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LOCATING THE WALLACHIAN REVOLUTION OF 1848*

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ABSTRACT. *This article offers a new interpretation of the Wallachian revolution of 1848. It places the revolution in its imperial and European contexts and suggests that the course of the revolution cannot be understood without reference to these spheres. The predominantly agrarian principality faced different but commensurate problems to other European states that experienced revolution in 1848. Revolutionary leaders attempted to create a popular political culture in which all citizens, both urban and rural, could participate. This revolutionary community formed the basis of the government's attempts to enter into relations with its Ottoman suzerain and its Russian protector. Far from attempting to subvert the geopolitical order, this article argues that the Wallachians positioned themselves as loyal subjects of the sultan and saw their revolution as a meeting point between the Ottoman Empire and European civilization. The revolution was not a staging post on the road to Romanian unification, but a brief moment when it seemed possible to realize internal regeneration on a European model within an Ottoman imperial framework. But the Europe of 1848 was too unstable for the revolutionaries to succeed. The passing of this moment would lead some to lose faith in both the Ottoman Empire and Europe.*

I

The Europe of 1848 was not a stable place. Revolution, in the words of one Wallachian poet, was ‘in the air like the cholera, which raged in many parts of Europe that year; thrones fell to the breath of liberty as people fell to the breath of cholera’.¹ The first outbreak came in Sicily in January. Manifestoes plastered walls and peasants and insurgents massed in Palermo squares. The French King Louis-Philippe took flight before the end of February, and the

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¹ C. D. Aricescu, *Memoriile mele* (Bucharest, 2002), p. 89.

Austrian Chancellor Klemens von Metternich followed suit in March. A few days later, the barricades rose in Prussian Berlin. People took to the streets in Milan, Venice, Pest, and Prague, and everywhere it seemed that the old order was on the brink. Authorities in Russia cast nervous eyes toward their Polish territories, and when he heard the news of the February Revolution in Paris, the Russian consul in Wallachia was alleged to have told the reigning Prince Bibescu that ‘it is unlikely you and I will be eating our Easter eggs in Bucharest this year’.²

Bibescu held his throne a few months longer. While most of the European revolutions of 1848 began during the so-called ‘Springtime of Peoples’, the Wallachians had to wait for summer. Their revolution began on Wednesday 21 June with the reading of a proclamation in a field outside the village of Islaz in the south-west of the country, where the Olt River meets the Danube.³ The message reached Bucharest by Friday, just as the bloody clashes between the workers of Paris and the French National Guard were getting started.⁴ Some 10,000 people took to the streets of the Wallachian capital and gathered outside the prince’s palace. Bibescu came out onto the balcony and accepted the Islaz Proclamation as the principality’s new constitution, but by Sunday he had had a change of heart. He abdicated and fled to Austrian Transylvania with the contents of the state’s coffers. A new Provisional Government was formed the following morning.

Wallachia was not a nineteenth-century cause célèbre, like Greece or Poland, and it cannot be found on a twenty-first-century map. In German, to be *in der Walachei* is to be out in the boondocks, in the sticks or the middle of nowhere. Travellers complained of its dusty roads and plains. Horses’ hooves and carriage wheels sprayed clouds that were ‘excessively injurious to the eyes and lungs’ into the air.⁵ Charles Doussault’s illustrations of the principality featured ruins, peasants, rustic windmills, national dances, and wooden churches.⁶ It was a world apart from the industrializing cities of Western Europe. A revolution could not follow the same course, and so the Wallachian case offers an alternative perspective on the upheavals of 1848. It provides an example of the course a revolution could take in a European agrarian context and suggests that national frameworks should not be determined by later unificatory movements.

² Reported in *Journal des débats*, 16 Apr. 1848; the literature on the revolutions across Europe is enormous. For several general surveys of events, see Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: a social history* (Princeton, NJ, 1952); Jonathan Sperber, *The European revolutions, 1848–1849* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2005); Mike Rapport, *1848: year of revolution* (London, 2008).

³ Wallachia used the Julian Calendar in 1848, but all dates are given in the Gregorian to match up with events elsewhere.

⁴ On the June Days in Paris, see Jill Harsin, *Barricades: the war of the streets in revolutionary Paris, 1830–1848* (London, 2002), pp. 294–318.

⁵ William Wilkinson, *An account of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: with various political observations relating to them* (London, 1820), pp. 88–9.

⁶ See Adolphe Joanne, *Voyage illustré dans les cinq parties du monde en 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849* (Paris, 1860), pp. 99–116.

The events that followed Bibescu's fall are perhaps the least studied and most poorly understood of the revolutionary year. They appear only fleetingly in general histories of 1848, and dedicated studies too often frame the revolution in 'Romanian' terms. Dan Berindei has called it 'one of the great moments of the historical affirmation of the Romanians', and Keith Hitchins has argued that the leading revolutionaries possessed a 'singular devotion to national goals'.⁷ This orthodoxy obscures the differences between the principalities, which were apparent to contemporary observers. The short-lived Moldavian Revolution of April aimed to reform the Organic Regulations, a kind of proto-constitution introduced by the Russian Pavel Kiselev in the early 1830s.⁸ Its leaders were from the 'highest social classes, the old, and the most important people in the principality, with the Metropolitan and the clergy at their head'. The Wallachian revolutionaries of June were younger; many came from the 'inferior classes'; and they scrapped Kiselev's work and replaced it with a constitution of their own.⁹

An independent Romanian state was not a revolutionary objective. Several projects for the union of Moldavia and Wallachia had appeared since the late eighteenth century. Some called for independence and others asked only for greater autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰ Both principalities were vassal states of the sultan, but after the Treaty of Adrianople of 1829 they occupied a new and unusual international status: still subject to Ottoman suzerainty, but guaranteed by a Russian protectorate. In theory, this meant that Russia would intervene to protect Moldavian and Wallachian interests; in practice, the Russian authorities often favoured their own.¹¹ The Wallachian revolutionaries of 1848 did not challenge this geopolitical order. Neither independence nor unification was among the twenty-two articles of the Islaz Proclamation.

⁷ Dan Berindei, *Revoluția română din 1848–1849: considerații și reflexii* (Cluj-Napoca, 1997), p. 17; Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774–1886* (Oxford, 1996), p. 233; see also Cornelia Bodea, *Lupta românilor pentru unitatea națională, 1834–1849* (Bucharest, 1967); Apostol Stan, *Revoluția română de la 1848: solidaritate și unitate națională* (Bucharest, 1987); G. D. Iscriu, *Revoluția română din 1848–1849* (Bucharest, 1997); Lothar Maier, 'The revolutions of 1848 in Moldavia and Wallachia', in Dieter Dowe et al., eds., trans. David Higgins, *Europe in 1848: revolution and reform* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 186–209.

⁸ On the Organic Regulations, see Alexander Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question: army, government, and society: 1815–1833* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 426–64.

⁹ Quotations taken from an anonymous account found in the papers of the Moldavian boyar Nicolae Suțu. See Biblioteca Academiei Române (BAR), Documente Istorice 52/DCCV.

¹⁰ See Vlad Georgescu, ed., *Mémoires et projets de réforme dans les principautés Roumaines 1769–1830* (Bucharest, 1970); Emil Virtosu, 'Napoeon Bonaparte și dorințele moldovenilor la 1807', *Studii*, 18 (1965), pp. 403–20.

