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Proiect cofinanțat din Fondul Social European prin Programul Operațional Sectorial pentru Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007 – 2013

Axa prioritară 1 *Educația și formarea profesională în sprijinul creșterii economice și dezvoltării societății bazate pe cunoaștere*

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Instituția coordonatoare de tematică: Academia Română – Filiala Iași

**Tematica:** Științele socio-umaniste în contextul evoluției globalizate – dezvoltarea și implementarea programului de studii și cercetare postdoctorală

**Numele și prenumele cercetătorului postdoctoral:** Mocanu Sorin

**Tema individuală de cercetare:** Modalități sărbătorești de construire și exprimare a identității la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și începutul sec. XX. Contribuția sărbătorilor tradiționale

### Festive Representations of Iași:

”The Month of Iași” and ”The Month of Moldova”, 1935-1937

Sorin MOCANU

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The holiday events series organized by the city of Iași under the name "The Month of Iași" and "The Month of Moldova" for three consecutive years (1935-1937) was often interpreted, both at the time and by contemporary historiography, as a provincial, unsuccessful imitation of "The Month of Bucharest" (May 9<sup>th</sup> - June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1935). The holiday events in Bucharest had been first organized by mayor Al. Donescu in 1935 and took place under the patronage of King Carol II. Their purpose was to present<sup>1</sup> the urbanistic achievements in the capital and also the systematization plans in a grand manner. In fact, "The Month of Iași" (September 29<sup>th</sup> - October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1935) was not a mere copy of the festivities in Bucharest. It celebrated the past political glory and The Cultural Golden Age of Iași – as represented by the its citizens – and festively inaugurated a potentially economic Iași – as its citizens desired -, therefore the festivities integrated into a wider strategy to end the decline that accelerated<sup>2</sup> after Iași stopped being the capital of Romania<sup>3</sup> following the 1859 Union and to revitalize economic and cultural life. Against all given assurances, Bucharest did not correctly fulfill the duties that come from being a capital and did not

<sup>1</sup> This is what mayor Donescu, the organizer, declared in his boastful speech, held in the presence of the King, at the inauguration: "I have called Romanians everywhere to come to Bucharest, as we think the entire population should watch the progress of Bucharest. The capital belongs not only to us, the people in Bucharest. We want the entire Romanian soul to witness its development. We want the entire country to know the stages of our progress.", *Vremea*, no. 387, 12 May 1935, 37.

<sup>2</sup> The local press presents images of the "ruralization" of Iași and in 1935 N. Iorga thought Iași did not benefit from modern urbanism, being composed of the cultural city and the rural periphery. Quoted in A. Loghin, I. Agrigoroaie, Em. Bold, *Iașul contemporan*, (Iași: Junimea, 1969), 33.

<sup>3</sup> N.A. Bogdan writes in 1904 that the fatidic moment when Iași lost its brilliance as a Capital was 1862, when its symbol and authority are moved to Bucharest: "As Iași ceased being the capital of the new country, its lanes – Mihail Cogălniceanu's fatalist prediction! – started to grow grass. Public life gradually regressed; personalities, clerks, owners, wealthy people, industrialists, even simple workers started to leave it for Bucharest; one by one, its old prerogatives started to disappear, business and general motion weakened, followed by inertia, silence and carelessness which makes it impossible for this town to ever redeem itself. And every once in a while a lonely voice is heard to bestow Iași with the phrase the second capital of Romania, but it does not melt the ice of numbness that almost no one bothers to try to shake off." N.A. Bogdan, *Orașul Iași. Monografie istorică și socială, ilustrată*, (Iași: Tehnopress, 1997), 167.





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pay its moral and financial debts to Iași, the former capital city which, for higher political reasons, sacrificed<sup>4</sup> its statute and the consequent economic privileges. The compensatory phrase "the second capital of the country," used by Carol I,<sup>5</sup> started losing its meaning as Iași became almost as miserable as North African towns,<sup>6</sup> as foreign travelers reported! There is a huge discrepancy between the rural, quasi-wild scenery<sup>7</sup> local media regularly presented and the cultural capital pretense, that is, "the symbolic projection of admiration and gratefulness to the city,"<sup>8</sup> the pretense of intellectual supremacy Iași still bears in the collective imaginary, a supremacy the same local media tried to support by assimilating flattering comparative phrases belonging to cultural

<sup>4</sup> "The sacrifice of Iași" and "Bucharest's ingratitude" are recurrent phrases in the discourse of the press in Iași after 1859: "Iași was doomed to be sacrificed [...] They sacrificed their precedence. It was not the capital any longer and certainly the sacrifice of its development had to follow. [...] ingratitude added to this. The 1859 sacrifice required from the entire country and state a huge moral obligation to the future of Iași. What followed? The rulers completely forgot about it." C. Toma, mayor of Iași (1922-1926), "Problema Iașului" in *Primul anuar-ghid al municipiului Iași 1935-1936*, 29-34.

<sup>5</sup> According to an eye witness (the writer Mite Kremnitz) of King Carol I's visit to Iași, in 1866, the King promised to take care of the wellbeing of "his second residence", as he was going to call Iași from then on. In E. Herovanu, *Iașul amintirilor*, (Iași: Junimea, 2009), 170. "I think of Iași as the second capital of Romania and wil reside here regularly, if possible, for a part of the year..." in *Însemnări ieșene*, no. 3, 1 February 1936, 110.

<sup>6</sup> E. Herovanu, mayor of Iași in 1923, sadly evokes the visit of a group of foreigners at the peripheries of Iași and the image of barbarism: " – Tiens, tiens! Exclaimed, at some point, the wife of a French deputy, who had seen a pig dabbling in a greenish puddle... Look, look... she exclaimed – equally surprised and amused – to her husband. Wouldn't you say we are in ... ? (and she said a name that I cannot recall now of a small locality in the North of Africa: Mazagrah, Meligrah, Gemilah...). *This is how they kept them there too – remember? - loose.*" In Herovanu, *Iașul amintirilor*, 173.

<sup>7</sup> We do not refer to mere aspects of a rather rural lifestyle in Iași (muddy streets, dirt, carts, lack of general public illumination, lack of good potable water, etc.), but to a true repress plan, considering a Ministry of Finance order announced tax exemption for houses made of clay "to help the needy population in villages and towns!"; in other words, fiscal exemption encouraged the construction of shacks! "Îndemn oficial la primitivitate", *Opinia*, 27 July 1934, 1. In fact, Iași receives from the press the discouraging name of "capital of mud." "Iași is somewhat beautiful only in the centre, where Cuza (the statue) watches. The rest is diluted slum.", "Capitala glodului", *Opinia*, 12 March 1935, 1.

<sup>8</sup> O. Buruiană, "Incursiune în cotidianul Iașului interbelic", in Gh. Iacob, I. Agrigoroaiei and C. Turliuc, eds., *Iașul, memoria unei capitale*, (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2008), 298.





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personalities: "the Romanian Oxford,"<sup>9</sup> "a Romanian Heidelberg,"<sup>10</sup> Jerusalem,<sup>11</sup> "Jerusalem of Romanianism,"<sup>12</sup> "Jena in Romania."<sup>13</sup>

The rapid decay of Iași around 1935 was perceived diversely by the local media, on the one hand as a result of excessive centralism, of lack of interest and even ill will on the part of Bucharest, and on the other hand as lack of initiative, fatalism and a complex of superiority on the part of the citizens of Iași, which made them passively expect compensation for their sacrifice in 1859. The exodus of the local values who chose to leave Iași in favor of Bucharest proves that Iași is capable of generating values who, fatally though, cannot flourish unless they move to Bucharest. The discrepancy of economic development between the capital and the provinces is so large that the relationship is viewed by the people in Iași as colonialism,<sup>14</sup> a relation in which only the "vampire" Bucharest benefits, suspected of intending to attract all the productive activities of the provinces.<sup>15</sup> Money is directed only for investments in Bucharest, "colossal" amounts, as Iași considered, wasted on minor things, which only caused more dissatisfaction for the people in Iași, who felt left aside, receiving next to nothing and, in some situations, even defied: 200,000,000 lei for central heating equipment at the Public Guard Center in Bucharest,<sup>16</sup> while the entire budget of Iași in 1934 was 60,000,000 lei<sup>17</sup> (half of Constanța's budget!), magnificent industrial

<sup>9</sup> "Iașul, - Oxfordul românesc. Impresia unui romancier francez" (that is, Jules Romains), *Opinia*, 27 June 1934, 1.

<sup>10</sup> C. Manolache, "De ce mor Iașii? Cum vedeți reînvierea Iașilor? De ce ați părăsit Iașii?", *Vremea*, no. 410, 20 October 1935, 6.

<sup>11</sup> "Cuvântarea I.P.P.S. Nicodem, Mitropolitul Moldovei", *Iașul*, October 1935, 11.

<sup>12</sup> C. Dron, "De ce mor Iașii? Cum vedeți reînvierea Iașilor? De ce ați părăsit Iașii?", *Vremea*, no. 411, 27 October 1935, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Nicolae Leon, "Note și amintiri", 1923, quoted by G. Trancu-Iași, "Amintiri din Iașul de altădată", in *Memorii politice (1921-1938)*, (București: Curtea Veche, 2001), 115.

<sup>14</sup> Lazăr Marcu, "Provinciile românești sub regim colonial în profitul Capitalei acaparatoare", *Opinia*, 27 July 1934, 1.

<sup>15</sup> "Acaparare centralistă, o boală primejdioasă!", *Opinia*, 31 January 1935, 1.

<sup>16</sup> "Pentru Iași nimic!", *Opinia*, 2 October 1934, 1.

<sup>17</sup> "Sărăcie municipală", *Opinia*, 9 April 1935, 1.





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exhibitions,<sup>18</sup> cultural exhibitions, 47,000,000 lei to cover 600m of the Dâmbovița river bed,<sup>19</sup> hundreds of millions spent by the Romanian Railways for new headquarters in Bucharest while 3,000,000 lei<sup>20</sup> could not be allotted for the restoration of the Nicolina Station in Iași, distribution of the lowest imports rates to Iași<sup>21</sup>, increase of the university departments and positions in Bucharest – the university with "the most numerous personnel in the world"<sup>22</sup> - while they are downsized in Iași on economic grounds, 4,000 public guardians with special orchestra and headquarters included, in Bucharest as opposed to 158 in Iași,<sup>23</sup> although the patrolling surface was similar, etc. Moreover, Bucharest postponed paying their financial debts to the administration of Iași for a very long time<sup>24</sup> or simply did not pay them at all. Various ministries and institutions owed 14,000,000 lei<sup>25</sup> to the Iași administration for several taxes, duties and services. The Internal Affairs Ministry, the very authority charged with legally executing debtors, owed the administration of Iași 3,000,000 lei<sup>26</sup> for 1934. Following such actions, but especially the way media presented and called them centralist abuses and defiance, Bucharest was perceived as abominable and, as Mihai D. Ralea<sup>27</sup> pointed out, hatred was one step away! Media was certainly dominated by a feeling of mistrust regarding if not the capacity, surely the desire of Bucharest to

<sup>18</sup> "Capitala petrece și provincia suferă", *Opinia* 16 October 1934, 1.

<sup>19</sup> "Sânt bani pentru București", *Opinia*, 3 January 1935, 1.

<sup>20</sup> N.V. Gheorghiu, "Stația Nicolina. O rușine a C.F.R.-ului și o sfidare a Iașilor", *Opinia*, 4 May 1935, 1.

<sup>21</sup> "Iașul primește cele mai mici cote de import", *Opinia*, 24 January 1935, 2.

<sup>22</sup> At the Bucharest University, the teaching personnel is more numerous than in Paris, Berlin or Chicago! "Problema deflației universitare. Sinecurism monstruos la Universitatea din București. Institutul cu cel mai numeros personal de pe glob!", *Opinia*, 19 March 1935, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Al. Nestor, "Paza publică a Iașului, o batjocură?", *Opinia*, 17 February 1935, 3.

<sup>24</sup> To pay their 20.000.000 lei debt for water consumption for a few years, The Ministry of Finance barely authorizes a CEC loan. "Un impresionat memoriu al primăriei Iași, adresat Ministerului de Interne, din care reiesă: sărăcia, penuria de fonduri și vitregia centrului față de capitala Moldovei", *Lumea*, 21 July 1935, 2.

<sup>25</sup> "Încasărilor Iașului au fost mai bune în 1934. Cetățenii plătesc dar statul nu prea!", *Noutatea*, 11 January 1935, 3.

<sup>26</sup> "Un impresionat memoriu al primăriei Iași, adresat Ministerului de Interne, din care reiesă: sărăcia, penuria de fonduri și vitregia centrului față de capitala Moldovei", *Lumea*, 21 July 1935, 2.

<sup>27</sup> M. Ralea, "Plaga centralismului", in *Dreptatea*, quoted and commented in "Plaga centralismului", *Opinia*, 22 August 1935, 1 and "Pentru ce decade Iașul", *Opinia*, 25 August 1935, 1.





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stop the economic decline of Iași. And Bucharest should have helped Iași considering the founding sacrifice in 1859, a constant element in all the articles which deal with the decay of Iași, but also its "matryrization"<sup>28</sup> in 1916-1917 when it sheltered 400,000 inhabitants more with the price of its economic and physical ruin.<sup>29</sup> During the refuge period, Iași not only fulfilled the capital duties, but also reaffirmed its symbolic value by representing "resistance to the end". Still, despite Iași being recognized the importance of its part played in two crucial moments in national history, the media in Iași continuously blamed Bucharest in the 1930s for forgetting its duties and not giving Iași what it deserved. In absence of actual economic measures, the symbolic recognition of its importance in the classic phrases "cultural capital of Romania"<sup>30</sup> or "the second capital of Romania", phrases political personalities overused, lose their values and prove insufficient. "The

<sup>28</sup> "During the war, Iași sheltered the entire country. Our buildings collapsed. Our streets broke. And this martyr city did not even receive the legal share for the streets upkeep...", M. Sevastos wrote in *Adevărul*, 28 May 1935, quoted in *Iașul*, October 1935, 47.

"When King Ferdinand left the city after living an intense life here, with bright ups and awful downs, Iași was left devastated. The fussiness of the crowd sheltered did not just trouble its peace, but shattered it completely. The rich poplar trees on the way to Socola and the old trees in Copou were knocked down. Holes were left in the streets shattered by the heavy Russian cannons. The pipe from Timișești that brought water even Bucharest envied once cracked after a unfortunate accident and is on the verge of bursting. The University building that once housed ministries and offices was left in ruin. The city once posh and clean became an image of misery. The court convoy, the leaders of the country took off one day leaving Iași tourment with poverty. They did not remember Iași, even if the union of Romania happened here. [...]. Everyone wiped Iași out of their memory, except for King Ferdinand, who could not forget the most troubling torments a soul can bear. The Ferdinand Foundation raises triumphantly. It is the sign of the gratitude the hero King for Iași, a city which, although far from the battle field, suffered more than a city in the battle field. The others have forgotten Iași, all have forgottten it." – excerpt from prof. Ioan Simionescu's speech held on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1935, at the Ateneu, at the "Manifestația pentru Iași", *Iașul*, October 1935, 21.

<sup>29</sup> "Iași, with its few inhabitants, was going to give shelter to the Court, the Government, the Parliament, The High Court of Cassation, two armies, ours and the Russians's, the entire Diplomatic Body and numerous military missions – truly impossible, materially speaking. Still, Georgel Mârzescu, mayor of Iași at the time, whose task was to receive in his home town the entire Romania, the official one and the one that accomplished a duty..., managed to do it." in *Vremea*, no. 410, 20 October 1935, 16.

<sup>30</sup> The phrase "cultural capital" belongs to King Carol II and was uttered in 1933, at the inauguration of the academic year in Iași: "Iași is the city of so many treasured memories, the Romanian soul. Its university life must be the center of Romanian culture; simply put, Iași must be the cultural capital of the country, the capital of Moldova must become the capital of Romanian thought." "Regele Carol și Iașiul cultural", *Opinia*, 28 October 1934, 3.





