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Abolitionism in the Danubian Principalities

Olivia H. Cull
St. Mary's Academy

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Olivia Cull
PSU Challenge History of Modern Europe
Mr. Vannelli
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"Will you dare count yourselves among the civilized peoples as long as it is possible to read in your newspapers, 'for sale, young gypsy woman'?"[1] Swiss-Romanian abolitionist Emil Coli de Guggsberg's democratic accusation reflects the surge in abolitionist movements throughout the Western world during the mid 19th century. Stirred by liberal values imparted by Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), many Western Europeans began to actively protest the imbalance of power in traditional, feudalistic hierarchies. One key facet of this revolutionary fervor was an increased effort to abolish traditional practices of slavery, which were seen by an expanding audience as abhorrent and shameful. These widespread trends of social reformation reached the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (a section of current day Romania) in the early 1800s. From the late 14th century to 1856, the economy of Wallachia and Moldavia heavily dependent on slavery.[2] Under the rule of early Tatars in the 14th century, wealthy aristocrats began to implement the slave trade in order to repay debts and maintain their vast plots of land."[3] Other sources point to the emergence of slavery as a means to suit the need for labor, most notably for blacksmiths.[4] A vast majority of these slaves were of Roma ethnicity (commonly known by the pejorative term Gypsy[5]); the principalities had enslaved the Roma for such an extended period of time that the Romanian word for "slave" (*rob*) and for "Gypsy" (*rom)* became interchangeable.[6] Yet, in the mid 1800s, Wallachian and Moldavian society slowly but

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[1] Gussberg, Emil C.*, "Le Philodace,"* (1841): quoted in Vesselin Popov, *Gypsy Slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia* (University of St. Andrews, 2013), 236.
[2] Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon., *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1972), 13-15.
[3]"Wallachia and Moldavia," *Project Education of Roma Children in Europe*, Council of Europe, accessed 19 November 2019, https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/ Source/FS2 /2.2_ wallachia-moldavia_english.pdf.
[4] "Gypsy Slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia," Research Gate, accessed 15 December 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235698657_Gypsy_Slavery_in_Wallachia_and_Moldavia.
[5] The common pejorative term for the Roma, *Gypsies,* originated out of the European middle age-era misconception that the ethnic group had migrated from Egypt. Bradford, Alison. "Roma Culture: Customs, Traditions & Beliefs." Live Science. Published November 11, 2018. https://www.livescience.com/64171-roma-culture.html.
[6] Ibid.

surely began to transition into a period of abolitionism; these trends became increasingly

apparent under the oppressive *Regulamentul Organic* (Organic Law), implemented in 1829, and

manifested in widespread revolts and demonstrations headed by a new, radical generation during

the late 1840s. Why, after five hundred years of slavery, did the Wallachian and Moldavian

governments become receptive to the idea of emancipation? And how, unlike so many other

countries' social revolutions, did the push for social change remain relatively peaceful? The

emerging nationalistic abolitionist movement in the Danubian Principalities was shaped by the

growth and implementation of locally-focused liberal ideals, social reforms that challenged

socioeconomic disparities across Europe, shifting power in the Wallachian and Moldavian

governments from monarchy toward democracy, and an influx of young, intellectual activists

and authors from the West.

   For centuries, the Danubian[7] principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were a

geographical bridge between the Ottoman Empire and Imperial Russia. Leading up to the 1800s,

Wallachia and Moldavia were under Ottoman suzerainty[8] and had been for the majority of the

previous three hundred years, with the exception of brief periods of Russian occupation

beginning in the mid 1700s.[9] Although the Ottoman Empire officially ruled over the Danubian

Principalities during this time, their usage of the *millet* system[10] allowed three powerful local

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[7]The Danubian Principalities include both Moldavia and Wallachia, two of the four principalities that are now united into the country of Romania along with Bessarabia and Transylvania. The term *Danubian Principalities* was coined in the Habsburg Monarchy in the early 14th century in order to designate an area on the lower Danube with a common geopolitical situation. "The Principalities of the Danube," *Harper's Magazine*, George M. Towle, accessed November 29, 2019, https://harpers.org/archive/1876/03/the-principalities-of-the-danube/.

[8]Kiel, Thomas J. *Romania's Tortured Road Toward Modernity*. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2006, 3-5.

