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THE "ROMÂNUL" NEWSPAPER (1846–1848) – AN ENIGMA IN THE HISTORY OF THE BESSARABIAN PRESS

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Domenii de preocupare academică: istoria modernă și contemporană a românilor și impactul politicilor naționale imperiale asupra societății basarabene; istoria presei din Basarabia secolului al XIX-lea, dinamica relațiilor internaționale în perioada anilor 1965–1989 și rolul biografiilor individuale în procesele istorice de amploare. Cărți publicate: *Politica etnolingvistică în R.S.S. Moldovenească (1940–1991)*. Chișinău: Prut-Internațional, 2000; *„Cursul deosebit al României" și supărarea Moscovei. Disputa sovieto-română și campaniile propagandistice antiromânești din RSSM (1965–1989). Studiu și documente. Vol. 1: 1965–1975*. Chișinău: CEP USM, 2013 (în colab.); *„Cursul deosebit" al României și supărarea Moscovei. Disputa sovieto-română și campaniile propagandistice antiromânești din RSSM (1965–1989). Studiu și documente. Vol. 2: 1976–1989*. Chișinău: Tehnica-Info, 2016 (în colab.); *Ioan Pelivan, Corespondență, Memorii. Prefață și notă asupra ediției*. Chișinău: Știința, 2019 (în colab.); *Politica identitară în RSS Moldovenească, 1940–1941, 1944–1989*, Chișinău, Lexon Prim, 2025 (în colab.) etc.


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The "Românul" Newspaper (1846–1848) – An Enigma in the History of the Bessarabian Press

Abstract. The present research analyzes the attempt to publish the newspaper "Românul" (The Romanian) in Chișinău between 1846 and 1848, a pioneering moment in the history of the Bessarabian press and an early manifestation of modern national consciousness. The study demonstrates that this editorial project was not an isolated incident, but rather an expression of the Bessarabian elites' synchronization with the political program of the 1848 Generation (*pașoptiștii*) from the Romanian Principalities. Although the formal request was submitted by the Russian nobleman Alexandr Mishchenko and the Armenian printer Akim Popov, their loyalist profile and the broader context of the era confirm the hypothesis – originally formulated by Alexandru Boldur – that they acted as intermediaries for a group of Romanian nobles motivated by a desire for identity assertion. The title of the publication, "Românul", constituted an explicit political manifesto, abandoning regionalisms in favor of a unitary ethnonym, in full consonance with the vision promoted by landmark publications such as "Dacia Literară" or "Magazin istoric pentru Dacia". This unionist orientation was foreshadowed by the petitionary offensive of the Bessarabian nobility (represented by figures such as Sturza or Dumitriu) who, in the early 1840s, demanded from the Tsarist authorities the right to education in their mother tongue and even the extension of the administrative reforms from the Principalities (The Organic Regulation) to Bessarabia.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Bessarabia, Romanian Principalities, Românul newspaper, national press, Romanian identity, the 1848 Generation.

Ziarul „Românul" (1846–1848) – o enigmă a istoriei presei din Basarabia

Rezumat. Cercetarea de față analizează tentativa de editare a ziarului „Românul" la Chișinău între anii 1846 și 1848, un moment de pionierat în istoria presei basarabene și o manifestare timpurie a conștiinței naționale moderne. Studiul demonstrează că acest proiect editorial nu a fost un incident izolat, ci o expresie a unor elite basarabene sincronizate cu programul generației pașoptiste din Principatele Române. Deși cererea a fost înaintată formal de către nobilul rus Alexandr Mișcenko și tipograful armean Akim Popov, profilul loialist al acestora și contextul epocii confirmă ipoteza, formulată de Alexandru Boldur, că aceștia au acționat ca interpuși pentru un grup de nobili români, motivați de dorința de afirmare identitară. Titlul publicației, „Românul", constituia un manifest politic explicit, abandonând regionalismele în favoarea etnonimului unitar, în deplină consonanță cu viziunea promovată de publicații precum „Dacia Literară" sau „Magazin istoric pentru Dacia". Această orientare unionistă a fost prefigurată de ofensiva petiționară a nobilimii basarabene (reprezentată de figuri precum Sturza sau Dumitriu) care, la începutul anilor 1840, solicita autorităților țariste dreptul la educație în limba maternă și chiar extinderea reformelor administrative din Principate (Regulamentul Organic) asupra Basarabiei.