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wishes of two Kings”<sup>31</sup> were not happening. Senator N. Gheorghidi, the President of the Association of Tradesmen and Industrialists in Iași pointed out that a cultural city cannot function without economic revival and declared in 1935: ”I admit, the phrase «cultural Iași» is comfortable and does not offend anyone but ... the people of Iași. With a little bit of attention we discover that this city has a different destiny and more rights.”<sup>32</sup>

In the imaginary constructed by the press, Bucharest is indicated as the main wrongdoer and scape goat for the decay of Iași, whereas the lack of reaction and initiative of the people of Iași, although constant, is not blamed, but subsumed under the egotistic and discretionary behavior of the central authorities, who do not just misappropriate the province of all its funds, but draws the best people (teachers, lawyers, doctors, bankers, artists, etc), causing ”the exodus of the people of Iași”, as the press called it (an exodus that had really begun immediately after 1859).<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the apparent apathy of the people of Iași was culturally assumed as local specific, a privileged distinction from the active, sly Bucharest citizen. For Petre Comarnescu, a person living in Iași in the 30s is a peculiar type – pseudo species<sup>34</sup> – who does not live in reality, but takes refuge in his cultural past imaginary, not interested in appearances, refusing to act even when his very existence is threatened; easy to mesmerize with promises, he is idealist and mystical, misses or exaggerates and acts like a ruined nobleman ”whose memory is so rich and spirit so humane that he can do without seeking the goods others who live a different life seek.”<sup>35</sup> E. Heroveanu thinks the people in Iași are too superior because of their past and have a complex about their superiority

<sup>31</sup> Carol I, in 1866: “I think of Iași as the second capital of Romania” and Carol II, in 1933: “I want to make Iași the capital of Romanian Culture”, *Insemnări ieșene*, 1 February 1936, 110

<sup>32</sup> N. Gheorghidi, ”Acțiunea pentru propășirea Iașului. Oraș al culturii fără redresare economică?”, *Politica*, 17 June 1935, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Herovanu, *Iașul*, 156.

<sup>34</sup> In ethology, “pseudo-speciation” refers to the behavior of a group who over appreciate their cultural heritage and despises any other comparable; it is analogous to ethno-centrism, as defined by cultural anthropology. In K. Lorenz, *Cele opt păcate capitale ale omenirii civilizate*, (București: Humanitas, 2001), 86-87.

<sup>35</sup> P. Comarnescu, ”Ciudata personalitate a Iașilor”, *Vremea*, no. 410. 20 October 1935, 13.





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which paralyzes any initiative;<sup>36</sup> for N.I. Popa,<sup>37</sup> the spirit of Iași is a lifestyle, the local lives in contemplation, prisoner of the tension between his inferiority complex (he feels unable compared to Bucharest) and his superiority complex (aware of the cultural tradition he belongs to), repressing and compensating by creating imaginary worlds, living in successive evasions: literary refuges into the past, into the dreamworld, into fantasy, into a protective den,<sup>38</sup> furnished with prestigious ruins that complete his memories.

### 1. "Give Iași what it deserves!"<sup>39</sup>

The first substantial, considerably ample action to help Iași originated in Bucharest. It was the initiative of a group of intellectuals from Iași, who studied or lived there, who founded "The Society of the People of Iași" on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1932.<sup>40</sup> The association, besides maintaining affection for Iași and supporting local patriotism, aims at bringing the ruin of Iași in the attention of the Government and the King. Also, they hoped to mediate the needs and claims of Iași and the power in Bucharest and, finally, to boost the economy of Iași. One of the projects was to constitute a series of festivities entitled "Days of Iași", which would include a trip and a pilgrimage to the "crypts of the great Forefathers"<sup>41</sup> and to the "Mecca - or the Moldavian Jerusalem."<sup>42</sup> The first such trip (October 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 1932) was very successful, despite the low number of participants, only 124 as compared to the expected 1,500. Following the trip, the participants proposed that "an

<sup>36</sup> Herovanu, *Iașul*, 160.

<sup>37</sup> N.I. Popa, "Fiziologia ieșanului", *Însemnări ieșene*, March 1936, 89-92.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 92

<sup>39</sup> O. Racovitză, former senator, mayor of Iași, in *Primul anuar-ghid al municipiului Iași 1935-1936*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> The meeting started on Sunday at 9.30 am, "time of the liturgy", to the discontent of the Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban! Arhimandrite Scriban, "Vatra ieșenilor", *Iașul*, March 1934, 23.

<sup>41</sup> "Apelul lansat în vederea constituirii «Cercului ieșenilor», *Iașul*, March 1934, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> "Ecoul – în presă al acestei vizite la Iași (în rezumat după ziarele «Dimineața» și «Universul»)", *Iașul*, March 1934, 51.







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annual fair be organized in Iași in October (or spring).<sup>43</sup> The administration of Iași accepted the proposition and promised that, together with the Chamber of Commerce of Iași, they would start making the necessary preparations to get the fair permit and 50% off on Romanian Railways fees, as it happened during fairs or exhibitions in Bucharest.

The second action took place in Iași in 1934, generated by collective resentment following the relocation of technical departments from the Polytechnic University in Iași to Bucharest and Timișoara, which also meant The Polytechnic University was denied thereupon the right to issue engineer certificates. Also, the Pharmaceutical Medicine Faculty was going to move to Bucharest with pharmaceutical education being centralized there and the project of reducing medical studies to a three-year Medical School, which meant students would have to move to Bucharest to finish their studies. The stake was huge for the "city of culture," as the University was its heart. The press was inflamed, everyone talked about actions conducted from the center to "downscale the University" and "humiliate Iași,"<sup>44</sup> about "public lack of interest" and "lethargic sleep of the people of Iași."<sup>45</sup> Also, energetic, visible, efficacious measures are requested, other than the repeated, ineffectual protests and discourses. Around mid-October, professor Gr.T. Popa and a group of local senators founded a *The Committee of Action for the Defense of Iași*, with the purpose of putting an end to the dissolution of university education in Iași and starting a dynamic action of raising consciousness and real engagement, beyond discourses and humiliating acceptance of pittance from Bucharest. The press always points to the "just"<sup>46</sup> phrase used by senator I. Botez, dean of the Letters Faculty – Iași does not implore, does not beg, Iași claims its rights! *Opinia* includes mobilizing titles in its front pages: "For Iași," "Defending the Interests of Iași", "Iași Reawakening," "Intellectuals' Movement for the Rights of Iași," "Defending the

<sup>43</sup> M. Câșlaru, "Rezultatul excursiei la Iași oglindit în **Referatul Secretarului General**", *Iașul*, March 1934, 49.

<sup>44</sup> "Orașul care primește palmele. Noul proiect de ciuntire a universității ieșene", *Opinia*, 9 August 1934, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Gr.T. Popa, "Nenorocirea Iașului – ieșenii (Acuzare publică)", *Opinia*, 12 September 1934, 1.

<sup>46</sup> "Iașul spiritual și istoric nu cerșește ajutor și își revendică drepturile", *Opinia*, 30 May, 1935, 3.





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Cultural Iași,” ”Defending Iași and Moldova,” ”The Destiny of the City of Iași,” ”The Underprivileged Iași,” ”Parasitical Centralism,” and presents the Committee as an ”emancipation movement” seeking ”regionalization,” stating that Iași does not want to be sacrificed any longer or treated as a vassal! *The Committee of Action for the Defense of Iași* organizes a meeting on December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1934 to adopt a motion calling for regional de-centralization in order to revive the economy of Iași. Important personalities and intellectuals in Iași partook. Among them, mayor Osvald Racovitză, member of the Committee, announced the project for ”The Week of Iași”, following the idea of the Bucharest administration, which publicized a ”Month of Bucharest” for the spring of 1935. This festive week was going to include the centennials of the Arts Academy, of the National High School and of the ”M. Sturza” Girls’ Normal School, inaugurate The Ferdinand Foundation and organize a Fair of Iași Economy in Copou, theater acts, open-air symphonic concerts, arts exhibitions. Mayor Racovitză emphasizes that the events would not be devoted to the people of Iași primarily, their main purpose being that of attracting outside visitors.<sup>47</sup> He also announces that he is going to ask for an audience with the King to invite His Majesty and the entire royal family to the festivities. The actions remain suspended, the press gives no more information on the subject. The expected cultural festivities are postponed until the fall, apparently for financial reasons and to the suggestion of the minister V. Iamandi.<sup>48</sup> On top of these, the opposition ridicules the mayor accusing him of having „stolen”<sup>49</sup> the idea from the mayor of Bucharest and does not agree that a ”Week” can do something for the local economy.

At the end of February 1935, the *Temporary Committee* broke up and was replaced by another structure, just as combative, *The Association for the Defense of Institutions in Iași*. Their plan for the development of Iași based on de-centralization on all ares: cultural funds,

<sup>47</sup> H. Burileanu, ”Mari festivități la Iași în vara anului curent. Va fi invitat și M.S. Regele”, *Opinia*, 15 February 1935, 1.

<sup>48</sup> ”Serbările culturale vor avea loc în toamnă”, *Opinia*, 21 April 1935, 3.

<sup>49</sup> ”Visul fericit al d-lui Osv. Racoviță”, *Politica*, 18 February 1935, 2.

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administrative, in education and also on „forcing” Bucharest to pay war indemnities, on a definitive solution for the water situation, on financing for hospitals and the University, etc. In the context of these de-centralizing actions, the publication of a part of E. Heroveanu’s essay „If Iași were the capital of the country...”<sup>50</sup> is not innocent. Only the part favorable to the new spirit was published, that is, the idealized image of a European capital, aesthetically and morally perfect, superior in any respect to Bucharest, whereas the final part<sup>51</sup>, which exposes it is all a utopian dream, is not published. On March 24th, 1935, The Society of the People of Iași in Bucharest unanimously votes to adhere to the „Action for the Revival of Iași”.<sup>52</sup>

The local press makes no mention about ”The Week of Iași” until April 1935, but rages against the publicized “Month of Bucharest” and considers it just another fabrication of the “vampire”<sup>53</sup> to draw people and money to Bucharest with their 50% off for railway transportation fees: “We cannot tell what more they want; it is clear though, tradesmen in Bucharest seem to say: buy nothing in your towns, buy everything from us!”<sup>54</sup>. Still, the idea of a month (so much more generous than a week) when commerce would be revitalized by drawing new clients from outside the city did not pass unnoticed. Mayor Racovitză announces in April – without convening The City Council – ”The Month of Iași”<sup>55</sup> for the month of August, festivities that would include a large commercial and industrial exhibition at the Bădărău Market (near the railway station), with stands put up by the municipality for the exhibition of goods, with all sorts of attractions – contests, wrestling, flower fights, etc. The economic interest is obvious, both the location chosen (at the market, near the station) and the use of means to draw clients (promises of cheap thrills for all,

<sup>50</sup> “Dacă Iașul ar fi fost capitala țării...”, *Opinia*, 26 februarie 1935,1.

<sup>51</sup> The entire text in E. Heroveanu's volume of memories, *Orașul amintirilor*, 179-181.

<sup>52</sup> “«Cercul ieșenilor» din București se raliază la acțiunea pentru ridicarea Iașului”, *Opinia*, 29 March 1935, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Ilie Râpă, ”În luna Bucureștilor. Când lumea moare de necez...”, *Opinia*, 24 May 1935, 3.

<sup>54</sup> “Luna Bucureștilor”, *Opinia*, 26 April 1935, 1.

<sup>55</sup> “«Luna Iașilor» o mare expoziție în localitate”, *Opinia*, 26 April 1935, 3 and P. Grancea, ”Luna Iașilor. Se reconstituie aspecte din Iașul de odinioară”, *Opinia*, 7 May 1935, 3.





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transportation fee discounts, bed and board bargains). On May 29<sup>th</sup>, in an interview for *Opinia*, the mayor says "The Month of Iași" is scheduled for September 15<sup>th</sup>-October 15<sup>th</sup>. He also reveals he would ask for royal patronage. In fact, the idea of a "Month of Iași" had been announced in Bucharest in the context of the "Month of Bucharest". On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1935, at the Ateneu in Bucharest, The Convention for Iași takes place, jointly organized by The Society of the People of Iași and The Association for the Defense of Iași. The convention establishes the disastrous predicament of Iași and its symbolic importance from political, religious and cultural viewpoints, which requires immediate recovery as a result of national effort. The convention also issues a motion, a fifteen-measure plan, the first measure requiring "de-centralization for a more equitable distribution of funds for culture and arts and for the institutions of Iași to fulfill their national cultural destiny."<sup>56</sup> Gr. Trancu-Iași, former minister and president of the Society of the People of Iași, advocated several revival measures, utopian under the circumstances: navigation on the rivers Prut and Siret, railways to help Iași turn into a touristic and commercial center, restoration of the entire infrastructure, but also the proposition to organize a "month for the commemoration of Iași."<sup>57</sup> Even in the central press, in the articles which present the Convention at the Ateneu, "The Month of Iași" project appears natural and necessary: "when mayor Donescu came up with "The Month of Bucharest", idea which immediately bloomed, he did not have in mind just our capital. A month of Cluj, or Constanța, or rather Iași would follow. [...] After "The Month of Bucharest," surely "The Month of Iași" will come"<sup>58</sup>.

Indeed, on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1935, mayor Racovitză had an audience with King Carol II, who was very interested in the project for Iași and, according to press releases, supported it: "Never stop fighting for justice for Iași, a city treasured by Myself and the entire country for its unique past in

<sup>56</sup> "Moțiunea pentru Iași. Din programul de înfăptuire pentru Iași", *Iașul*, October 1935, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>58</sup> Nicolae Roșu, "Pe când rândul Iașului?", in *Curentul*, quoted in *Iașul*, October 1935, 48-49.





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the history of the Romanian people, for the repeated sacrifices throughout history”.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the King accepts to sponsor the festivities: ”Anytime I am asked to go to Iași to preside over a celebration, I will come with all my heart. I will be there when you ask me to.”<sup>60</sup> This royal support consolidates mayor Racovitză’s position, endorses his project and practically annihilates any real criticism: consequently, at the first meeting – after the vacation ended - of the leading personalities of Iași, when ideas to expand the project were discussed, Mr. Racovitză’s opinions were all embraced and applauded, with only three „circumstantial objections”,<sup>61</sup> quickly solved by the impetuous mayor. Even the opposition, who usually does not miss any opportunity to criticize the liberal mayor’s activity, admits that any idea that aims at the economic development of Iași must be supported. Furthermore, senator N. Gheorgiadi,<sup>62</sup> member of the opposition, advocates administrative de-centralization, pointing to the fact that a cultural city cannot function without strong a economic background and that he future of Iași necessitates industry, commerce and infrastructure.

At the end of July, plans are still only verbal; the mayor is optimistic, announces an exhibition in Copou which would round out the one at the station and make it more complex and prestigious.<sup>63</sup> The press vacillates. Part of it is very enthusiastic, loyal to the mayor’s intentions, announcing grandiose events that would attract numerous visitors-buyers to the point that local economy would come around (the generous solution quickly gains believers, some tradesmen rush into ordering larger quantities of goods, rental fees in the Bădărău market area go up,<sup>64</sup> raising

<sup>59</sup> Petre Grancea, ”Ce a discutat suveranul cu delegația ieșeană”, *Opinia*, 30 June 1935, 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> ”Consfătuirea de la Primărie. «Luna Iașilor» a trăit eri câteva ore înălțătoare și promițătoare de succes”, *Lumea*, 11 September, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> N. Gheorgiadi, ”Acțiunea pentru propășirea Iașului. Oraș al culturii fără redresare economică?”, *Politica*, 17 June 1935, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> I.Fr. Botez, ”Despre Luna Iașului și despre alte întâmplări din marile centre europene”, *Noutatea*, 19 July 1935, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> I. Gelas, ”Comerțul ieșan se va înviora în Luna Iașilor”, *Noutatea*, 23 July 1935, p. 3.





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expectations regarding a beneficial transformation and modernization of the area well known for its miserable brothels<sup>65</sup>). The rest of the press remained pessimistic and skeptical. On the one hand, some who had initially supported the project started to doubt it observing that nothing had been done and implying that haste economizing organizing does not lead to the expected grand results. Therefore the plan is good but a delay would enhance a more thorough preparation. On the other hand, Bucharest municipality, despite expectations of a most productive “Month of Bucharest”, officially admits the serious deficit,<sup>66</sup> which suddenly shows that the plan for the economic revival of Iași might fail even in the situation of good organizing. Therefore, some suggest utilitarian and quasi-ascetic measures which exclude investments for the sake of grandeur and aim at plain economic profit: “for each hundred spent, make a thousand.”<sup>67</sup> An unexpected threat comes from the entrepreneurs in Bucharest, who had participated in “The Month of Bucharest”, interested in “plundering”<sup>68</sup> Iași and misappropriate the little wealth it has left, that is, the local administration funds. Evidently, the press unanimously refuses any intrusion of those who, guilty for the decay of Iași, now might accelerate it and make money off it. The mayor is challenged to resist the attack of the people in Bucharest. As a result, mayor Racovitză does not bring a Luna Park complex from Bucharest, but prefers a modest local entrepreneur with, as realized eventually, dull attractions. *Opinia*, a partisan of the delay until spring (which is considered a “boycott”<sup>69</sup> by mayor Racovitză!), starts a poll among the influential people of Iași to demonstrate the validity of their proposal, but most of the people consider that a delay, after “The

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>66</sup> I. Anestin, “Concursul pentru Luna Iașilor”, *Noutatea*, 25 July 1935, 2. The weekly satirical magazine *Caradașca*, the only constant opposing body of “The Month of Iași”, affirms that mayor Racovitză knew that “The Month of Bucharest” finished with a 35,000,000 lei deficit. “Luna iașilor”, *Caradașca*, 18 August 1935, 3.

