

PEACE OR CONFLICT? PAST CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES, RUSSIA AND THE ROMANIAN AREA (17TH - 19TH CENTURIES)

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Abstract:

During the modern period, Europe was affected by a series of military conflicts, which periodically rebalanced and reshaped political, social and cultural relations between the states involved in them. The wars in which the Nordic countries, the Russian Empire and/or the Romanian area took part thus resulted in temporary or more constant alterations of the bilateral and multilateral connections between them.

Although not always accurate when put into the perspective of the subsequent events, contemporary accounts regarding these conflicts and the shape of the political and cultural relations surrounding them represent extremely important sources of information for researchers interested in establishing the reasons that caused certain international developments of the 20th century. Having this in view, the present study's aim is twofold. Firstly, it intends to reveal the value of the written accounts pertaining to Nordic and Russian travellers through the Romanian area in the modern period and, secondly, to bring to light some rather hidden aspects of the cultural relations between these three geographically and culturally distinct spaces.

As cultural interactions are closely connected to political developments, a fact particularly relevant during the modern period, these two types of interstate contacts can only be analysed jointly and this general observation was either intrinsic to or made explicit in most of the analysed travel accounts. Moreover, the conclusion that must be drawn after evaluating the relations between the Nordic countries, Russia and the Romanians during the 17th-19th centuries is that sometimes political conflicts, even when they took the form of wars, could stimulate, not hinder, cultural contacts between the parties involved.

Rezumat:

În perioada modernă, Europa a fost afectată de o serie de conflicte militare, care au reechilibrat și reasezat constant relațiile politice, sociale și culturale dintre statele implicate în cadrul acestora. Războaiele la care au luat parte țările nordice, Imperiul Rus și/sau arealul românesc au avut ca rezultat alterări temporare sau constante în privința conexiunilor bilaterale și multilaterale dintre acestea.

Deși nu întotdeauna corecte când sunt privite în lumina evenimentelor ulterioare, relatările contemporane cu privire la aceste conflicte și la metamorfozele relațiilor politice și culturale ce le înconjurau reprezintă surse de informare extrem de importante pentru cercetătorii interesați să determine cauzele care au generat anumite evoluții din sec. al XX-lea. Având în vedere aceasta, studiul de față are două obiective. În primul rând, acesta intenționează să releve valoarea mărturiilor scrise ce au aparținut călătorilor nordici și ruși care au traversat arealul românesc în epoca modernă și, în al doilea rând, să aducă la lumină câteva aspecte mai degrabă ascunse ale relațiilor culturale dintre aceste trei spații geografice și culturale distincte.

Cum interacțiunile culturale sunt strâns legate de evoluțiile politice, un lucru foarte relevant mai ales în epoca modernă, aceste două tipuri de contacte interstatale pot fi analizate doar împreună iar această observație generală rezultă fie intrinsec fie este formulată explicit în cele mai multe dintre relatările de călătorie analizate. În plus, concluzia care poate fi extrasă din evaluarea relațiilor dintre țările nordice, Rusia și români în sec. al XVII-lea – al XIX-lea este aceea că uneori conflictele politice, chiar și când au luat forma războaielor, pot stimula, nu împieta, asupra contactelor culturale dintre părțile implicate.

Keywords: Nordic countries, Russian Empire, the Romanian area, travel accounts, cultural relations, 17th-19th centuries

Introduction

Within the framework of an imagological study, it is necessary to present the relationships between the person(s) who look and those who are seen, as their contacts represent a sine qua non condition for the existence of an opinion on the alterity. In fact, any type of ties between foreigners and locals influence the manner in which the Other is perceived and the (in)existence of opportunities to confront each other, these interactions' nature, frequency and importance, as well as the potential repercussions of the actions taken by both parties can considerably impact upon the way in which the autochthonous people are presented by the travellers. As it will be shown below, all these factors have left their positive or negative mark on the accounts pertaining to Nordic and Russian servicemen, diplomats or clerics who have passed through the Romanian area during the 17th-19th centuries and therefore a summary of the period's political context is needed.

It is thus relevant to mention that a series of military conflicts between the European Great Powers have affected the Romanian space within this chronological timeframe. In the case of some of these disputes, small states like Transylvania, Wallachia or Moldavia have ended up playing considerable roles. As a result, in certain situations, the rulers of the territories inhabited by Romanians had the opportunity to tip the scales in favour of one or the other of the belligerents or to mediate peace. For instance, this happened in the case of George I Rákóczi during the Thirty Years' War or in that of George II Rákóczi at the middle of the 17th century. Similarly, the rulers of the extra-Carpathian states have fairly influenced the relations between Charles XII's Sweden or Russia, on the one hand, and the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand.

These developments of the international political arena during the modern period will be detailed in the following paragraphs. However, the period's military conflicts will not be treated exhaustively; instead, I have taken into consideration those wars that have simultaneously involved, to a greater or lesser extent, the Nordic states, the Russian Empire and the Romanian area.

Thus, the present study aims to offer a sketch of the contacts between the Nordic states and the area inhabited by Romanians during the modern period, by taking into account the actions of a power that has often acted as a mediator of this relation, namely Russia. Furthermore, the accounts of the travellers who have directly participated in these military conflicts or in the negotiations that took place before and after the wars were used so as to enrich the information available in other sources and to demonstrate these texts' value for the contemporary historian, these being the study's main purposes. In order to provide a better image of their development during the period taken into account, Russia's relations with the Nordic countries and with the Romanian Principalities, respectively, are presented in separate sections of the study.

Relations between the Nordic countries and Russia during the modern period

The ties between the Nordic states and Russia were largely determined by their geographical closeness, which ensured tight connections dating far back: the establishment of Kievan Rus' by the Varangians (Vikings) is a generally accepted fact in universal historiography. On the other hand, the fight for supremacy over the Baltic Sea has often caused conflicts between Sweden, a consolidated and important power in the area, and Russia, a relatively new state whose ascension was hindered by the 'Time of Troubles'.¹ Fortunately though, when the Romanov family acceded to the throne through Mikhail Fyodorovich in 1613 the instability ended and this change was clearly beneficial to the state's foreign policy as well. The Treaty of Stolbovo concluded with Sweden in 1617 represented one of the latter's successes and the period of peace that followed it permitted an increased focus on the internal problems.