Cuvinte-cheie: Imperiul Rus, Basarabia, Principatele Române, ziarul Românul, presă națională, identitate românească, generația pașoptistă.

Introduction. The initiative to publish the newspaper "Românul" in Chișinău between 1846 and 1848 constitutes a fascinating enigma and a remarkable premiere in the history of the Romanian press. Although, at first glance, the project appears to be an isolated cultural endeavor in a peripheral province of the Russian Empire, a rigorous analysis of archival documents reveals a much more complex reality. While documentary sources now allow us to establish a solid factual framework for the local context in Bessarabia, the ideological substratum and the profound political significance of the chosen name can only be fully deciphered by referencing the space across the Prut River.

Thus, the genesis of this project cannot be separated from the intellectual effervescence in the Romanian Principalities, which undeniably generated the vision and terminology proposed by the petitioners. The projected publication was not a mere editorial appearance, but a manifesto of national synchronization, representing a bridge between the aspirations of certain Bessarabian intellectuals and the political program of the 1848 Generation from the Romanian Principalities. The present study aims to explore precisely this interdependence, decoding the significance of an action that, under the guise of administrative loyalty, concealed a profound claim to identity.

Historiographical Landmarks. The pioneer of research regarding this initiative was Alexandru Boldur, who, in a 1937 article, pointed out the desire of certain Bessarabian boyars to edit the newspaper "Românul" in Chișinău on the eve of 1848. According to him, the request had been submitted to the Russian government through the intermediary of the printer Akim Popov but was rejected [1, p. 13]. Analyzing these statements, we note that Boldur did not correctly date the endeavor – a confusion explainable by the insufficient documentary base available to him at the time. Although he does not cite his sources, it is likely that the historian relied on the only document then available in the Chișinău archives: a letter from the Regional Council dated January 24, 1848. This document did indeed mention Popov's request, but it dated from October 1847, not 1848. Furthermore, the lack of access to Russian archives prevented Boldur from discovering that this was, in fact, the second request, not the first. On the other hand, the scholar correctly intuited that the true initiators were not the official signatories, but a group of local boyars, with Popov serving only as a legal interface. However, likely considering the hypothesis self-evident, Boldur did not provide the necessary arguments to support this interesting assumption.

This task fell to recent historiography: in 2008, the author of the present study published, for the first time, the full set of documents regarding the editorial project conceived in Bessarabia in the 1840s. These consist of four acts identified in the Russian State Historical Archive in Saint Petersburg [2, p. 22-31] and one document from the National Archive of the Republic of Moldova [2, p. 26-27], the latter being, incidentally, the only archival piece to which Boldur had access during the interwar period.

New documentary evidence reveals that there were, in reality, two distinct requests for the authorization of the "Românul" newspaper. The first, signed by the nobleman Alexandr Mishchenko and the owner of the Chișinău printing house, Akim Popov, was drafted in the first half of 1846. The administrative path of the request brings to light both the rigor and the ambiguity of the Tsarist bureaucratic apparatus: in August 1846, the Odessa Censorship Committee forwarded the petition to the Main Censorship Directorate in Saint Petersburg, which, in September 1846, re-sent it to the attention of the Governor-General of New Russia and Bessarabia, Pavel Fyodorov [2, p. 28-29]. Although he held full authority to decide on periodicals in his jurisdiction, Fyodorov adopted a tactic of evasion. He neither officially accepted the proposal nor rejected it through a formal act, opting instead for a prolonged administrative "silence", leaving the project in a state of legal uncertainty [2, p. 28-29].

Despite the lack of an initial response, efforts to authorize the publication continued. A

second request, signed this time only by Akim Popov, was submitted to the Regional Council of Bessarabia in October 1847. From the data collected by this executive body, it appears that the Governor-General had not completely ignored the previous 1846 endeavor but had, nonetheless, requested a consultative opinion from the authorities in Chișinău.