<sup>67</sup> I. Anestin, “Idei pentru Luna Iașilor. Ce-ar fi, dacă toate ideile s-ar inspira și de la latura economică practică?”, *Noutatea*, 8 August 1935, 2.

<sup>68</sup> “Cum trebuie organizată «Luna Iașilor»? Anchetă printre intelectuali și comercianții orașului nostru”, *Opinia*, 4 August 1935, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 3.





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Month” has already been announced, would ruin the hopes of the tradesmen, would discourage them and would lead to a loss of prestige greater than in the situation the actions took place according to plan, that is, hastily<sup>70</sup>; this poll emphasizes an opinion which turns into a new objective of the “month”: the possibility for Iași to overtake Bucharest with an exhibition of wealth, to demonstrate its strength and creativity. Therefore, in the opinion of tradesmen, it would be beneficial to gather all actions in one place, in the central area, not in the peripheries! Another concept that circulates and gains advocates rejects the idea of festivities that look too much like a huge fair meant to draw peasants and take on the idea of “The Month” as an exclusively cultural event: “it must be kept from becoming a sort of Târgul Moșilor of Iași, a clattery amusement for the common herd. No trumpets, no drums, no smell of barbeque and wine, but an attempt to raise interest in the historic, cultural, picturesque Iași, in the hope that this capital of Moldova would become Great Romania's Heidelberg. The informative part should outrun the fun part...”<sup>71</sup>. Mihail Sadoveanu defended the old Iași and even rejected the idea of modernization and urbanization; his comments on “The Month of Iași” do not include the exhibition or entertainment, but the things that are really worth being seen in Iași, “a museum of memory and our collective soul.”<sup>72</sup> His approach is opposite to the municipality’s: if the modernist Racovitza uses Iași as a collection of antiques to draw the curious who would then spend money in nearby stores, the traditionalist Sadoveanu hopes that, thanks to the transportation fees discount, those who have never been to Iași could have an illuminating cultural experience - “my invitation does not bear a commercial

<sup>70</sup> “Cum trebuie organizată «Luna Iașilor»? Anchetă printre intelectuali și comercianții orașului nostru”, *Opinia*, 4 August 1935, 3, “«Luna Iașilor, cum și când să se facă? Alte trei răspunsuri. Ce cred d-nii: N. Gheorghiu, Manase Șpiegler și C. Pogor”, *Opinia*, 8 August, 3, “Cum își imaginează «Luna Iașilor» cunoscutul actor D. Mill. Gheorghiu”, *Opinia*, 9 August, 2, “O singură expoziție în centrul orașului pentru «Luna Iașilor»”, *Opinia*, 10 August, 1-2, “Cum trebuie organizată «Luna Iașilor»”, *Opinia*, 11 August, 2, “Ultimele trei păreri în privința organizării «Lunii Iașului»”, *Opinia*, 14 August 1935, 3, “Acțiunea pentru organizarea «lunii Iașului»”, *Opinia*, 15 August, 3.

<sup>71</sup> M.I. Duff, “Totul depinde de destoinicia realizatorului”, *Opinia*, 10 August, 1935, 1.

<sup>72</sup> M. Sadoveanu, „Luna Iașilor”, *Adevărul literar și artistic*, 20 October 1935, also in *Opere*, vol. XIX, 499-506.





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implication; I certainly invite you to hear the music and see the amusements; but when that is finished, let me show you the real Iași, the Iași few people know.”<sup>73</sup>

At the City Council meeting on August 11<sup>th</sup>, “The Month of Iași” period is announced: September 29<sup>th</sup> - October 29<sup>th</sup>, established following “consultations with superior central authorities.”<sup>74</sup> The exhibitions would be set up in Copou, without involving the Bădărău market area. It is striking that the mayor is criticized by the opposition press for this very delayed announcement, therefore he would be the sole culprit in case of failure!<sup>75</sup> Most likely, the mayor preferred to publicly launch “The Month of Iași” idea, to gain sympathizers and attracted (by spending a “cultural fund” of 400,000 lei at his disposal<sup>76</sup>) part of the journalists who then imposed the idea to the collective imaginary as a miraculous solution to save Iași, which the politicians had to accept. The Chamber of Commerce of Iași gets involved on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1935, with a meeting in which the mayor partook. The purpose of the meeting is to make tradesmen and industrialists in Iași understand that it is their duty to support “The Month of Iași”, considering its commercial end and consequently their exclusive benefit. Also, they are reassured that there is enough time for good organizing and that the result would be “grandiose.”<sup>77</sup> The objectives of the municipality are released: at least 30,000 visitors from outside Iași, each spending around 500 lei;<sup>78</sup> the overt purpose of the event is to draw money to Iași, local visitors are not taken into consideration as their money is already in Iași! The plan is simple: benefiting from cheap transportation and drawn by the cultural fame of Iași, by its image of former capital, by the grand festivities organized by the municipality (the presence of the King and other officials included), by the possibilities of

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 499.

<sup>74</sup> “«Luna Iașului» va fi centralizată la Copou pe terenul fostei expoziții”, *Lumea*, 12 August 1935, 2.

<sup>75</sup> “O ședință la consiliul comunal”, *Caradașca*, 12 August 1935, 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Manifest*, no. 5, 10 July, 1935, 5.

<sup>77</sup> “Consfătuirea de seară dela Camera de Comerț în vederea «Lunei Iașilor»”, *Lumea*, 14 August, 1935, 2.

<sup>78</sup> “Importante hotărâri privind Luna Iașului”, *Noutatea*, 14 August 1935, 3. At the time, in Iași, a 700 g wheat loaf of bread cost 7 lei.







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amusement that would be promoted, the curious would flock to see Iași, would spend their money there – for food and entertainment – more than they would back home; basically, the more visitors, the more buyers! For the sake of profit, merchandisers request that the Sunday break regulation and the fiscal control be suspended.<sup>79</sup> The only opposing voice belongs to a satirical publication, *Caradașca*, close to the Jewish Community, constantly ironic with regard to the project of the municipality. They consider "The Month of Iași overdue, useless, and unprofitable",<sup>80</sup> laying emphasis on those merchandisers who do not take part in the exhibition. On the one hand, they will lose their regular clients to the attractions in the Exhibition Park and, on the other hand, they will gain nothing from the visit of people outside Iași who will be forced to go directly to Copou to get the visa necessary for the transportation discount.

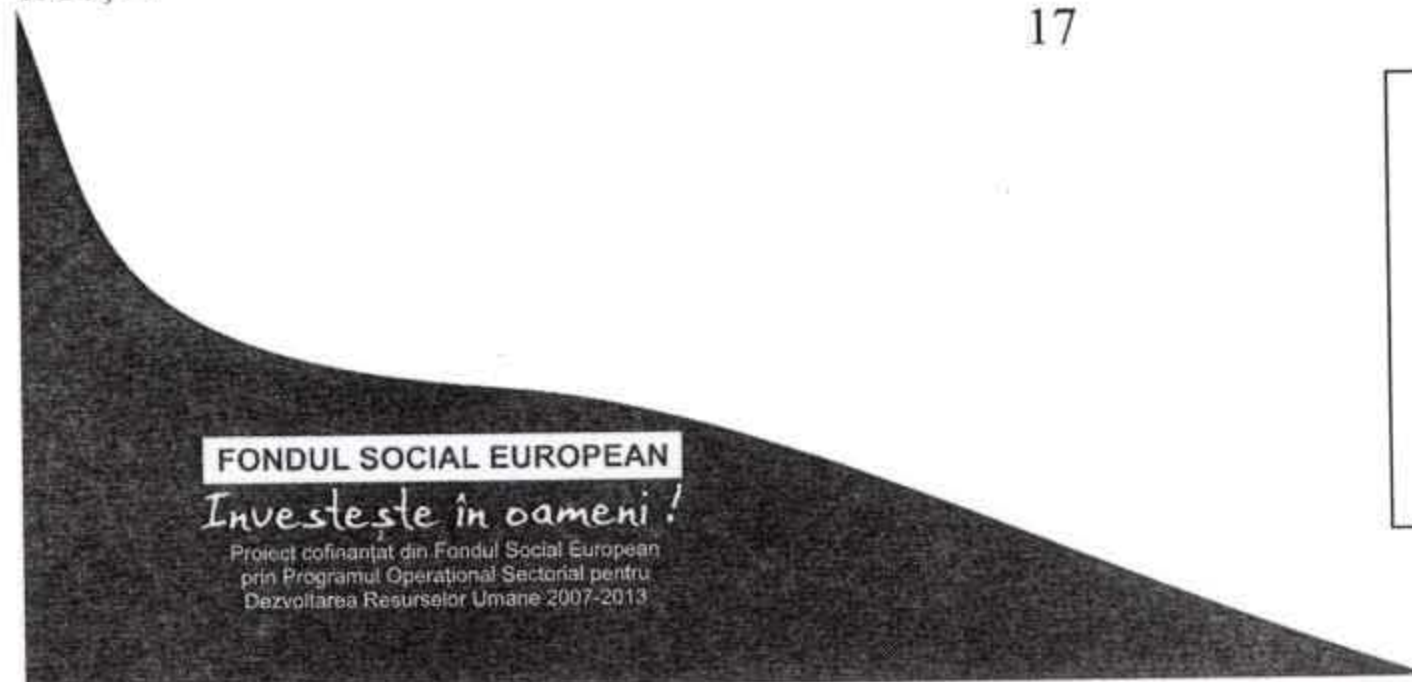
Things do not develop normally. At the end of August, the press records another blow Bucharest gives Iași<sup>81</sup>: The Romanian Railways agrees to a 50% discount (not 75% during weekends, as it happened during "The Month of Bucharest") only between September 21<sup>st</sup> - October 7<sup>th</sup> (half of the month!), which causes the press to resume the anti-centralist discourse and lament about a new sabotage of the "tycoons at the center"<sup>82</sup> against the province. A discouraging element is also the rumor that the King was not going to come for "The Month of Iași", but later, at the end of November, as the centennial of the University was postponed until then. The mayor guaranteed all these would work out. The press constantly informed regarding the preparations. The portioning of land on the Copou hill ended late in August, under the strict supervision of the mayor himself, who spends hours on the site to guide the operations personally. Representatives of the tradesmen and industrialists participate in a meeting at the City Hall where all the political parties agree to

<sup>79</sup> I. Armeanul, "Acțiunea pentru organizarea «lunei Iașilor»", *Opinia*, 15 August, 1935, 3.

<sup>80</sup> "Luna Iașilor o acțiune tardivă, inutilă păgubitoare. Pesimismul comercianților", *Caradașca*, 8 September, 1935, 4.

<sup>81</sup> "Pentru «luna Iașilor». Numai 15 zile și numai 50 la sută", *Opinia* 21 August, 1935, 1.

<sup>82</sup> "O nouă jignire adusă Iașului. Grangurii de la centru împiedică organizarea «Lunei Iașilor»", *Lumea*, 22 August, 1935, 2.



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work together for the sake of "the spirit of Iași",<sup>83</sup> for the sake of the project that would bring Iași progress and wealth. Furthermore, the success of the project would show Bucharest – and this seemed to be the new objective of the municipality in Iași – the capacity of the city to achieve something grand without outside help. The mean capital would be surprised to see something amazing Iași accomplished by themselves – even for one month! A detail that shows the desire to mark this happy moment in the life of the city is the intention to manufacture a special series of cigarettes called "Iași"<sup>84</sup> at the local tobacco company. The same desire to mark a moment in the history of Iași is the issuing of a special stamp<sup>85</sup> the Postal Office would apply on all mail leaving the city during the special month, with an open propagandist purpose. At the beginning of September, only three weeks before the start of "The Month," the poster presenting the schedule of the events is finally printed (15,000 exemplars to be sent all over the country)<sup>86</sup>: urbanistic, artistic, cultural, agricultural, industrial exhibitions, cultural centennials. The most important attraction seems to be the urbanistic exhibition, that is, the pavilion of the City Hall, which would include as focal point a scale reproduction of Iași, on a surface of 25 sqm. Its price was 150,000 lei, paid to the manufacturer, colonel Vârgolici. Unfortunately, the poster lacked information regarding the transportation discounts for visitors, as the situation was not settled yet.

Parallel to the works on the Copou hill, that is, the division of land plots contracted by the local industrialists who were promised the Tax Administration would not interfere<sup>87</sup> and there would be no special taxes<sup>88</sup> and the pavilions would remain at their disposal for two years,<sup>89</sup> all

<sup>83</sup> Al. Vifor, "Comercianții și industriașii se pregătesc pentru «Luna Iașilor»", *Opinia*, 26 August 1935, 3.

<sup>84</sup> "Lumea spune", *Lumea*, 24 August 1935, 2.

<sup>85</sup> "Lumea spune", *Lumea*, 29 August, 1935, 2.

<sup>86</sup> "Programul «Lunii Iașilor»", *Opinia*, 4 September 1935, 3.

<sup>87</sup> "Important ordin al ministerului de finanțe, privind «Luna Iașilor» remis prin d. primar Racoviță administrației financiare", *Lumea*, 1 September, 1935, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> "Pregătirile pentru «Luna Iașilor» continuă cu succes", *Opinia*, 7 September, 1935, 4.





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around the city "raids"<sup>90</sup> took place in hotels, restaurants and pubs, threatening to closed them if not hygienically proper, as the press kept reporting how the future visitors from Bucharest expect cleanliness and are interested in local fruit and wines.<sup>91</sup> Mayor Racovitză and the Chamber of Commerce negotiate a discount with the Power Company, as the mayor hoped for a rivalry of luminous signs all over the city; cheaper electricity also meant better illumination for edifices in Iași, therefore better exposure.<sup>92</sup>

All the optimism and illusions that "The Month" was going to be the starting point in the transformation of Iași were overshadowed by chancellor T. Bratu's announcement that the centennial of the University – a key element in the envisaged cultural festivities - was postponed until 1936, on financial grounds.<sup>93</sup> Bucharest refused to cover the costs of a tribute volume, the history of the University, that is, 600,000 lei. Without the volume, invitations cannot be sent. The news took the public opinion by surprise and mayor Racovitză insisted that the centennial be celebrated in October and the volume published later, in 1936. In Bucharest, the Ministry Council decides that the entire series of celebrations regarding the University centennial be postponed.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, attractions were reduced to exhibitions, the opening of the theater season, the Congress of the Union of Towns and the unveiling of Gh. Mârzescu's statue in the presence of government members, plus a Luna Park<sup>95</sup> with its specific electric installation (roller-coasters,

<sup>90</sup> "Controlul hotelurilor și restaurantelor. O măsură a primăriei Iașilor", *Opinia*, 14 September, 1935, 2.

<sup>91</sup> The hygiene and manners teachings in the daily newspapers, sometimes embarrassing considering the city's pretense of "second capital" are significant for the inferiority complex of the province: "Everywhere, in any restaurant and bar there should be clean tablecloths. [...] Waiters should not serve food in smutty plates, as it sometimes happens in restaurants in Iași; visitors should not be given stained or rusty tableware or broken dirty salt containers. Waiters should be at their best too: all in white shirts, completely buttoned." In "Ce ne cer bucureștenii spre a se simți bine în «Luna iașilor»", *Lumea*, 19 September, 1935, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> "Explicația d-lui rector Bratu asupra amânării serbărilor universitare", *Opinia*, 15 September, 1935, 2

<sup>94</sup> "Guvernul a amânat serbările culturale de la Iași", *Opinia*, 20 September, 1935, 3.

<sup>95</sup> The City Hall made 40,000 lei a month only from Luna Park rent. The amount is small, but the mayor did not want to discourage the bidders, who were few anyway. In "Lumea spune", *Lumea*, 29 August 1935, 2.





