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The International Dimension of the Romanians Anti-Ottoman Fight between the 15th and the 18th Century

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Abstract: The aim of our present paper, underwent several important historical stages, between the 15th and the 18th century, and ended up with the maintaining of the autonomy and territorial integrity of the Romanian Countries. We will also underline the main political moments to which these states took part during the centuries mentioned above, highlighting their place and role in the international relations from these times and the influence these relations had on their political situation. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire towards Central Europe was stopped by the isolated or coalesced resistance of the Romanian Countries. The Danube becoming the main European front for the Ottoman Empire during this period. The Romanians fought fiercely for the defense of their countries. Their anti-Ottoman fight, between the 15th and the 18th centuries, caused numerous defeats to the Ottoman armies, triggering important consequences for the state of the European continent.

Key words: Romanian Countries, Ottoman Empire, Danube, anti-Ottoman fight, XVth-XVIIIth centuries

The evolutions of the Romanian area have been influenced, to a large extent, by external factors, by closer or farther states, whose interests crossed in this extremely important geographical zone of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Between the 15th and the 18th centuries, the Romanian area has been submitted to military, political and economic pressures, from all sides.

The international dimension of the Romanians' anti-Ottoman fight, during this period, the object of our present paper, underwent several important historical stages and ended up with the maintaining of the autonomy and territorial integrity of the Romanian Countries. We will also underline the main political moments to which these states took part during the centuries mentioned above, highlighting their place and role in the international relations from these times and the influence these relations had on their political situation.

In north, the pressure on the Romanian area came from Poland, though this country, towards the middle of the 15th century, will transfer the focus of

its external politics towards the area of the Black Sea and of the Baltic Sea. From west, the menace was Hungary, and after its fall, the Habsburg Empire. From east, the Tartars exerted a permanent pressure on the Romanian area, to which we can add the arrival of the Cossacks, during the last quarter of the 16th century. From south stood out the Ottoman Empire, at the time in expansion, representing the greatest menace for the Romanians. From east, the main threat were the Tartars of the Great Horde, situated on the Volga River, and those from the Crimean Khanate, first of all menacing Moldavia and then representing a danger for Wallachia and Transylvania as well. Especially after 1475, when the politico-military alliance between the Tartars and the Turks began to function, and the Crimean Tartars became subordinated to the Ottoman Porte, they menaced the entire Romanian area, especially Moldavia, with attacks from two fronts – from south and east. The Turkish-Tartar alliance functioned efficiently in 1476, 1484, 1538, and 1574 and on other occasions, when Moldova suffered defeats

and important territorial losses. Without being a direct menace for the international status of the Romanian Countries, the Tatars from the region of the Volga River and from Crimea could give a decisive support to the Ottoman Turks in their attempt to subordinate as much as possible the Romanian area (Ş. Papacostea, 1974, p. 448-449; 1978, p. 477; P.P. Panaitescu, 1958, p. 95; E. Denize, 2003, p. 5-7).

The biggest threat came from south, from the Ottoman Empire. From a simple Turkish Emirate, as many other from Anatolia, towards the end of the Byzantine Empire, the Ottomans managed to create, in less than a century, a strong empire, which represented a serious threat for the Christian Europe, forcing it to re-discuss an entire series of projects of crusades. The rapid Ottoman expansion in Anatolia and in the Balkan Peninsula reached the Danube at the end of the 14th century, becoming a direct menace for the Romanian area. The Ottoman threat was radically different than the ones exerted by the Christian kingdoms, by Hungary and Poland, as it was not a menace against a state, but against a different culture and civilization. If Turkey had conquered the Romanian Countries, and if it had set up a pashalik, the Romanian political, economic, military and cultural elites would have been destroyed. The Islam would have replaced the Christianity and the being of the Romanian people itself would have been in danger of disappearing (E. Denize, 2003, p. 20).

The fact that the Turks made a direct contact with the Romanian Countries and with Hungary, during the reign of the sultan Baiazid I (1389-1402), as well as the Ottoman Empire's tendency of expansion in the north of the Danube, opened a long period of fights between the Romanians and the Ottoman power, for a century and a half. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire towards Central Europe was stopped by the isolated or coalesced resistance of the Romanian Countries, the Danube becoming the main European front for the Ottoman Empire during this period.

The analysis of the historical processes and evolutions that occurred during the second half of the 15th century, concerning the Christian states from the European continent shows that they were quite similar everywhere, from the Atlantic Ocean almost to the Ural Mountains. Obviously, given the specific socio-economic, political, cultural and geographic conditions, the historical evolutions

from this period advantaged more the Occidental states, like Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, the Italian and German States, and less the states from the central, eastern and south-eastern area of the continent. However all Europe was going in the same direction, towards a capitalist economy (E. Denize, 2004, p. 9-14; P. H. Beik, Laurence Lafore, 1959, p. 20; B. Chevalier Bernard; R.R. Palmer, J. Colton, 1974; N. J. G. Pounds, 1974; P. Léon, 1977; I. Wallerstein, 1980; S. Ozment, 1980; J. Delumeau, 1984).

The economic, social and political changes, to which we can add the appearing of the Ottoman Turks in South-Eastern Europe and in the Oriental Mediterranean area, determined in the 15th century the beginning of the process of shifting of the main continental commercial axis from the Mediterranean and Baltic area towards the Atlantic Ocean. The most eloquent example in this sense is Genoa, which transfers its interests from the Black Sea area towards the Iberian Peninsula and enjoys, therefore, until the second half of the 17th century, a new glamour and prosperity (J. Delumeau, 1984).

Politically, the transformations of the economic and social life had a tremendous importance for the accomplishment of the processes of territorial unification and political centralization, and for the appearing of the modern territorial states, led in their internal and external actions by « *raisons d'Etat* » (A. Oțetea, 1939a, p. 7-28; 1968, p. 147-148; E. Denize, 2004, p. 14). The Renaissance marked, from this perspective, the final end of the ideal of crusade, of the imperial messianism and of the unity of the Christian world.

The monarchy put an end to the feudal anarchy, abolished most of the political rights and privileges of the nobles, to the town's autonomy and to the clergy's privileges (E. Denize, 2004, p. 14-16). The Parliament's control over the monarchy's fiscal and general policy becomes more and more obvious, even in England, while in France and Spain, the General Assemblies and the Cortes are rather the allies than the opponents of the monarchy.

Such states appeared in Henry VII Tudor's England (1485-1509), who put an end to the War of the Two Roses, in the France of Charles VII and of Louis XI (1422-1461 and 1461-1483), who decisively reduced the nobility's impetus, in the Spain of the Catholic kings, Isabella de Castilla (1474-1504) and Ferdinand of Aragon (1479-1516), who united the state and completed the regaining of

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the territories under Muslim domination, by means of the occupation of Granada's Emirate, after the war between 1481-1492, in the Portugal of Alfons V (1438-1481), of Joao II (1481-1495) and of Manuel I the Great (1495-1521), who prepared the great geographic discoveries and the great maritime journeys and who changed the world's image.

But the modern states did not appear only in the Occident. They appeared under specific conditions and circumstances in the central and southeast Europe as well. The same unification and centralization process can be encountered in Poland, during the reign of Cazimir IV Jagiello (1445-1492), in Ivan III's Russia (1462-1505), in Mathias Corvin's Hungary (1458-1490) in the Wallachia of Vlad Țepeș (1448, 1456-1462, 1476) and in the Moldavia of Ștefan cel Mare (1457-1504). But here, the great influence of the nobles and of the boyards as well as the Ottoman invasion delayed the normal evolution of these countries towards the modern state, hindered this evolution and condemned the entire region to a process of stagnation and regress, to a process of late re-feudalization.