The local reaction was surprisingly pragmatic and favorable: in November 1847, the Regional Council communicated its agreement to the Governor-General for the publication of "Românul". The only condition imposed was that the new publication also ensure the dissemination of "official local news" until the potential establishment of a regional bulletin. This positive endorsement was reconfirmed by the letter of January 24, 1848, through which the Council reported to the Military Governor of Bessarabia (the same Pavel Fyodorov who, in November 1847, exercised the function of ad-interim Governor-General) both Popov's new memorandum and the favorable decision from the previous autumn [2, p. 26-27]. Nevertheless, the decision-making mechanism stalled again at the Governor-General's level. At the end of 1848, the Main Censorship Directorate in Saint Petersburg was forced to note that, despite the complete documentation sent to Fyodorov, "no response has followed so far in this matter" [2, p. 26-27].

This documentation, brought to light in 2008, was subsequently utilized by Maria Danilov in a 2012 work. Republishing these acts, the researcher decoded the initiative of A. Mishchenko and A. Popov as "telling evidence of the existence in Bessarabia, in the mid-19th century, of a national consciousness among Bessarabian Romanians" emphasizing their constant tendency toward asserting their own identity values [3, p. 32].

M. Danilov's analysis builds upon A. Boldur's idea regarding Popov's role as an intermediary, although without explicitly mentioning the renowned historian's authorship of this thesis. According to the researcher, Mishchenko and Popov served as "cover before the censorship bodies" for the group of noble initiators – a practice, moreover, common in the imperial journalism of the era [3, p. 27]. This strategy was also dictated by local technical realities: Popov's printing house was the only one in Chișinău equipped with the necessary characters for Romanian printing. Thus, delegating the initiative to these proxies is interpreted as a deliberate attempt to avoid a direct confrontation with the censorship authorities [3, p. 29, 32].

While M. Danilov's arguments explain the technical mechanism of the efforts made to register the publication, they remain insufficient to exhaust the profound significance of the Romanian boyars' gesture. Firstly, beyond the necessity of employing intermediaries, a fundamental question remains: why, from a political and identity-based perspective, can Mishchenko and Popov not be considered the *de facto* authors of the endeavor? Secondly, M. Danilov restricts the causes for the Russian Imperial officials' rejection of the project to strictly internal factors, citing the coincidence with the "terror of reaction" (1848–1855) and the establishment of the "April 2 Committee" led by Count D. Buturlin [3, p. 32]. However, this lens limits the understanding of the phenomenon by ignoring the organic interdependence between the project to publish the "Românul" newspaper and the political and national-cultural effervescence of the 1830s and 1840s in the Romanian Principalities. Indeed, it is precisely this cross-border context that provides the key to deciphering the imperial officials' significant "silence" toward the initiative of the Bessarabian boyars.

In the following pages, drawing upon the aforementioned documents and historiographical approaches, as well as recent research on Russian Imperial policies in Bessarabia, we aim to analyze the 1846 initiative from an integrative perspective that necessarily includes the context of the Romanian Principalities. The central objectives of this study focus on deciphering the significance of the newspaper title "Românul" and its intrinsic link to the political profile of the real initiators. At the same time, we will analyze the influence of the cultural and

national processes from across the Prut on the mentality of the Bessarabian nobility, reflected in the increased interest in youth education and indigenous cultural development. Finally, we will highlight the profound causes that led to the rejection of this editorial project by the imperial authorities, going beyond mere administrative formalism.

The Incompatibility of the Signatories' Profile with the Spirit of the "Românul" Newspaper: The Contradiction Between National Identity and Russian Imperial Interests. An analysis of the authorization process for the newspaper "Românul" highlights, from the very first reading, a fundamental contradiction. In a context where the Tsarist authorities were intensely promoting Russification policies, two petitioners who did not belong to the majority ethnic group – the Russian nobleman Alexandr Mishchenko and the Armenian printing house owner Akim Popov – were requesting permission to publish a newspaper with an extremely suggestive national title [4, f. 1-1v]. Such a name, which encapsulated the political program of the unionists in the Principalities and came into direct conflict with imperial interests, clearly indicates that Mishchenko and Popov were not the actual authors of the project.