[9]I.W. Roberts, *Nicholas I and the Russian Intervention in Hungary.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991; Studies in Russia and East Europe), https://link.springer.com/ chapter/10.1007%2F978- 1-349- 21195-1 _ 3 #citeas.

[10]Millet system: "Ottoman rulers believed that in an Islamic society, which their empire was, matters of family life, justice, culture, education, and the like were best left to the regulation of local communities. Thus, it was perfectly

groups to exert control over the slave trade and other internal affairs in Wallachia and Moldavia: the princes, the boyars and the church.

From around 1711 to 1821, Phanariot princes (*voivodes*) occupied the top position in Wallachian and Moldavian society. Phanariots were members of prominent Greek families who held honorable political roles in the ranks of the Ottoman Empire.[11] They were sanctioned to rule over the Danubian Principalities as a means of reestablishing Ottoman control after a period of skirmishes broke out between indigenous Wallachian and Moldavian rulers and their Ottoman overseers. Princes were elected by special assemblies (*andunarea obsteasca extraordinara)*, and were expected to serve for life.[12] As the most powerful leaders of local affairs under Ottoman, and eventually Russian, rule, princes had the right to appoint ministers and other officials. In addition, as the heads of a bureaucratic division mainly comprised of aristocratic landowners called *boyars*, each successive prince had central control over the city and village administrations, as well as the power to introduce legislation and regulate taxation. As a whole, they held a relatively conservative outlook on the fate of the local peasants, who suffered at the hands of the bureaucrats and were steeped in taxes.[13]

Second to the power of the prince were boyars, the powerful nobility. During the Middle Ages, boyars dominated the Romanian feudal system, buying authority from the prince and slowly developing a hierarchy of peasants, serfs, and slaves as well as and a monopoly of land; their estates covered an estimated half of Wallachia and Moldavia at the start of the 1900s. Their

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legitimate to grant a certain degree of independence to the Danubian Principalities. Kiel, *Romania's Tortured Road Toward Modernity*, 44.

[11] "The Phanariot rule of the Romanian Principalities," Radio Roma International, Steliu Lambru, published July 16, 2018, https://www.rri.ro/en_gb/the_phanariote_rule_of_the_romanian_ principalities- 258180.

[12] Kiel, *Romania's Tortured Road Toward Modernity*, 6-8.

[13] Ibid.

evolving relationship with the prince demonstrates a struggle for power throughout the decades; although princes exercised economic control over the boyars,[14] boyars had the power to elect and advise them. As part of the prince's council (*staful domnesc*), high-order boyars served as state judges and governors (*ban)* over divisions of Wallachia. With concentrated and high-reaching authority, the boyars standardized a system which ignored the rights of poor laborers and built a sturdy foundation of wealth for themselves and other nobles.

While the boyars exercised political power over Wallachia and Moldavia, high-ranking members of the Romanian Orthodox Church strengthened the conservative ideology among many high-class Romanians. The most powerful clergy included the bishops, metropolitans, and heads of monasteries, who represented both the social and political views of the prince and nobility; the prince had the power to elect clergy members, many of whom came directly from boyar families. Local clergy governed the church's daily proceedings, which involved the use of slaves. At the time, prospective Romanian priests were not required to receive seminary training and thus many came to the church as a means of climbing the social ladder. Priesthood was a position of respect and included a stable income stemming directly from boyars and from paid events such as baptisms, funerals, and weddings.[15]

These three social and political leaders--the princes, boyars, and clergymen--shared more in common than their power and wealth: they were all slave-holders. The vast majority of slaves (*robi*) in the Danubian Principalities were of Roma ethnicity. Although historians have not been able to specifically locate the birthplace of the Roma ethnicity due to a lack of written documents, the general consensus is that groups of Roma migrated from Northwest or Central

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[14] The princes regulated the boyars' taxes and appropriated the funds independently. Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

India and into Europe starting in the 9th century C.E.[16] Researchers gathered this knowledge by

connecting modern Romani dialects[17] to Sanskrit, as well as to Armenian and Persian dialects. In

addition, Roma populations have a high frequency of a particular Y chromosome and

mitochondrial DNA that are only found in populations from South Asia.[18] Their nomadic

beginnings can be traced back to the etymology of the word *Rom*, the singular version of Roma,

which reflects the Hindi word *Dom* for aboriginal people of India, who made up a section of a

low caste and were nomadic entertainers and artisans.[19] According to UNICEF, twelve to fifteen

million Roma currently live in Europe, 2.5 million of them in Romania.[20]