The disappearing of the crusade ideals, of unity of the Christian world and of the universality of the imperial power led, in the political European world, not to their replacement by other ideals, but to a reality that imposed itself and was recognized as such, in the spirit of the pragmatism of the Renaissance, together with the system of the European States and of the balance of powers. The principle of the balance of powers, applied first in Italy, by means of the Peace or League from Lodi, from 1454, was adopted European-wide as a means of defense against the expansion of a power that menaced to destroy the report of forces established among the competing powers. Within this system, the main role belonged to the sovereign states. Each state represented a community and a power. There was no more international community led by a central power, the international institutions, even the newly created ones, no longer had direct authority over the states. Because religion, in general, and especially the Papacy, had lost the authority they had had during the previous centuries, this new system of the European states included the Ottoman Empire as well, as one of its main factors. Although Europe was afraid of the Turks, although the crusade rhetoric and the projects of sending them away were largely present throughout the continent, however the Ottoman

Empire was introduced in the political system of the European states, thus becoming one of the most powerful states of the continent. The first Christians who negotiated with the Turks were the Italians, especially those from Genoa and from Venice, but also those from Florence, Milan and even the Papacy, during Alexander VI. Then followed Hungary, Poland and the Great Principality of Moscow, France, the German Empire, Spain and all the other European states, the Ottoman Turks becoming a natural component of the European political system, of the balance of powers on our continent (A. Oțetea, 1939b, p. 3-20; 1968, p. 157-158; V. Grecu, 1953, p. 55-81; E. Denize, 2004, p. 19).

This status reached by the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century was won by the Ottomans thanks to the conquests they had made during the 15th century and at the beginning of the following century. After conquering Constantinople under the leadership of the sultan Mehmed II (1451-1481), they continued their victories, defeating Moreea (1458-1460), Serbia (1459), Sinope and Trapezunt (1461), Lesbos (1462), Bosnia (1463), Karamania (1468), Negroponte (1470), Eastern Anatolia (1473), Caffa (1475), Albania (1478), Chilia and Cetatea Albă (1480). The Black Sea was transformed in a closed Ottoman Lake. The conquests of Selim I the Terrible and of Soliman I the Magnificent, from the first half of the 16th century, turned the Ottoman Empire into a power covering three continents, with possessions in Europe, Asia and Africa. After the beginning of the Great Geographic Discoveries, the great commercial roads linking the Extreme Orient to the countries of the European West either went by the Ottoman Empire, or the latter did not know how to use them. Under these circumstances, the transformation of the Black Sea into an Ottoman Lake (A. Afetinan, 1976, p. 7; M. Berza, 1941, p. 409-435; Gh. I. Brătianu, 1944, p. 36-69; 1969, p. 327-328; E. Denize, 2004, p. 20-21) the principle of its closure for the navigation of foreign ships becoming a fundamental rule of the public law in the Ottoman Empire, excluded this region from the great circuits of the international commerce and turned it into one of Constantinople's main sources of provisioning, lacking the Romanian Countries, Poland and Hungary of important sources of revenues resulted from the Black Sea commerce. This was one of the main reasons of the re-

feudalization of this country's society, of the transformation of Hungary into an anarchy to the point of its being wiped away from the map, of the weakening of the central power in Poland and of the deepening of the gap in the relations between the Romanian Countries and the Ottoman Porte in the 16th century. This entire geographic area missed the process of modernization and was condemned to remain behind from all the points of view in comparison with the states from Western Europe.

The Romanians fought fiercely struggling to defend their countries' autonomy and territorial integrity. This fight had, during the 15th century, several principal moments during the reigns of Mircea cel Bătrân, Iancu de Hunedoara, Vlad Tepeș and Ștefan cel Mare, and during the 16th century, during the reigns of Radu de la Afumați, Petru Rareș, Ioan Vodă cel Cumplit and Mihai Viteazul. These princes' fights resulted in numerous defeats of the Ottoman army, had a strong echo in Europe and preserved the Romanian internal autonomy and the states' existence. In order to defend themselves against the great menace that was visible south of the Danube, the Romanian leaders did not use only the military force, but also the arms of diplomacy. They set up a vast network of international relations, trying to face the Ottoman Porte by means of international coalitions, of holy anti-Ottoman leagues to which as many Christian countries as possible were called to take part.

The appearing of the Ottoman Turks in Europe, around 1354, when they managed to conquer the Gallipoli Peninsula, marked the beginning of a new and significant historical epoch for the southeast and central areas of our continent. The Ottoman Turks brought with them a culture and civilization different from those of the Balkan and European peoples, in general, which caused a permanent state of conflict and tension. At the same time, with the appearing of the Ottoman Turks in Europe, an important historical problem was born, known as "*the Oriental issue*", which had two main stages: a defensive one for the Christian states, which is the same as the Epoch of the Late Crusade, which lasts until the siege of Vienna, from 1683, and an offensive stage, for the same states, which ends with the disappearing of the Ottoman Empire and the appearing of modern Turkey, immediately after the First World War (E. Denize, 2003, p. 24).

From their location in the south-east of the Balkan Peninsula, the Ottomans organized their

offensive on three main directions (H. Inalcik, 1966, p. 12; A. Ghiață, 1971, p. 59): towards the center, westward, advancing on the road that linked Constantinople to Central Europe – Adrianopol (Edirne) – Plovdiv – Sofia, to the left, westward and south-westward, starting from Ipsela to Seres and to Albania, and in the south, to Greece, to the right, towards north and north-west, in the direction Stara Zagora-Karnobat-Dobrogea-Silistra. Acting in these directions, the Ottoman attack was successful, reaching the Danube by the end of the 14th century. Once the fortresses and the straights of the Balkan Mountains (Rodopi and Rila) occupied, the Ottomans started the offensive in order to conquer the Bulgarian territories from beyond the mountains, up to the Danube. After the battle from Cirmen, from 1371, on the right, in the north, between 1371 and 1375, the Ottoman Turks conquer Yambol, Karnobat and other towns south of the Bulgarian czardom of Ioan Șisman. To the center and to the west, the Ottoman offensive evolved against the czardom of Vidin, of Ioan Stracimir, against Serbia and Bosnia, and, a few years later, the Turks continue on the rivers Morava and Nișava, where the locality Niș is occupied in 1368.

In 1369, the Turks are defeated at Plocinik, by the prince of Serbia, Lazarus, helped by the Bosnians, which delays the conquest of Serbia and Bosnia. In 1388, the Ottoman offensive turned against the north and northeast of Bulgaria.

The beginnings of the conflict between Wallachia and the Ottoman power started with the intervention of the prince Mircea cel Bătrân (1386-1418) south of the Danube, in 1388, contribution to the withdrawal of the troops commanded by Ali Pacha (A. Ghiață, 1971, p. 60-63; M. Guboglu, 1966, p. 48).

Between 1388 and 1389, the Turks occupy north Albania, a part of Epir, and in 1392 they conquer Skoplje, after having managed to conquer in 1389 Kosovo, Kosovopolje, a historical battle that determined the fate of the Slavic Balkan countries, through the victory of the Turks against a Balkan coalition led by the Serbian prince Lazarus (M. Georgescu, 2005, p. 314-315). In 1391, the Turks, led by Firuz-bei, attack Vidin and undertake a raid in Wallachia, which provoked the reaction of the Wallachian prince, who attacked south of the Danube, going up to the Balkan Mountains, at the end of 1390 or the beginning of 1391 (N. Pienaru, 1996, p. 495, cited by E. Denize, 2003, p. 25). The

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Ottoman conquests progressed in the north of the Balkan Peninsula. The year 1393 brought the final submission of the Bulgarian Czarism of Şişman whose capital was at Târnovo (M. Georgescu, 2005, p. 316).

The main episode of the fight between the Wallachian prince and the sultan Baiazid, whose army also included the troops of his Balkan vassals was the bloody fight from Rovine, a place that remained unidentified, probably situated in the alpine region of Wallachia, on October 10, 1394, where the Turks suffered a heavy defeat. While waiting for a new Turkish attack, Mircea concluded an alliance with King Sigismund (Braşov, March 7, 1395). In May 1395, Baiazid I came back with a strong army and defeated the allied Romanian and Hungarian troops, yet his victory was won with heavy losses (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 185). Among the Turks' vassals there were the Serbian princes Stefan Lazarovici, son and successor of the prince of Kossovo, Marko, son of Vucaşin, who owned a territory near Prilep, and Constantin Dejanovici, his grandson, who reigned over the Oriental Macedonia (M. Georgescu, 2005, p. 316-317). The Ottomans' above-mentioned successes would make a huge impression in Occidental Europe.