This striking discrepancy between the unionist title and the profile of the two signatories, who were characterized by unquestionable loyalty to the regime, confirms Alexandru Boldur's hypothesis: the two acted merely as intermediaries. It is evident that they agreed to endorse the idea of certain Romanian boyars, who were aware of the title's political weight, being motivated primarily by material interests. On the other hand, the simple ethnonym "Romanian" (*Român*) did not arouse immediate suspicion among officials in Chișinău or Saint Petersburg, as they recognized the ethnic and linguistic unity of the population on both banks of the Prut as an obvious fact. The "subversive" significance of the term was only perceived later, during the revolutionary climate of 1848, by the political strategists of the Russian Empire, whose mission was to isolate Bessarabia from influences from across the Prut. This explains why, initially, the title was accepted without objection by the Regional Council of Bessarabia and the censorship committees in Odessa and Saint Petersburg.

Furthermore, the biographical paths of the two signatories confirm a total lack of affinity with Romanian national ideas. The *de facto* initiators strategically relied on the "capital of trust" held by Akim Popov, who had obtained the right to print in Russian, French, and Romanian as early as 1842, demonstrating impeccable political loyalty to the authorities. Moreover, in 1846, both protagonists easily obtained loyalty certificates from the Marshal of the Nobility and the police authorities [4, f. 1-1v]. Consequently, a rigorous analysis of Mishchenko's and Popov's political profiles leads to the conclusion that they could not have been conscious adherents of Romanian national unity and, by extension, were not the *de facto* authors of the proposal to edit the "Românul" newspaper. From this perspective, Boldur's hypothesis regarding the existence of shadow initiators and the role of the two signatories as proxies is not only plausible but follows logically from the corroboration of two fundamental elements: the profound political significance of the title and the administrative psychology of the imperial officials in Bessarabia.

Once it is established that Mishchenko and Popov represented only the legal screen for a segment of the local Romanian elite, it becomes imperative to explore the ideological origins of this endeavor. This editorial "enigma" from Chișinău ceases to be an isolated incident when placed within the intellectual climate across the Prut, where national terminology was beginning to defy the political barriers imposed by the great empires.

The Historical Context in the Romanian Principalities: From „Dacia Literară" in Iași to „Românul" in Chișinău. The decision to request the publication of a newspaper entitled "Românul" in Chișinău in 1846 cannot be correctly understood without an analysis of the

ideological effervescence that dominated the Romanian Principalities in the period leading up to the 1848 Revolution. Far from being an isolated event, the initiative in Bessarabia appears as a direct emanation of the national ideas intensely circulated in Moldavia and Wallachia.

Indeed, the 1840–1846 interval marked an acceleration in the crystallization of national consciousness. The intellectual elite – later known as the *1848 Generation* (*generația pașoptistă*) – succeeded in transforming literary salons and cultural publications into genuine platforms for political preparation. Young intellectuals, many of them trained in European university centers, proceeded to structure clandestine organizations with explicit political goals.

In Wallachia, for instance, the founding of the "Frăția" (Brotherhood) society in 1843 by Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion Ghica, and C.A. Rosetti demonstrated that the idea of unified political action had already become a structured doctrine, aimed at preparing the revolution and achieving union. In parallel, in Moldavia, the "Asociația Literară" (Literary Association, 1845), led by Mihail Kogălniceanu, functioned as a screen for intense national debates under the guise of cultural development, thereby preparing the ideological ground for the events to follow [5, p. 40-110], [6, p. 80-150].

Viewed through this lens, the choice of the title "Românul" in Chișinău in 1846 ceases to be a mere neutral editorial option and becomes an explicit political manifesto. By using the ethnonym "Romanian" ("Român") – to the detriment of regionalisms such as "Moldavian" (*moldovean*) or "Wallachian" (*valah*) – the initiators symbolically asserted the unity of all Romanian speakers, defying the borders imposed by the neighboring great empires.