Many groups of ancient Roma sustained their nomadic lifestyles as they migrated across

Europe, travelling as part of large family units, or clans.[21] Migratory Roma travelled at least

seasonally along patterned routes that ignored national boundaries, a system that generally

received hostile responses from political leaders across Europe; many rulers forcibly furthered

Roma nomadism by legalizing exile, deportation, and even execution of Roma families. One of

these antiziganist[22] acts includes a 1710 Prague edict stating that "All adult [Roma] men [are] to

be hanged without trial, whereas women and young males [are] to be flogged and banished

forever."[23] As victims of such severe oppression, migratory Roma had few opportunities for

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[16]"Wallachia and Moldavia," Council of Europe.

[17] Roberts, *Nicholas I and the Russian Intervention in Hungary.*

[18] Concluded by a 2012 PLoS ONE journal study. Bradford, "Roma Culture: Customs, Traditions & Beliefs."

[19]Kenrick, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, 156.

[20] "Balkan Roma: Shunned, Illiterate, Hungry," Latest Crisis, Ljilja Cvekic, accessed December 15, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL17527227.

[21] A typical household unit may include the head of the family and his wife, their married sons and daughters-in-law with their children, and unmarried young and adult children. Bradford, Alison. "Roma Culture: Customs, Traditions & Beliefs."

[22]Antiziganism: hostility, prejudice, discrimination or racism which is specifically directed at Romani people. "Roma Persecution--Antiziganism--Intensifies in Europe," https://www.amnestyusa.org/roma-persecution- antiz iganism-intensifies-in-europe/

[23]Belinda Cooper, "We Have No Martin Luther King: Eastern Europe's Roma Minority," *World Policy Journal* (2001/2002) pp 69-78.

work, but they traditionally occupied positions suitable for frequent displacement such as horse trading, metalworking, craftsmanship, and performing, as well as unskilled labor in a variety of avenues.

According to scholar Nicolae Gheorghe, the Roma arrived in the Danubian Principalities in the 12th century during the era of Tatar rule.[24] They entered as nomads and were almost immediately perceived as inferior due to their unusual lifestyle and dark skin tone. There is significant debate about whether the Roma were already slaves upon arrival, or if they gradually filled the position as a result of an increasing need for labor forces in the Romanian principalities. The more established theory, however, is that the Roma were captured during Tatar raids and sold to Romanian princes. Romanians are said to have adopted the practice of slavery and much of their social system from the Tatars. In addition, before arriving in Romania the Roma had been enslaved in Bulgaria and Serbia.[25] The first documented evidence of Roma slaves in Wallachia is from a 1385 document issued by Prince Dan I to the Monastery of the Virgin Mary at Tismana that confirmed a gift of forty Roma families to the Monastery of St. Anthony at Vodita.[26] By 1428, Moldavia had begun practicing slavery as well.[27]

By the 15th century, Roma slavery was engrained in Danubian society under princely (state-owned), noble (boyar-owned), and monastic control. Princely slaves were ordered to work as gold-cleaners, bear-trainers, and blacksmiths, among other tasks,[28] and were allowed to

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[24] The Tatars are a Turkish ethnic group living mainly in Tatarstan who ruled over the area of modern day Romania in the 1200s.

[25] Andrei Otetea, *The History of the Romanian People* (Bucharest: Editura Stintifica, 1970), 330-370.

[26] David M. Crowe, *A History of The Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 17.

[27] Bahor Alexandra, "Forgotten History--500 Years of Roma Slavery in Romania," *Education for Remembrance of the Roma Genocide*, July 2, 2014, http://2august.eu/events/.

[28] "Wallachia and Moldavia," Council of Europe.

continue their nomadic lifestyle as countryside performers so long as they brought their wages directly to the prince. Slaves were most often transferred from princes to boyars in lots (*cetas*)[29] as gifts or during auctions at a fixed price, but they could also be inherited in dowry or gained as "spoils of war." These slaves' main purpose was to maintain the boyars' estates; they worked as manor servants and as field laborers throughout the Wallachian and Moldavian countrysides. Field slaves lived in collections of reed and mud huts on the outskirts of the estates (*satras*) seldom visited by their owners. Both boyar and princely slaves remained under the supervision of a *vatav* (overseer), who was often brutally cruel.[30] Similarly to boyar slaves, monastery slaves were given as gifts from the prince or nobles. They were used as cooks, grooms, coachmen, craftsmen, and timber collectors. These slaves, as well as those in other divisions working in close proximity to higher class Romanians, were forbidden to speak Romani in one of many attempts to strip them of liberty and cultural identity.[31]

Until the 19th century, Roma slavery was an unquestioned norm, so deeply ingrained in society that the economy depended on the Roma for their sustained labor. But a tide of revolution was stirring in many countries in the West, and Moldavia and Wallachia would not be left behind. The process of Roma emancipation was catalyzed by this continental push for social reform in the early 1800s.