The armistice signed with the Poles in 1618 respected the same logic, but a military conflict between the two powers reignited in 1632 and influenced Tsar Mikhail's political decisions during the Thirty Years' War. Thus, during the latter Russia supported Gustav Adolf's Sweden including by means of subsidies,² in an attempt to weaken its Polish enemy. However, this line of foreign policy was pursued only temporarily and it can be stated that 'Russia fought against Sweden

¹ For the crisis that affected the Russian Empire at the end of the 16th century, see Geoffrey Hosking, *Rusia: popor și imperiu, 1552-1917* (Jassy: Polirom, 2001), 52-57.

² Paul Dukes, *Istoria Rusiei: 882-1996* (Bucharest: ALL, 2009), 67.

from 1656 until 1865 in order to defend its acquisitions and sought the much desired gateway to the Baltic Sea'.³

One of the most important moments of this nearly continuous conflict was the Great Northern War (1700-1721), which faced two belligerents of approximately equal strength at that moment. Attempting to ensure his victory over a state that found itself during a period of great expansion, Charles XII of Sweden obtained the support of Poland and Ukraine. He later addressed the same request for assistance to the Ottoman Empire, as Russia could have been considered a common enemy.⁴ Within this context, due to his multiple contacts with the European diplomacy, the Swedish king connected the Orient and the Occident, at least during his stay at Bender. As a guest of the Sultan, the Northern monarch established a relationship, even though not a very tight one, between the former and Sweden's close allies, namely Poland and Ukraine, on the one side, but also between the Ottoman Empire and other continental powers, such as the Habsburgs' Empire or France, on the other side. As an example of these ties, not long after settling in Bender, Charles XII was approached by both Joseph I of Austria and Louis XIV about solutions and means of repatriation.⁵

It is also worth mentioning that, due to this conflict, Russia became increasingly more important in the eyes of the continental powers. Thus, after Poltava (1709) and especially after the Nordic Crisis of 1716-1717, Great Britain completely changed its attitude towards the rising power ruled by Peter the Great,⁶ although until then she had regarded Russia with contempt. Consequently, the British even agreed that their fleet would join the Danish-Russian troops in a possible attack on the south of Sweden, if this was necessary.⁷ Although this plan did not materialise, as Peter the Great gave up this approach after a more thorough analysis of the military resources he had at his disposal,⁸ it still indicated a clear shift in the manner the British perceived Russia. They had started to take this new power into account and simultaneously to display an extremely negative attitude towards the

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴ V. Mihordea, 'Carol al XII-lea la Tighina', *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* Series III, Tome XXV (1942-1943): 444-447.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 447. See also Costel Coroban, 'British reactions to Charles XII's stay in the Ottoman Empire', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* Vol. 3, Issue 1 (2011): 34-35.

⁶ Paul Dukes talks about a 'forced acknowledgement' of Russia's great power status by the other European states after the peace Treaty of Nystadt from 1721. See Paul Dukes 2009, 105.

⁷ Matthew S. Anderson, 'English Views on Russia in the Age of Peter the Great', *American Slavic and East European Review* Vol. 13, no. 2 (1954): 206.

⁸ Although at the beginning of the Great Northern War Russia did not have a numerous fleet, thanks to the military reforms implemented by Peter the Great, by the end of this conflict there existed 800 vessels and 30,000 sailors in the Empire. Similarly, the regular army, drafted on the basis of a system introduced by the same reformist Tsar, counted around 130,000 soldiers, to which another 500,000 soldiers were added in the first ten years of the war with Sweden. Paul Dukes 2009, 104.

Tsar, to whom they attributed malevolent plans of conquering not only the enemy's lands, but also those of his allies. On the other hand, although he was not 'innocent' either, Charles XII was at least a Protestant and from this viewpoint he did not represent such a considerable threat for the British.⁹

As for the attitudes generated by this major conflict amongst the combatants, Leyon Pierce Balthasar von Campenhausen observed in the last decade of the 18th century that 'in an old book it can be found that the name of the Russians provokes fear to the Swedes'.¹⁰ On the other hand, during that same period, Johan Christian von Struve reminded the Russians about the qualities of the Swedish king, which were proved however in a battle against the Turks and not against Struve's compatriots. Thus, near Bender

foreigners are still shown the place where Charles XII, the King of Sweden, defended himself with so much bravery and foolish audacity against almost 10,000 Turks and Tartars, helped only by a fistful of fellows who shared his terrible fate.¹¹

The Nordic conflict was extremely significant for the Russian public opinion as well, not just for the Western one, and one of the Russian victory's consequences was the strengthening of the claims laid by the Tsar over the neighbouring territories. As a result, during the following decades, the Russian Empire continued to pursue expansionist objectives both in the north and in the south-east of the European continent. Therefore, the Peace of Värälä, which ended the Russian-Swedish war of 1788-1790, was received with joy by the Russian armies stationed in Moldavia,¹² especially since the war with the Ottoman Porte was still ongoing.

The death of Catherine the Great and the accession to the throne of her son, Paul I, in 1796 provided the possibility of a change in the Russian-Turkish relations, as the new Tsar intended to adopt a policy of neutrality, in agreement with Denmark, Sweden and Prussia. The League of Armed Neutrality founded in 1800 clearly expressed this desire, but the English attack on the Danish fleet that took place a year later deprived Russia of the help of a rather important ally, as, after this episode, Denmark was forced to sign an armistice with Great Britain.¹³ Moreover, the assassination of Paul I and Alexander I's rise to power led to the resumption of older conflicts between the allies, provoking the League's dissolution.

⁹ Matthew S. Anderson 1954, 206-209. However, after the Treaty of Nystadt, the British public started to admire Peter the Great due to his political and military successes, while Charles XII of Sweden lost his status of a 'Protestant hero' after being defeated at Poltava. See *Ibid.*, 211-212.

¹⁰ Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru and Paul Cernovodeanu, eds., *Călători străini despre Țările Române* Vol. X, part II (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2001), 885.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1120.

¹² This fact was mentioned by Iona Gedevanishvili. See *Ibid.*, 982.

¹³ Veniamin Ciobanu, *Statele nordice și problema orientală (1792-1814)* (Jassy: Junimea, 2005), 69-71.