¹¹ See, for instance, the Russian policy on Danube navigation, where the ports of Brăila and Galați emerged as competitors to Russian Odessa, discussed in Radu Florescu, *The struggle against Russia in the Romanian principalities: a problem in Anglo-Turkish diplomacy, 1821–1854* (Iași, 1997), pp. 273–300; and Constantin Ardeleanu, *International trade and diplomacy at the lower Danube: the Sulina question and the economic premises of the Crimean War (1829–1853)* (Brăila, 2014).

The only hint of union came near the proclamation's end, when Wallachia was described as a 'nation of more than eight million souls', a figure that included the populations of Moldavia and Transylvania, too.¹² But the revolutionary government did not take steps to create a state that would unite those eight million souls. Only one man urged the Moldavians to join the revolutionary cause: Constantin Rosetti.¹³ The other leading revolutionaries exercised greater caution. Local officials in the counties neighbouring Moldavia were instructed to prevent Wallachians from crossing the border while wearing revolutionary hats and scarves, and when Russian authorities accused the Wallachian government of trying to create a 'Daco-Romanian Kingdom', the official response stated that such a state was 'not yet a real and serious political consideration'.¹⁴

Internal regeneration was the revolutionary priority in Wallachia. The Islaz Proclamation offered a similar programme to many other European revolutionary documents in 1848.¹⁵ It called for equality of political rights, the abolition of ranks and titles, freedom of the press, speech, and association, and the establishment of a constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal manhood suffrage. All the Wallachian people were invited to participate. None was to be excluded, for every man was an 'atom of the sovereignty of the people'.¹⁶ If the revolutionaries harboured 'national goals', then these were Wallachian, not Romanian.

But the Wallachian revolution cannot be understood in isolation from the principality's geopolitical standing. Maria Todorova has wondered whether national movements are 'necessarily anticolonial'.¹⁷ Several historians have indicated that they are not. Partha Chatterjee has argued that the more moderate members of the Congress movement in nineteenth-century India 'favoured

¹² Romanian does not distinguish between 'Romanians' and 'Wallachians'. Both are called 'Români', but the Islaz Proclamation was printed in both Romanian and French, and the French version uses 'Valaques' instead of 'Roumains'. For the proclamation in Romanian, see Ioan C. Brătianu, ed., *Anul 1848 în principatele române, acte și documente publicate cu ajutorul comitetului pentru rădicarea monumentului* (6 vols., Bucharest, 1902–10), I, pp. 490–501; for a French version, see The National Archives (TNA), Foreign Office Papers 78/742, fos. 92–4. The French edition was not only distributed to foreign representatives. The Provisional Government's printing bill shows it printed 1,000 copies in French and 7,000 in Romanian. See BAR, Manuscrise Românești 3880, fo. 103r.

¹³ See the article that appeared in his newspaper, *Pruncul Român*, on 8 July, addressed to 'Our brothers from Moldavia'. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, II, pp. 139–40.

¹⁴ On border crossings, see *Anul 1848*, II, pp. 55–6; a copy of the Russian 'Saint Petersburg' Manifesto of 31 July can be found at BAR, Doc. Ist. DCCCXI/227; for the Wallachian government's response, see *Anul 1848*, III, p. 770; projects for unification were just as common among conservatives as liberals. One post-revolutionary petition to the tsar recommended union under a prince of his own household. See BAR, Doc. Ist. MDCLXXXVII/56.

¹⁵ Compare, for instance, the constitution of the Roman Republic of 1849. A copy can be found at Derek Beales and Eugenio Biagini, *Risorgimento and the unification of Italy* (2nd edn, London, 2002), pp. 245–7.

¹⁶ There is no suggestion of voting rights for women in the Islaz Proclamation, although it did guarantee equal access to education for both sexes, which was itself a radical proposition for the time. *Anul 1848*, I, p. 490.

¹⁷ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (updated edn, Oxford, 2009), p. 196.

some sort of citizenship within the British Empire', and Frederick Cooper, Jane Burbank, and Serhii Plokhy have demonstrated that the national ideologies of the nineteenth century 'did not develop in a vacuum but grew out of the political and ideological context of empires'.¹⁸ The same was true of revolutionary politics. Alexander Vezenkov has shown that it was possible for local Bulgarian notables to participate in both revolutionary politics and Ottoman administration during the 1860s and 1870s. The 'same people', he has argued, could serve two 'radically different causes'.¹⁹ But the Wallachian revolutionaries of 1848 did not view their own cause as 'radically different' from the Ottoman one. Internal regeneration did not preclude loyalty to the sultan.

A Wallachian revolutionary ideology was formulated at the intersection of three overlapping identities: Wallachian, Ottoman, and European. Writing from exile in 1850, the former secretary of the Provisional Government, Nicolae Bălcescu, described the general European revolution of 1848 as the 'occasion, but not the cause' of revolution in Wallachia.²⁰ He had recognized the significance of events from the beginning. Fresh from the halls of the Tuileries Palace in February 1848, he predicted that the revolution unfolding in Paris would 'change the face of the world'.²¹ Historians have only recently begun to investigate the global dimension of 1848, but its European horizons were clear from the start.²² As Holly Case has argued, people have considered revolutionary activity to be 'close to the heart' of a 'European' identity ever since the French Revolution of 1789, even if there is 'nothing like a consensus regarding what counts as revolutionary and what is good and bad about revolutions'.²³ The general European revolution might not have been the 'cause', but the Wallachian revolution could not have happened without it. It was not so much an 'occasion' as an opportunity, and the revolutionaries seized that opportunity to create a new and more expansive political community.

¹⁸ Partha Chatterjee, 'Nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism: some observations from modern Indian history', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 36 (2016), pp. 320–34, at p. 321; for a response to Chatterjee's article that situates his argument within an Ottoman context, see Christine Philliou, 'Nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 36 (2016), pp. 455–64; Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in world history: power and the politics of difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); quotation taken from Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossack myth: history and nationhood in the age of empires* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 9.

¹⁹ Alexander Vezenkov, trans. Rada Tzaneva, 'In the service of the sultan, in the service of the revolution: local Bulgarian notables in the 1870s', in Hannes Grandits et al., eds., *Conflicting loyalties in the Balkans: the great powers, the Ottoman Empire and nation-building* (London, 2011), pp. 135–54, at p. 153.

²⁰ Nicolae Bălcescu, 'Mersul Revoluției în Istoria Românilor', reproduced in Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere*, ed. G. Zane (4 vols., Bucharest, 1964–86), II, pp. 107–13.

²¹ Nicolae Bălcescu to Vasile Alecsandri, 24 Feb. 1848, in Bălcescu, *Opere*, IV, p. 86.

²² On the global 1848, see Quentin Deluermoz et al., eds., *Les mondes de 1848* (Paris, forthcoming 2021).

²³ Holly Case, 'Being European: East and West', in Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein, eds., *European identity* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 111–31, at p. 120.

