

## THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE VISIT OF FRANZ FERDINAND IN ROMANIA (1909)

BERTONI DRAGOMIR Silviu \*

**Abstract.** *The article displays the presence of Frederic Wilhelm and Franz Ferdinand (the heirs to the Throne of Germany and Austria-Hungary) in Romania during the year 1909, when King Carol I was celebrating his 70th anniversary. Their visits came to strengthen the alliance between Romania and Austria-Hungary, both part of a much greater ensemble, the Triple Alliance. Given the importance of Archduke Franz Ferdinand for the Romanians, we have focused on how his presence in Romania was perceived by the Hungarians.*

**Keywords:** *Frederic Wilhelm, Franz Ferdinand, diplomacy, national movement, Romania and Austria-Hungary.*

A significant moment in the history of the Kingdom of Romania was the anniversary of 70 years of King Carol I and the attention given by Germany and Austria-Hungary to this event. In the context of increasing tensions in the Balkans, the Emperors of the two central European Powers found it necessary to congratulate Carol I, but more important to strengthen his ties with the Triple Alliance. In the spring of 1909 Kronprinz Wilhelm Frederick arrived in Bucharest and in the summer of the same year followed the visit of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg.

Frederick William arrived in Bucharest on April 6, 1909, accompanied by a group of twelve officers, including Lieutenant Schenk, General Rohrscheidt (Dragons Regiment), Colonel Oppen, Count Bismarck-Bohlen. The German delegation was expected by Queen Elisabeta, Prince Ferdinand and his wife Maria, the King's brother, Prince Charles Anton who came on the same occasion of the jubilee, Prince Charles, ministers and other important figures<sup>1</sup>. The Kronprinz was received as a true Sovereign<sup>2</sup>. The event enjoyed the attention of the Romanian press, regardless of their political orientation. For example, "Patria" noted that the visit was not only the proof of harmony that reigned between the two dynasties, or a tribute to Carol I, but a definitive consecration of the Kingdom's status, equal to any other state in world. Adopting the same tone, "Secolul" wrote about the political and economic ties that Romania had with Germany, the most important European Power<sup>3</sup>.

---

\*This paper was financed from the contract POSDRU/CPP107/DMI1.5/S/78421, strategic project ID 78421 (2010), cofinanced from European Social Fund – Invest in People, through The Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007 – 2013"; PhD. Teacher Elena Cuza National College Craiova, dsilviub@yahoo.com.

<sup>1</sup> Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istoric Centrale (S.A.N.I.C.), Colecția Microfilme, Anglia, rola 240, vol. 175, c. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, vol. III, 1901-1910, Editura ziarului „Universul”, București, 1936, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Belgia, rola 9, vol. 15, c. 208-209.

While the Kronprinz offered him the German army Feldmarschall stick, Carol I gave a speech which generated some comments over the antagonism between his position as King of Romania and the other as a soldier serving in the Second Reich's army. Here are his words: "For more than 50 years I have been closely bound to the brave army of Prussia; by my appointment as Generalfeldmarschall these ties have become indissoluble; thus my long military career receives an upsurge and a historical finish. This rare distinction, as well as many other proofs of affection that His Majesty shows me in all the circumstances, deeply excite my heart and I cannot express my gratitude in a better way than restlessly wishing the happiness and prosperity of Your Royal and Imperial Highness beloved Parents"<sup>4</sup>. The bond which Carol I mentioned in his toast, determined some assumptions and critics<sup>5</sup> according to which the King kept the pledge with his homeland until his death and that the compromise from the summer of 1914 was the consequence of his inability to go in a war against Germany. Just how German or Romanian was Carol I we cannot determine. A certain fact is that the decision taken in 1914 was mostly in favour of his adoptive country and the King accepted the will of the majority instead of imposing his point of view.

The visit involved a pragmatic purpose, recommended by the German plenipotentiary in Bucharest, Kiderlen-Wächter<sup>6</sup> – to flatter the Romanian people and the old King who was quite sensitive to this type of pleasantries. The existence of a national movement which claimed the emancipation of Romania from the Austro-German influence and adopting an independent foreign policy orientation determined the German diplomacy to seize the opportunity of the jubilee to remedy some of these shortcomings of the alliance between Austria-Hungary and Romania. The British Minister accredited to Bucharest, Conyngham Greene, observed these aspects and noted the German diplomatic success in his reports, but with the observation that in a country with an illiterate population (in an overwhelming proportion of 80%), it was quite difficult to maintain the pro-German enthusiasm (*Schuärmeri*)<sup>7</sup>.