Finding itself on the French side, Russia attacked Sweden, her former ally, and occupied and then annexed Finland in 1808. The campaign conducted by Gustav IV Adolf in order to recover Finland did not amount to the expected results and the Swedish king even lost his throne following this event, being replaced by Charles XIII.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in 1812, Sweden's external interests demanded that it renounced the anti-Russian orientation of the previous centuries and that it joined the latter and Great Britain against Napoleon.¹⁵ Obviously, the inauguration of Jean Baptiste Jules Bernadotte as king of Sweden a year before this event¹⁶ had a strong influence upon this decision. Moreover, it was hoped that this manoeuvre would improve Sweden's chances to be compensated for the loss of Finland to Russia in 1808 by means of the annexation of Norway at the end of the military conflicts.¹⁷ But this objective had more chances of being achieved if the Russian-Turkish war that began in 1806 ended. This is why the new king Charles XIV John sent emissaries to both Russia and the Ottoman Empire in an attempt to convince the two belligerents not only of the advantages brought forth by the closure of this dispute, but also of the benefits of being part of an alliance against Napoleon.¹⁸ However, the Swedish plans were only half successful: although a peace treaty was signed between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1812, the Porte could not be convinced to partake in the war against France.¹⁹

The events that took place during the next two years of the Napoleonic Wars were favourable to Sweden, as the collaboration with Great Britain and Russia paid off. Thus, through the Treaty of Kiel from 1814, Sweden achieved an older goal of its foreign policy: the annexation of Norway as a form of compensation for the loss of Finland.²⁰

In fact, the relations between the Nordic countries and Russia followed the same sinuous trajectory as any other connections between two states at that time. Generally speaking, the international political situation was the one which determined the existence of amiable or hostile ties between two countries and the 'national' interest dictated the choice of friends and enemies. This is the context within which one should regard the benevolent attitude shown by the Russian

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 85, 190.

¹⁵ Veniamin Ciobanu, 'Aspects of the Eastern Question found in Swedish diplomatic reports (1813)', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* Vol. 2, Issue 2 (2010): 154.

¹⁶ Bernadotte became King of Sweden as Charles XIV John.

¹⁷ Veniamin Ciobanu 2010: 154-155.

¹⁸ Dan Amedeu Lăzărescu, *Imaginea poporului român în conștiința europeană (1821-1834)* (Bucharest: AGIR, 1999), 110.

¹⁹ Veniamin Ciobanu 2010: 155.

²⁰ In exchange for Norway, Denmark received Swedish Pomerania and Rügen Island. Veniamin Ciobanu 2005: 100.

consuls from Moldavia and Wallachia towards the Swedish representative, General Tawast, in 1813:²¹ the two states were then allied.

However, on the eve of the Romanian War of Independence, Officer Gunar Sölfest Flood encountered quite considerable difficulties when he wanted to pass through Russia while returning to Norway. Although the Russian representative initially assured him that there were no problems in taking the route Kishinev – Sankt Petersburg in order to reach his destination, a few days later

the affair had taken a completely different turn. He regretted profoundly that, as the Grand Duke was ill, he could not do anything for me. He thought that in such circumstances I would have very little to gain from this voyage and he advised me to delay my departure. He asked me openly what I wanted to do: Yes, do you wish to leave or to stay? To his question I naturally answered that it would be best if I delayed my voyage. Because the interdiction (to go to Russia) was so absolute that he did not even stamp my passport.²²

This study has so far had in view only the relations between the Russian Empire and the Nordic states situated further apart from it, so that it will now turn to the connections between Russia and Finland. Within this context, it must be mentioned that the image the Finnish had of the Russians was extremely unflattering, one of the most important causes of this situation being the fear the Finnish felt towards their powerful neighbour.²³ This fear was caused by the fact that, throughout the centuries, the Russians had represented one of the most visible images of alterity for the Finnish. Therefore, the former were seen as belonging to the East and possessing all the characteristics attributed to this space: stupidity, immaturity, alcoholism, dirtiness, cowardice, evilness, lack of self-control, the impossibility of sacrificing themselves for an ideal.²⁴

Moreover, similarly to other European states, at the turn of the 19th century Finland found itself in the midst of a process of affirming its national identity. Within this construction, autonomy from Russia represented an essential element

²¹ In Bucharest, 'le consul de Russie me fait toutes les politesses pour se conformer aux instructions de M. Italinsky' and, in Jassy, 'Le Consul Général de Russie Mr. de Pini m'y fit toutes les politesses qui dépendaient de lui. Il me présenta à la Cour, qui m'accueillit avec une distinction flatteuse et qui me donna, deux jours après mon arrivée, un bal qui était le premier depuis l'installation du Prince'. Constantin J. Karadja, 'Extraits des dépêches de la Légation de Suède à Constantinople (1811-1813)', *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen* VII, no. 1-3 (1930): 220-221.

²² After the beginning of hostilities, the Russian Commander in Zimnicea displayed a similar attitude towards the Norwegian Officer, as the former was 'very reserved, but still stamped my passport and then allowed me to go'. General R. Rosetti, *Notele unui ofițer norvegian înaintea și în timpul Răsboiului de Neatârnavă 1876-1878* (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1928), 33-35.

²³ Vesa Vares, '«Never satisfactory, according to the Finnish standards». From optimism and interest to disappointment and disillusion: Finnish views on the nations in Eastern Central Europe between the world wars', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* Vol. 3, No. 2 (2011): 229.

²⁴ During the interwar period, even Bolshevism started to be seen as a racial characteristic. *Ibid.*, 228, 239.

and the fact that the Finish had a separate stand at the world fair (also known as the 'Exposition Universelle') held at Paris in 1900 illustrated quite clearly the Finnish intellectuals' desire to differentiate themselves from their Eastern neighbours.²⁵

Relations between the Romanian area and the Russian Empire as seen by foreign travellers

Alongside generals, diplomats are a country's most important strategic actors in its relations with another political entity. The use of military means in order to settle certain disputes can be avoided, postponed or embraced without reserve by a sovereign, depending upon the information received from his representatives. Thus, 'a diplomat's game is the durable interweaving of interests in the fundamental act of negotiation, which constitutes the supreme test of his value'.²⁶