II

Lewis Namier described the events of 1848 as a 'revolution of the intellectuals'.²⁴ Scholars of the revolutions in France and the German lands have long dispensed with this narrow interpretative framework, but it still holds some sway in the historiography of Eastern Europe.²⁵ Several historians have suggested that the revolutions of 1989 were 'revolutions of the intellectuals', and Keith Hitchins has applied the label to events in Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia in 1848.²⁶ The members of the Wallachian revolutionary governments might have been intellectuals, but the revolution did not stop at the doors of the palace. It extended to the streets of Bucharest and the towns and villages beyond. These participants were not lifelong revolutionaries. They became political actors in the context of 1848. The revolution had made them revolutionaries.²⁷

The Islaz Proclamation defined the contours of an enlarged political nation. Few people could vote in Wallachia before the revolution. The principality's wealthy boyars enjoyed the exclusive right to be represented in the assembly, and participation in municipal politics was restricted, too. Only men over twenty-five and in possession of 5,000 lei were eligible to vote in elections for the Bucharest city council. Articles four and five of the Islaz Proclamation abolished these limits. The new constituent assembly was to be composed of 'representatives of all the classes of society', and a 'responsible ruler' was to be elected on the same franchise.²⁸ Ussama Makdisi has argued that the distinguishing features of the Kisrawan Revolt of 1858 in Mount Lebanon were its 'emphasis on formalizing popular representation and...recasting of politics as a communal, rather than an exclusively elite engagement'.²⁹ The same could be said of Wallachia in 1848. Revolutions across the mid-century moment signalled the possibility of widening democratic opportunities.

²⁴ Lewis Namier, *1848: the revolution of the intellectuals* (London, 1946).

²⁵ See, for instance, P. H. Noyes, *Organization and revolution: working-class associations in the German revolutions of 1848–1849* (Princeton, NJ, 1966); Peter H. Amann, *Revolution and mass democracy: the Paris club of 1848* (Princeton, NJ, 1975); William H. Sewell, *Work and revolution in France: the language of labor from the old regime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980); Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland radicals: the democratic movement and the revolution of 1848–1849* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Peter McPhee, *The politics of rural life: political mobilization in the French countryside, 1846–1852* (Oxford, 1992).

²⁶ See Timothy Garton Ash, 'The year of truth', in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *The revolutions of 1989* (London, 1999), pp. 108–24, at p. 111; Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, *The light that failed: a reckoning* (London, 2019), p. 23; Hitchins, *Romanians*, p. 250.

²⁷ Several historians have offered similar interpretations of other revolutions. See Timothy Tackett, *Becoming a revolutionary: the deputies of the French national assembly and the emergence of a revolutionary culture (1789–1890)* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon nation: a history of revolutionary Haiti* (New Haven, CT, 2019).

²⁸ *Anul 1848*, I, p. 495.

²⁹ Ussama Makdisi, 'Corrupting the sublime sultanate: the revolt of Tanyus Shahin in nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42 (2000), pp. 180–208, at p. 193.

Politics had ceased to be the preserve of wealthy boyars, and it spilled into the Bucharest streets. New modes of political sociability flourished. Clubs debated the issues of the day and raised subscriptions to pay for the uniforms of national guardsmen who could not afford to buy their own, and public meetings brought together merchants, artisans, and the peasants who lived on the city's margins. The best attended and most consequential took place on Filaret Field, which was rechristened Liberty Field in the revolution's honour. It became the beating heart of revolutionary popular politics in the capital. Thousands gathered on 27 June to celebrate the new constitution and witness the consecration of the new national flag. Attendees were not passive spectators. They swore oaths to uphold the constitution and support the revolutionary community and to 'never work against the national interest'.³⁰ The celebrations of 27 June were intended to be an extraordinary event, but meetings on Liberty Field became part of daily life in the Wallachian capital during the summer. The most popular ceremonies drew crowds of thousands, not all of whom could hear the speeches delivered from the stage, but the words were not as important as the experience of being part of the revolutionary community.³¹ When a cabal of landowners attempted to depose the Provisional Government on 1 July, it was the people of Bucharest who took to the streets to defend the new government.³² The revolution was not defined by the Islaz programme alone. The 'body of beliefs' was insignificant without the 'body of believers'.³³

The revolutionary body extended beyond Bucharest. Towns and cities across Wallachia replicated the capital's revolutionary ceremonies. Church bells rang and national flags were raised; gunboats fired a salute in the port of Brăila; and candles were lit and oaths on the constitution sworn.³⁴ These celebrations were overseen by a cadre of new local administrators. Among them was Florian Aaron, a Transylvanian schoolteacher who had taught several of the leading revolutionaries at Bucharest's Saint Sava College.³⁵ His initial posting kept him close to Bucharest, but later in the summer he was moved to Dolj in the

³⁰ *Anul 1848*, I, pp. 590–1.

³¹ The British consul estimated that 7,000 people attended the meeting that elected the princely lieutenant on 1 August. Colquhoun to Palmerston, 5 Aug. 1848, TNA, FO 78/742, fo. 235r; on political communication beyond words, see Paul Pickering, 'Class without words: symbolic communication in the Chartist movement', *Past & Present*, 112 (1986), pp. 144–62.

³² For accounts of the events of 1 July, see *Anul 1848*, II, pp. 31–5; Hory to Aupick, 1 July 1848, Archives diplomatiques, Centre de Nantes (CAD), 166PO/E/168.

³³ These phrases taken from Mack Holt's definition of religion in sixteenth-century France. See Mack P. Holt, *The French wars of religion, 1562–1629* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2005), p. 2.

³⁴ Many of these ceremonies are described at BAR, Mss Rom. 3856, fos. 210–54. The interior minister requested that several of these accounts be published in the official revolutionary gazette.

³⁵ Before Saint Sava, Aaron taught at the village school established by Dinicu Golescu, whose sons and nephews were also revolutionary leaders in 1848.

western region of Oltenia. Aaron had misgivings about this appointment. He had no personal connection with the county, and he did not know whom to trust within the local administration. But he did not have to overcome these obstacles alone. Advised by the members of the revolutionary club in Craiova, he soon filled the police force and local district offices with men who were ‘completely devoted to the cause’.³⁶

Support from local notables played a crucial role in spreading the revolutionary message. Claus-Møller Jørgensen has argued that the revolutions of 1848 were principally urban affairs and that governments struggled to reach the rural masses.³⁷ The connections between cities were stronger than those between urban centres and their rural hinterlands. His argument founders in Eastern Europe. The Hungarian Society for Equality concentrated its political activities on market days to ensure visiting peasants heard its message, and in Wallachia the revolutionaries recruited local notables to help promote their cause.³⁸ Representatives from every village in the principality were invited to visit Bucharest at the government’s expense. The purpose of this trip was simple. The interior minister described it in his request for the funds: the delegations had ‘come to the capital for propaganda’.³⁹ They would tell their peers of the glories of the new constitution when they returned home.

The revolution was to reshape the political life of the Wallachian countryside. Barbara Jelavich argued that peasant participation in national politics was not one of the revolutionary party’s objectives, but the government devoted considerable resources to getting the revolutionary message across.⁴⁰ Villages could not match the political clubs and large-scale meetings that dominated revolutionary life in towns and cities. They made do with churches and village schools. Tricolour flags were raised, teachers were instructed to read the new constitution to their pupils and discuss it during lessons, and all government decrees, publications, and bulletins were to be read by priests outside their churches following the Sunday service.⁴¹ Both priests and schoolteachers

³⁶ BAR, Mss Rom. 3904, fol. 85r.