This terminological shift was not accidental; it reflected a fundamental paradigm shift operated by the core of the national movement, which had begun to employ terms capable of evoking historical unity. An eloquent example is the magazine "Dacia Literară" (1840, Iași), where Mihail Kogălniceanu established a national literary program under a title that placed the concept of the nation under a protective "historical shield". Other landmark publications followed this same symbolic logic, such as "Propășirea" (Progress, 1844, Iași), reflecting the imperative of modernization, or "Magazin istoric pentru Dacia" (Historical Magazine for Dacia, 1845), edited by Nicolae Bălcescu and A. Treboniu Laurian. The latter, by placing historiography under the sign of "Dacia", constantly consolidated the concept of a unified nation in the public consciousness [7, p. 180-240], [8, p. 25-65].

Therefore, the attempt to print a newspaper called "Românul" in Chișinău demonstrates that the Bessarabian initiators were deeply synchronized with the unionist terminology circulated by the elite in the Principalities. Adopting a title that had become synonymous with the political program of the 1848 Generation represented the assumption of a vision that directly contravened the Russification policy promoted by the Russian Empire. Moreover, this endeavor constitutes a remarkable act of cultural pioneering, preceding by more than a decade the appearance of the first publication with the same name in the Principalities, which would only see the light of print in Bucharest in 1857 [9, p. 370].

Echoes in Bessarabia of Ideas and Events from the Romanian Principalities. Within this landscape of ideological effervescence, the initiative to print a newspaper in Chișinău that emphasized – starting with its very title – the ethno-linguistic and cultural unity of the Romanians appears as a natural endeavor by a group of Bessarabian nobles and intellectuals. This conclusion is not a mere deduction but emerges from the internal logic of the Romanian nobility's behavior at the time. Influenced by the consolidation of national sentiment in the Principalities between 1830 and 1840, the local elite began addressing a series of concrete proposals to the Tsarist authorities, aiming at improving the teaching and acquisition of their mother tongue [10, p. 69-70].

Far from being isolated actions, these requests submitted "in the name of the entire

distinguished nobility" systematically criticized the shortcomings of the imperial education system. A relevant moment in this regard occurred on November 30, 1839, when the Marshal of the Nobility of Bessarabia, Egor Dumitriu, pointed out to the trustee of the Odessa educational district, Dmitri Knyazhevich, that the study of the mother tongue at the county school and the gymnasium in Chișinău did not meet "our expectations". Dumitriu's diagnosis was precise: the unsatisfactory level of education was due to an acute shortage of teaching staff and bibliographic materials.

The solution proposed by the Marshal, however, was of subtle political importance: he requested not only the selection of trained teachers but also the direct ordering from the Romanian Principalities of "grammars, lexicons, reading books, and Bibles". Furthermore, to ensure long-term cultural autonomy, he requested the possibility that new editions be printed right at the printing house in Chișinău [11, p. 80-81].

Such constant pressure on the authorities continued in the following years, forcing the administration to recognize the realities on the ground. Thus, on April 29, 1841, the ad-interim trustee of the Odessa district reported to the Minister of Public Instruction regarding the request of the director of Bessarabian schools, Nelidov, to travel to Iași and Cernăuți to procure textbooks. The acknowledgment that teaching materials for the "Moldavian language" (Romanian) had to be "subscribed from abroad" [11, p. 83-84] implicitly confirmed Bessarabia's belonging to the same Romanian cultural space, despite imperial political barriers. All these cultural actions – from requesting textbooks from the Principalities to the demand to print them locally – constituted the necessary prelude to the much bolder project of 1846: the "Românul" newspaper.

Further Petitions and the Imperial Response: Between Concession and Control. These endeavors were reiterated with even greater vigor on September 25, 1841. Based on the minutes of a nobility assembly, Marshal Sturza renewed the requests from the end of the previous decade, denouncing the alarmingly low level of mother-tongue literacy among Moldavian students at all educational levels. This time, the demands took on a much more pragmatic and firm tone: the nobility requested the appointment of trustworthy teachers in every county school and the ordering of necessary stocks of textbooks directly from Moldavia and Wallachia. Furthermore, the local elite declared themselves willing to self-finance these acquisitions from the landowners' public funds, even electing special deputies to provide the government with any clarifications necessary to fulfill this "entirely well-founded desire" of the native youth [11, p. 86-88].