The project that led to the anti-Ottoman crusade ended with the disaster from Nicopole, on September 15, 1396. The call of the Hungarian king Sigismund de Luxemburg, to which Europe answered, resulted in support for the coalition from Venice, which sent a small fleet in the Dardanelle, made up of 30 small ships (P. P. Panaitescu, 2000, p. 329; 2001, p. 286). The promising action failed completely. In the battle from Nicopole, the strong, but too scattered army, was defeated by the Turks, because of the inefficient cohesion between the Hungarian and the French forces.

The disaster of the crusaders from Nicopole faced the Byzantine Empire, and especially Constantinople, with a very difficult situation. The sultan Baiazid I attempted to conquer the empire's capital by means of a real blockade. Under these circumstances, Venice managed to provide the necessary supplies to Constantinople between 1396-1403, to gather with the Genovese fleets, defended the free circulation through the straits connecting the Black sea to the Mediterranean Sea and, before 1402, managed to make a maritime anti-Ottoman alliance together with Genoa, with Byzantium's

emperor, Manuel II, with the Duke of Naxos and the hospitable knights from Rhodes (J.W. Barker, 1969, p. 234, cited by E. Denize, 2003, p. 26).

The terrible defeat of the sultan Baiazid I, on July 28, 1402, at Angora (Ankara) (Marie-Mathilde Alexandrescu-Dersca, 1942, cited by E. Denize, 2003, p. 27; E. Werner, 1978), by Timur-Lenk, the great Mongolian Khan, resulted in the separation of the Ottoman Empire into two parts, the territories from Asia going to Mehmed I, and those from Europe, to Soliman, and then to Musa, until 1413, when the reunification is achieved by Mehmed I (1413-1421).

As for the European territories, mastered by Soliman I, they were doubly threatened. On the one hand, a maritime coalition had been formed around Venice, and on the other hand, a continental coalition was becoming possible as well, centered on the alliance between Sigismund of Luxemburg and Mircea cel Bătrân. Collaboration between the two coalitions would have finally meant a great danger for the Ottomans (Ş. Papacostea, 1986, p. 24).

If Mircea cel Bătrân was determined to do his best to keep the Turks as far away from the Wallachian frontiers as possible, Venice was however less reluctant to reach a compromise with the sultan. Such a compromise would have ensured its commercial, political and military interests. Thus, beginning with April 1402, Mircea cel Bătrân, with the help of Sigismund of Luxemburg, Hungary's king, won a few battles at the Lower Danube, where he conquered the main fords (N. Iorga, 1937, p. 6). This offensive of the Romanian prince hurried the decision of the sultan Soliman I of opening negotiations with Venice, in order to conclude a peace treaty. The sultan's determination was prompted by the Wallachian's prince who was really following a program of destruction of the Ottoman force by means of attacks against the basic elements of the Ottoman political construction (T. Gemil, 1987, p. 353; P. Şt. Năsturel, 1978, p. 50; 1966, p. 63-65; Ş. Papacostea, 1986, p. 26).

In 1403 and 1404, Mircea cel Bătrân, following the same line, won a few battles and conquered Silistra and the entire Dobrogea. The main purpose of the military and political initiatives of the Romanian prince was to prevent the Ottoman Empire to reunite again. Supporting, in collaboration with other powers, different claimers to the succession of Baiazid I, Mircea tried to keep

the Ottoman danger away from his country.

At the beginning of 1417, a large Turkish army invades Wallachia, conquers Dobrogea and imposes the payment of a tribute to the Romanian prince. At the same time, the Turks occupy some strategic areas on the northern bank of the Danube – Turnu and Giurgiu -, from where they could initiate devastating raids inside the country. The control over these areas facilitated the setting up of the Turkish hegemony in Wallachia.

Continuing their offensive, the Turks launch a massive attack at the Lower Danube, in 1420, trying to take over the control of the entire river, from Porțile de Fier to its mouths at the Black Sea. During this action the son and successor of Mircea, Mihail, disappeared (1418-1420). Though the attempt failed, though with the help of Sigismund of Luxemburg, Wallachia managed to get rid of the unbearable type of domination the Turks had imposed in 1420, however, the Ottoman presence becomes increasingly significant in this region during the reigns of: Dan II (1421-1431), Radu Praznaglava (1421-1427), Alexandru Aldea (1431-1436), Vlad Dracul (1436-1447), whose reigns were repeatedly interrupted by dark political and military events, while the country oscillated between the alliance with the Hungarian king and the acceptance of the Ottoman peace. The Turks initiate a series of devastating raids in Transylvania, of which the best known are those that took place in 1421, 1432 and 1438, this territory being directly menaced by the Ottoman power (**Istoria Românilor....*, p. 306-315).

In Transylvania as well, the efforts of consolidating the central power were closely connected with the fight against the Ottoman expansion. Tendencies in this sense are noted as well in some measures of Sigismund of Luxemburg, the Hungarian king, meant to ensure a larger participation in the army, but they were developed to the maximum by the politics of Iancu de Hunedoara, whose name is connected to the last significant attempts of chasing away the Turks from Europe.

Iancu de Hunedoara (1441-1446) held a significant role in the anti-Ottoman war at the Lower Danube, his political and military activity being dominated by the effort of organizing the resistance against the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, Transylvania being situated on the main front against the extending Ottoman power. He

came from a family of not very rich Romanian nobles from Hațeg, who, together with the nobles from Banat, provided a great number of soldiers for the wars of the Hungarian Empire against the Ottoman Empire. Iancu de Hunedoara secured the highest rank in the Hungarian Kingdom, being ban of Severin (1438-1441), prince of Transylvania (1441-1446), governor (1446-1453) and general captain of the kingdom (1453-1456) (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 181, 186-187).

The anti-Ottoman fight of Iancu de Hunedoara took place as part of the effort to organize a new crusade, this effort having been prepared by the Union achieved in 1439 between Florence, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, a posthumous result of the politics of Sigismund of Luxemburg, who tried to support a common European action against the Ottomans.

The first stage of the anti-Ottoman action of Iancu de Hunedoara took place within the framework created by the Union from Florence, which seemed to ensure favorable conditions for a new European action meant to chase away the Turks from Europe, and for the achievement in 1440 of the personal union between the Hungarian king and the Polish king, namely Vladislav Jagiello, the prelude of the coalition of all the regional forces directly menaced by the Turks.

Understanding the sense of the general European evolution, the sultan Murad II started new military actions at the Lower Danube, in 1440-1441, in Serbia, in order to conquer Belgrade. The sultan organizes, under the leadership of Mezid, bey of Vidin, a significant military action in Transylvania (March 22, 1442). After a first success, the Turks were heavily defeated by the troops of Iancu de Hunedoara, in the south of the country. Exploiting his victory, the Transylvanian prince crossed the Carpathians and arrived in Wallachia, where he enthroned a prince that was favorable to the Christian cause. The Turks' attempt to annihilate this success brought Iancu de Hunedoara once again in Wallachia, where he defeated and destroyed the Ottoman army, who was led by the beglerbeg of Rumelia, in the battle that took place on the upper course of Ialomița River in September 1442.

His greatest success came the following year, when the Transylvanian prince adopted an offensive tactics. In the context of serious negotiations for the organization of a new crusade, supported by Rome, but not by the other Western powers, Iancu prepares

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and leads, in the autumn of 1443, a significant military action inside the Balkan Peninsula, to which king Vladislav Jagiello participated as well. Defeating the Turks, the princely army occupies the towns Niş and Sofia, but the coming of the winter and the Turks' resistance in the crossings of the Carpathian Mountains forced it to withdraw.