³⁷ Claus Møller Jørgensen, ‘Transurban interconnectivities: an essay on the interpretation of the revolutions of 1848’, *European Review of History—Revue européenne d’histoire*, 19 (2012), pp. 201–27.

³⁸ Laszlo Deme, ‘The society for equality in the Hungarian revolution of 1848’, *Slavic Review*, 31 (1972), pp. 71–88.

³⁹ BAR, Mss Rom. 3893, fos. 14–15.

⁴⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the formation of the Romanian national state, 1821–1878* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 40.

⁴¹ On flags, see Constantin Căzănișteanu, ‘În legătură cu drapelele instituite în timpul revoluției muntene de la 1848’, *Materiale de Istorie și Muzeografie*, 4 (1966), pp. 265–72; and Maria Dogaru, ‘Tricolorul și cocardele în contextual luptei revoluționarilor pașoptiști’, *Revista de Istorie*, 31 (1978), pp. 861–9; for reports of flags being raised, see also BAR, Mss Rom. 3860, fos. 27, 31, and 86; for the instructions to schoolteachers, see BAR, Mss Rom. 3856, fo. 294. Also reproduced in *Anul 1848*, II, pp. 318–19; for the priests’ instructions, see Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANIC), Comisia Alcătuită pentru cercetarea celor amestecați în fapte revoluționare de la 1848, 601/27/1848, fo. 63.

would be important in other revolutionary theatres, but in Wallachia they were also supported by itinerant propagandists.⁴² Between three and five propaganda commissars were dispatched to every county in the principality. These men were described as ‘priests’ of the constitution, and they were directed to deliver sermons on the revolutionary themes of brotherhood, liberty, and most important of all from a peasant perspective: land.⁴³

Land was the great dividing issue that threatened to tear the revolutionary nation apart. Article thirteen of the Islaz Proclamation promised that each peasant would receive his own parcel of land. One propaganda commissar reported that he had met a peasant who refused to swear the oath to the constitution until he received that parcel. The propagandist responded that the people needed to work together for the common salvation, and the other peasants of the village urged their neighbour to sign.⁴⁴ A land commission was established in August to decide upon the division of land and the level of landowner compensation. Representatives of both sides from every county met in Bucharest, and they squabbled and argued and failed to reach an agreement. Many peasants grew restless as the autumn approached. Some refused to work and others asserted their traditional rights of usufruct. They grazed their animals on landowner estates, fished ponds dry, and gathered firewood from the forests.⁴⁵ The government’s repeated pleas to return to the fields were ignored. The revolutionary nation had fractured.

But the final break between the revolutionary government and the broad political nation it had spawned was delivered by the government itself. The land commission’s work had been undermined before its first meeting. To win Ottoman support for the revolution, the new princely lieutenancy had to agree several concessions to the programme outlined in the Islaz Proclamation. The Ottoman representative Suleiman Pasha insisted that the new law on landowner–peasant relations could only be decided by an elected assembly. This plan was consistent with the one laid out at Islaz, but Suleiman also insisted on a restricted franchise: only those who could read and write would be eligible to vote. The requirement would put the peasants at a disadvantage, but Interior Minister Nicolae Golescu accepted. He hoped this stipulation would induce the peasantry to ‘accept the means of education which it is the intention of the government to offer to all the districts’.⁴⁶ But while the peasants

⁴² See, for instance, Vezenkov, ‘Local Bulgarian notables’; Paul Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin and the Venetian revolution of 1848–1849* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 77–8; Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg empire: a new history* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 149–50.

⁴³ For the propagandists’ instructions, see *Anul 1848*, III, pp. 105–9; many propagandists faced obstacles to their work. See Apostol Stan, ‘Propaganda revoluționară la sate în revoluția de la 1848 din Țara Românească’, *Revista de Istorie*, 31 (1978), pp. 769–91.

⁴⁴ BAR, Mss Rom. 3858, fo. 208. Also reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, pp. 570–1.

⁴⁵ Two volumes of documents detail the investigations into these activities that followed the revolution. See BAR, Mss Rom. 3886–7; for a summative discussion, see Ilie Corfus, *Agricultura în țările române, 1848–1864: istorie agrară comparată* (Bucharest, 1982), pp. 104–48.

⁴⁶ Colquhoun to Palmerston, 15 Aug. 1848, TNA, FO 78/742, fo. 268v.

learned their ABCs, the land question would surely be resolved to the benefit of the landowners. The government had abandoned the peasants to gain Ottoman support.

III

The church bells of 23 June were still ringing in Florian Aaron's ears when he sat down the following evening to write a letter to a friend in Transylvania. He lauded the day's events in Bucharest. A native national administration, as was 'written in the treaties', would no longer be an 'empty idea'. The Wallachians had secured their freedom in domestic affairs. They would continue to support the sultan and pay the annual tribute, and Russia would protect them from any Ottoman encroachment.⁴⁷

But the revolutionary government could not rely on Russia to protect the principality. The tsar's March Manifesto had laid out a non-interventionist policy on the revolutions in Western Europe, but he reserved the right to act if the threat of anarchy should reach the borders of the Russian Empire.⁴⁸ His representative in Bucharest warned several members of the revolutionary party in April what would happen if they went ahead. The first sign of an outbreak would prompt a Russian army to cross the border and occupy Wallachia.⁴⁹ This position was well known in Bucharest, and according to the French consul it left a 'painful impression' on both the government and citizens.⁵⁰ It was unsurprising that the Islaz Proclamation mentioned the arbitration of France, England, Germany, and the Ottoman state, but not Russia.⁵¹

The threatened invasion seemed imminent when a Russian army occupied Moldavia on 7 July. A rumour that it had crossed the Wallachian border led the Provisional Government to decamp from Bucharest, although it soon returned once the rumour was proven false. An address to the tsar followed on 18 July. It stressed that the Wallachian people had greeted the Organic Regulations as the 'dawn of their liberty and prosperity', but that abuses had shattered those hopes. The government hoped that Tsar Nicholas would

⁴⁷ Aaron to George Bariț, 12/24 June 1848. Reproduced in Ștefan Pascu and Iosif Pervain, eds., *George Bariț și contemporanii săi* (8 vols., Bucharest, 1973–), I, p. 69; the treaties to which Aaron referred were mentioned in the Islaz Proclamation, but these were almost certainly eighteenth-century fabrications. See Viorel Panaite, 'The legal and political status of Wallachia and Moldavia in relation to the Ottoman Porte', in Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević, *The European tributary states of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 9–42.

⁴⁸ Ian W. Roberts, *Nicholas I and the Russian intervention in Hungary* (London, 1991), pp. 15–16.

⁴⁹ Colquhoun to Palmerston, 6 Apr. 1848, TNA, FO 78/742, fos. 35v–36r.

⁵⁰ Doré de Nion to Monsieur le Chargé d'affaires de la République Française à Constantinople, 11 Apr. 1848, CAD, 166PO/E/168.