Beyond the strictly educational aspect, the influence of political processes in the Principalities began to be felt on a legislative level as well. On March 6, 1841, the assembly of the nobility took a bold step by requesting the extension to Bessarabia of the Organic Regulation's provisions regarding peasants, which had been implemented "among our brothers" since 1833. Their argumentation, invoking ethno-cultural unity, remains an extremely suggestive testimony of the national consciousness of the era, making direct reference to the existence of "the same nation on both sides of the Prut" and the "identity of ancient laws and customs" [12, p. 216-217].

In this tense climate, the Tsarist authorities found themselves in a delicate position. Although the seven-year term provided for the acceptance of petitions in the Romanian language was set to expire in 1843, the effervescence in the Romanian Principalities forced Saint Petersburg into a more conciliatory stance to avoid local radicalization. Consequently, on June 3, 1841, the Committee of Ministers of the Russian Empire approved, under the Emperor's sanction, the purchase of textbooks from Iași and Cernăuți [11, p. 85].

However, the imperial openness was carefully controlled. Although in September 1842, the Deputy Minister of Public Instruction,

Count Shirinsky-Shikhmatov, accepted the expansion of Romanian language teaching, he limited the implementation of the measure. Thus, instead of its presence in "every county school", as the nobility had requested, the government followed the proposal of the Regional Council of Bessarabia to introduce the subject only in the centers of Hotin and Bălți [11, p. 94]. This "limited concession" clearly shows the authorities' fear that mother-tongue instruction might become a catalyst for a much broader emancipation movement.

Therefore, the endeavor submitted by Alexandr Mishchenko and Akim Popov in 1846 fits organically into a much wider context: that of the awakening interest of the Bessarabian nobility and intelligentsia in language, schooling, and national culture. This programmatic insistence of the local elite was not an isolated phenomenon but a fundamental component of the process of consolidating modern Romanian identity, representing a direct echo of the political and cultural movements in the Romanian Principalities.

In conditions where both the local population and the authorities of the Russian Empire operated with the certainty of the ethno-cultural unity of the Romanians on both banks of the Prut, the request of the two petitioners was perceived, in its initial stage, as a natural act. It is precisely this neutral reception that explains why the endeavor initially passed through all administrative hierarchical levels without encountering resistance. The title of the newspaper, although laden with profound significance, did not immediately trigger the censorship's alert mechanisms, being treated instead as a legitimate editorial request within the cultural landscape of the region.

The Significant Silence of Imperial Officials and the Proximity of the 1848 Romanian Revolution. Although the request to edit the newspaper "Românul" fit harmoniously into the favorable cultural climate created by the local elite, the final fate of the endeavor was decided not in Chișinău, but at the strategic level of the Russian Empire. Here, the interests of the censorship fatally intersected with the tense political evolution in the Romanian Principalities. Documents attest that by September 1846, the file had already reached the capital of the Russian Empire, at which point the head of the Main Censorship Directorate in Saint Petersburg, Count Shirinsky-Shikhmatov, redirected it to the ad-interim Governor-General of New Russia and Bessarabia, Pavel Fyodorov. According to the Censorship Regulations, Fyodorov was the sole authority invested with deciding whether a publication with such a profile was "expedient and useful" for the realities of the region [4, f. 2-2v].

Despite the fact that the file remained pending for a period, on January 24, 1848, Akim Popov renewed the request, forcing a response from the authorities. It is remarkable that the local executive body, the Regional Council of Bessarabia, maintained a pragmatic vision, having endorsed the endeavor as early as November 9, 1847. The Council's officials considered the admission of the newspaper not only possible but even useful, imposing only one technical condition: the inclusion in its pages of "official local news" until the potential establishment of an official government bulletin [13, f. 1].