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carrouseles etc). On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, after a visit on the construction site, the press reports 20 pavilions were finished while a few others were still under construction, applaud their "artistic"<sup>96</sup> turn and point to the general impression: "As you enter the Park, it is like you go into a state-of-the-art small town that appeared overnight at the outskirts."<sup>97</sup> Yet, just one week before the inauguration, concerns - generated by rumors and the mayor's frequent trips to Bucharest and repeated audiences with the King - regarding the King's absence come true. Although he had promised he would come to Iași and his visit was viewed by the public opinion in Iași as compensation to Bucharest's ingratitude, Carol I uses the pretext of The Ferdinand Foundation not being finished to refuse, the very last minute, not only to patron the holidays of Iași, but even visit Iași.<sup>98</sup>

## 2. "Let us give Iași the splendor it deserves!"<sup>99</sup>

### "The Month of Iași", September 29<sup>th</sup> - October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1935

The solemn inauguration takes place on September 29<sup>th</sup>, (although preparation is not finished yet<sup>100</sup>), symbolically under the sign of fall abundance. The officials' speeches (minister V. Iamandi – called "the minister of Iași" -, mayor O. Racovitză, county prefect Th. Jipa, general T.

<sup>96</sup> Z. Dessmond, "Aspectul frumos al pavilioanelor dela parcul Copou", *Opinia*, 22 September, 1935, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> The statement is made by "parties close to the Palace" who conveyed the sovereign's wish to inaugurate only an institution that can function immediately after, an implied criticism to the local habit of positively designate intentions and actions rather than finality. "Dl. Primar Racoviță în audiență la M.S. Regele", *Lumea*, 27 September 1935, 2 and "Lumea spune", *Lumea* 28 September, 1935, 2.

<sup>99</sup> O. Racovitză, speech at the opening of "The Month of Iași" in 1936, in I. Armeanul, "S'a inaugurat expoziția lunii Iașilor", *Opinia*, 19 May 1936, 3.

<sup>100</sup> H. Burileanu, "Inaugurarea lunii Iașilor. Frumoasa solemnitate de la Copou. Cuvântările. Inaugurarea și vizitarea expoziției", *Opinia*, 1 October 1935, 3.





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Dumitrescu, commander E. Sârghie, director of The National Theatre, architect G. Grumăzescu, chief architect of Iași, etc) invariably include the same nuance, the necessity for Iași to present itself to the country so that the Others can confirm the affirmations perpetuated by public opinion to the point of becoming clichés regarding the greatness and cultural importance of the old Iași and, at the same time, the possibility for Iași to present itself as an important economic and industrial center. Therefore, "The Month of Iași" was going to be a seductive and representative image of the prestigious past and of the dynamic optimistic future. The images reported by the press<sup>101</sup> – in special, festive issues – are dreamlike: a month before, the Copou hill was a deserted wild field, now – as exclusive merit of mayor Racovitză who worked "titanically"<sup>102</sup> for 30 days – it is a small modern town with "superb alleys, enchanting gardens, decorative towers built up with style and in the middle of this beautiful location numerous stands of high architectonic value line up..."<sup>103</sup>; from the "impressive" gate to the "immense" area occupied by Luna Park and the "huge" water jet, from the "splendid" stand of the Electricity Company to the "huge" three-tower pavilion of industrial and commercial enterprises and the 10 m high bottle<sup>104</sup> shape stand of the *Spiridonia*, all was done with just one purpose: to raise admiration. The first economic consequence is soon publicized: on the inauguration day, over 10,000 people were present, 1,000 of which from outside Iași, and the total amount of money gathered from entrance fees was 100,000 lei<sup>105</sup> (for the people in Iași the fee is 10 lei, for outsiders who need to check their ticket for the railway transportation

<sup>101</sup> Especially by *Opinia*, *Noutatea*, *Lumea* and, from October 1<sup>st</sup>, by the new *Chemarea*.

<sup>102</sup> I. Belfert, "Popas în rondul al II-lea. Expoziția din dealul Copoului", *Lumea* (Festive Issue), 30 September 1935, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> The stand that exhibits the Slănic mineral water seems to remain in the visitors's memory the longest, according to the memory of the few memorialists of Iași, Rodica Weidner-Ciurea: "Every year, at the end of summer, "The Month of Iași was celebrated in the capital of Moldova. The Park was the area where all the trades, enterprises and institutions of the city exhibited, in allegorical forms, products or specific activities. I remember the St. Spiridon hospital almost always exhibited on the occasion a gigantic bottle of Slănic Moldova mineral water with a gazebo where mineral water was sold...". In Rodica Weidner-Ciurea, *Iașul copilăriei mele*, (Sfântu-Gheorghe: Etnocarpatica, 2002), 92.

<sup>105</sup> "S-au încasat 100 mii lei la intrarea în Expoziția lunii Iașilor", *Noutatea*, 1 October 1935, 4.





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discount, 30 lei)<sup>106</sup>. The first week of the „month of Iași” enjoys minor presentation in the press but, by its end, a series of laudatory articles meant to arouse curiosity – a indication that the number of visitors was not as high as expected – start to be published. Around October 6<sup>th</sup>, the press resumes the propaganda campaign (from July to the beginning of October, no less than 417 articles including „odes to the Month of Iași and eulogies addressed to the mayor of our city”<sup>107</sup> were published), with the purpose of showing again how the month of Iași is an alternative to Bucharest’s lack of interest regarding the province and a proof of the vitality and creative power on the part of the people in Iași. Therefore, it is important to impose by repetition (not by veridicality) the images and symbols that connote power, creation, dynamism, the image of another Iași, „younger, more beautiful, more vibrant”<sup>108</sup> as opposed to the stereotypical images of „oldish lingering”,<sup>109</sup> „freezing”<sup>110</sup>, and „the refusal to become active”<sup>111</sup> that were associated to Iași, „a city of dying, sleep and boredom”<sup>112</sup>. The media exaggerates<sup>113</sup> its reports on the stands of the Economic Exhibition in Copou, but also the cultural exhibitions in the Administrative Palace, „Trei Ierarhi” School, Carol Street, always mentioning the continuous affluence of visitors. The

<sup>106</sup> At the entrance to the exhibition, they were not selling tickets, as it would have implied the Tax Administration, but informative fliers of Iași were handed, edited by the municipality, and visitors carrying them were let inside. “Măsurile în vederea Lunii Iașilor: aprovizionarea orașului, evitarea speculei, îndrumarea vizitatorilor, viza biletelor etc”, *Lumea*, 30 September 1935, 2. The solution is contested by the opposition, who affirms this is an abuse and money is cashed without any account – some paying visitors are not given the flier! “Aspecte dela deschiderea «Lunii Iașilor»”, *Politica*, 7 October 1935, 4.

<sup>107</sup> “Articolul no. 418...”, *Lumea*, 11 October 1935, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> “Revista revistelor. Însemnări ieșene, nr. 3-1936”, *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, March 1936, 718.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 719.

<sup>111</sup> P. Comarnescu, “Ciudata personalitate a Iașilor”, *Vremea*, 20 October 1935, 2.

<sup>112</sup> “De ce mor Iașii? Cum vedeți reînvierea Iașilor? De ce ați părăsit Iașii?”, *Vremea*, no. 410, 20 October 1935, 6.

<sup>113</sup> Qualifiers such as “dazzling,” “unprecedented,” “grand,” “tasteful,” “wonderful,” “surprisingly interesting” describe the “fairytale realm” that appeared almost overnight. “Vizitând parcul expoziției din dealul Copoului”, *Opinia*, 5 October 1935, 2; C. Meissner, “O legendă spulberată?”, *Opinia*, 6 October 1935, 1; “Cu prilejul inaugurării «Lunii Iașului»”, *Opinia*, 7 October 1935, 3; “Ce am văzut în pavilionul municipal”, *Opinia*, 8 October 1935, 3; “Evoluția remarcabilă a industriilor”, *Opinia*, 9 October 1935, 3.





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star of all these reports is the pavilion of the municipality and „The miniature Iași”<sup>114</sup>, followed by industrial pavilions belonging mainly to textile companies (*Țesătura Victoria*, *Țesătura mătășii și a lânii* - former *Geller*, *Țesătura-Socola*, *Textila-Copou*) displaying highly qualitative products, by the pavilions belonging to smaller industries and crafts (Martin Buchholtzer - dry cleaning, washing and dyeing, Royal House provider, Weissman Forestry, Mendelsohn Mirrors, Copolovici Mirrors, Socec Publishing House - „Great books, low prices”, Vulcan Shop, Garota Shoes), the palace of tobacco (housing a small manufacture shop), the viticulture, horticulture, and forestry pavilion, the Communal Electricity Company pavilion (a tower with colored light bulbs „that competes against the tower of the Golia Monastery”<sup>115</sup>), the pavilion of the Aviation (presenting, among others, a 3 m-wide panoramic photograph of Iași), the pavilion of Tourism. Journalists from *Opinia*, *Noutatea* and *Lumea* who report daily on the progress of the exhibition always mention that it is in the evening that most visitors come. A modern way of attracting visitors involves the latest discovery of the propaganda, the cinema. The people in Iași are announced that their city and the “month” will be the subject of a motion picture. Starting on October 13<sup>th</sup>, people will be filmed every day and the press will inform on the exact location of the crew; therefore, for only 10 lei, anyone in Iași can turn from simple spectator to actor, become famous in the entire country and, ultimately, immortal!<sup>116</sup>

Paradoxically, the least attractive element seems to be the Luna Park organized by a local entrepreneur as, out of local patriotism, a professional from Bucharest was refused; the amusements are rather limited, whereas the prices high: the field reporter spends 200 lei without

<sup>114</sup> “Ce am văzut în pavilionul municipal”, *Opinia*, 8 October 1935, 3.

<sup>115</sup> “Prin pavilionul tutunului. Pavilionul luminei. Parcul de recreație”, *Opinia*, 23 October 1935, 3.

<sup>116</sup> “«Filmul Iașilor»”, *Opinia*, 12 October 1935, p. 3 și “«Filmul Iașilor» sub patronajul d-lui Primar O. Racovitză”, *Lumea*, 13 October 1935, 3.





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having the time of his life, on the contrary; yet<sup>117</sup>, in the thrill of the moment, he regards the experience.

The fairytale image is ruined by the presence of the Tax Administration, which requires that receipts are issued at the entrance,<sup>118</sup> although the City Hall intended not to use them precisely for this reason, already explained in the fliers, it is not a fair-business, but a retail showroom-exhibition.

Then there is the omnipresent menace posed by Bucharest; after having approved the 50% discount for transportation to and out of Iași, they immediately granted Chișinău the same discount - for transit to and out of Chișinău and also for transportation to Bucharest - (viewed as sabotage and "criminal intent towards Iași"<sup>119</sup>). Due to fine weather and good progress, the City Hall decides to prolong the "month" until November 15<sup>th</sup>, requires and receives the approval for a longer transportation discount period also.

The secretariat of the exhibition publicizes<sup>120</sup> that in the first half of the month, 50,000 provincials visited Iași, whereas on October 13<sup>th</sup>, St. Parascheva's eve and the start of pilgrims' arrival, 11,000 visitors came from the province. On Saturdays and Sundays, the number of trams on the route Socola-Copou is doubled, there are five parallel buses going to the exhibition, three belonging to the Power Company and two to a private company. On Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, the exhibitions cashes in 99,000 lei,<sup>121</sup> and on Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, the press counts and emphatically announces 15,000 visitors.<sup>122</sup> By the end of the month, a preliminary calculus made by the mayor

<sup>117</sup> "Parcul cu distracții așa cum l-am văzut", *Opinia*, 11 October 1935, 3.

<sup>118</sup> "Fiscul intervine în Luna Iașilor și cere taxe pentru biletele dela expoziție", *Opinia*, 11 October 1935, 1.

<sup>119</sup> I. Anestin, "De ce sabotati Iașul?", *Noutatea*, 6 October 1935, 2 and "Halal acțiune pentru Iași", *Politica*, 7 October 1935, 3.

<sup>120</sup> "50.000 provincionali au vizitat până în prezent Iașul în «luna» lui", *Opinia*, 16 October 1935, 3.

<sup>121</sup> "Mii de străini vor vizita Luni Iașul", *Noutatea*, 12 October 1935, 2.

<sup>122</sup> "Peste 15000 ieșeni 3000 provincionali au asaltat duminică ghișeele Expoziției Iașilor de la Copou", *Lumea*, 23 October 1935, 1.







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and the exhibition administration reveals that 90,000 guides were sold, which means over 100,000 visitors, of which 30,000 provincials, whereas the population of Iași was 104,700 inhabitants;<sup>123</sup> the amount of money cashed in by the City Hall is roughly 1,500,000 lei.<sup>124</sup>

The events agenda is busy in October: The Towns Union Congress takes place (all the mayors in the country are present, they are given a tour of the exhibition, taken to the theater and offered a banquet sponsored by *Textila*; the mayor of Bucharest, Al.G. Donescu, takes the opportunity to congratulate the officials of Iași<sup>125</sup>, 30 members of "The Society of the People of Iași" come for a pilgrimage-visit between October 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>, and they consider it their duty to spend money, spread propaganda and continue the fight for Iași. According to their president, mr. Trancu, they wish not to view Iași as a city of memories anymore, a cemetery<sup>126</sup> of great cultural personalities of the past, but a "work, production, and creation center".<sup>127</sup> A ministry conference also takes place, but the press extracts only the vain promises.

After the official closing of the exhibition, *Opinia* publishes a first page analysis of the events, of the flaws that led to the economic nonachievement<sup>128</sup> of the project. Whereas the City Hall is criticized for its lack of experience in organizing grand events and the absence of an ingenious element of the Tour Eiffel type that could attract visitors, the merchandisers are found guilty for not having trusted the "Month of Iași", that is, not having prepared long enough and thoroughly; paradoxically, the absence in the exhibition of the historical factor is condemned, the

<sup>123</sup> E. Petrov, "Note generale despre Iași", *Primul anuar-ghid al municipiului Iași, 1935-1936*, 44

<sup>124</sup> "Vizitatorii «Lunii iașilor». Bilanțul expoziției dela Copou", *Opinia*, 31 October 1935, 1.

<sup>125</sup> "Iașul ospitalier. Când ieșenii primesc...dau din toată inima", *Lumea*, 16 October 1935, 1 and "Primarul Capitalei a spus: Cu gospodarii pe care-i are Iașul, orașul nu va pieri", *Lumea*, 17 October 1935, 1.

<sup>126</sup> "Iași shouldn't be the city of memories any longer – as memory means old age, dying.", Gr. Trancu said during a meeting of the "Society of the People of Iași" and the association "Friends of the University" at the Exhibition. "Sute de ieșeni din București și-au luat eri angajamentul de a lupta neîncetat pentru Iași", *Lumea*, 21 October 1935, 1.

<sup>127</sup> I. Armeanu, "Au venit ieșenii din București", *Opinia*, 20 October 1935, 2.

<sup>128</sup> The expected commercial revival took place, after all, but only in the week starting on October 14<sup>th</sup>, that is, St Parascheva's day, when pilgrims came to Iași. "S-a înviorat piața comercială la Iași în ultimele trei zile", *Noutatea*, 15 October 1935, 3.





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municipality having relied too much on the fame of the city to offer other visual representations. Still, the press critics are few, most coming from the opposition; the newspaper *Politica* says it was all a cheap show and "just advertising",<sup>129</sup> without commemorations and serious festivities. *Manifest* complains about the mayor's "baboonery" who just "had a few pens and shacks built up - pompously called stands or pavilions, then glory made him dizzy and he fainted with immortality."<sup>130</sup> *Caradașca*, the most acid magazine (not disinterested!<sup>131</sup>), observes that those who came to see Iași, the curious, were not "squandering people, but modest and provident citizens"<sup>132</sup> and that in the end the project proved useless and expensive.<sup>133</sup>

Therefore, neither economic rebound or commercial recovery happened, so the tradesmen who had high hopes turn out rather disappointed (although, as a matter of fact, they did not invest much). On the other hand, symbolically and politically, the historical Iași became "actual"<sup>134</sup> again, made it back on the map and imposed itself to the political world, forcing Bucharest to admit the necessity of an immediate economic answer to replace the compensatory honorary titles. The "Month of Iași" can be considered a success, "a proof of the endless possibilities of a city overpowered by a centralist anarchic regime."<sup>135</sup> The general belief that a lot was spent and wasted, without real economic calculi, that a lot was built quickly, again without clear calculi, reinforces this conclusion.

The municipality hopes to organize this type of exhibition every year and the parliament delegates from Iași, supported by Internal Affairs Minister Ianculeț and State Minister Iamandi,

<sup>129</sup> G. Baci, "Bilanțul bâlciului dela Copou", *Politica*, 28 October 1935, 2.

<sup>130</sup> *Manifest*, 25 October 1935, 2.