⁵¹ The reference to 'Germany' suggests a particular idealism given that no German state existed in 1848.

recognize their efforts at peaceful regeneration.⁵² His refusal came with the Saint Petersburg Manifesto of 31 July, which distinguished between the Great Powers of Europe and those ‘pure and simple provinces...governed temporarily by their princes, whose elections had to be sanctioned’. Wallachia was among the latter. Its revolution threatened the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which the tsar considered an ‘essential condition for the maintenance of the general peace’.⁵³

Support from the Ottoman authorities seemed more likely. A representative from Constantinople had arrived in the principality in early June, and he was surprised when he met the members of the liberal party, who would launch the revolution later that month. They bore little resemblance to the descriptions in Prince Bibescu’s reports, and their ideas struck the Effendi as within the bounds of acceptable change in a reforming Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ He urged Bibescu to listen to their proposals.⁵⁵ One member of this party, Ion Ghica, was already in the Ottoman capital. He had travelled there in May to advocate reform, and the new government immediately named him its agent before the Porte. The foreign minister advised Ghica of the importance of his work. If the sultan pronounced in the revolutionary government’s favour, then the ‘wellbeing of the country is assured’. He passed him an address meant for the Ottoman foreign minister. It emphasized the government’s loyalty to the suzerain power and described the revolution as the ‘unanimous wish of the people’.⁵⁶

The revolutionary government’s appeals to both the tsar and the sultan were grounded in the will of the Wallachian people. This popular support was not theoretical. The new political community that the revolution helped to forge was invited to participate in foreign policy directly. Copies of the address to the tsar of 18 July and a similar address to the sultan were distributed to local authorities with instructions to gather as many signatures as possible.⁵⁷

⁵² BAR, Doc. Ist. DCCCXI/231.

⁵³ BAR, Doc. Ist. DCCCXI/227; Russian support for the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire was by 1848 a long-standing policy to counteract the potential expansion of France, Britain, and Austria. See Jelavich, *Formation of the Romanian national state*, pp. 29–30.

⁵⁴ The Tanzimat era of Ottoman reform began with the Gülhane Edict of 1839. There is an extensive literature on the Tanzimat as well as earlier efforts at reform. Among the works I found helpful are Ussama Makdisi, ‘Ottoman Orientalism’, *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), pp. 768–96; Selim Deringil, ‘“They live in a state of nomadism and savagery”: the late Ottoman Empire and the post-colonial debate’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45 (2003), pp. 311–42; Selim Deringil, ‘The Turks and “Europe”: the argument from history’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 43 (2007), pp. 709–23; Christine Philliou, *Biography of an empire: governing Ottomans in an age of revolution* (Berkeley, CA, 2011); Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the empire: the crisis of the Ottoman order in the age of revolutions* (Stanford, CA, 2016).

⁵⁵ For a report of this meeting and the memorandum that the Wallachian liberals presented to the Ottoman representative (Talaat Effendi), see Colquhoun to Palmerston, 20 June 1848, TNA, FO 78/742, fos. 78–89.

⁵⁶ *Anul 1848*, I, pp. 594–5.

⁵⁷ For examples from Prahova, Romanați, Râmnicu-Sărat, Olt, and Brăila counties, see BAR, Mss Rom. 3862, fos. 24–60.

Almost 100,000 Wallachians put their names to the cause.⁵⁸ Petitions were a common tool within the Ottoman Empire proper from the 1760s onwards. Local communities sent petitions to Constantinople protesting against the behaviour of their local administrators (*ayans*), but the Wallachian petitions were different.⁵⁹ They came from a vassal state beyond the formal borders of either empire and represented an unprecedented example of the exercise of popular sovereignty as a tool of foreign policy. Contemporaneous with the Chartist petitions in Britain, these documents represented what Paul Pickering has described as a ‘symbol of the unity between the cause and the peoples’.⁶⁰ Many of the signatories may not have understood the complex imperial politics in which they were intervening, but they were willing to declare themselves to be part of the revolutionary community, and in doing so they demonstrated the community’s adherence to the geopolitical order.⁶¹

While the Saint Petersburg Manifesto disabused the Wallachians of any lingering hope for Russian support, the Ottomans proved more pliable. Sultan Abdülmecid dispatched the former Ottoman ambassador to France, Suleiman Pasha, to deal with the revolutionaries. He arrived at Giurgiu on the Danube in late July, and the first signs were not promising for the Wallachians. Suleiman refused to receive the Wallachian foreign minister in an official capacity. The Porte considered the Provisional Government to be illegitimate, and its representative would not proceed to Bucharest until that government had been replaced by one that was more to the Porte’s liking. A princely lieutenancy comprised of three of the more moderate members of the government was duly elected on Liberty Field. But the Pasha had other demands, including the limits to the franchise that would exclude the peasant masses. The government had mobilized the people to treat with the Ottomans; to secure Ottoman recognition it betrayed their sovereignty.

The festivities that marked Suleiman’s arrival in Bucharest were a celebration of the link between Wallachia and the Ottoman Empire. A triumphal arch combining Moorish, Gothic, and Romanesque elements was erected at the top of the city’s main thoroughfare, Podul Mogoșoaiei.⁶² Suleiman was met at the

⁵⁸ Figure taken from an address to the French foreign minister by A. G. Golescu in November. See *Anul 1848*, v, pp. 540–2.

⁵⁹ Yaycioglu, *Partners of the empire*, p. 139.

⁶⁰ Paul Pickering, ‘“And your petitioners &c”: Chartist petitioning in popular politics, 1838–1848’, *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), pp. 368–88.

⁶¹ The evidence on popular political attitudes is scant, particularly in the countryside, but many communities across the principality would burn their copies of the Organic Regulations in September. Some participants were interrogated by a counterrevolutionary commission in late 1848 and early 1849. Several claimed to have had no idea what the books contained. See, for instance, the cases of Scarlat Petrovici and Costache Steriadi at ANIC, 601/16/1848 and ANIC, 601/12/1849.

⁶² The arch was designed by the Jewish-Hungarian artist C. D. Rosenthal. See Ion Frunzetti, *Pictori revoluționari de la 1848* (Bucharest, 1988), p. 47; see also Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, ‘Momentul 1848 în plastica documentaristă’, *Revista Istorică*, 15 (1999), pp. 501–18.

city gates by trade delegations bearing traditional gifts, and Bibescu's palace was readied for his stay. A special ballroom and kiosk were built in the public gardens to host a grand banquet and an evening of entertainment. An Italian opera singer was contracted to perform against a backdrop supplied by the artist Barbu Iscovescu, who painted a portrait of the sultan surrounded by flowers and the articles of the Wallachian constitution. A fireworks display followed at midnight, and the words 'sultan' and 'constitution' were spelled out against the night sky.⁶³ Florian Aaron had described a constitution as the preserve of civilized peoples; placing the word 'constitution' alongside 'sultan' united a European idiom with the structures of Ottoman governance. Russian authorities had refused to countenance a 'constitution' when they introduced the Organic Regulations, and so perhaps the union of 'sultan' and 'constitution' also served as a rejoinder to the protecting power, which had rejected the revolution.⁶⁴ The evening cost the government more than 170,000 lei, but it was worth the outlay.⁶⁵ Suleiman recognized the princely lieutenancy and invited the representatives of the other European powers to follow suit. None could deal with the Wallachian revolutionary government without Ottoman approval. Suleiman's endorsement opened the revolution up to Europe.