In the past, as well as in the present, diplomatic representation in a foreign country benefited the development of political and economical relations between the two countries, but it could also lead to unexpected situations and potential causes of conflict. An example of the latter situation is provided by Nikolai Vasilyevich Reprin, who, acting on behalf of Russia, gradually began to be perceived by the Moldavians as someone who had a certain influence over the ruler. Consequently, when Reprin passed through Jassy in 1775, the locals handed him a series of complaints against Grigore III Alexandru Ghica, who had come to power with the help of the Russian Empire. Although this initiative was welcomed by the diplomat as a reflection of his influence in the Principalities, it also placed Russia in a delicate situation: on the one hand, a refusal to answer these petitions would have shattered the Moldavians' trust in Russia's desire to help them, but, on the other hand, any attempt to censure Grigore Ghica could have been perceived as an act of interference by the Ottoman Empire. The solution Catherine the Great came up with was the following: she instructed Reprin to demand that these matters be dealt with by the sovereign and the competent authorities, while the Sultan was to be informed of these demands only in the event of a specific request in this sense from the Moldavians.²⁷

A decade later, Ivan Ivanovich Severin was faced with a similar problem, triggered by the sovereign's decision of prohibiting the use of the traditional wooden swings during Easter celebrations. Severin proved to be less tactful than Reprin, his actions leading to a minor conflict with Alexander Mavrocordatos. The cause of the dissension was the fact that Jassy's inhabitants chose to address the

²⁵ Louis Clerc, 'The Eye of the Beholder: the Finns, Finland and Paris, 1870-1940', *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies* no. 2 (2004): 53.

²⁶ Mircea Malița, 'Diplomatul în istorie. Introducere la o galerie de portrete,' in *Diplomați iluștri*, Vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1969), 6.

²⁷ Gheorghe Bezviconi, *Călători ruși în Moldova și Muntenia* (Bucharest, 1947), 116-117.

Russian consul rather than presenting their complaints directly to the ruler. Thus, Mavrocordatos was unable to respond favourably to the Russian diplomat's requests, since such a gesture could have given the Ottomans enough reason to consider that the former was the 'Russians' man'. Therefore, the Russian emissary could do no more but note that: 'however it might have been, this matter was debated in each and every house and I was told that the people's attachment towards us is exceptional'.²⁸

The following decades provided further proof of this 'attachment', but they also brought about incidents and a number of difficulties caused by the series of wars that took place on the Romanian territory. Consequently, such an important event as the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as ruler of both Moldavia and Wallachia inevitably gave rise to a series of diplomatic issues, which fortunately enough were not major. For example, in spite of its disapproval of the act accomplished by the Romanian politicians, the Russian government recognised the election and refused to join a potential Ottoman armed intervention in the Principalities.²⁹

On the other hand, numerous events that occurred during Cuza's reign are illustrative for the manner in which Romanian and Russian diplomats managed to prevent potentially serious political crises. One such example is the assistance that Romania offered Russia in 1862, when the latter was granted permission to transport on the former's territory a shipment of armaments destined to reach Serbia. In return, the Tsar was supposed to maintain a minimum involvement in the matter of the secularisation of the monasteries' properties. The Russian sovereign did indeed keep his promise, but only until the Polish revolt which followed almost immediately. The (unofficial) solidarity the Romanians showed the Polish, who, like them, were in the midst of a process of national emancipation, caused tensions between Cuza's young state and the Russian Empire. However, a slight improvement in the relations between the two countries could be sensed after Romania forcefully prevented the passage through its territory of a group of armed volunteers headed towards Poland (a different response would have seriously jeopardized Romania's neutrality claims and would have undoubtedly unleashed a violent reaction from Russia's part).³⁰

Nevertheless, after this significant moment and especially after the secularisation of the monasteries' properties by the state, the Tsar began to regard Alexandru Ioan Cuza with growing suspicion. Consequently, Cuza's forced abdication at the

²⁸ Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru and Paul Cernovodeanu, eds., *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, Vol. X, part I (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2000), 655.

²⁹ Marian Stroia, 'Rusia și românii. De la războiul Crimeii la cucerirea independenței. Repere diplomatice (1855-1878),' in *România și geo-politica marilor puteri 1718-1918*, eds. Daniela Bușă and Ileana Căzan (Bucharest: Oscar Print, 2009), 59-60.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 61-64, 65-67.

beginning of 1866 was saluted by the Russian diplomats from the Principalities, who nevertheless took into consideration the possibility that the country they represented could lose part of its influence in the event of the election of a foreign prince as a substitute for Cuza. Hence, Alexander II only recognized the election of Carol I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen after the latter displayed a benevolent attitude towards the Tsar and took it upon himself to put an end to the ongoing revolutionary activities, as well as to protect the Orthodox Church through the state's institutions.³¹

Ironically, given the tensions from the first half of the 19th century, the first international agreement between the newly formed Romanian state and a foreign power was the telegraphic convention with Russia from December 1860, which became effective two years later.³² The first postal convention was also concluded with Russia at the end of 1867.³³ They were followed by the Romanian-Russian convention for the junction of the railways of the two states between Jassy and Kishinev signed in May 1872³⁴ and by a Convention for commerce and navigation, concluded in March 1876.³⁵

This period also marked the early stages of Romanian diplomacy in Russia. At the beginning of the year 1869, the Romanian diplomat from Vienna was also accredited to Sankt Petersburg.³⁶ Three years later, on 6 May 1872 the latter was substituted by the Romanian representative in Berlin, while in 1874 Romania set up a diplomatic agency in the Russian capital, which became a legation in 1878.³⁷ The latter functioned until 13 January 1918³⁸, when the Bolshevik government interrupted its diplomatic ties with Romania until 1934.

³¹ For details, see *Ibid.*, 73-75, 78-79.

³² *Istoria României în date*, elaborated by Dinu C. Giurescu, Horia C. Matei, Nicolae C. Nicolescu, Marcel D. Popa, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Alexandru Stănculescu, coordinator Dinu C. Giurescu, Second revised and enlarged edition (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2007), 200.

³³ The convention stipulated the exclusivity of the Romanian post in ensuring services of this nature on the Romanian territory. *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

³⁵ Ion Ionașcu, Petre Bărbulescu and Gheorghe Gheorghe, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900). Culegere selectivă de tratate, acorduri, convenții și alte acte cu caracter internațional* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971), 391-399.

³⁶ The Romanian-Russian consular convention was published in *Ibid.*, 355-367.

³⁷ The Romanian diplomatic agents in Sankt Petersburg were: George C. Filipescu (4 April 1874 – 12 June 1876), Ioan A. Cantacuzino (12 July 1876 – 1 March 1877) and Ioan Gr. Ghica (4 April 1877 – 10 October 1878). Between 1 March and 4 April 1877 the agency did not have a holder due to economic reasons. *Istoria României în date*, elaborated by Dinu C. Giurescu, Horia C. Matei, Nicolae C. Nicolescu, Marcel D. Popa, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Alexandru Stănculescu, coordinator Dinu C. Giurescu (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), 896.