By 1830, many European nations had already reshaped their economies to function without slaves, and others were actively uniting to push against the barriers of oppressive social structures. Still recovering from the social upheaval of the French Revolution, French armies

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[29]Cetas, also known as satras or salaces, are groups of Roma slaves that are sold as one purchase to slaveholders. Bahor Alexandra, "Forgotten History--500 Years of Roma Slavery in Romania."

[30] Ibid.

[31] In addition to preventing Roma slaves from speaking their native dialects, slaveholders forbid possession of musical instruments, only allowed slaves to marry with their consent: "The only right of a slave was to life." Ibid.

raged across Europe in the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) and briefly succeeded in unifying much of Western Europe, spreading the liberal ideals of "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" and promoting the abolition of serfdom, democracy, and demand for constitutional limits on monarchs.[32] The Vienna Congress of 1815 led to the condemnation of slavery in Austria, England, Prussia, Russia, and France.[33] By 1817, Serbia, Wallachia's neighbor to the West, had won its thirteen year-long struggle for independence from the deteriorating and oppressive Ottoman Empire,[34] and Greece followed soon after, gaining independence in 1830.

In the midst of these neighboring political and social conflicts, the Danubian Principalities experienced significant governmental development of their own.[35] Major shifts in the Phanariot regime[36] and the subsequent implementation of a new set of laws paved the way for a series of reforms which would slowly chip away at legal barriers to Roma emancipation. The passage of *Regulamentul Organic* (Organic Law) in 1829 was a result of both the Revolution of 1821[37] and Russian invasion of Bessarabia[38] in 1829, which led to Russian control over a portion of the principalities. Enacted by the Russian governor Pavel Kieselev, the *Regulamentul* initiated a period of boyar rule which favored the development of capitalism and free trade. It called for

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[32]"Napoleonic Wars," *European History*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed December 3, 2019. https://www.britannica.com/event/Napoleonic-Wars.

[33]"What was the Congress of Vienna?" History Today, Stella Gervas, accessed 4 December 2019, https://www.historytoday.com/archive/what-was-congress-vienna.

[34]Crowe, David M. *A History of The Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia.* New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994, 136.

[35] In spite of these political reforms, it would take until well into the 1850s to firmly secure emancipation of robi, and even later, in 1878, to win independence from the Ottomans and Imperial Russians and to unify as Romania. Andrei Otetea, *The History of the Romanian People*, 23.

[36]"The Phanariot rule of the Romanian Principalities," Radio Roma International.

[37]The Revolution of 1821 was initiated by a violent peasant revolt led by Tudor Vladimirescu that pushed the Ottomans to withdraw Phanariot rulers and regain autonomous power. "The Phanariot rule of the Romanian Principalities," Radio Roma International.

[38]Bessarabia is a region of Eastern Europe located directly east and northeast of the Black Sea. "Bessarabia" *Region, Eastern Europe*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed December 3, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/place/Bessarabia.

the separation of executive and legislative power, as well as the right for landowners to decide

what land they would allow peasants to use. This implementation forced peasants into even

deeper levels of economic instability and chronic hunger. Yet historians have argued that

Kieselev was "sickened by the concept of slavery on moral grounds," which is evident in his

decision to "set up a fund for redeeming [slaves] from vagrancy, and obliging them to build

houses and dwell in them."[39] However, he was not inclined to free them. According to Ian

Hancock, when a group of Roma attempted to bribe the prince with gold in hopes that he would

emancipate them, he angrily responded that they would "remain slaves forever."[40] Thus, despite

significant shortcomings, the reforms that the *Regulamentul Organic* did include defined

pathways for organizing political and economic structures lasting well into the 20th century.[41] It

revealed the corruption of local rulers and brought about the beginnings of a nationalistic social

activism movement.