<sup>131</sup> *Caradașca* includes paid negative advertising such as: "Luna Iașilor? Nu! Chilipirul Iașilor e magazinul Kratemștein din str. I.C. Brătianu", *Caradașca*, 6 October, 1935, 3.

<sup>132</sup> "Luna Iașilor. Între vis și realitate", *Caradașca*, 6 October 1935, 1.

<sup>133</sup> P. Ghițescu, "Ce-a vrut d-nul primar?", *Caradașca*, 30 October 1935, 1.

<sup>134</sup> L. Preda, "Luna Iașilor. Rezultate și perspective", *Chemarea*, 18 November 1935, 1.

<sup>135</sup> N. Dalu, "Închiderea expoziției Iașilor", *Opinia*, 18 November 1935, 1.



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announce the drawing of draft legislation with only one article that would compel The Romanian Railways to grant Iași the 50% and 75% discount as protection measure against Bucharest's disloyal competition.

### “The Month of Iași”, May 17<sup>th</sup> - June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936

Despite the fact that the municipality publicized their intention to organize an annual “Month of Iași” in the spring of 1935, at the beginning of 1936 the local press has no information on the subject. The Merchandisers' and Industrialists' Association convenes early in March to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having the “Month” in the spring or fall. No decision was made at the meeting, only a proposition to hold a plebiscite for the tradesmen; they all agree upon the necessity of a safety element, that is, “a cheap fair”<sup>136</sup> parallel to the exhibitions. But before the Association communicates its ideas to the City Hall, mayor Racovitză already announces “the Month of Iași” will take place between May 1<sup>st</sup> - June 1<sup>st</sup>,<sup>137</sup> and establishes the general design for the new exhibition: to build 20 new pavilions and use the old ones also, to build replicas of the Hanul Ancuței and the old Bolta Rece, to organize a car race.<sup>138</sup> Later on though, in an interview for the bulletin of the “Society of the People of Iași”<sup>139</sup>, mayor Racovitză states “The Month of Iași” will take place between May 17<sup>th</sup> - June 15<sup>th</sup>, and would include, besides those already announced in the press, a reproduction of the Arch of the old Academia Mihăileană, the commemoration of *Junimea*, symphonic concerts and a horse race. During the entire month of April, the press reports nothing on the subject, thus questions and uncertainties appear: no

<sup>136</sup> Al. Vifor, “Cum să se organizeze «Luna Iașilor 1936»: în primăvară sau în toamnă? Un plebiscit printre negustori”, *Opinia*, 11 March 1936, 3.

<sup>137</sup> “1 mai-1 iunie Luna Iașilor 1936. Au început pregătirile la parcul dela Copou”, *Opinia*, 12 March 1936, 3.

<sup>138</sup> “Concurs de automobile în cadrul Lunei Iașilor”, *Opinia*, 12 March 1936, 4.

<sup>139</sup> “Serbările dela Iași. Interview cu d. Primar Osvald Racoviță”, *Iașul*, no. 4, March 1936, 65-66.





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advertising, no posters, no preparation throughout the city, only advertisements<sup>140</sup> for "The Month of Bucharest" (but also counter-advertisements<sup>141</sup> revealing Bucharest's intent to take the money of the provincials otherwise than using politics!) that was going to start on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Donescu was already boasting about the excellent accommodation Bucharest can offer the provincials. In reply, Iași announces that engineer E. Petrov, Chief of the Technical Service of the Municipality, has already started supervising operations of land cleaning and leveling in the Park Carol 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, at the end of May, the press knows nothing but rumors from the City Hall and calls the situation „strange”<sup>143</sup>, considering also the fiasco of the „Month” in 1935 was partially caused by insufficient advertising. The lack of advertising is indeed strange, as from May 1st, the transportation discount<sup>144</sup> period starts, according to the protocol signed the year before, after "The Month of Iași". The first announcement is made one day before the opening, on May 17th, with the remark that no new pavilion was built and the replicas for Hanul Ancuței, Bolta Rece and Arcul Academiei Mihăilene will be finished only in June! The press does not even invite the people in Iași to visit the exhibitions, warning them they will be disappointed, but that they have a civic duty to „participate enthusiastically”<sup>145</sup>. The cause of bad organizing may be the fact that the budget of the City Hall had not been approved and is 5,000,000 lei short<sup>146</sup>. Still, in his opening speech, mayor Racovitză presents triumphantly the significance of the „Month”: the clear proof that Iași deserves the support it requires from the country, that it is not just a city, not even just a former

<sup>140</sup> "Vizitatorii din provincie vor avea tot confortul în cursul Lunii Bucureștilor", *Noutatea*, 30 April 1936, 4 și "Luna Bucureștilor, anuala atracțiune românească", *Opinia*, 8 May 1936, 2.

<sup>141</sup> "Nu vă duceți la București!", *Opinia*, 9 May 1936, 1.

<sup>142</sup> "Încep lucrările de amenajare a parcului pentru «Luna Iașilor»", *Noutatea*, 29 April 1936, 4.

<sup>143</sup> "Ce este cu luna «Iașilor»? O ciudată lipsă de publicitate", *Opinia*, 13 May 1936, 1.

<sup>144</sup> I.Fr. Botez, "Iașul așteptărilor", *Noutatea*, 3 May 1936, 2.

<sup>145</sup> "Mâne Duminecă se deschide oficial Luna Iașilor", *Opinia*, 17 May 1936, 3.

<sup>146</sup> "Bugetul municipiului n-a fost încă aprobat", *Opinia*, 29 May 1936, 3.





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capital, but „an important center”<sup>147</sup>! The press mentions nothing about the progress of events during the month and the tragic accident during the Youth Holidays in Bucharest, when, in the presence of King Carol 2nd, the scaffold of a tribune collapsed and 5,000 people fell, 3 died, 424 were badly injured and other 269 mildly injured becomes the main topic for several days. Despite the 50% transportation discount, nobody is willing to go to Iași, except for the „Society of the People of Iași” members, who make the traditional trip to Iași and take part in the Congress between May 21<sup>st</sup> - May 22<sup>nd</sup>. By the beginning of June, it is obvious for everyone that ”The Month of Iași” is an economic and moral fiasco. Not even the local population visits the exhibitions any longer, the press remains silent.

### “The Month of Moldova”, September 15<sup>th</sup> - November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936

Throughout the summer of 1936, the press continues the anticentralist discourse of denouncing the rapacity of the capital which turns the provinces into „historical ruins”<sup>148</sup> and the former cities into rural localities; Iași is presented as a city of dust, filth<sup>149</sup>, holes<sup>150</sup> and debris, in obvious opposition to the radiance of Bucharest, which is critically analyzed following the Cotroceni catastrophe and considered nothing more than a ”gloss”<sup>151</sup> that covers a weakness and a void, just like the exquisite tribunes at Cotroceni built on a rotten wood structure. A new topic appears: the ridicule of the people in Bucharest. The capital and its population become the subject

<sup>147</sup> I. Armeanu, “S’a inaugurat expoziția «lunii Iașilor»”, *Opinia*, 19 May 1936, 3.

<sup>148</sup> Aurel Leon, “Bilanțul a două decenii de progres și civilizație. Consecințele sistemului centralist prin care capitala ia totul iar provincia nimic”, *Opinia*, 10 July 1936, 1.

<sup>149</sup> V. Gr. Chelaru, “Iașii orașul amintirilor ....și al străzilor murdare”, *Opinia*, 14 July 1936, 1.

<sup>150</sup> Aurel Leon, “«Să vă fie rușine!» Gropile din Piața-Unirei”, *Opinia*, 24 July 1936, 1.

<sup>151</sup> Aurel Leon, “Bilanțul a două decenii de progres și civilizație. Consecințele sistemului centralist prin care capitala ia totul iar provincia nimic”, *Opinia*, 10 July 1936, 1.





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of an ironic press campaign in *Lumea*, which, in its issues of August and September, builds several typologies of Bucharest<sup>152</sup>, all negative, having in common superficiality, sneakiness and the desire for profit at any costs, lack of moral values and education, superiority complex. In this process of depreciation of the people in Bucharest and institution of the dichotomy Iași citizen-spirit, Bucharest citizen-matter, the most significant attitude belongs to *Însemnări ieșene*, which does not only reply to the denigrating articles in the Bucharest press, but also discovers and presents the tragicomic symbol of superficiality and mundaneness in Bucharest: the businesscard of the anachorite Savel Sihleanu!<sup>153</sup>

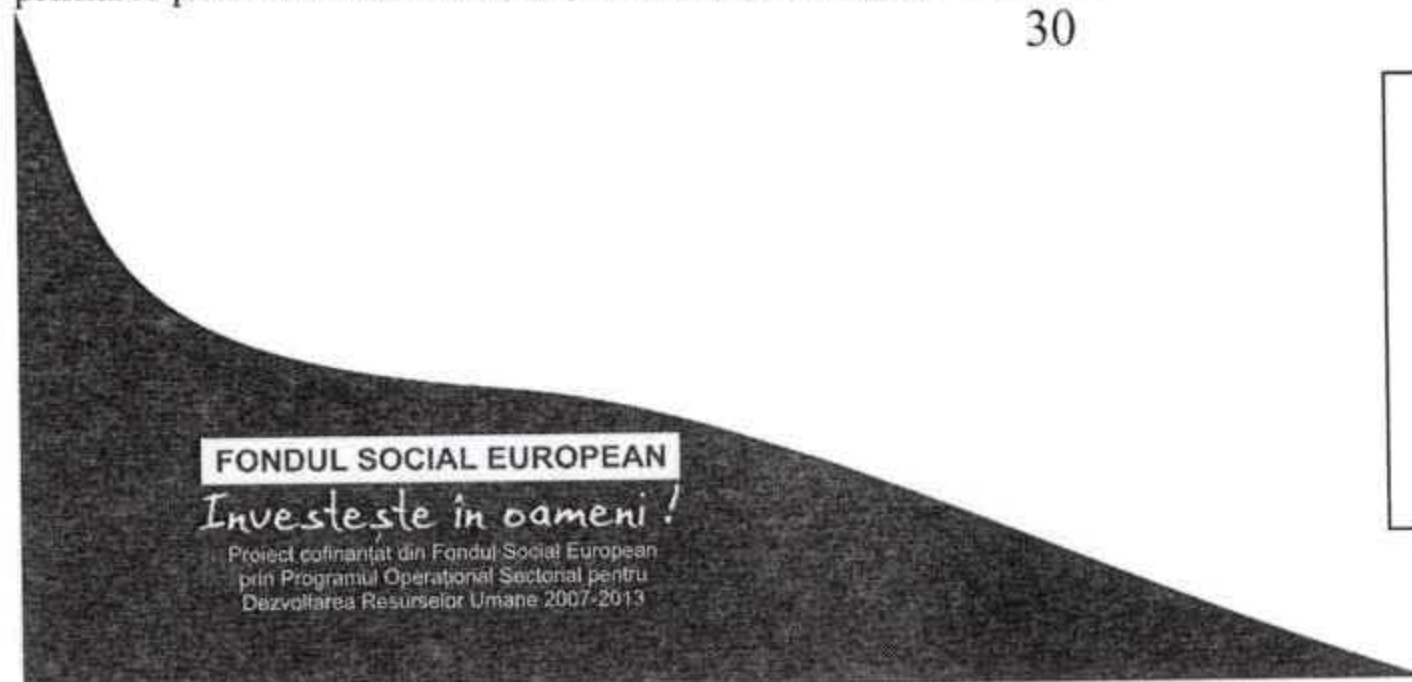
At the same time, information on the fall edition of the "month of Moldova" preparation starts to appear, but the press warns again on the little time left and on the danger of improvisation that could ruin the outcome of this "exam of worthiness before the entire country."<sup>154</sup> Indeed, although the month is scheduled for September for the sake of tradition and mayor Racovitză declares the intention to organize grander festivities than those in 1935, The Organizing Committee (G. Carp, city administrative manager, Gh. Grumăzescu, chief architect, E. Petrov, project manager, Th. Jipa, county prefect, senator I. Botez, president of the Chamber of Commerce, senator N. Gheorghidi, and numerous merchandisers) is convened only at the beginning of August "to sketch a rough organizing strategy."<sup>155</sup> The purpose is to have festivities of epic proportions to represent not only Iași and the spirit of Iași, as the "Month of Iași" did, but

<sup>152</sup> Adrian Pascu, "Domnul «facem un șpriț»", *Lumea*, 9 August 1936, 2, "Domnul «ți-o las pe nevastă-mea»", *Lumea*, 10 August 1936, 2, "Domnul «trei milioane»", *Lumea*, 16 August 1936, 2, "Domnul, «am geniu, moncher»", *Lumea*, 17 August 1936, 2, "Domnul «are o ocazie rară»", *Lumea*, 20 August 1936, 2, "Domnul «dă-mi o halbă și doi țapi»", *Lumea*, 9 September 1936, 2, "Domnul «cu două inimi într'un pept»", *Lumea*, 11 September 1936, 2, "Domnul «atinge-mă cu un pol»", *Lumea*, 21 September 1936, 2, "Domnul «Bel-Ami»", *Lumea*, 25 September 1936, 2.

<sup>153</sup> *Însemnări ieșene*, 15 May 1936, 585.

<sup>154</sup> "În vederea «Lunei Moldovei»", *Opinia*, 8 August 1936, 1.

<sup>155</sup> "Importante hotărâri se iau azi cu privire la «Luna Moldovei»", *Lumea*, 10 August 1936, 2 and "Consfătuirea dela primărie pentru luna Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 11 August 1936, 4.





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also Moldova and the spirit of Moldova.<sup>156</sup> Again, political consent and the support of the entire population, no matter the political affiliation, are called for. The press draws attention to details again: "The Month of Chișinău"<sup>157</sup> starts on September 1<sup>st</sup>, and most likely will be prolonged for another month, transportation discount included, which means it will superpose and compete with "The Month of Moldova". At the end of August, the land in the Park Carol 2<sup>nd</sup> is again parceled for a larger exhibition area and a posters contest is organized, the City Hall first selects 30 models<sup>158</sup> and is going to pick a winner so the poster could be distributed at the beginning of September together with *Călăuza Iașilor*, a guide of Iași. New popular attractions are announced: free entrance after 9pm (except for Saturdays and Sundays), a birds and small animals exhibition, a larger Luna Park, planes, a fishery for the famous restaurant Vraja Lunii, but also a monastic pavilion – at the request of the Metropolitan Nicodem – (for rugs and other products hand-made by sisters in the Agapia, Agafton and Văratec monasteries), the replicas for Hanul Ancuței, Bolta Rece, Arcul Academiei Mihăilene, and the meeting room of Junimea, the centennials of the Academia Mihăileană and of the Arts Academy, a series of theater shows at the National Theater with "popular" ticket prices<sup>159</sup> (30, 20 or 10 lei). Also, on September 28<sup>th</sup>, approximately 400 parliament members will come for the unveiling of Gh. Mârzescu's statue. The Romanian Railways grant 50% discount for weekdays and 75% for Saturdays and Sundays. For the festivities to gain solemnness, mayor Racovitză invited again King Carol 2<sup>nd</sup> (who accepted to give mayor Racovitză's an audience and requested to see the plans of the project<sup>160</sup>) and all the mayors in Romania for the opening. The exhibition opens on September 15<sup>th</sup>, but the official inauguration

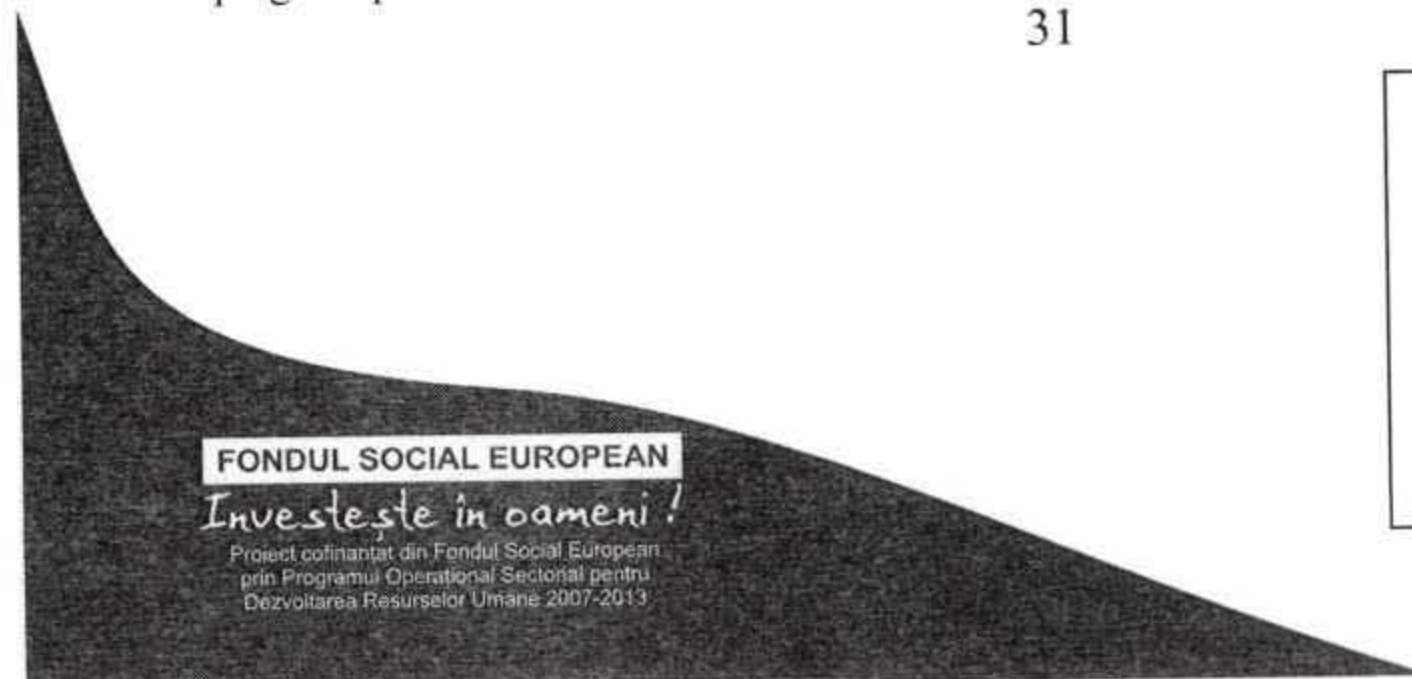
<sup>156</sup> "Moldovenismul. Un drept și o datorie", *Opinia*, 22 September 1936, 1.

