In 1874, a British diplomatic agent at Bucharest wrote to London that:

In my previous reports I have endeavoured to convey my earlier impressions of the real progress in material prosperity and development made by these Principalities since the treaties of 1858, especially within the last few years, and of their consciousness of this fact; I have also noticed the feeling of greater strength and of self-reliance thus engendered which finds expression among moderate men in a conviction of the real necessity for more extended rights of self government including complete Commercial enfranchisement; and with the Prince and some of the more advanced Politicians, in a dream of eventual independence and a neutrality guaranteed by the Great Powers.1

With slight modifications, a similar report might have been sent to London a century earlier by a British diplomatic agent in Philadelphia; as a matter of fact, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia did send, on 5 September 1774, a strong protest against the Coercive Acts. The words "freedom," "democracy," and "equality" frequently appear in American documents and writings published in the crucial year of 1776. The Virginia Bill of Rights proclaims that all men are free and so does the Declaration of Independence of 4 July. The war that followed pitted imperial troops against men who fought for their rights and in the name of human dignity. Similar social and political goals can be identified in the revolutionary movement in Western Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. Hence, historians speak of an Atlantic Revolution which had no parallel in Eastern or Southeastern Europe.2

The assertion of human rights reverberates through all revolutionary proclamations written in America and Europe between 1776 and 1848; but the accent falls on different key words. In one of his works, Robert Palmer evokes the dramatic scene of Louis XVI's execution in 1793 and notes that when "the crowds shouted 'Vive la République!' One young man heard, or at least reported, 'Long live Democracy!' He was, however, a Greek, writing to a fel-

low countryman in the Greek language. It may be that ‘democracy’ to him, not being a foreign word, could convey a feeling that it lacked for western Europeans; that he used it naturally as a translation for the Latin ‘republic,’ to express the ideals and passions that he sensed in revolutionary Paris.”3 The Transylvanian Paul lorgovici saw this scene, but no written record of his reaction has survived; probably he would have used the Latin word “republic,” like any other intellectual of the Transylvanian School, for this group of writers strongly emphasized the Latin origin of the Romanian people in order to demonstrate their “historical” rights.

Emphasis on the Romanians’ Latin origin fluctuated with exigencies. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Romanians periodically confronted ambitions of several imperial powers in Southeastern Europe whose troops marched under different banners: the green flag of the Prophet, the flag of His Catholic Majesty, and the flag of the Orthodox Emperor. In 1772 Romanian delegates pleaded the cause of independence—which had been enjoyed by the Danubian principalities in previous centuries—to Russian and Ottoman diplomats at Focsani. But the treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774 obliged the Porte to promise only “to observe with respect to all the inhabitants of these Principalties . . . absolute amnesty in favour of all those who shall be suspected of having had the intention of doing injury to the interest of the Sublime Porte. . . .” Led by Horea in 1784, Romanian peasants in Transylvania attacked the castles and burned the property of aristocrats who had ignored them and had proclaimed the existence of only three “nations”—excluding the majority whose religion was not recognized (recepta). By the end of the eighteenth century and long afterwards, the Romanian people struggled against the plans of emperors who, according to the Russian diplomat A. G. Jomini, would not come down from the heights and official splendors and simply disregarded the claims of the Balkan nationalities.4

During the “age of revolutions” there were several common intellectual factors in countries on both sides of the Atlantic. These factors were, first, industrialization—in which new technical processes were used to create wealth, thereby contributing to the transformation of concepts about time, space, and nature; second, revolutionary thinking—in which people questioned traditional social structures and sought new personal and social relationships; and, third, modernization—in which old formulas were reviewed and new theories and systems were invented to explain the existing world.