In his correspondence, Carol remembered bitterly his poor state of health in the moment of the visit, something that restrained him to take part in all the events held in honouring his German guests. However, the Kronprinz deviated from the program to stay with King, saying that he came to learn from him how to guide himself in political matters<sup>8</sup>. Undoubtedly, from the young prince in

<sup>4</sup> *Cuvântările Regelui Carol I*, vol. II, 1887-1914, Fundația pentru literatură și artă „Regele Carol I”, București, 1939, p. 409.

<sup>5</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>6</sup> Teodor Pavel, *Mișcarea românilor pentru unitatea națională și diplomația Puterilor Centrale (1878-1914)*, vol. II, 1894-1914, Editura Facla, Timișoara, p. 218-220, annex LXI.

<sup>7</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Anglia, rola 251, vol. 724, c. 110. Sorin Liviu Damean, *Diplomați englezi în România (1881-1914)*, vol. II, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2009, p. 334.

<sup>8</sup> Sorin Cristescu, *Carol I și corespondența personală (1878-1912)*, Editura Tritonic, București, 2005, p. 459.

1866 to the wise king in 1909, Carol accumulated enormous experience in this part of Europe to share it with any prince eager to learn, but the German guest came rather to observe Romania's progress within the Triple Alliance and its position in a future continental conflict. His conclusion was that “in case of war Romania will refuse, at best, to fulfil its obligations as an ally or worse, will decide to join the opposite alliance”<sup>9</sup>.

In the summer of that year followed the visit of Franz Ferdinand, the chosen successor of Emperor Franz Joseph. Announced in 1908, the visit came one year after as the events in the Balkans postponed it. “*Neue Freie Presse*” noted the two visits confirmed the importance of Romania in the Balkan affairs and the trust the two Empires had in its current policy<sup>10</sup>. Being well known Franz Ferdinand's sympathy towards Romanian people and their hopes with him, an enthusiastic reception was prepared<sup>11</sup>. The event enjoys our special attention due to its impact on the Romanian national movement from Austria-Hungary.

Together with General Huyn, Major Brosch and Baron Rumerskirch the Princely Couple arrived in Predeal, the Romanian border point, in the afternoon of July 10, where they were greeted by Ferdinand and Maria. Carol I and his wife along with the Austro-Hungarian Legation members awaited the arrival of the couple in Sinaia. During the dinner gala, Carol I paid special attention to the Princess of Hohenberg whom he placed in his right side<sup>12</sup>. This gesture had a special significance as the status of a morganatic wife deprived Sophie of Hohenberg of such treats, things to which Franz Ferdinand was quite sensitive. It was the first visit of the Duchess with her husband abroad and also the first time she was treated as his equal. Remembering this episode, Count Ottokar Czernin considered that through this proof of “friendly tact”, Franz Ferdinand came to appreciate Romania, of course by associating the country with the image of Carol I and Elisabeta<sup>13</sup>.

The visit had an intimate character with the exception of some official celebrations. Without detailing, the King noted in his correspondence he dealt some political matters and discovered with joy the Archduke sound judgment. “He is focused in all matters and disagrees the repeated concessions they are forced to make to the Hungarians, which also embitter the poor Emperor's days”<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *România și Tripla Alianță la începutul secolului al XX-lea (1900-1914)*, Editura Litera, București, 1977, p. 72-73. The French newspaper „*Le Temps*” observed the influence the Germans had in Romania and accused the French authorities for loosing their influenc in this part of Europe. Constantin Bacalbașa, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>10</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Belgia, rola 9, vol. 15, c. 220.

<sup>11</sup> Sorin Cristescu, *op. cit.*, p. 461. Călin-Radu Ancuța, *Arhiducele Franz Ferdinand și rolul său în relațiile româno-austro-ungare*, Fundația pentru Democrație și Educație Politică, București, 2002, p. 150.

<sup>12</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Anglia, rola 251, vol. 724, c. 371.