<sup>157</sup> "În atenția organizatorilor Lunei Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 13 August 1936, 4.

<sup>158</sup> "Primăria lucrează intens pentru «Luna Moldovei»", *Noutatea* 20 August 1936, 2 and "Pregătiri intense pentru «Luna Moldovei»", 21 August 1936, 2.

<sup>159</sup> "Un ciclu festiv la Teatrul Național", *Opinia*, 23 September 1936, 2.

<sup>160</sup> "Marile pregătiri pentru «Luna Moldovei»", *Opinia*, 13 September 1936, 1.





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(without the King and the otherwise omnipresent "minister of Iași" V. Iamandi) takes place on September 20<sup>th</sup>. Among other speeches that pay homage to the festivities, former minister and deputy, Bucharest City Hall counselor N. Bartzaria<sup>161</sup> communicates that Bucharest does not want the province to decay and that he was sent by the mayor of Bucharest, Al. Donescu, to wish "the month of Moldova" the best of luck. Despite such verbal pledges, Bucharest is still perceived as an enemy who expects and exploits any weakness, ready to sabotage<sup>162</sup> or at least hassle<sup>163</sup> the achievements of the province: this time Bucharest extends the Navy Holidays in Constanța and moves them to the capital in the form of a "Navy Exhibition" (September 15<sup>th</sup> - October 15<sup>th</sup>) which, obviously, benefits from advertising and transportation discount and robs Iași "of its visitors from Dorohoi or Fălticeni or other small towns"<sup>164</sup>. Another example refers to Bucharest not allotting the funds necessary for the centennial of the Universitatea Mihăileană, which forced Iași to abandon the project.<sup>165</sup> Adopting the mayor's call at the opening and especially his vision regarding the demonstrative purpose of the festivities and their prestige, that is, to show that Iași can achieve something by itself and to turn the exhibition into "something more"<sup>166</sup> than just money cashed for entrance tickets, the press asks the local population to participate, pointing to the fact that it is a "moral"<sup>167</sup> question, not an economic matter, as it was in 1935: Iași must be revealed to the visitors as a great city that "vibrates"<sup>168</sup> on itself, an economic, cultural and political center independent from Bucharest, worthy of its past glory, as it is represented in the

<sup>161</sup> "Eri s'a inaugurat «Luna Moldovei»", *Opinia*, 22 September 1936, 3.

<sup>162</sup> Eug. Marinescu, "Expoziție marinărească! Cum procedează Capitala în paguba provinciei", *Opinia*, 25 September 1936, 1.

<sup>163</sup> "Mare audiență pentru Luna Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 17 September 1936, 3.

<sup>164</sup> Marinescu, "Expoziție marinărească!", 2.

<sup>165</sup> "S'a renunțat la serbările centenarului Universității Mihăilene", *Lumea*, 24 September 1936, 4.

<sup>166</sup> "Trebue spulberată legenda că Moldovanul ar fi indolent. Ce trebue să însemne o lună a Moldovei – Punctul de vedere just al Primarului Iașilor", *Opinia*, 23 September 1936, 1.

<sup>167</sup> "Toți ieșenii să ajute la reușita «Lunei Moldovei»", *Opinia*, 17 September 1936, 1.

<sup>168</sup> "De ce trebue să isbândească Luna Moldovei", *Lumea*, 19 September 1936, 2.







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imaginary of Moldova. Therefore, the local population had to live up to the rank of the city: clean and dressed up, even making money sacrifices to achieve attractive appearance. Moreover, they were expected to turn into propagandists, into "speaking newspapers"<sup>169</sup> or enthusiastic and watchful "mobile brigades."<sup>170</sup> Therefore, the festive representation, the involvement and dynamization of the local population aim (primarily, not secondarily, as in 1935) at annihilating a stereotype, or that which the mayor calls "legendary indolence of the people in Moldova,"<sup>171</sup> by showing and proving the "motion"<sup>172</sup> and action capabilities.

The revenues for the first day, September 20<sup>th</sup>, raise to 90,000 lei,<sup>173</sup> the entrance ticket costs 10 lei, but for many locals the entrance is free of charge. The amount is immediately publicized and it generates very optimistic expectations; indeed, thousands<sup>174</sup> of visitors and buyers are recorded in the first week. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, a provisional account<sup>175</sup> reported 70,000 locals and 50,000 provincials (including the St. Parascheva pilgrims, interested in the transportation discount and therefore forced to check their train tickets inside the exhibition) and on October 25<sup>th</sup>, the secretary of the exhibition, Zeiler, presented the official count of the tax paying visiting provincials: 53,400<sup>176</sup>. As in 1935, numerous details mark the extraordinary events and privilege Iași: stamp launch, special postal cards, and "Gh. Mârzescu" cigarettes<sup>177</sup> on the occasion of the former mayor's statue unveiling. Unlike in 1935, the press supports the mayor

<sup>169</sup> M.I. Paraschiv, "Susțineți Luna Moldovei!", *Noutatea*, 8 September 1936, 2.

<sup>170</sup> D. Komarofsky, "Reflexii pe marginea lunii Moldovei", *Însemnări ieșene*, 15 September 1936, 192.

<sup>171</sup> "Trebue spulberată legenda că Moldovanul ar fi indolent. Ce trebue să însemne o lună a Moldovei – Punctul de vedere just al Primarului Iașilor", *Opinia*, 23 September 1936, p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.


<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> "Mii de vizitatori la expoziția lunii Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 25 September 1936, 2.


<sup>175</sup> "Timpul admirabil menține afluența provincialilor", *Lumea*, 22 October, 1936, 3.

<sup>176</sup> "53400 de provincionali au vizitat până eri Iașul", *Noutatea*, 28 October 1936, 2.

<sup>177</sup> "Mărci postale «Luna Moldovei»", *Noutatea*, 18 September 1936, 2. In 1935, the special cigarettes "Iașul" were a big hit, over 100,000 were sold in two weeks at the exhibition.



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entirely<sup>178</sup> with announces and calls for local patriotism, without publishing though advertising reports and fairytale images of the exhibition, either because the City Hall lacked publicity funds, or because it was too confident to consider publicity necessary. The only exception is *Noutatea*, which publishes a series of exaggerated imagery: rich fall, dreamlike pavilions, exuberant amusement in Luna Park, music, lots of people, the park resembling "a corner of a resort."<sup>179</sup> The exhibition separates from the rest of the city as entirely different: "dreamlike lighting during the night makes this miniature city where industrialists from Moldova spread their net of attractions look definitely western,"<sup>180</sup> everything contributes to image of Iași as "a great city in a world of dreams."<sup>181</sup> According to *Noutatea*, hotels are packed with provincials, visitors crowd the entrance to the exhibition, hence the double number of ticket inspectors!<sup>182</sup> The only critical newspaper belongs to the opposition. *Politica* hardly refers to "The Month of Moldova," considering it a "faux pas" from the very start, "a disgrace to Iași"<sup>183</sup> left to misery by the very mayor busy with festivities. In their view, the "Month" is doomed to fail.<sup>184</sup> More important than the criticism of political enemies stands the attitude of *Gândul vremii*, an "ideology magazine" which, besides the continuous caricature of the Gr. Trancu-Iași's phrase "spirit of Iași," protests against the new method used by Iași to fight for its rights. The aggressive but ridiculous recrimination of Bucharest and the agitation around "The Month of Moldova" are considered examples of impertinence and

<sup>178</sup> *Noutatea* constantly praises mayor O. Racovitză in its editorials and articles signed by Aureliu Corlat and I.Fr. Botez, but *Chemarea naționalistă* really stands out for turning O. Racovitză into a myth and attributing him the "savior hero" of Iași and Moldova calling. Laur Preda, "Figuri în relief", *Chemarea naționalistă*, 10 September 1936, 2 and Laur Preda, "Luna Moldovei. D. primar Racovitză luptă eroic pentru redresarea Iașilor și Moldovei", *Chemarea naționalistă*, 4 October 1936, 2.

<sup>179</sup> I.Fr. Botez, "Expoziția Lunii Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 30 September 1936, 2.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> I.Fr. Botez, "S'a deschis expoziția", *Noutatea*, 22 September 1936, 2.

<sup>182</sup> "Provincia vizitează zilnic Expoziția ieșeană", *Noutatea*, 20 October 1936, 2.


<sup>183</sup> "O nouă gafă: Luna Moldovei. Nepregătită din timp, nearanjată cum trebuie, expoziția din dealul Copoului constituie o rușine la adresa Iașului", *Politica*, 20 September 1936, 1.

<sup>184</sup> "Ultima speranță", *Politica*, 18 October 1936, 1 and "La bălcu", *Politica*, 18 October 1936, 2.

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petulant vanity not in keeping with the modesty of the local spirit; voicing its sufferance and the request for compensations do not characterize a city that pretends to be the keeper of authentic glory and morals, but reveals infirmity and weakness.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the positive efforts of the municipality, the visitors are not impressed. The poet Ion Minulescu, who came to Iași for two days as a result of reading E. Heroveanu's *Orașul amintirilor*, is not delighted with what he sees<sup>186</sup>. In his view, the city is miserable and poor, the monuments are not well maintained, "The Month of Moldova" is pale, without luminous advertising, the impression is deplorable, the exact opposite of the organizers' goal. On the other hand, Al. Donescu, the mayor of the capital, out of courtesy or not, expresses his admiration for what was done "with little money."<sup>187</sup> Paradoxically, even the most fervent and vocal propagandist of Iași, the president of the "Society of the People of Iași", Gr. Trancu-Iași, considers the accomplishment poor, finds the exhibition empty and the city deserted on a Saturday.<sup>188</sup> Despite all these, mayor Racovitză asks for and is granted an extension of the transportation discount period and of "The Month of Moldova"<sup>189</sup> consequently until November 1<sup>st</sup>. He has other posters and invitations printed and distributed. The press mentions nothing on the matter.

### "The Month of Moldova", September 15<sup>th</sup> - November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1937

<sup>185</sup> M. Uță, Iașul, "Orașul suspinelor", *Gândul vremii*, 15 February 1937, 28-32.

<sup>186</sup> Petre Mircea, "Iașul orașul ...mizeriei și ruinei pe care nici bucureștenii nu-l prețuesc cum trebuie", *Opinia*, 30 September 1936, 3.

<sup>187</sup> I.Fr. Botez, "Expoziția Lunii Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 30 September 1936, 2.

<sup>188</sup> Petre Mircea, "Cuvinte despre Iași într'o convorbire cu d. Gr. L. Trancu, fost ministru", *Opinia*, 7 October 1936, 1.

<sup>189</sup> "Luna Moldovei s'a prelungit", *Noutatea*, 8 October 1936, p. 1 and "S'a prelungit reducerea pentru Iași", *Noutatea*, 15 October 1936, 2.





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In the summer of 1937, the mockery<sup>190</sup> of the people in Bucharest continues, with emphasis on their superficiality, superiority complex, and on destructive centralism. At the beginning of May,<sup>191</sup> mayor Racovitză announces – again without consultations with the Communal Council – that "The Month of Moldova" will take place in September and that all the towns in Romania will be invited. The Council is convened only in June and informed about the mayor's hope<sup>192</sup> to have the inauguration on September 1<sup>st</sup>. At the end of July<sup>193</sup> and beginning of August<sup>194</sup>, the first news about preparation in the Park Carol 2<sup>nd</sup> – which would gain an "impressive"<sup>195</sup> "grand appearance"<sup>196</sup> (all is done according to the mayor's plans!) - come out. At the same time, the novelty of "The Month of Moldova" starting on September 15<sup>th</sup> is disclosed: a pavilion for the great industries from all over the country (estimated at 3,000,000 lei), a reproduction of a wine cellar, of a traditional barn, of a cave,<sup>197</sup> open-air theater shows. The most important of all are the representations of the future Iași – the display of models of future urbanistic achievements: the new St. Spiridon Square (the old one had been completely destroyed in the 1935 fire), the square in front of the Ferdinand Foundation, and the central area (The Metropolitan Cathedral - The National Theater – The Commander's Quarters) around Carol 1st's equestrian statue (area cleared by demolishing all the buildings located between The Commander's Quarters and the Mârzescu street).<sup>198</sup> There will be no amusement park any longer, as the mayor thinks it does not arouse

<sup>190</sup> Aurel Leon, "Impresii de provincial. Aspecte bucureștene", *Opinia*, 17 July 1937, 1-2, "Impresii de provincial. București, orașul sportului și al grătarului", *Opinia*, 21 July 1937, 1-2.

<sup>191</sup> "Toate orașele din țară vor participa la «Luna Moldovei»", *Noutatea*, 8 May 1937, 2.

<sup>192</sup> "Consiliul comunal va discuta organizarea Lunii Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 15 June 1937, 2.

<sup>193</sup> "Nouile lucrări dela Copou", *Noutatea*, 31 July 1937, 2.

<sup>194</sup> Petre Grancea, "Mari pregătiri pentru «Luna Moldovei»", *Opinia*, 3 August 1937, 2.

<sup>195</sup> Z. Dessmond, "Parcul expoziției dela Copou va lua un aspect măreț", *Opinia*, 7 August 1937, p. 2.

<sup>196</sup> Petre Grancea, "Mari pregătiri", 2.

<sup>197</sup> Z. Dessmond, "Parcul expoziției", 2.

<sup>198</sup> Z. Dessmond, "Machetele viitoarelor realizări urbanistice ieșene au fost frumos executate", *Opinia*, 8 August 1937,

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enough interest<sup>199</sup> but also because he does not want the recreations to be compared to a cheap fair. The new Moldova pavilion will be built on the site. The pavilions Gheler and Victoria are demolished as "they do not correspond to the aesthetics of the park."<sup>200</sup> Not surprisingly, the first obstacle is raised by Bucharest: the press informs the transportation discounts were not approved;<sup>201</sup> on the other hand, The General Union of Romanian Industrialists accepts<sup>202</sup> to sponsor the construction of the Palace of industries, on condition the exhibitions turns afterward into a commercial society.<sup>203</sup> The construction site in the Park Carol 2<sup>nd</sup> opens on August 10<sup>th</sup>, with the fabrication of the model of Iași, the wine cellar and the industry pavilion. The Moldova pavilion includes a replica of an old style Romanian house and a three dimensional map of Moldova with colored light bulbs, following the model of the map of Romania displayed at the International Exhibition in Paris, the focal point of the Romanian pavilion. All the works usually take place under mayor Racovitză's supervision, who ends up being perceived as the only one responsible with organizing the holidays, the only one capable of removing all the obstacles raised by Bucharest or the local opposition. Significantly, "Politica" blames him for pursuing "American advertising"<sup>204</sup> for himself. A surprising impediment is raised by the press itself, by its repeated reports on the undrinkable water and the typhoid epidemics, generating a negative representation and driving potential tourists away, a serious misconduct that "Lumea" labels as sabotage.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Z. Dessmond, "«Pavilionul Moldovei» din Parcul Expoziției", *Opinia*, 10 August 1937, 3.