"*The long campaign*", one of the most brilliant military achievements of those times, led by the Transylvanian prince south of the Danube at the end of 1443 and the beginning of 1444, certainly contributed to the starting of the anti-Ottoman revolt of the Albanian people, led by Skanderbeg, and of other anti-Ottoman uprisings in the Balkans. At the same time, his victories stimulated as well the anti-Ottoman actions in the Turkish-Muslim Anatolia and turned him into a real hero of the Christian world (*propugnaculum christianitas*) (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 188; T. Nicolau, 1925, p. 41; C. Mureşan, 1968, p. 73; E. Denize, 2003, p. 47).

But, before the disaster from Varna, as a consequence of the great victories of Iancu de Hunedoara in "The Long Campaign", in the south-east of Europe was created a strategic and political situation that was especially favorable to the Christian forces, a situation that, in order to bring about a decisive defeat of the Turks, needed a period of consolidation that only the negotiation of a peace with the sultan could have offered. Aware of this thing, he managed to convince Vladislav I to accept the propositions made by the Turks, so that, on June 12, a peace treaty for the following ten years was concluded in Adrianopol. The treaty, which was profitable for the Christians, was ratified in July, at Seghedin (Fr. Pall, 1941, p. 144-148; C. Mureşan, 1968, p. 97; 1979, p. 337-379; *Istoria Românilor*..., p. 342-348).

The fast victories of Iancu of Hunedoara led to the beginning of a new expedition in the Balkan Peninsula, in 1445, which would have been enough to send the Turks away from Europe, among its organizers being Vladislav I of Hungary, the papal representative Giulio Cesarini, the duke of Bourgoigne, Alphonse V of Aragon and of Venice.

Venice had accepted to send a fleet to make it impossible for the Turkish armies to cross the straits, as they were, most of them, in Minor Asia with the sultan. Begun during the autumn, with few troops, in the hope that it would be an easy action that would destroy the Turkish domination over

Europe, the expedition of king Vladislav I ended in a great disaster. Fearing the setting up of their Venetian rivals in the straits, the Genovese from Pera transported to Europe, on their ships, the troops of the sultan Murad II. Taken aback by the presence of a Turkish army much larger than his own army, the king's army was destroyed at Varna (November 10, 1444) and king Vladislav I himself died on the battlefield. At Varna, it was not only the Christian army that was destroyed, but also the last great hope of saving Byzantium and of sending the Turks away from Europe. Iancu de Hunedoara's new attempt of starting the offensive in the Balkans, in collaboration with Skanderbeg, the hero of Albania's anti-Ottoman uprising, ended in a new defeat with heavy losses at Kossovo, in October 1448. Iancu de Hunedoara, who represented the interests of the entire Romanian area, to which he had given a feudal state unity, focused his entire political, diplomatic and military action on the fight against the Ottoman menace. This fight, given the fact that the Christian Western states – especially those whose interests were as well directly menaced by the Ottoman expansion – sent no significant help, had no chance to succeed. But even if the attempt of sending the Turks away from Europe failed, Iancu de Hunedoara managed to prevent their progress towards the center of Europe. Mehmed II's attempt to conquer Belgrade, under the favorable conditions created by the occupation of Constantinople, was stopped under Belgrade's walls, fiercely defended by Iancu in July 1446 (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 188).

The following stage of the Romanian resistance against the Ottoman Empire was illustrated by Vlad Ţepeş (1448, 1456-1462, 1476), prince of Wallachia (N. Stoicescu, 1976, p. 21; Ş. Andreescu, 1998, p. 66; *Istoria Românilor*..., p. 314-316, 349-363). In 1459, Pope Pius II tried to relaunch, at the Congress from Mantua, the crusade against the Turks. The Pope's initiative resulted in a revolt of the Greeks in Pelopones, which was soon repressed by Mehmed II, who consequently gave an impetus to the actions of the powers from Asia Minor, led by Uzun Hasan, the Turkman Khan of the tribe union known as Akkoyunlu. On the European side, to the action participated Vlad Ţepeş, the Wallachian prince, in collaboration with Matias Corvin, the king of Hungary.

Ceasing to pay the tribute to the Porte, Vlad Ţepeş opened the war with the Ottoman Porte. In

the winter of 1461-1462, at a moment when the sultan was trying to gather together his armies, after the hard fights from the campaign from Asia Minor against Uzun Hasa and his allies, the Wallachian prince attacks and destroys the entire Ottoman war machine from the Lower Danube, in an attempt of making it difficult for the sultan to assail his country.

The Ottoman assault initiated by Mehmed II, in a new strategy characterized by the combination of terrestrial and naval operations, began in June 1462, when the sultan, who had taken over the command of his troops, entered Wallachia. At the same time, Vlad Țepeș had to deal as well with the attempt of Ștefan cel Mare of conquering Chilia. The great army led by the sultan, of over 100.000 soldiers, continued to advance in Wallachia, through a territory devastated at the order of the Romanian prince, who continuously harassed the Turks. During one of these actions, Vlad Țepeș personally entered at night in the Turkish camp, leading a small group of soldiers, an operation that became notorious all over Europe.

After advancing up to Târgoviște, the country's capital, which he found empty, the sultan decided the retreat without having been able to engage in any decisive battle with the Romanian army. But Mehmed II transformed the failure into a political success, thanks to the agreement he concluded with the Wallachian boyards. Vlad Țepeș withdrew to Transylvania, hoping to return with military help from Matias Corvin. Yet, the latter, preoccupied by his confrontation with Frederic III of Habsburg, arrested Vlad Țepeș and took him with him to Buda, and Wallachia began again to pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire.

Vlad Țepeș enjoyed a significant European fame, which gave birth to an abundant literary production, spread beginning with the second half of the 15th century throughout Central and Eastern Europe. A strong and complex personality, become famous since his existence, Vlad Țepeș faced the Ottoman power and managed to defeat Mahomed II el Fatih, one of the greatest sultans, the reformer of the Sublime Porte, the conqueror of Constantinople and of the Byzantine Empire. His anti-Ottoman action delayed the establishment of the Ottoman domination over the Romanian Countries, allowing the Central and Eastern Europe to turn to good account the fruits of the Humanism and of the Renaissance.

In a fluid and complex international context, during his long reign, Ștefan cel Mare (1457-1504) managed to keep the stability of the relations with the Ottoman Empire, and even to eliminate the asymmetry appeared in these relations with the payment of the tribute by Moldavia, between 1455-1456 (Ș. Papacostea, 1981, p. 899-918; cited by E. Denize, 2004, p. 22-23; P. Syke, 1930, p. 140-162; V. Minorsky, 1933, p. 1-23; R. Furon, 1938, p. 132-133). In order to attain this objective, he set in motion a large network of international relations spread from Italy to Persia, the traditional Asian enemy of the Ottoman Turks. The fight against the Ottoman Empire was imposed to Ștefan cel Mare as a true historical need, because Moldova, with its important economic, political and military power could not accept to assist passively to its subordination by the sultans from Constantinople. His fight ended with a success in point of the stability of the Moldavian-Ottoman relations, yet with a failure concerning the setting up of the Ottoman domination over the entire Black Sea Basin. But, though he was unable to prevent the Ottoman expansion, Ștefan cel Mare managed to delay it, just like his predecessors Mircea cel Bătrân, Iancu de Hunedoara and Vlad Țepeș. Thus they gave the states of Central Europe, and especially the Habsburg Empire, the necessary time to find solutions and to gather the capacity to stop the Turkish expansion.

If the Turks were stopped in front of Vienna in 1529, this was also due to the fierce resistance of the Romanians, who prevented the transformation of their states into Ottoman pashaliks and caused heavy losses to the sultan's armies. Defending themselves, the Romanians also defended Central Europe, gaining a well-deserved role in the history of the European continent during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Externally, Moldova had to face three major threats: Poland, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, which wanted to draw Moldova in their sphere of influence and even to extend their direct domination over it. Important parts of the country were under foreign domination: Hotin, a walled city occupied by Poland, and Chilia, another fortified city occupied by Hungary. If Poland and Hungary already represented traditional menaces that often annihilated each other, on the other hand the Ottoman Empire represented the menace of a power

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with a politics of expansion in the geographic area of the Danube and of the Black Sea.