Two key political leaders acted as pioneers of abolitionism during the period of

Regulamentul Organic despite pushback from many of their powerful peers. The first was Barbu

Stirbei, a wealthy landowner and a co-writer of the *Regulamentul*. In an attempt to earn the funds

he needed to renovate his palace in 1834, he held an auction to sell three thousand Roma slaves

in Bucharest. At the auction, "passers by quickened their steps and lowered their eyes so that

they didn't have to look at the men and women tearing at their rags in anguish."[42] Appalled and

disturbed by the public's reaction to the auction, Stirbei "hurriedly suggested abolition as a

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[39] Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History.* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998),
http://books.openedition.org/ceup/1551, 156.
[40] Crowe, David M. *A History of The Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia.*
[41] Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History.*
[42] Crowe, David M. *A History of The Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia.*

means of regaining face."[43] Although his proposal was quickly overridden by the boyars, nearly

twenty years later Stirbei would assume the Wallachian throne and succeed in ordering the

emancipation of state-owned slaves. Also in 1834, Wallachian governor Alexandru Ghica freed

his four thousand state slaves and granted them equal status to his white, working peasants. He

also permitted them to practice their customs and to speak Romani.[44] His act of emancipation

inspired a host of boyars to follow his lead in the coming decades.

While intermittently elected liberal leaders did contribute to reform various policies

regarding state slave's rights, progress was slow under the *Regulamentul Organic*. The church

had not yet changed its stance on slavery although some "enlightened prelates" occasionally

attempted to baptize robi.[45] The conservative boyars remained steadfastly attached to their estate

and field slaves, even persuading the prince to pass laws that would grant them greater power

over their workers.[46] On the other hand, a variety of reform programs initiated by liberalized

residents starkly combatted the conservatism of those in power and paved the way toward

significant economic reforms later in the century. A subset of this reform movement were the

"Forty-Eighters": an emerging group of liberal, young, wealthy intellectuals[47] who played an

enormous role in revealing the injust realities of slavery to the general population of Wallachia

and Moldavia, and soon enough, to the government.

Although the more general social reform movement and the Forty-Eighters emerged

around the same time (1830s-50s) and shared similar anti-conservative sentiments, the two had

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45]*The Roma in Romanian History*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European Press, 1998, 124.
[46]Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 257.
[47]Kiel, *Romania's Tortured Road Toward Modernity*, 36.

separate goals. Both groups were inspired by social activism in the West, and both were concerned with the principalities' unjustly imbalanced social system that enabled a relatively small percentage of the population to harness a vast majority of the area's wealth. Yet upon closer inspection, the general reformers mainly focused their efforts on the fight for economic freedom as well as independence and unification of the principalities, while the Forty-Eighters focused mainly on the fight against slavery.

In the 1830s and early 40s, many young men left their boyar families to study in the West at universities in Paris and England. While there, they developed an understanding of slavery as a shameful, oppressive, and increasingly obsolete entity;[48] enlightened, they returned to the principalities determined to fight for justice on behalf of the Roma. With them came foreign revolutionary exiles who added their experienced voices to the growing abolitionist movement. Together, these young people made up the heart of what was later to be called the Forty-Eighters as an homage to the major social revolution occurring in 1848 that was largely a result of massive spikes in abolitionist trends and social opposition to the government.[49]

Arguably the most effective catalyst of Roma emancipation perpetuated by the Forty-Eighters was the spread of abolitionist literature in the form of magazines, reports, and essays from a variety of authors. Mihail Kogălniceanu was one of the most influential abolitionist writers of the time.[50] In 1837, he published one of the first books written on the Roma hoping that it would "serve those voices who have risen up on behalf of the [Roma]".[51] He

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[48]Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History,* 245.
[49]The Wallachian Revolution of 1848 was a liberal and nationalist uprising in the Principality of Wallachia which sought to overturn the administration imposed by Imperial Russian authorities under the *Regulamentul Organic* regime. Ibid., 247.
[50]Mihail Kogălniceanu was a Moldavian liberal statesman, lawyer, historian and publicist."Mihail Kogălniceanu, 1817-1891 Biobibliografie," Al. Zub, accessed December 4, 2019, https:// www.ohio. edu/chastain/ip/kolganic.htm.
[51]Ibid.

was also an active journalist, exposing the harsh conditions of slavery by describing encounters with slaves from his childhood:

> I saw human beings wearing chains on their arms and legs...Cruel beatings and other punishments such as starvation, being hung over smoking fires, solitary imprisonment and being thrown naked into the snow or the frozen rivers, such was the fate of the wretched Gypsy.[52]

Writings such as these forced readers in the general public to face the horrifying realities of slavery.