<sup>13</sup> Constantin Graur, *Cu privire la Franz Ferdinand*, Editura „Adevărul”, București, 1935, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Sorin Cristescu, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

For four days Budapest's attention stayed focused on Romania, due to the Archduke attitude towards Hungary and the strained relations between the two neighbouring countries, at that time the public opinion from Romania being outraged by the arrest and conviction of deputy Aurel Vlad's wife. In these moments, an invitation was addressed to all the doctors in Romania to attend the Congress of Medicine in Budapest. Unanimously, the Romanian doctors rejected the invitation and addressed them a Memorandum approved by their political leaders, which presented the reasons of refusing to be guests of the "Romanian people oppressors". Finally, the crisis was avoided through the intervention of the Emperor who pardoned the deputy's wife<sup>15</sup>. Another incident took place on July 4th during the funerals of the director of "Gazeta de Transilvania" newspaper (Aurel Mureșanu), in Brașov where the funeral wreath sent by the union of journalists from Bucharest wasn't accepted to appear on the burial chariot, because the presence of the Romanian flag on it<sup>16</sup>. The union responded by issuing a national call which criticized the press processes and the abusive convictions dictated by the Hungarian authorities, in this way asking the Romanians to sustain the newspaper left without its most important figure<sup>17</sup>.

Of course, to the Hungarians satisfaction, incidents took place also during the Archduke's stay in Romania. Franz Ferdinand was welcomed in Sinaia by a delegation of several hundred Romanians from Austria-Hungary and other delegates came to represent the society "Transilvania" from Bucharest or "Liga Culturală". A controversial issue was the receiving of a delegation composed of Dumitru Popovici, Nicolae Mircea and Ion Scurtu, who gave Franz Ferdinand a homage parchment and presented the wishes of the Romanians from Transilvania. The next day, "Epoca" made public the obstacles Ugron (Secretary of Legation) tried to face the delegation and only an approach on Schönburg (Austro-Hungarian plenipotentiary in Bucharest), made the audience possible<sup>18</sup>.

Of course, their presence led to media attacks which blamed the Hungarian Archduke for staying no more than ten minutes in Budapest, while in Romania he received the "enemies of the Hungarians"<sup>19</sup>. This enthusiasm was well portrayed by Constantin Bacalbașa in his memories. He noted that the sympathy for Franz Ferdinand was accompanied by a great animosity against the Hungarians whose flags were at stake. Bacalbașa relates the case of a merchant who during that event displayed the Hungarian flag and was urged to do the same with the Austrian and Romanian

<sup>15</sup> Haus-, Hof-, und Saatsarchiv (în continuare se va cita HHStA), PA XVIII Rumänien, Karton 41, Berichte 1909, f. 317-318.

<sup>16</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Belgia, rola 9, vol. 15, c. 223. Idem, Franța, rola 25, vol. 6, c. 505.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, c. 225.

<sup>18</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op. cit.*, p. 234-235.

<sup>19</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Belgia, rola 9, vol. 15, c. 223.

flag. After he complied, he was asked to bring down the Hungarian flag, thereby an entire scandal<sup>20</sup>. Such unfortunate events were speculated by the press, and the Government had to disprove these incidents in an official statement<sup>21</sup>.

In an article of “Budapest Hírlap” noted the Archduke represented in Romania only the Austrian side of the Empire, and if he had been aware of those incidents he would’ve had to leave Romania immediately. Another publication “Budapest” requested the intervention of the Foreign Ministry to give explanations. “Pesti Hírlap” condemned the reception of the Romanian delegation, an achievement more than impossible in the case of Franz Joseph. No doubt, Franz Ferdinand intended to express his sympathy towards the nationalities of the Empire, particularly towards the Romanians. According to “Naplo” the Minister accredited in Romania was also responsible<sup>22</sup>.

Hungarian and Romanian press found each other in a fierce dispute, as the latter accused the “collective madness” of their neighbours, the oppression of the nations of the Monarchy and their guilt in compromising the good relations between Romania and Austria-Hungary<sup>23</sup>. As these critics continued, Schönburg had to intervene and ask Ionel Brătianu to stop the campaign promoted by “L’Indépendance Roumaine”. His answer was negative because the publication mentioned belonged to the Liberal Party and didn’t represent an official point of view. As he noted in his reports, Schönburg wanted to prevent the alteration of a press campaign into a larger dispute. His report also records the hostility generated by the school laws of Apponyi<sup>24</sup>. We also have to appreciate how Brătianu handled the matter and his attitude towards Schönburg, unlike that of D.A. Sturdza in the past. By being the leader of the most powerful party in Romania and also the President of the Government, Brătianu reconsidered the terms of the secret alliance between Bucharest and Vienna and the boundaries of the latter’s interference in Romania’s domestic policy.