<sup>200</sup> Z. Dessmond, "Un fastuos pavilion al Industriei se va construi în Parcul xpoziției dela Copou", *Opinia*, 17 August 1937, 3.

<sup>201</sup> "Străduința d-lui. O. Racovitză", *Noutatea*, 3 August 1937, 2 and "Cum va fi organizată «Luna Iașilor 1937»", *Lumea*, 5 August 1937, 3.

<sup>202</sup> The influential industrialists of the moment, Max Auschnit and Malaxa authorized this investment on the phone, to the delight of mayor Racovitză, witness of the phone call. "Ce pregătiri se fac pentru «luna Moldovei» 1937", *Lumea*, 9 August 1937, 2.

<sup>203</sup> "Mari pregătiri pentru Luna Moldovei", *Noutatea*, 10 August 1937, 2.

<sup>204</sup> "Consiliul de administrație al Expoziției. Cu ce va mai înzestra Iașul d. Racoviță", *Politica*, 22 August 1937, 4.

<sup>205</sup> "Nedumerire", *Lumea*, 11 September 1937, 2.





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The preparations went well, the transportation discount<sup>206</sup> was approved, therefore four days before the opening the press announces everything is ready and reminds the locals to clean and decorate the city<sup>207</sup> and also visit the exhibition pointing to the fact that after the mayor has done everything he could, the success of the "Month" is left to the population.<sup>208</sup> Only the posters will be ready and distributed around the middle of September,<sup>209</sup> but radio broadcasting time<sup>210</sup> was bought (1,200 words, six lei per word).

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, at the opening of "the third Month of Iași and the second Month of Moldova, merged from now on,"<sup>211</sup> all the parliament members, the presidents of the Senate and Deputy Chamber, presidents of the Commerce Chambers, mayors and county prefects from all over the country and a number of ministers are invited as usual. Certainly, the King was invited but did not RSVP. The official speeches praise mayor Racovitză for having the idea of reviving Iași with the Exhibition and drawing the attention of the country on Iași other than with words and for succeeding in opening "a new chapter"<sup>212</sup> in the life of Iași and Moldova and for eradicating "the legend according to which the Moldovans are indolent."<sup>213</sup>

The press starts its account on the Exhibition with unexpected criticism<sup>214</sup> on the mayor's plans: the most important aspect is missing, the joy and holiday spirit rendered by popular

<sup>206</sup> Only the 50% discount, the 75% for Saturdays and Sundays will be approved only on September 18<sup>th</sup>. "Dl. Gh. Gheorghiu a obținut aprobarea reducerii de 75% pe c.f.r. în timpul «Lunii Moldovei»", *Lumea*, 19 September 1937, 4.

<sup>207</sup> Z. Dessmond, "Pentru un aspect cât mai atrăgător al Iașului în timpul Lunii Moldovei. Câteva propuneri practice", *Opinia*, 10 September, 2.

<sup>208</sup> I.L. Basarabeanu, "Toți ieșenii au datoria să sprjine acțiunea oficială pentru reușita Lunii Moldovei", *Opinia*, 11 September 1937, 1.

<sup>209</sup> "Manifestele de propagandă pentru «Luna Moldovei» vor fi lansate în câteva zile", *Noutatea*, 11 September 1937, 2.

<sup>210</sup> *Lumea*, 18 September 1937, p.2.

<sup>211</sup> "Inaugurarea în cadru festiv a «Lunii Moldovei» în parcul «Regele Carol» dela Copou", *Lumea* 17 September 1937, 2 and "Inaugurarea Lunii Moldovei, asistența-discursurile-banchetul", *Noutatea*, 17 September, 2.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Aurel Leon, "Trebuesc distracții populare la parcul Expoziției dela Copou", *Opinia*, 18 September 1937, 3.





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amusements; the charts and photographs replaced the merry go rounds and the shooting barracks but produce no enthusiasm and do not make an unforgettable visit. In exchange, the open-air theater shows of the National Theater, subsidized by the City Hall,<sup>215</sup> gather around 1,000 spectators on Sunday evenings<sup>216</sup> (shows are performed on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 7pm and 9pm). Other attractions include the mineral water pavilions, which draw the elderly in need for specialized cures without having to deal with the difficult trip, but also the Moldova pavilion and the three dimensional map of Moldova with its 500 colored bulbs and the miniature Iași (postcards, stamps, painting of old Iași in the time it was the capital). Adopting the successful idea at the International Exhibition in Paris when free Romanian food and drinks seduced the visitors - "the most efficient propaganda goes through the stomach"<sup>217</sup> - Bolta Rece offers Cotnari wines and Hanul Ancuței traditional foods. In the first week, 16,000 tickets<sup>218</sup> were sold and 29 days after the opening 50,000 visitors (who probably spent "millions"<sup>219</sup> on hotels, restaurants and shopping) had checked their railways tickets. Again the number of ticket inspectors at the entrance to the Park had to be increased.<sup>220</sup> The great number of visitors (38,000 in total) is considered a success by mayor Racovitză who voices his satisfaction,<sup>221</sup> despite the usual low budget<sup>222</sup> and the 200,000 lei final deficit.<sup>223</sup> Part of the press is more interested in the "moral" outcome<sup>224</sup> of the miniature city – the exhibition on the Copou hill -, in the astonishment it exerts on the provincial

<sup>215</sup> The subsidy is 25,000 lei. In *Lumea*, 22 September 1937, 2.

<sup>216</sup> M. Dima, "Teatrul Moldovenesc din dealul Copoului și-a inaugurat ciclul de spectacole în aer liber", *Opinia*, 22 September 1937, 2.

<sup>217</sup> "Supeu de gală", *Însemnări ieșene*, 15 September 1937, 320.

<sup>218</sup> "O raită prin expoziția dela Copou", *Lumea*, 23 September 1937, 2.

<sup>219</sup> "Câteva date și cifre asupra «Lunei Moldovei»", *Lumea*, 14 October 1937, 1.

<sup>220</sup> "Câteva mii de provinciali au vizitat Duminică Iașul", *Noutatea*, 6 October 1937, 4.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> In 1937, the budget of Iași was approximately 66,000,000 lei, four times lower than the budget of Ploiești, as Iași did not have its own income. "Oraș sărac; totuși...", *Opinia*, 2 October 1937, 1.

<sup>223</sup> "Rezultatul expoziției", *Politica*, 31 October 1937, 4.

<sup>224</sup> I.Fr. Botez, "Câteva considerațiuni prilejuite de Expoziția din parcul Carol II", *Noutatea*, 12 October 1937, 2.





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who checks his ticket and glimpses through the fences the huge park with "fairytale palaces" in which the richness of the province and the miraculous perspectives of Iași come to life just because they are shown. A proof of mayor Racovitză's project success is the interest shown by the Israelite Community (so far critical regarding the exhibition for taking away their regular clients in Copou) and their decision to start a campaign of organizing a "Month of the Community" to popularize their importance and function.<sup>225</sup> Despite the cold weather, the exhibition is extended until November 1<sup>st</sup>, but press accounts miss. Only the official closing on November 3<sup>rd</sup> is announced.

### "The Month of Moldova", 1938

In 1938, the interest of the municipality in "The Month of Iași" is minor. O. Racovitză lost the elections and was replaced by M. Eșianu on February 14<sup>th</sup>. The City Hall does not intend to invest in the construction of pavilions (the Moldova pavilion cost 1,000,000 lei in 1937<sup>226</sup>) and in the undertaking, the experience of the former years showing that the project was never financially profitable. However, there is a slight pressure from public opinion for the continuation of the festivities – already called "traditional" – plus a certain need to carry on in order to ease acceptance of the new administration. Moreover, M. Negruzzi, the Royal Resident of the new county of Prut – with its capital in Iași – stated that he hopes for "the rise of Iași"<sup>227</sup> therefore "The Month of Moldova" idea is actual. As mayor Eșianu announces the municipality does not have the money to organize "The Month", the initiative is taken by the Chamber of Commerce, which requests the

<sup>225</sup> *Opinia*, 25 September 1937, 2.

<sup>226</sup> "Luna Iașilor nu mai are loc anul acesta. Dar se proiectează o mare expoziție pentru anul viitor", *Opinia*, 7 August 1938, 1.

<sup>227</sup> "Ridicarea Iașului este prima grijă a d-lui. Rezident regal M. Negruzzi", *Opinia*, 18 August 1938, 2.







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help<sup>228</sup> of industrialists and merchandisers, supported by a Committee in which O. Racovitză is an active member. Following a spirited meeting at the Chamber of Commerce, it is decided that the municipality provide the location and the merchandisers bring and sell products. A week later, the organizing committee convened at the City Hall leaves the financial matter unresolved. After long debate, a delegation is appointed to go around the city and collect funds necessary for the first expenditures, funds called loans, guaranteed by the City Hall to be returned from the first income.<sup>229</sup> A special press bureau is established to coordinate propaganda. Mayor Eșianu and O. Racovitză go to Bucharest to discuss with the government and obtain the transportation discount.<sup>230</sup> With the typhoid fever cases increasing in Iași and also with the incapacity to raise money in such a short period of time, the idea of delaying<sup>231</sup> "The Month" starts circulating, followed immediately after by the announce that it will not be organized at all in 1938,<sup>232</sup> but postponed until 1939. The statement does not seem to surprise anyone and the press quickly turns to another subject: the ceremonies of investiture of M. Negruzzi as the Royal Resident of the County of Prut and the banquet at the Administrative Palace where the eternal "minister of Iași", presently minister of Justice, V. Iamandi, gives a speech fit for a "Month of Iași" or "Month of Moldova" inauguration, in which he promises support for Iași and declares that "His Majesty the King himself is closely interested in the matter of reviving Iași and will soon prove that Iași was not forgotten"<sup>233</sup>.

<sup>228</sup> "Expoziția Iașului", *Opinia*, 21 August 1938, 1, "Expoziția Iașului se va deschide la 15 septembrie", *Opinia*, 21 August 1938, 3 and "Industria și comerțul ieșan participă la Expoziția Iașilor", *Opinia*, 23 August 1938, 3.

<sup>229</sup> Virgil Gheorghiu, "Noua consfătuire a comitetului «Lunei Iașilor»", *Opinia*, 2 September 1938, 2.

<sup>230</sup> "Intense pregătiri pentru «Luna Iașilor» și a ținutului Prut", *Iașul*, 3 September 1938, 1.

<sup>231</sup> "Expoziția Iașilor va fi amânată?", *Opinia*, 3 September 1938, 4.

<sup>232</sup> "Anul acesta nu mai avem o lună a Iașului. Motivele amânării ei", *Chemarea*, 3 September 1938, 1, "S'a renunțat la Luna Iașilor dar se pregătește o expoziție a Ținutului Prut", *Opinia*, 4 September 1938, 1.

<sup>233</sup> "M.S. Regele se interesează de ridicarea Iașilor și va dovedi tuturor că Iașul nu a fost uitat. Discursul d-lui Victor Iamandi, ministrul Justiției", *Opinia*, 13 September 1938, 4.





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### 3. „Iași will live on!..”<sup>234</sup>

The intention of the municipality of Iași to stop the decline and economically revitalize the city with commercial progress is transferred into reality in the holidays of Iași that bear a double connotation: a celebration of the past glory, of the historical-cultural background – present mostly in the mind of people of Moldova - , capable of attracting numerous participants and the instauration of a new urbanistic representation, Iași as a new commercial and economic center. The goal of the municipality is to impose and maintain (by gaining adherents) a modern image of Iași, but, according to the general process of dynamics of traditionalism and modernity identified by G. Balandier<sup>235</sup>, the new structures are interpreted with old, familiar languages based on traditional symbols that communicate and explain the new political vision and turn it into reality. The new celebration of the city is a project based, as any other holiday, on consensus, not on force! Mayor Racovitză's project does not resume to a common fair with cheap attractions, but represents a wide vision employing the traditional – therefore protective - model of the holidays to convince. The economic goal remains secondary (but it is there!), the holidays opening a dimension that the fair lacks, because the traditional holiday belongs to the imaginary<sup>236</sup> although elements belonging to the everyday are exclusively used in its realization.

The traditional holiday, "the essence holiday,"<sup>237</sup> is an ethnological concept, a "trans-cultural"<sup>238</sup> model created by researchers and philosophers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (É. Durkheim, M. Mauss, S. Freud, R. Caillois, R. Girard, M. Eliade, G. Bataille), including universal categories

<sup>234</sup> N. Gheorghidi, senator, president of the Association of Merchandisers and Industrialists in Iași, in *Primul anuar-ghid al municipiului Iași 1935-1936*, 109

<sup>235</sup> G. Balandier, *Antropologie politică*, (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1998), 203-204.

<sup>236</sup> J. Duvignaud, *Fêtes et civilisations*, (Genève: Librairie Weber, 1973 ), 39.

<sup>237</sup> A. Villadary, *Fête et vie quotidienne*, (Paris: Les éditions ouvrières, 1968), 25-36.

<sup>238</sup> R. Chartier, "Disciplină și libertate", in *Lecturi și cititori în Franța Vechiului Regim*, (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1997 ), 47.





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that manifest themselves more or less in any particular holiday. In the complex ensemble of the holiday as ritual that dramatizes, performs and materializes a system of symbols,<sup>239</sup> everyday rules are suspended,<sup>240</sup> work stops, interdiction ceases, being replaced by a time and place of liberties and all possibilities; freed by the limitations and abnegation social life entails, man lives his dream and myth: the return of The Golden Age, the ritualized access to "the other world possible," experimenting - through excesses and transgressing interdiction - a happiness other cultural projects only promise or place in a utopian future. Symbolically, the holiday brings a primordial time when everything was possible into the present, it is a return to the original chaos that renews and purifies the world, chaos symbolically represented by fusion, inversions, disguise, crowd, motion, etc. Symbolically repeating chaos and creating the premises of another Creation, the holiday produces the best world possible; gayness, excess and waste are the most obvious signs that a time and space opposite to the everyday settle, even if temporarily. Wealth is one of the signs a holiday bears; Roger Caillois considered it part of the law of the holiday: "There is no holiday, be it structurally sad, without at least a slight feast or excess: one should only refer to the rural wakes. In the old times, just as today, holiday meant dancing, singing, eating and drinking. One must eat fully, to the point of exhaustion and discomfort. This is the law of the holiday."<sup>241</sup> Excess

<sup>239</sup> "Thus, social life, in all its aspects and moments, is possible only by means of vast symbolism.", in É. Durkheim, *Formele elementare ale vieții religioase*, (Iași: Polirom, 1995), 214.

<sup>240</sup> Acknowledging Durkheim's merits regarding the function of the holiday and the illustration of the distinction between sacred and profane, R. Caillois emphasized the fundamental opposition between quotidian and holiday: "Indeed, they oppose intermittent explosion to dull continuity, exalting frenzy to everyday repetition of the same material preoccupation, the powerful breath of communal effervescence to calm actions when everybody takes care of his own doing, crowding of society to dispersal, the fever of its peak moments to quiet toil during the atonic phases of its existence." in R. Caillois, *Omul și sacrul*, (București: Nemira, 2006), 118. The opposition holiday-quotidian perfectly superposes upon the sacred-profane opposition, both of them are particular forms of the "pendular vision" man has on time. Discontinuity, passing, oscillation between two opposite poles is important (therefore marked). In E. Leach, *Critique de l'anthropologie*, (Paris: PUF, 1968), 213-217.

<sup>241</sup> Caillois, *Omul și sacrul*, 116.





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is not free, its role is not just releasing<sup>242</sup>, but it acts symbolically<sup>243</sup> against cosmic depreciation, being capable of creating and introducing a new world to replace the old one that is impossible to improve. For Mircea Eliade, the time of the holiday is a sacred time, ontological, reversible and always retrievable at the end of a cycle, which allows the religious man – by means of rites - periodic access to what is *real* and what is *true*. For the traditional society individual, the most important moment of collective life is the ritual repetition of cosmogony through the New Year's holiday;<sup>244</sup> the religious individual recuperates *illo tempore*, becomes contemporary to his gods and turns into a "real man;"<sup>245</sup> he contemporizes and performs in detail gods' acts,<sup>246</sup> reconstructs the world, participates directly in the cosmogonic work and the abundant energy of creation finds its outlet in excesses, orgies and feasts. Symbolic remake of the original chaos or ritual reenactment of the cosmogony, the holiday connotes a happy world, a combination of dream and utopia, as far from the everyday as possible. It constructs another version of human existence, a representation of a new world that transcends the quotidian.