Several other influential abolitionist writers were Cezar Bolliac, Eufrosin Poteca, and Emil Coli de Guggsberg. Cezar Bolliac contributed his poetry to the movement, writing the famous, "*The Boyar and the Gypsy's Daughter*"and calling fellow Wallachians and Moldavians to action: "Come all of you who have taken up your pens, driven by noble sentiment, teachers, journalists and poets, let all of us fight for [the Roma's] freedom" In a famous 1827 address delivered on Easter Day before Prince Ghica, Eufrosin Poteca called for the liberation of slaves using arguments from the Bible and the history of the church.[53] Emile Kohly, a Swiss immigrant, perpetuated his home country's Western social reform in the principalities through a number of essays including *Le Philodace*, stating that "slavery is the country's greatest shame, a black stain in front of foreigners."[54] His words rang true-- by the time the principalities began to embrace abolitionist views, most European nations had renounced slavery long before and had begun to criticize those who had yet to ban these inhumane practices.

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[52]Hancock, Ian F. The Pariah Syndrome: *An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Prosecution.* Ann Arbor, MI.:Karoma, 1987.
[53]Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History,*
[54]Cooper, "We Have No Martin Luther King: Eastern Europe's Roma Minority," 3.

With a final push from the Forty-Eighters and widespread acceptance of abolitionist

propaganda, rulers slowly began emancipating division after division of slaves. By 1847,

Wallachian and Moldavian princes had emancipated both state and church slaves. In the spring

of 1848, the Wallachian Forty-Eighters staged a revolution against Imperial Russian rulers

appointed under the *Regulamentul Organic*, demanding regulations on the power and wealth of

princes and boyars, as well as emancipation of privately owned Roma slaves.[55] Although the

revolution failed in its efforts to ban slavery, it succeeded in dissolving the *Regulamentul*

Organic and reinforcing the tenets of the abolition movement across Wallachia and Moldavia.[56]

By 1856, both Moldavia and Wallachia had abolished private slave ownership. Romanian poet

Adriano Colocci captured popular sentiment after the official end of Roma slavery in his book,

Gli Zingari (The Gypsies): "Come running, beloved brothers all-- /Today, come running all;/For

freed we are, by the Rumanian prince./Let us cry out with full voice,/So be it!"[57]

It is crucial in one's understanding of the process of Roma emancipation to recognize that

although ultimately successful, the attempts of social activists to demand abolition were more

often than not shut down with harsh punishment such as imprisonment or death.[58] In addition,

although de facto emancipation did lead to important advances in Roma rights and allowed many

groups to openly reclaim their cultural lifestyles, de jure regulations on Roma rights remained. In

place of slavery, the Wallachian and Moldavian governments enacted laws that forced thousands

of freed slaves to assimilate through sedentarization, tying them to many of the agrarian

occupations they had labored under during the era of slavery. They lived in ghetto-like villages

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[55] Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 246.
[56] Ibid.
[57] David M. Crowe, *A History of The Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia.* New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994, 33.
[58] Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 246.

on the edges of cities, living largely in squalor and, as always, subject to racial discrimination and disdain.[59] Others, in fear of being re-enslaved, migrated out of the principalities in to Western Europe, most notably to Spain, England, France, and overseas to the United States and Brazil. This movement is now known as the Romani Diaspora.[60]

The abolitionist movement in the Danubian Principalities was made possible by the propensity of traditional mindsets to change and grow, in a period of significant social reform. The progress of abolitionism depended on the public's increased willingness to reshape their idea of slavery, de-emphasizing the institution's economic benefits and more widely acknowledging its morally problematic implications. The liberal undercurrents of social and political change demonstrated by this movement are representative of social progress today- with time, dedication, and a political climate open to change improvement, activists can make a legitimate difference in the way their society is governed.

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[59] "In the popular mind, Roma continue to be thought of as dirty, lazy, uneducated people who have many children and live parasitically on social assistance. Media routinely identify Roma criminals by their ethnic affiliation." "Roma Children Kept Separate, and Unequal," *The New York Times*, Jacy Meyer, published 7 July 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/world/europe/roma-children-kept-separate-and-unequal.html.
[60] Cooper, "We Have No Martin Luther King: Eastern Europe's Roma Minority, 4.

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