shulamit Volkov⁹⁸. But instead of following the line of thought of previous studies on the topic which favored an irrational, anti-modern, and illiberal interpretation of anti-Semitism, thus purging it from modernity and relieving the foundations of the contemporary world from a terrible and embarrassing burden, it is probably more stringent and wise to emphasize its place within modernity itself. Anti-Semitism in that period had the characteristics of a cultural code circumscribed by modernity, rather than representing a divergent strategy completely eluding it. In this respect, William W. Hagen's finding⁹⁹ that "aggressive anti-Semitism was intrinsic to successful social modernization and nation building" – is fully validated by the Romanian case in point.

⁹⁷ Although following a different line of argumentation, William Oldson reached a similar conclusion, See William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism...*, 9 and *idem*, *Rationalizing Anti-Semitism: The Romanian Gambit in Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 138, No. 1, 1994, 25-26.

⁹⁸ See Shulamit Volkov, *Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code*, p. 45-46.

⁹⁹ William Hagen, *Before the "Final Solution"*, *art. cit.*, p. 380.