IV

Many sensed that 1848 would be a seismic year in European history from its earliest days. Some time in January or early February, a young Wallachian student, Dumitru Brătianu, gave a speech to a meeting of his friends at the Society for Romanian Students in Paris. He asked them whether they had heard the echoing voices from Italy and Switzerland, which carried across the Apennines and the Alps. Movements were afoot in Styria and Bohemia, and in Croatia 'the women break their necklaces and tear off their jewels to throw to the deputies, demanding their national language: the Croat language'. In Palermo, he said, the 'smell of gunpowder rejuvenates the old, arms the young, and makes men of the women', while in Naples, on the Via Toledo, a 'man of the people' embraces the soldier who beats him, and 'in the heat of that embrace the iron sceptre of Neapolitan tyranny melts'.⁶⁶

⁶³ Account of the evening taken from an article in *Poporul Suveran*, 13 Aug. 1848. Few copies of the newspaper survive. One can be found at Biblioteca Națională a României (BNR), Fond Brătianu XXXIX/4, fo. 6v.

⁶⁴ Pascu and Pervain, eds., *George Bariț*, 1, p. 69.

⁶⁵ A thorough investigation of the government's expenditure on Suleiman's visit was conducted by a counterrevolutionary commission. The documents associated with the investigation can be found at BAR, Mss Rom. 3861. Some documents were reproduced in *Anul 1848*, but the vast majority were not.

⁶⁶ The speech was published by Brătianu's friend C. A. Rosetti in *Pruncul Român* in July. Rosetti dated the speech to late 1847, but several of the events that Brătianu described in

Five months passed before the Wallachians joined the revolutionary chorus, but when they did, they sang in harmony with their European peers. The extent to which events in south-eastern Europe resembled those across the continent is a matter of some debate. Keith Hitchins has described the contents of the Islaz Proclamation as a ‘characteristic programme of the European liberal intellectuals of 1848’, but Wolfgang Höpken has argued that the agrarian question gave the revolutions in the region a ‘totally different social dimension’ to those in France and the German states, although the revolutionary intelligentsia were only interested in agrarian matters ‘to the extent that it would not endanger their nationalist aims’.⁶⁷ The Wallachian revolutionary leaders may have sacrificed the peasants’ claim to land to gain Ottoman recognition, but that did not mean they were not invested in the agrarian question. In mid-July, the Provisional Government’s finance minister wrote to local administrators to request statistics on their peasant populations. He needed numbers to calculate how much money would be needed to compensate the landowners.⁶⁸

Agrarian and national aims were connected, and they reflected a broader European debate on self-sufficiency. The right to land was the agrarian equivalent of the right to work. Pauperism was one of the most pressing issues facing the urban centres of Western Europe. Cities like Paris, Lille, and Vienna were hotbeds of poverty and unemployment. The degenerated state of their labouring classes was considered to be both an economic and a moral problem, and the introduction of the national workshops in France under the revolutionary government was an attempt to solve that problem by guaranteeing to the urban unemployed their ‘right to work’.⁶⁹ Giovanna Procacci has described the right to work and support as the ‘social equivalent of the franchise’, but the two were connected rather than commensurate.⁷⁰ Revolutionary proclamations were issued in the name of the sovereign people. In order to be sovereign as a body, the people needed to be sovereign over themselves. The right to work gave that opportunity to the unemployed workers of Paris; the right to land served the same purpose in Wallachia. Both were aspects of the ‘Social Question’.⁷¹ Wallachian villages may not have looked like Paris, but they suffered from a variation on the same problems: political and economic precarity.

the course of his speech did not take place until January 1848. For the full speech, see *Anul 1848*, I, pp. 61–73.

⁶⁷ Hitchins, *Romanians*, p. 241; Wolfgang Höpken, ‘The agrarian question in southeastern Europe during the revolution of 1848/49’, in Dowe et al., eds., trans. Higgins, *Europe in 1848*, pp. 443–71.

⁶⁸ ANIC, 601/27/1848, fo. 70.

⁶⁹ Sewell, *Work and revolution*, pp. 223–32; Rüdiger Hachtmann, ‘The European capital cities in the revolution of 1848’, in Dowe et al., eds., trans. Higgins, *Europe in 1848*, pp. 341–68.

⁷⁰ Giovanna Procacci, ‘To survive the revolution or to anticipate it? Governmental strategies in the course of the crisis of 1848’, in Dowe et al., eds., trans. Higgins, *Europe in 1848*, pp. 507–27, at p. 510.

⁷¹ As Holly Case has recently argued, questions were often bundled together in the nineteenth century ‘so that it seemed impossible to solve one without addressing the other(s)’.

European intellectual currents provided an ideological framework for the Wallachian revolution, and the idea of Europe itself served as a powerful rhetorical tool.⁷² Definitions of Europe since the eighteenth century have often drawn distinctions between an advanced western half of the continent and a backwards east. The German Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch wrote in 1932 that ‘not all people exist in the same now’, and this idea was the orthodoxy in nineteenth-century Europe.⁷³ Western European states were the arbiters of civilization and progress, and Eastern European liberals looked to their example to learn how to mould the futures of their homelands in the 1830s and 1840s.⁷⁴ But the simultaneity of revolution in 1848 and the interest the revolutions provoked in publics across the continent seemed to undermine that sense of difference and foster a new feeling of contemporaneity. The peoples of Europe were joined in a shared struggle, and many in Wallachia invoked the ‘eyes of Europe’ to advance their political goals. The Provisional Government denounced an attempted counterrevolution in early July as an attempt to ‘compromise our cause in the eyes of Europe’, and repeated appeals to the wealthy landowners who had fled Bucharest for their country estates or neighbouring Transylvania invoked the same argument to call

The events of 1848 support Case’s thesis. See Holly Case, *The age of questions or, a first attempt at an aggregate history of the Eastern, social, woman, American, Jewish Polish, bullion, tuberculosis, and many other questions over the nineteenth century, and beyond* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), p. 6.

⁷² French influence was particularly strong. See Vladimir Hanga, ‘La Proclamation d’Islaz (Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen, 1848) et l’influence française’, *Revue internationale de droit compare*, 22 (1970), pp. 491–501; John C. Campbell, *French influence and the rise of Roumanian nationalism* (New York, NY, 1971); Nicolae Liu, ‘La Révolution française et la formation de l’idéologie révolutionnaire et républicaine chez les Roumains’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 265 (1986), pp. 285–306.

⁷³ Ernst Bloch, trans. Mark Ritter, ‘Nonsynchronism and the obligation to its dialectics’, *New German Critique*, 11 (1977), pp. 22–38, at p. 22; for historical discussions of the definition of Europe, see Stuart Woolf, ‘The construction of a European world-view in the revolutionary-Napoleonic years’, *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 72–101; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA, 1994); J. G. A. Pocock, ‘What do we mean by Europe?’, *Wilson Quarterly*, 21 (1997), pp. 12–29; Stuart Woolf, ‘Europe and its historians’, *Contemporary European History*, 12 (2003), pp. 323–37; Maria Todorova, ‘The trap of backwardness: modernity, temporality, and the study of Eastern European nationalism’, *Slavic Review*, 64 (2005), pp. 140–64; Leslie Rogne Schumacher, ‘The Eastern Question as a Europe question: viewing the ascent of “Europe” through the lens of Ottoman decline’, *Journal of European Studies*, 44 (2014), pp. 64–80; on the global imperial dimension of ideas of European cultural and economic supremacy, see Jennifer Pitts, *A turn to empire: the rise of imperial liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ, 2005).