Ștefan cel Mare returned to the traditional orientation of the external politics of Moldova, namely the alliance with Poland. The Moldavian prince concluded, in April 1459, a convention with king Cazimir, by which he recognized him as sovereign. The renewal of the relation with Poland implicitly meant the drawing away from Hungary and Wallachia. The early indicators of this evolution turned into a direct opposition in 1462, under the favorable conditions created by the attack of Mehmed II against Vlad Țepeș, when Ștefan cel Mare tried to conquer Chilia, but did not succeed. Yet in 1465, the Moldavian prince managed to conquer the walled city from the mouths of the Danube, seriously undermining the commercial interests of Hungary and Wallachia.

In order to reestablish the former order, Matias Corvin entered the campaign at the end of 1467, advancing at the lead of a large army towards Suceava, Moldova's capital, where he hoped to enthrone his contender for the throne. At Baia, an urban center and the headquarters of the Catholic bishopric of the country, where the king had stopped in order to prepare his final attack, Ștefan cel Mare launched his counterattack. The result of the fight was not definite, but the impetus of the royal army was stopped. Unable to continue his advance, Mathias Corvin left Moldova without attaining his objective.

Hungary's last attempt to impose its domination over Moldova by means of arms and to create a direct connection with the Black Sea ended with a failure. Trying to do the same thing, namely to conquer Moldova's Chilia, the Wallachian prince, Radu cel Frumos (1462- 1474) begins, in his turn, his hostilities against Ștefan cel Mare (1470).

The war against Wallachia was but the prelude of the great confrontation with the Ottoman Empire started by Ștefan cel Mare in 1473, when he enthroned a new prince, faithful to him, in the neighboring country, which he had saved from the Ottoman domination. The immediate purpose of the action of the Moldavian prince was to ensure his control over the mouths of the Danube and to remove the danger of their re-becoming Ottoman possessions. But the war begun by Ștefan cel Mare in 1473 was part of a much larger effort to slow down the Ottoman expansion. To this effort participated, from 1463, Venice, menaced to lose its

possessions from the Aegean Sea, Hungary and other powers. Ștefan cel Mare's war against the Turks coincided with the last attempt of the adversaries of the Porte to restore the freedom of the Black Sea.

The loss of Wallachia and the remake of an anti-Ottoman front at the Danube represented a serious danger for the Ottoman domination in the Balkan Peninsula. Mehmed II organized, in order to get Moldova out of the fight, at the beginning of 1475, a great expedition under the command of the beglerbeg of Rumelia, Soliman. The prince's attempt to set up his camp south of Vaslui, at Podul Înalt, in a narrow place, was meant to make up for the great number of soldiers in the Ottoman army. Ștefan cel Mare destroyed the great army sent by Mehmed against him (January 10, 1475). The news of the victory spread all over Europe witnessing the unexpected power that Moldova had (E. Denize, 2004, p. 73; N. Iorga, 1897, p. 93; I. Bogdan, 1913, p. 319-329; *Istoria Românilor*..., p. 378-379).

Understanding that a new Ottoman offensive was unavoidable, Ștefan cel Mare began, immediately after the victory, to prepare a new stage of the fight. Envoys sent to Poland and Hungary, to Venice and Rome, to the khanat of Crimea and to Caffa, tried to enlarge the anti-Ottoman coalition in order to give Moldova the possibility to face under better conditions the new attack of the sultan Mehmed II.

In July 1475, putting an end to their conflict, Ștefan cel Mare and Matias Corvin negotiated a treaty of anti-Ottoman alliance, which set new bases for the relations between the two countries. In order to give more chances of success to the new confrontation under way with Moldova, the sultan organized a great expedition in Crimea, after which Caffa and the entire system of colonies of Genoa come under Ottoman domination in June 1475. The Tartar Khanat of Crimea submits to the sultan, becoming a vassal state of the Ottoman Porte. Consequently, Moldova is caught in the tongs of the Turkish-Tartar coalition.

In June 1476, Mehmed II enters Moldova with an immense army of more than 100 000 people. His arrival had been preceded by devastating raids of the Tartars from Crimea, sent away by Ștefan cel Mare at the cost of the scattering of his army. The prince's attempt to stop the sultan's march toward Suceava was made by means of the setting up of the Moldavian camp on a high plateau, on the Valley of

Pârâul Alb, a tributary of Moldova River, at a place called Râzboieni or Valea Albă. His attempt failed, the capital of the country being conquered by invaders. But the intense resistance of the walled cities prevented the sultan from obtaining political gains out of his victory. As in the meantime a Transylvanian army was moving to Moldova, endangering the sultan's connection with his provisions, and as Ștefan cel Mare began to gather a new army, Mehmed II started to withdraw, in August 1476. The second great campaign against Moldova ended therefore with a huge failure.

Lacking dynamism, the anti-Ottoman coalition did not exploit the unfavorable moment the Ottoman Empire was going through. Following the example of Venice, Ștefan cel Mare signed a peace with the sultan, returning to the former conditions (1479-1480). Baiazid II (1481-1512), the successor of Mehmed II, used the favorable conditions created by the peace concluded with Hungary in 1483 in order to start a great expedition against Ștefan cel Mare in order to conquer the Moldavian fortified cities from the Black Sea, Chilia and Cetatea Albă. In July 1484, the sultan's terrestrial army and fleet arrived at the mouths of the Danube, supported by the army of the Wallachian prince Vlad Călugărul (1481-1495) and joining the Tartars from Crimea. Under siege by land and by water, and with no perspective of help, the two fortified cities were defeated. This put an end to the existence of the last free emporia from the Basin of the Black Sea, and this is how the Black Sea became a Turkish lake (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 192-193; **Istoria Românilor....*, p. 385-387).

Ștefan cel Mare tried to re-conquer his fortified cities, helped by Poland, which was seriously menaced by the possible setting up of the Turks north of the Black Sea Basin. In order to obtain Poland's help, Ștefan cel Mare became, at Colomea, the vassal of the king Cazimir, in September 1485. But the Polish military help proved insufficient for the attainment of Ștefan cel Mare's goal, because Poland concluded, a few years later, a peace with the Turks, and Ștefan cel Mare had to negotiate again his own peace with the Turks, starting again to pay a tribute in 1489 (**Istoria Românilor....*, p. 389-390).

The situations created by the presence of the Ottoman power south of Moldova affected once again Ștefan cel Mare's external politics. After becoming king of Poland in 1492, Ioan Albert began

intense diplomatic and military preparations for an expedition meant to chase away the Turks from Chilia and Cetatea Albă. But the Polish king's program had in view, as a stage preceding the anti-Ottoman action, the setting up of the Polish control over Moldova, through the removal of Ștefan cel Mare, who, beginning with 1489, had returned to the alliance with Hungary, obtaining from Matias Corvin the Transylvanian fortified cities Ciceu and Cetatea de Baltă with their estates, in compensation for the loss of the two walled cities from the Black Sea.

The great Polish expedition from 1497, whose official proclaimed purpose was to get back Chilia and Cetatea Albă, was actually directed against Suceava. But the city's durable resistance and the danger of the intervention of other forces in the fight, especially of Hungary, forced the Polish king to stop the siege and to start to withdraw. On his way back, at Codrii Cosminului, most of the Polish army was surprised and destroyed by Ștefan cel Mare (1497). During the last two years of his reign, Ștefan cel Mare initiated several expeditions in Poland, meant to repress it, but also with the secret hope of gaining Pocuția.

