The revolution of 1848 was an outstanding moment in the life of the Romanian people: Never before had Romanians so decisively risen with a view to achieve national and social freedom. The revolution’s aim was to overthrow the old disintegrating feudal social order and to establish a new bourgeois order like that in England and France. Moreover, Romanians wanted to be freed from foreign domination, to be united in a national independent state, and to see revolutionary ideas spread in Eastern Europe. In order to accomplish this daring program, the revolution of 1848 marshaled all the national political forces—the masses and their leaders—who sacrificed themselves for the common cause.

One leader of the revolution in Wallachia was Ion Heliade Rădulescu—commonly known as Eliade. A member of the bourgeoisie, he embodied the interests of his social class. But he also had significant views on the progress and possibilities of the Romanian nation. Born in 1802, Eliade grew up in a period of political unrest and social contradictions throughout the Danubian principalities as well as in the Romanian regions of Habsburg Austria. He acquired a rich political experience and conducted significant cultural activities, and his reputation as a leading intellectual as well as his popularity served him well in the cause of the revolution. Eliade began his studies at the prince’s academy in Bucharest. Here he encountered the ideas of the French encyclopaedists. He was also fascinated by the Daco-Roman thesis of the Transylvanian teacher Gheorghe Lazăr. Following Lazăr’s return to Transylvania, the young Eliade assumed Lazăr’s post at the Saint Sava Monastery school in Bucharest.

In 1827 he began to work with Dinicu Golescu, an enlightened boiar, who had just returned from fruitful travels in Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. Together they founded a literary society—Societatea litterară—a cultural and political organization designed to introduce Romanians to the culture of Western Europe through newspapers, theater, grammar books, literature, and colleges. With the support of the Societatea litterară, Eliade published his valuable Gramatica românească (Sibiu, 1828)—a work in the spirit of the eighteenth-century encyclopaedists. Also with the society’s sponsorship, Eliade edited and

*This article stems from a paper read at the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania in Bucharest, 1 January 1977.
published the first Romanian periodical, *Curierul românesc*, in Bucharest. In announcing this journal, Eliade lamented that Romanians were limited to information gleaned from foreign-language newspapers.\(^1\) Hence, Eliade’s purpose was political. The paper would appeal to Romanians everywhere and would be sent to such major cities as Iași, Brașov, and Sibiu as well as to Pest and Arad plus towns in Bucovina and Bessarabia. This paper, which appeared from 8 April 1829 to 19 April 1848, performed outstanding work in raising the political and cultural level of the Romanian people.

In order to publish his paper Eliade purchased the only printing house in Bucharest, which he enlarged and improved. He also published books and pamphlets as well as the official Wallachian *Buletin: Gazetă administrativă*. Through his activities as publisher and editor Eliade became wealthy. According to a contemporary observer, Elias Régnauld, “Eliade does not owe to his predecessors either his wealth or his importance. He is a self-made man, who became more powerful by his work. His cleverness and his writings are his support. That was something new in Wallachia.”\(^2\)

Eliade’s patriotism soon became manifest. In 1828, along with his Romanian countrymen, he welcomed the Russian armies in the campaign against the Ottoman empire. Ultimately, however, he realized that the tsar’s protectorate over the Romanian principalities was a step toward their annexation by the Russian empire. When asked in 1831 by Romanian authorities to publish the Organic Regulations (*Regulamentul Organik*), Eliade discovered an article in the manuscript which forbade the ruling prince and the country’s assembly to make any changes “without the Protecting Power’s prior approval.”\(^3\) The former members of the Extraordinary Assembly were unaware that this article was to have been discussed and approved by the assembly.\(^4\) Eliade printed 2,300 copies of the Organic Regulations rather than the 300 ordered.

The secret addition in the Organic Regulations of the article limiting the country’s autonomy led Eliade to join those who opposed the tsar’s protectorate, such as Ion Câmpineanu, one of Dinicu Golescu’s collaborators, and the poet Ion Văcărescu. As a result of their protest against restrictions on the principalities’ autonomy in the Organic Regulations, Văcărescu was banished by the Russian official Paul Kiselev.\(^5\)


\(^{4}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{5}\) Ioan C. Filitti, *Domniile române sub Regulamentul Organic 1834-1848* (București: Socec, 1915), p. 53.