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Andrzej Walicki, ‘Russian social thought: an introduction to the intellectual history of nineteenth-century Russia’, *Russian Review*, 36 (1977), pp. 1–45; Jerzy Jedlicki, *A suburb of Europe: nineteenth-century Polish approaches to western civilization* (Budapest, 1999); Alexander Maxwell and Alexander Campbell, ‘István Széchenyi, the casino movement, and Hungarian nationalism, 1827–1848’, *Nationalities Papers*, 42 (2014), pp. 508–26.

them back to the capital.⁷⁵ To look bad in the ‘eyes of Europe’ was to appear barbarous and uncivilized, unworthy of being considered a European nation.

But the revolutionary government did not enjoy a monopoly on the idea of Europe. Other revolutionary actors invoked Europe’s gaze for their own particular purposes. The members of the land commission that met in Bucharest in August were all revolutionary partisans. They had to swear an oath on the new constitution to be eligible to participate, but not all of them understood the revolution in the same terms. The representative of the landowners of Argeş County phrased his opposition to the expropriation of their estates in the same language that the Provisional Government had deployed against its adversaries. He noted that the ‘whole of Europe’ had turned its attention towards Wallachia, which awaited its ‘sympathy and help’. Such help would not be forthcoming when the rest of Europe saw that ‘our peaceful and common revolution...begins its work with the abolition of the right of property and the breakdown of human society’.⁷⁶

Beyond the rhetorical potency of appeals to Europe, the Wallachians needed foreign aid for their revolution to succeed. Several articles of the Islaz Proclamation demanded a substantial financial outlay. Landowners would need to be compensated for the loss of their estates; an end to Roma slavery required similar monetary compensation; and the establishment of a national bank was yet another proposal that could not be realized without foreign funds.⁷⁷ One revolutionary estimated that the government needed 300 million piastres to enact its programme. He urged a foreign envoy to do all he could to secure those funds. He should offer all state-owned, monastic, and peasant lands as collateral to the Bank of France or the Rothschilds in Frankfurt and Vienna.⁷⁸ Loans were not the only form of support that the revolution’s envoys abroad pursued. The same agent was also directed to obtain at least 50,000 rifles to arm the National Guard and safeguard the principality’s internal order.

But the Wallachians were not the only European revolutionaries with pressing needs. A friend in Paris who had acted unofficially on the Wallachians’ behalf in July and August found himself competing against the representatives of other revolutionary parties. He reported that the Irish, the Danish, and the Italians were all seeking weapons, and there were not enough rifles to go around.⁷⁹ Those that could be found were difficult to transport. The Austrian cabinet

⁷⁵ For the response to the counterrevolution, see BAR, Doc. Ist. DCCCX/144. Also published in *Pruncul Român* and reproduced in *Anul 1848*, II, p. 31; an example of a proclamation addressed to the landowners can be found at BAR, Mss Rom. 3862, fo. 10r. Also reproduced in *Anul 1848*, II, pp. 603–4.

⁷⁶ *Anul 1848*, III, p. 363.

⁷⁷ On the abolition of Roma slavery, see Venera Achim, ‘Emanciparea țiganilor și programul legislativ al guvernului provizoriu din 1848’, *Revista Istorică*, 20 (2009), pp. 63–72.

⁷⁸ A. C. Golescu to A. G. Golescu, 30 Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, pp. 529–30.

⁷⁹ V. Mălinescu to A. G. Golescu, 20 Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, p. 287.

in Vienna advised one Wallachian representative that it could not help with the movement of arms across its Hungarian territories. The Wallachians would have to negotiate with the Hungarian revolutionaries themselves, but they too were in need of weaponry, and so it seemed unlikely that they would grant the request.⁸⁰

Powerful allies were harder to come by than the Wallachians anticipated. Many of the leading revolutionaries had been educated in European universities, where they developed close links to prominent political and intellectual figures. Alphonse de Lamartine became the patron of their student society in Paris, and the revolutionary government sought his aid as French foreign minister, but he was no longer in a position to help come summer. He was replaced by Jules Bastide the day after the revolution reached Bucharest. His melancholy reply captured the changing fortunes of summer: 'Your letter was intended for a member of the Provisional Government of the Republic. It was received by a simple citizen with no power today other than his voice and his word.'⁸¹ Another ally, Prince Adam Czartoryski, never realized his Polish Revolution, and all his party could offer the Wallachians was advice from afar.⁸² In spring, it had seemed that revolution would recast the social and political order of Europe, but by mid-summer such hopes had faltered.

European solidarity proved to be more of an ideal than a political reality. The Wallachian government's foreign envoys were losing faith by the middle of September. One wrote from Vienna to complain that the 'indecisive and timid governments which govern the affairs of the French bourgeois republic and the majority of the constitutional states of Europe have an instinctive aversion for any measure even the least bit hazardous'. Only public opinion could sway them. He urged the Wallachian foreign minister to send petitions like those that had been sent to the tsar and the sultan to 'all the peoples of Europe, especially the French, German, and English'.⁸³ His counterpart in Frankfurt was even more pessimistic. He lamented that the German states were 'on fire' and there were revolutions everywhere. No central power existed; France had not recognized a German government; and the Frankfurt parliament had no representative before the Porte. Austria was a 'Slavic power, more or less', and the French ambassador in Constantinople received little guidance from his government.⁸⁴ The optimism and shared faith of the

⁸⁰ A. G. Golescu to the revolutionary leaders of Wallachia, Aug. 1848. BNR, Fond Brătianu VI/13, fos. 4–5. Also reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, p. 150.

⁸¹ Alphonse de Lamartine to the Provisional Government of Wallachia, Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, p. 185.

⁸² On Czartoryski in 1848, see M. Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European unity, 1770–1861* (Princeton, NJ, 1955), pp. 251–76.

⁸³ A. G. Golescu to Ion Voinescu II, 16 Sept. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, IV, p. 200.

⁸⁴ Ion Măiorescu to A. G. Golescu, 21 Sept. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, IV, p. 277.

‘Springtime of Peoples’ had given way to national difference and indifference.⁸⁵

V

The Wallachian revolution ended with the Ottoman occupation of Bucharest on 25 September. A cadre of firemen put up the last resistance, but they could not withstand an army. The revolutionary government was dismissed and its members arrested and exiled. They were replaced by a single governor or *caimacam* from one of the principality’s leading families.⁸⁶ Two days later, a Russian army crossed the Milcov River, which divided Wallachia from Moldavia. It reached Bucharest the following day, and the city was divided between the two imperial powers. Curfews were imposed; new border controls were introduced; and censorship was more vigorously enforced.⁸⁷ The dreams of June 1848 had passed.

Those who continued to believe in European solidarity found themselves frustrated. Holly Case has written that being ‘European’ can be a ‘constituent element of national identity’, but that ‘notions of what it means to be European have themselves been informed by localized and national experiences of struggle’.⁸⁸ Nicolae Bălcescu faced this ‘neighbourhood’ problem when he attempted to broker an alliance with the Hungarian revolutionaries in the winter of 1848. Both the Hungarians and the Wallachians looked on Russia as the enemy, but the Romanians of Transylvania considered the tsar’s forces as potential saviours from the Hungarian threat.⁸⁹ National solidarity

⁸⁵ The Swiss socialist Pierre Coullery offered a similar observation in a speech to mark the third anniversary of the revolution in Neuchâtel. A copy of this speech was sent to the French royal family in exile in Britain and ended up with the dead letter office. It can be found at British Library, Additional Manuscript 89177/3/5/15.