³⁸ During this interval Romania was represented by: Ioan Gr. Ghica (10 October 1878 – 21 March 1881), Nicolae Kretzulescu (25 July 1881 – 10 April 1886), Gheorghe M. Ghica (10 April 1886 – 31 January 1889), Emil I. Ghica (31 January 1889 – 17 July 1891), Alexandru C. Catargi (14 November 1892 – 7 October 1895), Gheorghe Rosetti-Solescu (1 December 1895 – 15 August 1911), Constantin

The obvious improvement in the Romanian-Russian connections in the last part of the 19th century even allowed G. I. Bobrikov to present the image of some extremely personalised relationships between the Russian diplomats stationed in the Principalities around the Romanian War of Independence and the members of the Romanian government. According to him, a series of problems and conflicts that appeared due to the presence of the Russian troops on the Romanian territory could be solved after a simple amiable discussion.³⁹

It is probable that, alongside the Romanian military contribution during the conflict, these rather close ties between some officials ensured the prompt recognition of Romania's independence by Russia, which took place on 15/27 October 1878.⁴⁰ However, the peace treaty signed at the end of the war gave rise to new debates between the Romanian and Russian governments, as the Tsar had territorial claims that affected his former ally. The three counties situated south of Bessarabia, namely Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail, were thus taken over by Russia, although not without the Romanian authorities' protests, Romania being 'compensated' by taking possession of Dobrudja.⁴¹

The end of 1888 also witnessed certain difficulties in the relations between Romania and Russia, following the expulsion actions enforced by the Romanian authorities against the pedlars who sold ikons and the veterinary agents of Russian origin.⁴² Similarly, the last decade of the 19th century saw a sinuous evolution in the connections between the two states, depending upon the moment's political situation. For instance, some tensions which appeared after the Congress of Berlin were neutralised by Carol I's journey to Russia in 1898, an event that was that much more important as this official visit of the Romanian King to Sankt Petersburg was the first of its kind paid by a head of the independent Romanian state to the Tsar's Empire.⁴³

The end of World War I brought to the fore major diplomatic problems caused by the situation of the prisoners of war, their number being extremely large. For example, in 1920, it was estimated that in Russia there were around 14,000

C. Nanu (15 October 1911 - 1 October 1913) and Constantin I. Diamandi (1 October 1913 - 13 January 1918). *Ibid.*, 897.

³⁹ For one such example, see Gheorghe Bezviconi 1947, 426.

⁴⁰ *Istoria României în date 2007*, 244.

⁴¹ For a succinct presentation of the negotiations' evolution and of the general political context, see Daniela Bușă, *Modificări politico-teritoriale în sud-estul Europei între Congresul de la Berlin și primul război mondial (1878-1914)* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 48-60.

⁴² Ion Calafeteanu and Cristian Popișteanu, eds., *Politica externă a României: dicționar cronologic* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986), 145.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 149.

Romanian prisoners. Their repatriation through the Nansen Commission⁴⁴ and the International Red Cross would have required approximately 70,000 pounds (the final sum paid by Romania for the repatriation of her prisoners of war was 52,584 pounds).⁴⁵ It seems, however, that the Romanian government's interest in this matter was extremely low: after several telegrams from the part of those involved in this initiative the Romanian officials offered a vague acceptance and afterwards ceased communication altogether.⁴⁶ Only the international pressures stemming from the actions of the Secretary General of the League of Nations succeeded in obtaining a favourable answer from Romania, the delays being motivated by misunderstandings. Thus, between 1920 and 1922, the Nansen Commission, with the support of the International Red Cross, managed to repatriate 18,140 Romanians by using the ports of the Baltic Sea and the railways from the region, 901 Romanians who left the Russian territory in the Black Sea area and 649 prisoners of the same nationality who embarked on ships at the Vladivostok harbour.⁴⁷ As a result, from the total of 427,886 successful repatriations accomplished by these two international organisms, 19,690⁴⁸ involved Romanian ethnics.

Military contacts between the Nordic countries, Russia and the Romanian area

Although there were no direct military conflicts between the Nordic countries and the Romanians, we can still talk about a mutual understanding of the two areas in terms of the bravery their inhabitants exhibited on the battlefield. As regards the timespan under consideration here, the Great Northern War represented an extremely relevant moment from the aforementioned perspective. Thus, during this conflict, there existed both Romanian mercenaries who fought alongside Charles XII against the Russians and soldiers of the same origin who joined the ranks of Peter the Great's army.⁴⁹ The Romanians' presence alongside the Swedes was recorded by the chronicler Nicolae Costin, but also by a host of other sources that

⁴⁴ More information about the role played by Fridtjof Nansen in the League of Nations can be found in Florin Hera, 'Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930),' in *Diplomați iluștri* Vol. II (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970), 386-396.

⁴⁵ Ioana Ecaterina Cazacu, 'The Nansen Commission and the Romanian prisoners of War's repatriation from the Russian territories,' *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* Vol. 3, Issue 1 (2011): 149-150, 158.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁸ This is the total that results from adding up the three numbers noted within the text. The figure found by the study's author in the official reports is 19,188.

⁴⁹ Veniamin Ciobanu, *Carol al XII-lea și românii* (Jassy: Domino, 1999), 47-75 passim. See also Nicolae Iorga, *Histoires des relations roumaines. Anthologie et édition augmentée par Florin Rotaru* (Bucharest: Semne, 1995), 405.

made reference to the regiment of the 'royal Wallachians' from the vanguard of the Swedish king's troops.⁵⁰ Nicolae Iorga popularised the case of Sandu Colțea, one such Moldavian volunteer in the army led by Charles XII, who, after distinguishing himself amongst the Swedes, was captured past Poltava. Apparently valiant by nature, he refused to give away the Swedes' plans and was spared by the Russians because of that. On being released at the end of the war, he once again ended up on Swedish lands, but he asked to be allowed to return to his native Moldavia, as he wished to be able to worship in an Orthodox church.⁵¹