"The Month of Iași" and later on "The Month of Moldova" organized by the municipality has nothing explicit in common with the religious holidays with sacred time and space,<sup>247</sup> on the contrary, a laic ideology is explicitly affirmed and thought as an economic and political instrument<sup>248</sup> but, in order to be perceived as holiday, it preserves the series of oppositions that

<sup>242</sup> The recreative, liberating function of the holiday is mentioned by S. Freud: "A holiday is an allowed excess, more, a dictated excess, a festive violation of a an interdiction. People do not give in to excess because it makes them happy according to the prescription, excess is part of the very essence of the holiday; joy is the result of being allowed to do something forbidden otherwise." In S. Freud, „Totem și tabu”, *Opere I*, (București: Editura științifică, 1991), 148.

<sup>243</sup> „[...] reactualization of the primordial time of the universe, *Urzeit*, of the original, essentially creative era that witnessed the origin of all things, beings, institutions at the time they set into their traditional definitive form.” In Caillois, *Omul și sacrul*, 113.

<sup>244</sup> M. Eliade, *Mitul eternei reînțoarceri. Arhetipuri și repetare*, (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1999), 23-27.

<sup>245</sup> M. Eliade, *Nostalgia orginilor. Mit și semnificație în religie*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 94.

<sup>246</sup> Eliade, *Mitul eternei reînțoarceri*, 23-27.

<sup>247</sup> The Metropolitan Church of Moldova participated in the exhibition only as exhibitor.

<sup>248</sup> Y.-M. Bercé proves the propaganda of the modern state integrates into the traditional scheme of the holiday and





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mark the difference from the quotidian: the institution of a completely different time, the creation and enforcement of a completely different space, designed for enthusiasm, joy and optimism. Therefore, the activity and actions of the mayor on the Copou hill, the preparation and progress of “The Month of Iași,” – considering the detailed, repeated, continuous manner in which they are presented in the local press – are in fact ritualizing practices (in the sense established by C. Bell<sup>249</sup>), that is, modes of action projected, orchestrated and popularized to distinguish and privilege what is done as opposed to other ordinary activities of the municipality. A qualitative distinction is created between the mayor’s actions to serve a truly important purpose, almost sacred<sup>250</sup>: to save Iași from dying and make it an economic and political center on the one hand and, on the other, the everyday activity of the City Hall (often criticized by the press).

In the classic Durkheimian approach, the holiday is a moment of life intensification that leads to reunion and congregation of the society which can become acquainted with and retain this feeling and pursue an ensemble of ideal conceptions,<sup>251</sup> an idea individuals have about themselves, an alternative model of society that is part of the society, not separate from it. This alternative model is communicated and shown, outside of theory and even becoming reality on the spot, visible and palpable. But, as C. Bell observed, a communal activity does not produce mechanical solidarity by means of emotional fervor and effervescence. Solidarity comes after coherent belief forms and is communicated, a belief shared by all the participants<sup>252</sup> through negotiation, not imposition. The ideology mayor Racovitză promotes in the media, in his political speeches and

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affirms that political holidays constituted according to the model of traditional holidays. In Y.-M. Bercé, *Fête et revolte. Des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, (Paris: Hachette, 1976), 62.

<sup>249</sup> C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual practice*, (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1992).

<sup>250</sup> C. Bell claims – contrary to the classical Durkheimian theory - that ritualization generates sacredness by simply being different from the profane: a particular method of operation that draws a flexible distinction that produces notions and categories such as “sacred” and “profane.” Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual practice*, 91.

<sup>251</sup> “A society cannot be created or recreated without creating an ideal at the same time.” In Durkheim, *Formele elementare*, 386.

<sup>252</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual practice*, 187.





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with his essential role in the development of the “Months” is the spirit of Iași: assuming values that gravitate around the representation of Iași as a cultural, political force that can come back, by means of political activity, in the foreground of economic and political Romanian life, near Bucharest. This ideology, from the view point of the municipality, would act as link for the people of Iași and Molova, but also as mystification for those who are not convinced by the possibility of revival for the city. The symbols of the old, cultural Iași and the symbols of the virtual, economic Iași, together in the festive space of the Exhibition (and represented in the press) would become instruments of the consensus regarding the place and role of Iași in the future, provided those who operate and manipulate these symbols (organizers and supporters) and those who receive them (visitors and readers) establish dialogue and “complicity.”<sup>253</sup> To theorize these ideas and values, to make them public with discourses, interviews and articles is not enough to convince the public they are viable, it takes active involvement but excludes coercion.

The place of any holiday is achieved by clipping and decorating a part of the everyday space used for unusual purposes; the space of the holiday is the result of differentiating and privileging – performed by the one invested to do it – where something other than the quotidian is shown. In the Carol Park, a brilliant setting is being constructed and something is knowingly “shown” – an exhibition of symbols belonging to the past<sup>254</sup> and the future, recollections and projects, visual representations of the expected and claimed political economic force, but also entertainment: Luna Park, theater shows, gardens, restaurants, and all sorts of goods and souvenirs to buy. The simple, sober, Spartan holiday model, as Rousseau<sup>255</sup> envisaged it, is remote, but the

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>254</sup> The symbols and representations of the glorious past presented inside the exhibition, but also in the press and posters, especially the representations of cultural monuments, offer a support for the collective memory of the people of Iași. Collective memory is “the selfportrait of the group”, what enables the group to acknowledge itself as such even with the passing of time: if familiar walls stand, individuals think nothing else changes around them. M. Halbwachs, (New York: Harper Colophone Books, 1980), 130-133.

<sup>255</sup> J. J. Rousseau, Scrisoare către d’Alembert, in *Scrieri despre artă*, (București: Editura pentru toți, 1981), 258.





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finality is the same: “in a laborious delight, everything was pleasure and show [...] amusements that served the purposes of the state...”<sup>256</sup>; on the one hand, the citizens remain in their native towns, contributing to local prosperity, on the other hand participants can turn from spectators to actors, so “anyone can see and love himself in others, so everyone stays united”<sup>257</sup> Whereas in the case of the traditional holiday equality of participants was ensured by the wealth and the constitutive waste that left all stuffed, in the case of the urban holidays, where the budget of the municipality cannot even provide free meals and drinks, the participants can at least see each other in ways different than the everyday relations. In a time and space different from the ordinary, in an embellished and idealized space, during their free time – appropriated from economical activities – the people in Iași and the provincials can see each other in a special perspective that values union and reconciliation. This is only possible in a controlled environment (in open air though, to symbolize freedom!), fit for theater and dramatization, where participants can be interconnected as in a true “civic instruction”<sup>258</sup>, a pedagogical action for the benefit of community contacts. Nothing related to the holiday is ordinary, everything is performance, that is, symbolic acts meant to bear impact on an audience, communicating “something” and, at the same time, affecting spectators’ perception of reality. By means of symbolic forms (and everything is symbolic in social life!<sup>259</sup>), such as words, images, behaviors, people can represent themselves to others by performance, C. Geertz said<sup>260</sup>, the imagined and the real worlds merge, participation conveys acceptance of the situation presented.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>258</sup> M. Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 235.

<sup>259</sup> Human behaviour is a symbolic action, any human action bears significance, can and must be interpreted. C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture*, (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>260</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture*, 112-113.





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“The Month of Iași” and “The Month of Moldova” can be interpreted as “performance”<sup>261</sup>, as action that reaffirms the status of Iași not only symbolically, but enforces it actively and visibly; performance is not just a way to exhibit a given situation, but a special “agent of change”<sup>262</sup>. Performative expression does not describe an action, but is a special action, generating significance and practices<sup>263</sup> important for the unity and continuity of the community. Symbols are not only presented, but their substance is dramatically conveyed to the participants and later represented in the press for the use of the readers. Participants are the most important<sup>264</sup> – that is why the presence of as many locals as possible is requested, even though financially they are not as substantial as the provincials who bring outside money – so they are shown the ideal, it is for them the imaginary is made tangible, it is them the ideas of the municipality are presented to. The performance taken out of its context becomes incomprehensible; analyzed separately, both “The Month of Iași” and “The Month of Moldova” as represented by the press, that is, optimistically, in fairytale representations, having grandiose, amazing dimensions, with exhibits never seen before, are almost ridiculous; but in a dynamic context, the performance shows the new cultural design, the change and rearrangement envisaged by O. Racovitză. Inside the exhibition, „social antistructure”<sup>265</sup> or „communitas”<sup>266</sup> - as V. Turner defined it - installs, that is, the

<sup>261</sup> In V. Turner’s ritualic theory, performance creates a breach into the quotidian and introduces a dramatic time in which what is hidden or implied in social activity is forcibly shown. V. Turner, *From ritual to theatre. The human seriousness of play*, (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1982), 91.

<sup>262</sup> Performance is not just an expression of culture or change within culture, it is the eye culture uses to take a look at itself, the board on which creative actors show what they think is better or more interesting. V. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, (New York: PAJ Publication, 1987), 24.

<sup>263</sup> For P. Connerton, any ritual is a symbolic form of collective representation of action that produces communication only by means of performance. In P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 57-59.

<sup>264</sup> Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, “Secular Ritual: Forms and Meanings”, in Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (eds.), *Secular Ritual*, (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 18.

<sup>265</sup> Turner, *From ritual to theatre. The human seriousness of play*, 28.

<sup>266</sup> V. Turner, “Variation on a Theme of Liminality”, in Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (eds.), *Secular Ritual*, 46.







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dissolution of normative social structure and the institution of an alternative system (another world, another vision of Iași), the desired precursor of innovative normative forms: "the new Iași" and its new economic function are practiced at the exhibition.

Furthermore, performance has a reflexive function; V. Turner called the human "*Homo performans*"<sup>267</sup>, not in the sense an animal at the circus performs before the audience, but in the sense the individual can know himself better when he observes himself or the performance of another group. Thus, someone in Iași can know himself better as a local, the provincials can know the locals better by participating or just observing the way those involved in the festive mechanism of the exhibition present themselves, in a privileged space and time, without work, competition, threats<sup>268</sup>. The exhibition becomes a scene on which the ideal life of Iași is performed, it is a grand scale execution of the "mise en abyme" technique: the Park in Iași becomes a miniature Iași itself, with replicas of representative well-preserved historical monuments, with paved, clean alleys, with security – which induces safety –, with new pavilions exhibiting the best of the city, all sorts of goods, well-organized city transportation, joy and amusements; in the middle of all these, the model of Iași in the pavilion of the City Hall, just as idealized, attracts locals eager to see how their city really looks like, willing to waste minutes trying (not always successfully) to find their house in the miniature that does not offer the same markers they know: ruined buildings, destroyed pavements, faded facades, etc. This aspect of the performance is especially visible in 1935, when the locals are announced (and even invited) by the press they will be actors in the performance, they will be recorded on tape and thus serve proof and model for the rest of the country and the posterity, therefore they must adopt a proper attitude, a positive self-representation. The locals recorded in "The movie of Iași" would be actors in a performance that would present – by means

<sup>267</sup> Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, 81.

<sup>268</sup> In terms of symbolic forms (words, behaviors, images), "people actually represented themselves to themselves and to one another", C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 58.





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of visual language – a meta-comment („story a group tells itself about itself”<sup>269</sup>), that is, the image Iași has about itself, as it wants to be, as it can be. The film would be in cinemas in Iași the following spring, significantly advertised for the propagandist role it is attributed with in the construction and projection of a local identity: ”I and you and she and he will be seen in *The Movie of Iași*,”<sup>270</sup> ”The 2000m long *Movie of Iași* we all star in, together with the beauties of Iași.”<sup>271</sup>

C. Rivière<sup>272</sup>, commenting on V. Turner, observed that any cultural performance solves a crisis, because it employs partial determination (a clear, well-prepared scenario) to control general indecisiveness and uncertainty; a performance both factual and metaphorical of a cultural alternative, the performance of ”another” Iași, stronger, bright and appealing is the response to the crisis of Iași. In the Exhibition Park, a supernatural reality that becomes concrete by the very act of imparting (as in theater) – is communicated to the locals with a language that affects both body and sight<sup>273</sup> and cannot be ignored. This reality represents a model for the future, a message conveying safety, intensely affectionate to ease anxiety induced by the decline of the city, and a model with pedagogical role functioning as identity integration factor. Beyond the canonical message of the holiday – visible in symbols and declared by the organizers – the ”self-referential message”<sup>274</sup>, as R. Rappaport calls it, is transmitted (without it, the canonical message cannot even be conveyed!). It includes information regarding the current physical and psychological state of the participants, namely their joy and satisfaction, capable of leaving an imprint in individual memory.

Finally, the financial failure of the exhibition, despite the fact that the municipality always

<sup>269</sup> C. Geertz, ”Blurred Genres: The Reconfiguration of Social Thought”, *American Scholar*, 165-179, Spring, 1980, quoted by Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, 104.

<sup>270</sup> *Noutatea*, 18 februarie 1936, 3.

<sup>271</sup> *Noutatea*, 5 martie, 3.

<sup>272</sup> C. Rivière, *Les rites profanes*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), 32-34.

<sup>273</sup> Holidays always create lasting visual memories! In M. Vovelle, *Les métamorphoses de la fête en Provence. De 1750 à 1820*, (Paris: Aubier/Flammarion, 1976), 284.

<sup>274</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 52.





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declares enthusiastically its contentedness and optimistically<sup>275</sup> counts visitors, is part of the traditional paradigm of the holiday. Spending and excess are elements that produce the fundamental opposition to the quotidian and utilitarian and, in the case of municipal holidays, they prove the prosperity and happiness of the locals and rank<sup>276</sup> the organizing city before others which cannot afford to spend similar amounts. The money spent without profit translates and affirms political values first and foremost, a mark of the current system and ideology. It is what tribal society calls *potlatch*, wasting and spending to earn prestige and exhibit power;<sup>277</sup> the greater the waste and the embellishment, the greater the prestige before the rival that becomes dependent or partner.<sup>278</sup> Even if the municipality funds lessened and the ticket costs did not cover the expenses, at least there was a political benefit. In the duel with Bucharest, Iași came out as a visible center of power and prosperity for the rest of Moldova. The fact that the exhibition became permanent, according to the mayor's wish in 1935 – despite financial losses – is an indication of the desire to make the symbols of the power of Iași stronger, to show and dramatize a "resilient force"<sup>279</sup>.

The survival of Iași is based on producing an attractive representation of its continuity,<sup>280</sup> in a space especially designed, fit for the reaffirmation of social connections and the construction of a collective identity ("we, the people of Iași") with reference to an urban ideal.

<sup>275</sup> In any political holiday, the municipality expresses optimistically the participation of the population, seeking the unanimity that would make it legitimate. Vovelle, *Les métamorphoses de la fête en Provence*, 186.

<sup>276</sup> With expenditures and frandeur, the municipal feast is part of competition diplomacy. Chartier, *Lecturi și cititori*, 41.

<sup>277</sup> Balandier, *Antropologie politică*, 90.

<sup>278</sup> M. Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 60.

<sup>279</sup> J. Duvignaud observed the tendency of bourgeoisie to undermine holidays (parades are forbidden, that is) and preserve the festive space even after the holiday finished, as part of the coherence of progress! Duvignaud, *Fêtes et civilisations*, 135.

<sup>280</sup> Even in modern times, no society can survive uncertainty and crisis unless it produces and forces upon individuals a representation of its own continuity, unless it produces "imaginary roots". D. Hervieu-Léger, "Rites politiques et religieux des sociétés modernes", in E. Dianteil, D. Hervieu-Léger and I. Saint-Martin, (eds.) *La modernité rituelle. Rites politiques et religieux des sociétés modernes*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 15-18.





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To conclude, mayor Racovitză’s initiative to organize the “Months” (1935-1937) is part of the plan to revitalize Iași in the 30s, without giving in to passive lamenting and produces – with local means – a surreal dimension that becomes reality by dramatization. This dimension gives the people of Iași the possibility<sup>281</sup> to practise a fundamental living manner in a place designed for this purpose and in a distinct time, a practice of urban happiness completely different from everyday life and worries that can serve to create a new local identity, based on contemporary political economic values. With the help of the media, the municipality of Iași projects for the provinces and Bucharest an image of its force, its organizing and economic capacities that make its pretence of new center legitimate and advances a new strategy in the reconstruction of “the second capital of Romania” representation.

<sup>281</sup> But, like in any ritual, this behaviours are “not only models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it.”, Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 114.



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