This attitude of the officials in Chișinău, who accepted the title "Românul" as a natural fact and its publication as an administrative necessity, is extremely revealing. It highlights the high degree of recognition of the ethno-linguistic and cultural unity of the Romanians in Bessarabia with those in the Principalities – a reality so evident at the local level that it did not initially arouse political suspicion. However, what appeared in Chișinău as a practical utility began to be perceived in Saint Petersburg as an ideological danger, as the pre-revolutionary echoes from Moldavia and Wallachia grew increasingly resonant.

Notwithstanding the favorable endorsement from the Regional Council of Bessarabia, the ad-interim Governor-General, Pavel Fyodorov, opted for a strategy of indefinite delay, avoiding a clear response. Documents from

December 15 and 29, 1848, from the Odessa Censorship Committee and the Main Directorate in Saint Petersburg confirm that, although the endeavor had been transmitted to Fyodorov since 1846, "no response has followed in this matter" [4, f. 4-4v]. This prolonged "silence" so discouraged the petitioners that they eventually requested only the return of the loyalty certificates originally submitted with the file [4, f. 4-4v].

Far from being a case of mere bureaucratic negligence, the Governor-General's tactical silence between 1846 and 1848 constituted a *sui generis* rejection of the project, marking an imminent and radical shift in Tsarist policy. The reason for this attitude was not administrative but eminently strategic-political in nature. The context was critical: beginning in February 1848, Russian armies were already massed along the Prut River, and by the summer of that same year, they had invaded the Romanian Principalities to suppress the revolutionary movements. For Saint Petersburg, the 1848 Romanian Revolution represented a major danger of "contagion" for Bessarabia, in terms of both social and, especially, national demands. In the eyes of imperial strategists, authorizing the newspaper "Românul" in Chișinău – viewed as an emanation of the ideas of cultural and political unity – would have meant the official sanctioning of a vehicle for propagating unionism right within the interior of the empire.

Conclusions. The research into the initiative to publish the newspaper "Românul" in Chișinău (1846–1848) reveals that this project was not merely a failed editorial endeavor, but an act of cultural resistance and identity assertion of major importance for the history of Bessarabia. A corroborated analysis of archival documents and the cross-border political context leads to the following conclusions:

1. The choice of the title "Românul" constitutes indisputable proof of the Bessarabian elite's synchronization with the ideological effervescence in the Principalities. In an era when the term "Romanian" was becoming synonymous with national unity and the political program of the 1848 Generation, its use in Chișinău represented a symbolic manifesto that defied imposed regionalisms and imperial borders.

2. The discrepancy between the ethnic profile of the official signatories (the Russian nobleman A. Mishchenko and the Armenian printer A. Popov) and the unionist weight of the title confirms that the local Romanian nobility operated through intermediaries loyal to the regime to elude the rigid mechanisms of censorship. This tactic highlights the political maturity of the actual initiators, who attempted to transform an administrative necessity into a vehicle for cultural emancipation.

3. The constant efforts to procure textbooks from Iași and Cernăuți, coupled with the request to publish this newspaper, demonstrate that for Bessarabian society in the 1840s, the Prut River did not constitute a cultural barrier. The organic interdependence between the nobility's educational demands and the "Românul" editorial project attests to the existence of a vibrant national consciousness, capable of generating projects of pan-Romanian scope.

4. The project's failure was not due to formal flaws but was the result of a deliberate political decision by Saint Petersburg. Governor-General Pavel Fyodorov's "silence" was, in essence, a strategic barrier raised against the "contagion" of national and revolutionary ideas from the Romanian Principalities. At a critical moment when Russian armies were preparing to suppress the 1848 emancipation movements in the Principalities, authorizing a publication that could have become the nucleus of unionism in Bessarabia was considered a direct threat to imperial stability. Thus, the refusal, masked as a lack of response, marked the end of a period of limited concessions and the beginning of a policy aimed at isolating the province from Romanian national influences.

Ultimately, the enigma of the newspaper "Românul" confirms that Bessarabia in the first half of the 19th century was not an inert province, but a space connected to the great currents of Romanian modernity. Although the

publication never saw the light of print, its mere projection remains a symbolic pillar of identity continuity, demonstrating that the ideal of national unity long preceded the political achievements that followed.

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