The capacity and wisdom of Ștefan cel Mare served well the external politics of Moldova, and his diplomatic talent and his military qualities turned him into a well-known and respected European personality. Though Ștefan cel Mare did not manage to stop the expansionist politics of the Turkish Empire, he managed to delay it considerably, and thus, when the Turks reach the center of our continent, during the sultan Soliman the Magnificent, their capacity of expansion was almost exhausted, and the Christian powers were able to find the necessary solutions to stop the Ottoman offensive. Losing the chance of modernization during the second half of the 15th century and during the 16th century, because of the permanent Ottoman threat and of its effects, the Romanians, by their heroic fight, allowed other European states to enjoy its benefic results.

The 16th century represents an extremely complex period in point of the international relations on the European continent. The balance of powers achieved during the previous periods tends to be broken apart by two huge politico-military blocks, the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire, arrived at the peak of their power and territorial extension. At the center of this political

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construction, with a medieval imperial ideology was Spain, due to king Carol Quint's politics, whose main guideline was the fight against the Islamism, an ideal inherited from the Catholic kings and from the tradition of more than seven centuries of the Spanish Reconquista and which he tried to put into practice, especially by means of naval actions in the Mediterranean Sea and, to a lesser degree, by means of terrestrial actions in Central Europe.

Under these circumstances, the actions of world hegemony undertaken by the Habsburgs, began by Carol Quint and continued by Philip II (1556-1598) led to a vivid reaction of the European states, especially of France, who tried to redress the balance of forces by involving the Ottoman Empire in the European political system, as an element to counter-balance the Habsburg politics.

The Ottoman Empire as well, the main power in the S-E Europe and in the Middle East, reached the climax of its power in the 16th century. During the reign of Selim I (1512-1520), the Turks conquered Georgia, Armenia (1514), Syria (1516) and Egypt (1517), setting up their supremacy in the Near East, while the sultan Soliman the Magnificent (1520-1566), continuing the war tradition of his predecessors, not only pushed to the max the territorial dimensions of the Ottoman Empire, but also opened the perspectives of a universally-wide active politics. The Ottoman Empire included in the sphere of its political influence any significant problem, both in its quality of protector of the Muslim world, and as a participant in the political system of the European states.

The ever-increasing antagonisms of the Christian world, especially the Franco-Habsburg rivalry, were not only factors that generated a lot of turbulence in the entire political structure of the European relations, but also factors that made it easier for the Porte to break in and become a main element of the European balance system. Thus, it is well known that the sultan began his expedition against Belgrade in 1521, the moment when the Franco-Habsburg war began, that the great victory from Mohács, from 1526 was obtained after the conclusion of the Turkish-Polish peace treaty, under the circumstances of the French defeat from Pavia (1525) and after an express demand addressed by the French court to the sultan, as the king of France, Francis I (1515-1547) considered, in 1532, that the Ottoman Empire was the only power able to warrant the existence of the European states against the

politics of domination of the Habsburgs (E. Denize, 2003, p. 129-131; H. Hantsch, 1959, p. 55; M. A. Mehmed, 1976, p. 46; T. Gökbilgin, 1970, p. 627-637; I. Ursu, 1908, p. 23, 28-29, 31-40).

The decisive success obtained by the sultan at Mohács established the main line of the Ottoman offensive on the direction Belgrade-Buda-Vienna. At the same time, other Ottoman fronts were opened in the Mediterranean Sea, against the Spanish Habsburgs, while the fights between the Ottoman fleet and the Portuguese in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean can also be considered anti-Habsburg actions, if we consider the connections and interests of the House of Austria in Portugal.

In the conception of the Ottoman power, the Habsburg power was the representative power of the Christian world, and its tendencies of universal domination were not only rivaling those of the Porte, but could even endanger the Ottoman positions in Europe, in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean. This explains why the relations with the Habsburgs represented a landmark of the entire Ottoman political edifice from Europe, beginning with Soliman the Magnificent and ending with the appearing of the Tsarist Russia as great power (E. Denize, 2003, p. 132).

The political and military evolutions from Europe, and especially those from its southeast and central parts, brought important changes in the political, military and strategic situation of the Romanian Countries (E. Denize, 2003, p. 132-134).

The defeat of Hungary, at Mohács, in 1526, and then its falling into pieces in 1541 made the Romanian Countries lose their most important ally in the anti-Ottoman fight. The Romanians' potential allies were farther away, especially Venice and the Habsburgs, and the neighbors, like Poland, were not interested in the anti-Ottoman war, or were allied to the Turks, like the Crimean Khanat.

Of all the three Romanian Countries, the most difficult situation was that of Wallachia. It had been caught, beginning with 1451-1452, in a Hungarian-Ottoman system of co-suzerainty, but Hungary's fall led to a considerable increase in the Porte's influence. The attempts of going against this evolution, though meant to fail, however managed to stop the Turks' attempts of transforming the country in pashalik or to limit its internal autonomy. Moldova, having a better situation after the death of Ștefan cel Mare, managed to resist better to the attempts of interfering with its internal problems,

manifested by the Turks, or to the continuous raids of the Tatars from Crimea, who were the sultan's vassals.

As for Transylvania, it practically got separated from Hungary after 1526, and beginning with 1541, when Soliman the Magnificent conquered Buda and formally put an end to the Hungarian kingdom, it became an autonomous principality under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Porte, enjoying a superior status in comparison to that of Wallachia and of Moldova.

If in the southeast and central Europe the international political relations were dominated by the Ottoman expansion and menace, in Western Europe, the main factor of the international relations was the fight for supremacy in Italy and, along with it, the fight for dominance or hegemony in this entire geographic area (E. Denize, 2003). The wars for conquering Italy, which took place between 1494 and 1559 and opposed mainly Spain and France, had negative consequences for the states from the peninsula and politically subordinated the entire region to Spain, the victorious power, except Venice and the Papacy.

An important moment in the anti-Ottoman system of alliances is constituted by the creation of the Holy Anti-Ottoman League, on February 8 1538, in Rome, with the participation of Venice, of king Carol Quint and of Pope Paul III, followed by the treaty of peace and collaboration from Oradea, signed by Ioan Zápolya and by Ferdinand of Austria, on February 24, the same year (E. Denize, 2003, p. 140), which automatically included Moldova, by virtue of its alliance with Ferdinand, which determined the beginning of the politico-military campaign of Soliman the Magnificent, aimed at all the zones of interest for the Ottoman Empire: Europe, the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean (E. Denize, 2003, p. 141-142; T. Gemil, 1978, p. 306).

The events of the year 1538 situated Moldova and Wallachia into a more accentuated state of dependence on the Ottoman Empire. Under an ever-growing Ottoman pressure, the Romanian Countries lose, by the middle of the 16th century, Brăila and Buceag, and at the same time Banat with Timișoara. In this context, the politics of the Romanian princes of establishing new contacts during this period with the Habsburg Empire seems natural. But the main disadvantage for the Romanian Countries, resulting from these relations, was the Habsburgs'

expansionist tendency, as they wanted to conquer, first of all, Transylvania, which they considered as part of their hereditary patrimony, and the other two Romanian Countries, in order to reach the mouths of the Danube and the Black Sea coasts.

The occupation of Transylvania, between 1551 and 1556, as well as the Habsburg intervention in Moldova and Wallachia demonstrated that the Romanians, relying too much on the Habsburgs, would have risked changing a domination, the Ottoman one, with another one, that of the House of Austria. In this situation, the Romanian princes turned their attention towards other potential allies, like Spain and Venice, which could have benefited of the possible diversions and military actions from the Lower Danube. However, during this period, Venice avoided a conflict with the Porte, during the second half of the 16th century being registered only one Turkish-Venitian war, with Spanish participation, the one from 1570-1573, caused by the conquering of Cyprus by the Turks (E. Denize, 2003, p. 149-150; A. Decei, 1978, p. 194-195; C. Feneșan-Bulgaru, 1977, p. 223-238).

The battle from Lepanto, of October 7, 1571, actually the age of the battle from Lepanto, marked an important moment in the long series of anti-Ottoman wars supported by the Romanian Countries. Profiting of the tension marking the relations between the Habsburgs, the Spanish and the Turks and of the creation of a Holy League, in September 1570 and May 1571, with the participation of Spain, Venice and the Papacy, and of the beginning of the war between the latter and the Ottoman Porte, the Romanian Countries tried once again to balance their relations with the Ottoman Empire.