As for the Romanians' contacts with the Russian armies, they were much more numerous than the ones with the Nordics, given the frequent military conflicts between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires that took place throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries. For example, during the battles of 1770, 1789 and 1807, probably motivated by their members' anti-Ottoman sentiments, the detachments of Romanian volunteers in the Russian army stood out due to the courage they displayed in battle.⁵²

Unfortunately, however, as soon as the Romanians turned from soldiers into civilians, the nature of the Russian-Romanian relations also changed. Thus, the Russian-Romanian military interactions cannot be said to have been beneficial for the latter, as the Tsarist troops committed frequent and serious abuses against the locals. As Louis-Alexandre Andrault de Langeron confessed in 1790,

I was in a position to judge the excesses our officers in Moldavia indulged in all too often, and even if I had not witnessed them, I could still have figured them out judging by the fear the Moldavian peasant was seized by the moment he saw a Russian uniform entering his house. He would be petrified and there was no way you could determine him to say a word or make a gesture. You could ask him, beseech him, offer him money for some service, but the Moldavian would do nothing and stand like a pillar, leaning against his kiln. Then there was nothing to do but take what you needed – which was what usually happened – and then leave him some money⁵³ – which was not always done.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ V. Mihordea 1942-1943, 450-451.

⁵¹ Nicolae Iorga 1995, 405.

⁵² *Istoria României în date* 2007, 134, 138 and 141, respectively.

⁵³ The existence of a system of compensation according to which the Romanian peasants received money in exchange for the requisitioned products was confirmed by P. H. Grabbe for the year 1829 as well, but it is not clear to what extent this principle was actually applied. The Colonel stated that the ongoing war had imposed special measures that had in view both the quantities that were being requisitioned and the prices being paid for them, but, as he admitted, the latter's values were smaller than normal. Paul Cernovodeanu and Daniela Bușă, eds., *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, New Series, Vol. II (1822-1830) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2005), 377.

⁵⁴ Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru and Paul Cernovodeanu 2001, 941.

From the viewpoint of the Russian General of French extraction, the most frequent blameable gestures the Russian officers in the Principalities committed included 'wiping out' the horses by using them for the chores related to the ongoing military activities and using physical force against the defenceless peasants.⁵⁵ Leyon Pierce Balthasar von Campenhausen also noted, during the same period, that 'their fear of our weapons is indescribable. The mere word *muscal* (Muscovite, Russian) disperses a group of gathered Moldavians.'⁵⁶

Unfortunately, these abuses continued also at the beginning of the 19th century and Admiral Pavel Vasilievich Chichagov was sent to the Principalities in 1812 to set right the shortcomings of the Russian administration theretofore. According to his own statements, Chichagov's appointment was made by Alexander I after he had read a 'long memorandum containing the grievances of the unfortunate inhabitants of Moldavia and Wallachia', a memorandum that triggered the Tsar's firm yet compassionate reaction, as the latter allegedly exclaimed: 'I can no longer bear such horrors!'⁵⁷ Upon his arrival in the Principalities, the Admiral found that the information sent to the Russian authorities was largely substantiated by the realities encountered in the territory, one of the most important pieces of evidence in this regard being the fact that

many of the dwelling places had been abandoned and I found that some of the owners, in order to avoid the requisitions, perpetually renewed by the authorities, and the eternal insults proffered by the soldiers, had retreated outside the country, while others roamed the woods. These emigrations took place especially during the stationing of the troops.⁵⁸

Chichagov therefore resorted to a series of measures for disciplining the soldiers and to several administrative changes designed to end these abuses;⁵⁹ still, he was impelled to do so not so much by the poor living conditions of the natives, but by the fact that

in these most fertile regions, in these two provinces, which, by themselves, could produce an income of over 150,000 ducats, cash and supplies were

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 949.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 885.

⁵⁷ Paul Cernovodeanu, ed., *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, New Series, Vol. I (1801-1821) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2004), 537.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 545-546.

⁵⁹ Pavel Dmitrievich Kiseleff also considered that the improvements registered at the level of the administration in the Principalities had eliminated a series of shortcomings, which, in turn, had engendered an even greater attachment to the Russians on the part of the Romanians: 'Indeed, the administrative reforms from the Principalities, made in the interest of the great population masses, hitherto crushed under the weight of abuses and oppressions of all kinds, have been so successful in the eyes of the people that the latter can no longer turn a blind eye to a replacement with the former government'. Gheorghe Bezviconi 1947, 306.

lacking. Russia was forced to provide money and food for the maintenance of the troops stationed in the midst of abundance of all kinds, whose fruits were being destroyed because of sheer lack of order.⁶⁰

To better illustrate why this situation had been reached, the Admiral gave an example of the manner in which the Russian army and the government representatives oppressed the peasants in full collaboration with some corrupted locals:⁶¹

When the army demanded 50 carts (with two oxen each), the Divan ordered the requisition of 200 so that each of those involved could gain something. The treasurer added 50 for himself, then came the share of the *ispravnici* (petty executive officers); thus, the demand for carts usually rose to 500. The inhabitants, who could not meet such claims, asked for mercy and obtained the number of carts required for the army, while for the extra ones they were charged two or three ducats per ox.⁶²

The transport of military equipment proved extremely difficult during the War of Independence too, as the 'peasants, cart owners, were not always willing to interrupt their work and make long and arduous journeys'. Thus, even though it did not involve resorting to corrupt administrators and abuses, getting hold of vehicles and traction horses was problematic, because it entailed the natives giving up or postponing agricultural work for a while; moreover, the carts could get damaged and the horses could be injured or even die from the exertion. It comes then as no surprise that officers like Victor Tuderus stated that 'I was therefore forced to send soldiers looking for carts everywhere, to villages several kilometres away'.⁶³

In 1828, the Finn Johan Berndt Rosenström illustrated another type of attitude adopted by the Russian troops towards the Romanians: he claimed that the 'inhabitants were treated as well as possible and everything that was taken from them had to be paid for. But war is always oppressive by its very essence'. Similarly, after 'we entered Bucharest, being joyously acclaimed by the inhabitants,

⁶⁰ Paul Cernovodeanu 2004, 547.

⁶¹ The corruption of the power holders was also noted by the representatives of the German linguistic space. Klaus Heitmann, *Oglinzi paralele. Studii de imagologie româno-germană* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1996), 47. See also Id., *Imaginea românilor în spațiul lingvistic german: 1775-1918. Un studiu imagologic* (Bucharest, Editura Univers, 1995), 75-76, where the author states that 'in some of the sources, the Wallachians are depicted as being corrupt, ferocious, lazy, dissolute, apathetic'.