Like the Romanian public opinion, Franz Ferdinand was outraged by the attitude of Hungary. In a letter from Major Charles Brosch to Vaida Voivod (13 July), we can see now the measures ordered against the Romanians from Transilvania who had the intention to greet the Imperial train of Franz Ferdinand. Brosch informs how in some regions the Romanians managed to reach the station and they were stopped and held like they were animals. Without indicating the Archduke’s position, Brosch recommended recording these incidents by the Romanian and Austrian press<sup>25</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the visit of Franz Ferdinand and his wife was an important event for the Romanians in the Kingdom and especially for those from Austria-Hungary, who put all their

<sup>20</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>21</sup> S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Belgia, rola 9, vol. 15, c. 223; Sorin Cristescu, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

<sup>22</sup> HHStA, Karton 41, f. 235.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 239-245; S.A.N.I.C., Colecția Microfilme Belgia, rola 9, vol. 15, c. 223.

<sup>24</sup> Teodor Pavel, *op. cit.*, p. 221-222, annex LXIII.

<sup>25</sup> S.A.N.I.C., fond Vaida-Voevod, 3/1908-1909, f. 7.

national hopes in the future reign of Franz Ferdinand. Confirming this attachment towards the House of Habsburg, Alexandru Vaida Voivod said in an interview that only this dynasty could change the political situation of the Romanians abroad<sup>26</sup>.

This visit was a successful “workmanship”. Franz Ferdinand was an unusual character in the outdated Habsburg Empire<sup>27</sup>, an exponent of the state’s modernization, a monarch who envisioned the consolidation of his power by being the Empire’s nations friend. His staying in Romania was used as a pretext and instrument to provoke Hungary. Still, Franz Ferdinand acted cautiously and his statements were moderate as he was aware that no matter the expectations of the Romanians from Transilvania or Bucovina, their future remained an internal matter of the Empire.

### Bibliography

- Ancuța, Călin-Radu, *Arhiducele Franz Ferdinand și rolul său în relațiile româno-austro-ungare*, Fundația pentru Democrație și Educație Politică, București, 2002.
- Bacalbașa, Constantin, *Bucureștii de altă dată*, vol. III, 1901-1910, Editura ziarului „Universul”, București, 1936.
- Cristescu, Sorin, *Carol I și corespondența personală (1878-1912)*, Editura Tritonic, București, 2005;
- Cuvântările Regelui Carol I*, vol. II, 1887-1914, Fundația pentru literatură și artă „Regele Carol I”, București, 1939.
- Damean, Sorin Liviu, *Diplomați englezi în România (1881-1914)*, vol. II, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2009.
- Graur, Constantin, *Cu privire la Franz Ferdinand*, Editura „Adevărul”, București, 1935.
- Haus-, Hof-, und Saatsarchiv (în continuare se va cita HHStA), PA XVIII Rumänien, Karton 41, Berichte 1909.
- Pavel, Teodor, *Mișcarea românilor pentru unitatea națională și diplomația Puterilor Centrale (1878-1914)*, vol. II, 1894-1914, Editura Facla, Timișoara.
- Rădulescu-Zoner, Șerban, *România și Tripla Alianță la începutul secolului al XX-lea (1900-1914)*, Editura Litera, București, 1977, The French newspaper „Le Temps” observed the influence the Germans had in Romania and accused the French authorities for losing their influence in this part of Europe.
- Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (S.A.N.I.C.), Colecția Microfilme, Anglia, rola 9, vol. 15; rola 25, vol. 6; rola 240, vol. 175; rola 251, vol. 724.

<sup>26</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op. cit.*, p. 23; HHStA, Karton 41, f. 376, 540-543.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Istoria Balcanilor. Secolul XX*, vol. II, Institutul European, Iași, 2000, p. 55.