The 7th and 8th decades of the 16th century had a huge importance concerning the Habsburgs' relations with the Ottoman Porte, especially in point of the Turkish-Spanish conflict from the Mediterranean Sea, a conflict that had consequences on the Romanian area as well. The deaths of Carol Quint and of Mary Tudor, both occurred in 1558, and the Peace from Chateau Cambrésis of 1559 shifted the main axis of Philip II's Empire from north to south, towards the Mediterranean Sea (E. Denize, 2003; F. Brudel, 1966, p. 265). In Correr Museum from Venice, in room no. 12, "The Venitian Civilisation", are presented two oil paintings on canvas, of large dimensions, made by Italian painters of the 16th

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century, entitled "The Battle from Lepanto" (1571), which present the battle figuratively; one of these works presents down the painting the inscription: "LA MEGRAVIOSA F.C.I.N. VITTORIA, DATA DI DIO A CHRISTIANI CONTRA TURCHIALI SCOGLI CVRZORARI L'ANO 1571 A 1700"; in room no. 13, "The Arsenal", is presented a xylograph by Cristoforo Guerra, entitled "The Battle from Lepanto".

Between 1560 and 1574, Spain, delivered temporarily and partially by the pressures from other areas of Europe, was able to concentrate its attention and efforts on the Mediterranean Sea and on the fight against the Turks.

The battles between the naval forces of the Holy League and those of the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean Sea, though not directly involving the Romanian Countries, had, however, a quite important influence on them, just as their situation somehow influenced the development of the hostilities.

The most important internal effort of sending away the Ottoman domination during the second half of the 16th century, came from Moldova, during Ioan Vodă (1572-1574). After his defeat, the situation of the Romanian Countries was characterized by an intensification of the Ottoman domination. The Romanians chose to fight, in order not to lose their state, and, finding the necessary personality in Mihai Viteazul, they started an anti-Ottoman revolt that made them once again known all over Europe, during the years that ended the 16th and started the 17th century.

The reign of Mihai Viteazul (1593-1601) coincided with the re-launch, by the Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605) of an alliance to which participated the Papal State, Spain, Austria, the Dukes of Toscana, Mantova and Ferrara, but not Poland and England (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 230-231; **Istoria Românilor...*, p. 596-639). A special place in the anti-Ottoman plans had to be held by the Romanian Countries, which, because of their position, were interested in the action of the Holy League. To this league adheres the Transylvanian Principality, with Sigismund Báthory, considered a key element in the drawing in of Wallachia and of Moldova. The action directed by the Papal See and the Habsburgs manages to attract the Moldavian prince, Aron Vodă, who concludes a treaty with the emperor on September 16, 1594. Wallachia's adhesion was due to the

initiative of the prince who had the accord of the Assemblies, in which the Buzescu boyards held a central position.

The integration of the Romanian Countries in the Christian alliance led to the anti-Ottoman revolt which started on November 13, 1594, in Bucharest, with the killing of the creditors from Levant and of the Ottoman garrison. The conquering of the fortified cities situated along the Danube started the hostilities with the Ottoman Empire and made Wallachia enter the war that had been started a year before between the Habsburgs and the Turks.

Under these circumstances, as the Ottoman reaction was predictable, Mihai Viteazul concludes at Alba Iulia, with the consent of the delegation of the Assemblies, on May 20, 1595, a treaty with Sigismund Báthory, by means of which the Assemblies subordinate Wallachia to the Transylvanian prince, who thus becomes a supreme authority, and submits the prince to the almightiness of the boyards.

Aron Vodă of Moldova concluded a similar treaty, at the beginning of June, and so Sigismund becomes the suzerain of the two countries, in the spirit of a medieval tradition, thus accomplishing the unification under the form of the suzerano-vassalic relations in view of the confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. The suzerainty of Sigismund Báthory over Moldova and Wallachia meant as well that a political and military organism, able to face the Ottoman Empire, was necessary.

The political desires of Sigismund were opposed to the Habsburg intentions, the latter seeing in the Transylvanian prince nothing else but a vassal of the House of Austria. A treaty of alliance signed in Prague, on January 28, 1595, with the emperor, established the reports between Transylvania and the empire.

After the anti-Ottoman revolt, the history of the end of the 16th century is marked by an epoch of military confrontations between the Romanian Countries and the Ottoman Empire. They are initiated by the Wallachian prince along the Danube, through attacks directed against the Turkish fortified cities. The Ottoman reply in Wallachia has as preface the victories of Mihai Viteazul, who occupies the important port of Brăila and continues with actions beyond the Danube. The decisive confrontation prepared by the Turks took place at Călugăreni, on August 13/23, 1595, and then the army of the prince, overwhelmed by the

numeric superiority of the Ottoman army, withdrew in the north, waiting for the Transylvanian intervention (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 231). The campaign, under the leadership of Sinan Pasha, attempted to transform the Principalities into pashaliks. After Călugăreni, the Turks begin to organize a pashalik at Bucharest and Târgoviște, introducing garrisons and transforming the churches into mosques. The military actions of the three Principalities, begun at the beginning of October, re-conquered Târgoviște and chased away the Turks, beyond the Danube, through Giurgiu. Thus, the Ottoman campaign, started with the intention of transforming the Romanian countries into pashaliks, ended in failure, its echoes reaching the west of Europe.

However, the Ottoman Porte relaunches its offensive in Hungary, where it obtains a victory at Keresztes, defeating the Habsburgs (October 26, 1596). Under these circumstances, Mihai Viteazul opens negotiations with the Turks, which end with a peace, at the end of the year, the prince's reign being recognized in exchange for the payment of a tribute. Mihai Viteazul also negotiates with the Habsburgs and signs a treaty oriented against the Ottomans in 1598. By this double suzerainty, both Ottoman and imperial, he emancipates himself from the consequences of the treaty of May 20, 1595, by which the country entered under Transylvania's guardianship.

In the autumn of 1599, he enters Transylvania and defeats the Transylvanian army at Șelimbăr (October 18, 1599). After the victory, the Wallachian prince comes to Alba Iulia on November 4, 1599. Refusing to take into account the Habsburg's reticence about his plans, Mihai becomes the master of Transylvania, as the Dieta (the Assembly) acknowledges him as *locum tenens*, as the Latin diplomas mention. He awards himself the title of Wallachian and Transylvanian prince in the Slavonic documents, which proves his own interpretation of his mastership over the Principalities.

The leaning towards Transylvania was an option in concurrence with the Balkan plan. It came true because of the opportunities appeared after the falling apart of the Christian alliance and thanks to the boyards' decision, who saw in the orientation towards Transylvania the fulfillment of their political and constitutional desires under the form of a regime of Assemblies, and a guarantee against the

Turks.

The politics of Mihai Viteazul, after the conquest of Transylvania, was adapted to the plans of the Habsburgs who were following their dream of including the Principality in their Empire. At the same time, his politics followed his own objectives, which involved the mastering of the country for himself, and the boyards' options, who wanted to be integrated in the social, economic and political structures of the Principality. To these grounds we can add the "party" that was favorable to the continuation of the anti-Ottoman war and the completion of the project of liberating the Balkans (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 232; P. P. Panaitescu, 1936, p. 13-15).

The fact that he was master over Transylvania and the musts of the anti-Ottoman war led him from the beginning of his reign to try to attract Moldova in the common fight (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 232-233). Between 1595 and 1597, Mihai Viteazu tried, by means of diplomatic politics, to maintain good relations with Moldova.