⁶² Paul Cernovodeanu 2004, 548.

⁶³ Raoul Bossy, *Mărturiile finlandeze și alte scrieri nordice despre români* (Târgoviște: Valahia University Press, 2008), 113.

and made the remaining Turks prisoners, without firing a single shot', 'we set camp outside the city so as not to burden the population'.⁶⁴

Still, such stories were quite scarce, as the contacts between the Tsarist troops and the Romanians most often proved to be detrimental to the latter. Perhaps this is why the locals did not feel very close to the Russians they came into contact with,⁶⁵ despite their sharing the same faith. In any case, judging by the account left by Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis towards the end of the 18th century, the Russians did not take a liking to the Romanians either, particularly because the latter appeared to have a preference for the Turks:

Since the war,⁶⁶ the Russians have occupied entire Moldavia and, despite their common faith, [they] are far from harbouring any sympathy towards the natives, who regret the Ottoman rule and are looking forward to the moment they will find themselves [in the same situation] as before the war. However ill regarded, one might say - and rightly so - Turkish despotism is, a very strange observation that is nonetheless made everywhere is that neither the Muslims, nor the [Christian] subjects of the Porte can get used to living under a different rule, regardless of the advantages that were to be granted to them in order to determine them to stay [in the country].⁶⁷

And in 1831 Ivan Petrovich Liprandi noted that:

More than twenty years ago, the boyars of both Principalities placed their entire trust in Russia, expressing their confidence in it during some troublesome times, they settled down here temporarily or permanently, they transferred here the wealth they had gathered, many of them bought estates from us, their children studied in our educational institutions, etc. Today, everything is reversed: the boyars prefer to be taken under the protection of the Austrian Empire.⁶⁸

And even if 'the boyars still gladly resort, in general, to Russia's protection', they nonetheless 'sincerely fear its influence'.⁶⁹

Like the Romanians' relations with the Russians, their contacts with the Finns were also marked by the numerous military conflicts waged across Europe in the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

⁶⁵ However, Ivan Petrovich Liprandi had a different opinion from that of many of his compatriots. Writing in 1831, he stated that '[t]he last campaign, about whose circumstances we do not have the opportunity to speak at length here, was indeed destructive for the peasants in both Principalities, especially during the first year. Still, the exhausting depletion and frequent abuses did not, in any way, attenuate the sympathy towards Russia'. Paul Cernovodeanu and Daniela Bușă 2005, 307.

⁶⁶ Namely the Russian-Turkish War conducted between 1787 and 1791.

⁶⁷ Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dersca *Bulgaru* and Paul Cernovodeanu 2001, 925.

⁶⁸ Paul Cernovodeanu and Daniela Bușă 2005, 297.

⁶⁹ Gheorghe Bezviconi 1947, 261.

18th and the 19th centuries.⁷⁰ Thus, Romanian soldiers were often confronted with soldiers who came from the Finnish space and fought in the Russian army and the War of Independence is perhaps the conflict that left the largest number of traces of these encounters. Clearly, this influenced, to a certain extent, the opinion the Finns formed about the Romanians,⁷¹ as the political and military relations between two states leave a substantial imprint on the image one people acquires about another one.⁷²

The Russian armies' collaboration with the Romanian troops in the above-mentioned conflict had effects at the diplomatic level too, as these states awarded decorations to the soldiers who had fought at Plevna. The Russian soldiers who had served under the command of Carol I were awarded the commemorative distinction 'Crossing the Danube' by the Romanian government and the Romanian troops were granted the 'Russian Commemorative Medal of the 1877-1878 War'.⁷³ Some of the Russian travellers who provided valuable data on the course of this conflict and the Romanian society in the second half of the 19th century were also decorated for their acts of bravery. For instance, on 28 December 1877, Nikolay Karlovich Giers⁷⁴ received the 'Star of Romania' Order, the 'Grand Cross' rank and one month later, on 31 January 1878, Emil Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berlenburg received the same order, but the rank was that of 'Grand Officer'.⁷⁵ The Norwegian Gunar Sölfest Flood was also rewarded with the 'Star of Romania' by Carol I,⁷⁶ despite having been a mere observer of the manner in which the hostilities had been conducted.

The Romanian-Russian relations continued under more or less favourable auspices until the late 19th century. For example, during his visit to the Principalities in 1904, the Governor of Bessarabia, Sergei Dmitrievich Urusov, recounted that Dimitrie A. Sturdza 'spoke to us with much regret about the millions Romania had spent for consolidating the border with Russia, on account of an unjustified fear of Russia's conquering tendencies'.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Alexandru Popescu, 'The Romanian-Finnish cultural relations: history, trends, bibliography', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* Vol. 1 (2009): 116.

⁷¹ This was extremely negative in the first part of the 20th century. As Alexander Duțu has noted, military campaigns can generate distorted ethnic images and clichés, as they do not allow for a more thorough apprehension of the Other. Alexandru Duțu, *Călătorii, imagini, constante* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1985), 19.

⁷² Klaus Heitmann 1995, 82.

⁷³ Irina Gavrilă, 'Baze de date istorice. Distincții militare acordate în timpul războiului de independență și relevanța lor în planul operațiunilor militare româno-ruse,' in *România și geo-politica marilor puteri 1718-1918*, eds. Daniela Bușă and Ileana Căzan (Bucharest: Oscar Print, 2009), 253.

⁷⁴ For details on his personality, see Paul Cernovodeanu, 'Nikolai Karlovici Giers (1820-1895),' in *Diplomați iluștri* Vol. V (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1986), 141-225.

⁷⁵ Irina Gavrilă 2009, 286.

⁷⁶ General R. Rosetti 1928, 56.

⁷⁷ Gheorghe Bezviconi 1947, 442.