⁸⁶ His name was Constantin Cantacuzino and he would hold power in the principality until Prince Barbu Știrbei, the brother of Prince Bibescu, took office in June 1849.

⁸⁷ On the counterrevolution in Wallachia, see James Morris, ‘Retour à l’ordre? Valachie entre Empires Russe et Ottoman’, in Deluermoz et al., eds., *Les mondes de 1848*.

⁸⁸ Case, ‘Being European’, pp. 111 and 130.

⁸⁹ Bălcescu described the war between the Transylvanian Romanians and the Hungarians as a ‘barbarous’ one in a letter to Ion Ghica. See Nicolae Bălcescu to Ion Ghica, 28 Dec. 1848. Reproduced in Bălcescu, *Opere*, iv, p. 119. On the other side, John Paget, an Englishman in Transylvania, wrote in his diary that the Russians would be seen by the Hungarians as saviours if they saved them from the ‘Wallachs’. See Henry Miller Madden, ed., ‘The diary of John Paget, 1849’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 19 (1939–40), pp. 237–64, at p. 244. On the Hungarian revolution of 1848 and relations between the Hungarians and the Romanians in Transylvania, see Keith Hitchins, *The Rumanian national movement in Transylvania, 1780–1849* (Cambridge, MA, 1969); István Déak, *The lawful revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849* (New York, NY, 1979); Apostol Stan, ‘Lajos Kossuth and the Romanians during the 1848 revolution’, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, 33 (1994), pp. 355–74; Gelu Neamțu, ‘Maghiari alături de revoluția română de la 1848–1849 din Transilvania’, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Bariț din Cluj-Napoca*, 41 (2002), pp. 97–126. On the Russian intervention, see Barbara Jelavich, ‘The Russian intervention in Wallachia and Transylvania, September

foundered on the competing interests of national communities across borders. The Wallachian revolutionary representative before the Porte, Ion Ghica, bemoaned the national turn that the revolutions had taken. In a letter to a friend, he prophesied that 'only a system of United States of Europe modelled on the United States of America could save Europe from shipwreck'.⁹⁰ He sent his letter from Constantinople, where he had entered Ottoman service.

Exile brought disillusion and division to the revolutionaries. Some lost faith in both the European powers and the Ottoman Empire. The former Wallachian agent in Frankfurt complained that the French Republic had 'abased' itself in 'flattery and coquetry towards London and Saint Petersburg'. He saw little hope of French support.⁹¹ In London, Dumitru Brătianu, who had expressed such hopes in early 1848, wrote of disappointment with the Ottomans in a pamphlet addressed to the British parliament one year later. The Wallachians had 'thought the Turks were their friends', but found themselves 'unfortunately doubly mistaken'.⁹² Brătianu's pamphlet horrified other Wallachian revolutionary exiles. One member of the three-man princely lieutenantcy, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, reminded his peers that they had not only sworn to uphold the autonomy of Wallachia, but also the suzerainty of the Porte.⁹³ Rădulescu clung to a composite identity. In his memoirs, he would describe an encounter with French customs officers on his arrival at the French border in the wake of the revolution's defeat. They asked whether he had any foreign objects on his person. 'Yes, sirs', he replied, 'myself'. He pointed to one part of his body and said it was Romanian, another was Turkish, a third Slavonic, and a fourth German. His heart, he said, was French.⁹⁴

The Wallachian revolutionary body in 1848 was composed of multiple interdependent parts. Larry Wolff has written about the ways in which a nineteenth-century Galician identity was intertwined with both a European and a Habsburg one.⁹⁵ Wallachia may not have been part of a Christian empire ruled from Vienna by one of Europe's preeminent families, but the revolutionaries of

1848 to March 1849', *Rumanian Studies: An International Annual of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4 (1979), pp. 16–74. On the ongoing discussions between the Hungarians and the Romanians in exile, see Ambrus Miskolczy, 'The dialogue among Hungarian and Romanian exiles in 1850–1851', in Ignác Romsics and Béla K. Király, eds., *Geopolitics in the Danube region: Hungarian reconciliation efforts, 1848–1998* (Budapest, 1999), pp. 99–129.

⁹⁰ Ion Ghica to C. A. Rosetti, 24 Mar. 1850. Reproduced in Ion Ghica, *Opere*, ed. Ion Roman (6 vols., Bucharest, 1967–88), vi, pp. 149–55.

⁹¹ Ion Maiorescu to A. G. Golescu, 31 Oct. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, v, p. 218.

⁹² D. Brătianu, *Documents concerning the question of the Danubian principalities dedicated to the English parliament* (London, 1849), p. 11.

⁹³ Ion Heliade Rădulescu to 'My brothers in Bursa', 1 Aug. 1849. BNR, Fond Brătianu XL/12, fols. 21–32. Also reproduced in Ion Ghica, *Amintiri din pribegia după 1848. noue scrisori către V. Alecsandri* (Bucharest, 1889), pp. 722–30.

⁹⁴ J. Héliade Rădulescu, *Souvenirs et impressions d'un proscrit* (Paris, 1850), p. 20.

⁹⁵ Larry Wolff, *The idea of Galicia: history and fantasy in Habsburg political culture* (Stanford, CA, 2010).

1848 shared the Galicians' sense of being part of multiple and interconnected communities. They did not turn to the Porte as a 'lesser evil', as Barbara Jelavich claimed, after failing to secure support from other European powers.⁹⁶ Loyalty to the Ottoman state was connected to their understanding of both Europe and their own national objectives. In 1848, it seemed possible to believe in all three, to realize the internal regeneration of the principality in European terms without disrupting the existing geopolitical order.

Accounts of 1848 are too often cast in national and urban terms. The nations that define revolutionary historiography are the ones that endured, but the Wallachian case suggests that alternative histories are possible. Several revolutionary leaders would go on to play prominent roles in post-unification Romanian politics; this did not mean that their ambitions were Romanian in 1848. Their objectives were specific to Wallachia, and their plans were tailored to the principality's needs. Perhaps it was easier for revolutionaries in Paris and Berlin to forget rural populations, but the Wallachians could not ignore them. The revolutionary programme needed to be rural as much as urban; it needed to connect the Wallachian to the Ottoman and European. The revolutionary moment had created an opportunity to enact liberal reform. To succeed, it had to balance competing social and geopolitical interests and unite overlapping identities. For a few months in the summer of 1848, a new revolutionary future seemed possible.

But the revolutionary body was torn apart before the autumn harvest. Popular support had been won with a common European promise: economic self-sufficiency. The Wallachian peasants joined the political nation so that they could become masters over their own prosperity, but Ottoman recognition could only be gained by sacrificing the peasants' needs. They downed tools and threatened the principality's stability, and Russian influence in Constantinople pushed the Ottomans to act to quell the anarchy. The other Great Powers were preoccupied with their own affairs. Wallachia may have been a member of the European family of nations, but it was only a small one. It was not worth a war in 1848. The revolutionary moment was over, and many within the Wallachian revolutionary party lost their faith in the Ottoman Empire. Some even doubted whether European civilization was founded on anything more than national self-interest. They feared the continent had splintered and would not survive the next storm.

⁹⁶ Jelavich, *Formation of the Romanian national state*, p. 46.