The decision of invading Moldova was rushed by Sigimund Báthory's plans of entering Transylvania. In May 1600, Mihai conquers Moldova, invoking as ground the alliance between Ieremia Movilă and the Turks and Tartars. He asked the emperor to acknowledge his mastership *in perpetuum* over Transylvania, Moldova and Wallachia, for him and his son. It is obvious that by conquering Transylvania Mihai Viteazul consolidated his reign over this Principality; and, by conquering Moldova he remade the anti-Ottoman front. The organization of the Romanian area under the terms required by the prince, as a hereditary reign, was a step towards the creation of a unitary political organism under the same leadership. The official documents and inscriptions on seals of "Prince of Wallachia and Transylvania and Moldova" show the intentions Mihai Viteazul nourished. Although the Principalities remained separated administratively and politically, though not the idea of the national union was foremost at the unification, but the idea of the Christian solidarity, however seen from the perspective of time, the creation of a moment's union meant a precedent that turned into a durable ideal.

The achievement of the union *manu militari* did not last, the political creation crumbled, because of the powerful competitors who could not give up their own desires. The Ottoman Empire wished once

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again the setting up of its suzerainty, Poland wanted, in competition with the Habsburgs, its own hegemony, while the Austrian Empire tended to set its hands on the Hungarian heritage, in virtue of its engagements dating since the preceding century.

Consequently, the nobles from Transylvania, hostile to a Romanian supremacy, joined the general Basta and defeated Mihai Viteazul at Mirăslău (September 18, 1600). The Court asks for the help of Mihai Viteazul, who, together with general Basta defeats Sigismund's army in August 1601, at Gurăslău. But the Habsburgs, who had their own precise and durable objectives in the area of the Principalities, get rid of Mihai Viteazul by means of an assassinate.

The end of the Wallachian prince put an end to the reconstruction of the military organism of the League, which in fact Mihai Viteazul created and which he tried to subordinate to the anti-Ottoman crusade (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 234).

Mihai Viteazul represented at the end of the Late Crusade a chapter of Europe's history, through the entrance in the Holy League and the military successes that determined a state creation under the supremacy of the Wallachian prince.

The unity accomplished out of reasons that converged with the reestablishment of the League's unity of action led, after a while, to the creation of a political organism interposed in between the desires of the great powers. This unification actually knew two stages: one during the reign of Sigismund Báthory, and the second, starting from Wallachia, directed by Mihai Viteazul.

Once accomplished, the unification under Mihai Viteazul, being a leadership superposed over state particular features, triggered latent historical processes that sprung out of the evolution of the 16th century, which in the central-European area is marked by an affirmation of the ethnic conscience.

The 17th century represents a special period in the history of the Romanian Countries, set between two historical boundaries: the reign of Mihai Viteazul and the setting up of new political regimes, the *Habsburg* one in Transylvania and the *Phanariot* regime in Moldova and Wallachia (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 235-237). The history of these more than 100 years was situated under the sign of the heritage of Mihai Viteazul, the hero of the Late Crusade who regained Wallachia's independence and created, for a moment, the Principalities' union under a single leadership. It

was, at the same time, a period of consolidation of the civilization, of improvement of the human potential, of slow progresses in the domain of the economy and of modifications in the social structure, of consolidation of the feudal monarchy in the environment of the classic Europe. Between 1601 and 1711, the political direction set by Mihai Viteazul, of union of Wallachia and Moldova to Transylvania, under the form of interdependent relations materialized in a system of alliance becomes more and more obvious. The 17th century registers, after 1683, in the context of the Ottoman recession, a significant evolution towards the politics of liberation from the Ottoman domination.

The siege of Vienna (1683), a result of the relaunch of the anti-Habsburg war by Kara Mustafa, as a solution for the straightening out of the Ottoman power, brings the princes of the three Romanian countries together under the walls of the imperial capital. The defeat of the Turks, at Kahlenberg, by the Austrian-Polish armies, and the victory of the coalition represented, by their consequences, political mutations in Central and Eastern Europe. They will trigger, however, a significant evolution in the internal political life of the Romanian Countries, faced, after the successes from Hungary, with the competition between the three powers: the Habsburg Empire, Poland and Russia.

The victory of the Austrian-Polish coalition determined the creation of a new line, created through the participation of the Papal State, of Austria, of Poland and Venice, joined by Russia. The Austrian Empire, winning several victories in Hungary, regained, by means of the battles from Buda (September 2, 1686) and Mohács (August 12, 1687), the territories that had been, for more than a century and a half, under Ottoman domination. The Empire's politics wanted to achieve, helped by the counter-reformation, significant projects of conquest in the southeast of Europe, at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks' withdrawal south of the Danube (1688) consolidated the hope for a durable success in the southeast of Europe.

The Turks' defeat at Vienna, in 1683, opens a new page in the history of the Romanian area. The triumph of the Holy League, the reconquering of Hungary and the setting up of the Habsburg domination in Transylvania, in the context of the Ottoman withdrawal, determines, at the level of the political forces, a trend favorable to the exit of the

orbit of domination of the Porte. The Reconquista contributed to the opening of the Oriental crisis, because of the change in the ratio of forces in the east of Europe. In the new background created by the redimensioning of the continent, by the metamorphosis of the European political geography, there appear indications that show possible successes for a generalized anti-Ottoman action.

After the Peace from Karlowitz (1699), in the political history of the Romanian States, the relations with Russia intensify, as the role of Russia grows in the politics of East Europe, after the victory against the Swedes from Poltava (1709).

The introduction of the *Phanariot regime* (M. Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 239-243, 268-270) in Moldova and Wallachia, at the beginning of the 18th century, was the Porte's reply to the international situation appeared at the end of the 17th century, through the chasing away of the Ottoman Empire from Central Europe. The inclusion of Transylvania in the Austrian Empire and its acknowledgement by means of the Peace from Karlowitz (1699) transformed the Principalities in its most endangered outposts. Thus, under the conditions created by the Peace from Karlowitz, which maintained Moldova and Wallachia under the Ottoman suzerainty, the sultans' empire decides the introduction of a new political regime. In 1711 in Moldova and in 1716 in Wallachia, Nicolae Mavrocordat (1711-1715, 1719-1730), was called to set up the new Phanariot era. The change was not just a replacement of a reign by another, but a change in the political regime, which, by bringing modifications to the juridical statute of the Romanian Countries, expressed the consequences of the foreign domination during the new period and the new phenomena appeared in the European society.

The Phanariot solution was determined by the new political configuration from Central and South-Eastern Europe, where the Ottoman recession triggered the liberation movement, by means of the Romanian Countries' attempts of setting themselves free of the Ottoman Empire, with the help of the great Christian powers.

In the history of the Phanariot century, the Russian-Turkish war caused an interruption of the regime and, consequently, a replacement of the Phanariot administration with a Russian one. The war between 1768 and 1774 opened, at the

international level, by means of a series of regulations, a *Romanian issue*, as part of the *Oriental issue*. The treaty from Kuciuk-Kainargi (1774), reconfirmed the Principalities' autonomy in the Ottoman Empire and at the same time opened a new stage in the process of liberation from the Turkish-Phanariot domination.

The re-establishment of the Phanariot regime, which followed the Peace, was the result of the international political relations, an image of the *Oriental issue*, which would not allow the suppression of the Ottoman suzerainty and its substitution by Russia's suzerainty.

The political history of the Phanariot regime registers as well important territorial losses. In 1713, the Porte transforms Hotin into a *raia* (area occupied and administered by the Turkish armies), and after the Peace from Passarowitz (1718), Wallachia loses Oltenia, which becomes an Austrian possession, while in 1775 the Habsburg Empire annexes the north of Moldova. After the Peace from Kuciuk-Kainargi, which marked even more insistently the Ottoman decline and the Russian ascent in eastern and southeastern Europe, the Phanariot regime presents obvious signs of disintegration.

The variations of the *oriental issue*, the progresses triggered by the French Revolution and the spreading of the revolutionary spirit in southeastern Europe also affect the political situation of the Romanian Countries.

By the end of the 18th century, in the climate of the continental international problems, in the southeast of Europe appears a new climate, favorable to political and territorial mutations.

The Romanians' anti-Ottoman fight, between the 15th and the 18th century, had international dimensions, triggering important consequences for the states of our continent.

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