The Romanian soldiers' involvement in the European wars seems to have been constant during the period analysed in this study and it obviously continued during World War I as well. Due to the complex political situation, the Romanians participated in this conflagration both by way of their recruitment by the Romanian and, respectively, the Austro-Hungarian authorities and as volunteers. In the latter context, a significant number of Romanian soldiers arrived on Russian territory, where they faced a series of difficulties during the battles for the takeover of power that were waged between the 'Whites' and the 'Reds'.⁷⁸

Concluding remarks

As this study demonstrated, the relations between the area inhabited by Romanians, on the one hand, and the Nordic countries and Russia, on the other hand, had a rather large importance during the 17th-19th centuries. The political developments occurring on the continent, which caused the involvement of these states in a series of military conflicts throughout this period, have significantly contributed to providing a framework for these connections' unfolding, although this framework was not always beneficial. Nevertheless, one must not disregard the fact that the Thirty Years' War had as an effect the fact that Transylvania became an important actor on the international scene. Moreover, it can be demonstrated that, during the Great Northern War, Charles XII's Sweden, Peter the Great's Russia and the Romanian area constituted a triangle, as any decision or action adopted by one of these states largely influenced the other countries enumerated above.

From a chronological viewpoint, there existed sustained relations between Transylvania and Sweden until the first half of the 18th century, but afterwards the contacts with Russia were the ones that dominated the Romanian external politics. The long series of wars against the Ottoman Porte and the Tsarist interests in the Black Sea area had as a result the fact that, after the Russian Empire was recognised as a great power following the victory of Poltava (1709), the latter became more and more involved in governing the Principalities.

Within this context, the Russians attributed themselves an extremely positive role in their relations with the Romanians, one of the best illustrations of this opinion being provided by Ivan Petrovich Liprandi's affirmations. According to him, throughout history, the Russian Empire only sought to set its fellow Orthodox believers free of the Ottoman yoke, but, unfortunately, they did not repay the Russian efforts. This idyllic presentation of the multiple situations in which Russia became involved in the Principalities' affairs was doubled by the omission of the numerous and grave abuses to which the locals were subjected during the presence

⁷⁸ For a detailed presentation of this problem, see Ioana Cazacu, 'The second corps of Romanian volunteers in Russia', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* Vol. 2, Issue 1 (2010): 111-118.

of the Tsar's armies on Moldavia's and Wallachia's territories during the 18th-19th centuries. As a result, Liprandi affirms that he was stunned by the fact that

the villagers, who even today do not dare – they being fifty – to attack an armed man, etc.,⁷⁹ precisely these people have not only proven great determination and disobedience towards the rule imposed on them by the Tsar, who always took them under protection, but have dared to start a fire exchange with the infantry and the Cossacks of the victorious army, which had settled down their oppressors and which has always released the two Principalities from the burdensome yoke of the unbelievers and, through its resounding victories, has dispersed the fog of forgetfulness that surrounded their ancient rights, rulers and popular militia.⁸⁰

Pavel Dmitrievich Kiseleff illustrates even better the belief that Russia had a civilising influence upon the Principalities,⁸¹ but, although this was true in his particular case, probably also due to his personal qualities,⁸² one cannot say the same thing about the evolution of the Romanian-Russian relations over time. Thus, while his analysis is accurate up to a certain point, the idealisation of the Russian Empire's intentions reduces its value:

Descendants of a brave people! Your ancestors had a national government, which disappeared, making room for foreign, weak and occasional governments. While other European peoples stepped ahead on the path of progress, the peoples of these two countries stood still; called upon by civilisation, they could no longer remain strangers to their mission. Gentlemen, let us thank the heavens that this change, which is usually accompanied by social convulsions and calamities, was accomplished, exclusively due to the generous intentions of... Russia, which, - beginning with Peter the Great, - has never ceased to manifest benevolence and care towards these provinces.⁸³

⁷⁹ The cliché regarding the Romanians' peaceful nature and Russia's desire to release them from the Ottoman yoke was also present in Alexander Ivanovich Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky's notes: 'The Moldavian boyars do not occupy themselves at all with the trade of weapons. The Turks do not take from the Principalities recruits for their army and therefore the Moldavians, being a totally peaceful people, must obey their masters without objections and they place their hope that they will someday escape the Turkish yoke not in a popular uprising, which may take place, but in Russia's help'. Paul Cernovodeanu and Daniela Bușă 2005, 406.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁸¹ For details about the reforms and technical improvements adopted while Kiseleff governed the Principalities, see Gheorghe Bezviconi 1947, 274-310.

⁸² Romanians' appreciation of Kiseleff due to the manner in which he administered the Principalities was illustrated, amongst other things, by the fact that the portrait of 'this popular, kind-hearted and propitious man [...] can be found on the walls of all the houses, be they more modest or nobler'. This observation belongs to Anatoly Demidov, who noticed that a picture of the Russian General could be encountered even in one of the rooms of the Romanian King's palace. Paul Cernovodeanu and Daniela Bușă, eds., *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, New Series, Vol. III (1831-1840) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2006), 611.

⁸³ Gheorghe Bezviconi 1947, 295-296.

Although the image presented by these representatives of the Tsar does not coincide with reality, one must mention that, at least in certain contexts, the majority of Romanians and/or those who held power have had a rather good opinion about the Russians.

During the modern period, most of the times, the existence of political-military and diplomatic relations constituted the basis of other types of connections between two states. The initiation of commercial, scientific or cultural connections thus depended upon the presence of some strategic interests, as these links were influenced to a great extent by the developments of the international political scene. Oftentimes, the simple presence of certain Nordic and Russian travellers in the area inhabited by Romanians denotes and exemplifies the numerous facets of the relations between these geographical and cultural spaces. The most obvious example in this sense is Charles XII's stay at Bender, but the presence of the Danish doctor Hans Andersen Skovgaard at Vasile Lupu's court or that of other Swedish sovereigns on the Romanian territory during the 20th century, as well as the fact that the Romanian Principalities were administered for specific time intervals by Russian officials are also highly relevant from this viewpoint.

Largely due to geographical realities, conflicts involving Romanians and Russians occurred fairly often, but they however facilitated at times a number of contacts between Romanians and Northerners. Thus, to answer the question stated in this study's title, peace mostly characterised Romanians' interactions with the Nordic peoples, while war was a more frequent option in the contacts between Romanians and Russians.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the purpose of this study was not that of providing an exhaustive presentation of the relations between the Nordic countries, Russia and the Romanian area, but of highlighting some connections that were less studied so far by the Romanian researchers. Besides, the use of travel writings was intended as a tool that would bring to light interesting details regarding particular events whose chronological elements and political-diplomatic implications are rather well known. As a result, even such a presentation, which includes the inherent shortcomings of any historiographical approach, should lead to the conclusion that the relations between the Romanians, the Nordic countries and the Russian Empire were rather frequent and important during the 17th-19th centuries, both from a political viewpoint, as well as from a cultural one.

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