

## A SUPPLIER OF THE ROYAL COURT IN THE TIMES OF CAROL I GRIGORE CAPȘA

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On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1868, on the ground floor of the former Slătineanu House, on the ancient Mogoșoaia Street, was inaugurated a new confectionery, named „At two brothers, Constantin and Grigore Capșa”. Few people were giving it more chances of success than to any other similar initiative that was functioning on the same important street from Bucharest. But those who believed that the new confectionery would have an ephemeral existence, were wrong. Thanks to Grigore Capșa, things didn’t happened this way.

Towards the end of the XIX century, he was named, with good reason, “master of modern confectionery and cuisine. He was born in 1841, in a worthy A-Romanian family established in Bucharest in the last decade of the XVIII century, through their grandfather, Dumitru Capșa, “furrier of thick”, left from the city of Moscopole (Epir). One of his boys, Constantin, the only one who inherited the founder of the family’s trade, becoming “furrier of thin on Bucharest’s market”<sup>1</sup>, married in 1818. Ana Vasiliu, the daughter of a merchant from Ploiești, gave him twelve children. Only nine of them lived – eight boys and a girl, Grigore being the last child. Four of Constantin’s sons were able to attend superior studies, with the help of the father, of the elder brothers and of the wealthy relatives from Brașov. They became “gentlemen” – Ștefan a doctor, Dumitru a theologian, Nicolae mathematician and Ion an engineer. The other four would have to embrace a trade so that they could support themselves, and that was the confectionery.

The fascinating and interesting “sweet” story of the confectioners in the Capșa family begins with the four years apprenticeship of Vasile Capșa in the “confectioner’s trade”. If he was going to “be hardworking, just, obedient and submissive to his master’s commands”<sup>2</sup>, he would receive a certificate from the confectioner Constantin Lefteru. Eventually this thing happened. After four years of apprenticeship and a probation period, Vasile Capșa founded, together with an older brother, Anton, who brought the necessary capital, the first Capșa confectionery. It begun to function on the 12 July 1852, in the Damari Inn ground floor, across the street from Zlătari Church (on this place existed „Hotel de France” and „Hotel Victoria” – n.n.). For a while another brother, Constantin, associated to this business.

The youngest brother, Grigore, after an apprenticeship in his brothers confectionery laboratories, left, on their expense, in 1864, to Paris. Here he was going to perfect his skills, under the guidance of Boissier, the master and owner of

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Nicolae Angelescu, *Negustorii de odinioară. Grigore Capșa și familia sa (1841-1902)*, București, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> National Museum for Romania’s History (further on it will be quoted M. N. I. R.), nr. inv. 291.971/ a-b.

one of the most famous confectionery and pastry commerce houses from the capital of France. Although the Empress Eugenia, Napoleon the III<sup>rd</sup>'s wife, promised him the title of supplier of the French Imperial Court and the Boissier House wanted to collaborate with him, Grigore Capșa decided in 1867 to return into the country. He announced his intentions: „as a Romanian I feel my country's need to own a place where everybody can find, every day and every hour, the thousands of sweets that made the fame of the best French confectioners”<sup>3</sup>. He started the commerce activity in April 1868, desiring to transform and develop the confectionery trade to the level of real art. Grigore Capșa wasn't by far intending to copy the French confectionery, pastry and cuisine. He was trying to combine and complete it with the autochthonous cuisine, dominated by the oriental products. In the confectionery from Mogoșoaia Street no.26 (later, after the street recounting, it became 48, then 36, which Capșa has today – n.n.) along with „a complete sweetness assortment” – of apricots, wild strawberries, pine-apple, gooseberry, morello cherries, raspberries, vanilla plums or with white nuts – you could find compotes, sponge cakes, pain d'Espagne, fruit paste and “a rich assortment of veritable Bossier bonbons, glazed sweet chestnuts, confided fruits, packet chocolate and bonbons” from Marquis, Perron,, Masson and Suchard and a “very rich and complete assortment of French cookies and fancy cakes, after the recipes of Boissier, Siraudin and Frascati Houses.

In time, thanks to his inventiveness and talent, but also to his French or Romanian workers, in Capșa confectionery and later in Capșa restaurant (in 1866 to the confectionery was added a restaurant and a hotel and in 1891 a coffee house that will increase the popularity) will be made a series of original preparations, most of them “addressed”. A notorious example is the Joffre cake (made for the French marshal Joseph Joffre – n.n.). It wasn't neglected neither the presentation of the products, mend to increase the attractiveness. Constantin was associated to the firm founded by Grigore Capșa until 1872. After only two years from opening, the Capșa brothers confectionery could praise with a rich collection of „pasteboard for all kind of assorted presents, exposed and awarded at the universal Parisian exposition. They also had “fantasy elegant bowl of sweets made of bronze or crystal, sculpted bowl of sweets made of rosewood, Brazilian rosewood... embroidered... surprises, dolls”<sup>4</sup>, and an “elegant service we took from Paris”<sup>5</sup> necessary at weddings, christenings, “great feast”. If to all these we add Grigore Capșa's habit to observe personally the firm's activity, we can explain why, at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the Capșa House – confectionery, restaurant, hotel and coffee house – didn't had rivals in Bucharest, in the country and we might say in Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> Advertising-catalogue *Maison de Confiserie, Rue Mogoșoaia, no. 26*, București, 1869, p. 3 la M.N.I.R., no. inv. 291.956.

<sup>4</sup> Advertising from the Official Monitor, 12 December 1870, M.N.I.R., no. inv. 292.050.

<sup>5</sup> Advertisement Special well assorted confectionery under the firm of two brothers C. and G. Capșa, M.N.I.R., no. inv. 291.969.

One of Grigore Capșa's nephews, Ștefan Capșa, speaking about the owner, said "not only that you could always find him in the office behind the confectionery, but at banquets he personally walked between tables and took care that each client be content. His greatest desire was that his products to be first class, to rival the finest French articles. Thus the Capșa buffet was the supplier of two Balkan Courts (of Serbia and Bulgaria – n.n.) and didn't miss, starting with the Palace, from any holiday, wedding or ball organized in our distinguished houses"<sup>6</sup>. We can add that almost every presence of Grigore Capșa and his articles at different contests and expositions organized at that time, in the country and abroad ended with a prize. We can mention the two honorable mentions and several gold medals gained at the universal expositions organized at Paris in 1867, 1873, 1875, 1883, 1889 and 1900, the merit medal received at the universal exposition from Vienna in 1873, the bronze medal received for the Romanian wine-making products exposed at Bordeaux in 1882 or the numerous prizes and medals gained at the co-operators expositions organized in the country. In 1900 he participated at the universal exposition organized at Paris which mend crowning of his entire activity. Here he won three gold medals, two "Grand-Prix", received the French decoration "The Legion of Honor" in officer rank and numerous complimentary appreciations from the press. Presenting him to the French public in the magazine „L'Encyclopédie Contemporaine”, the journalist G. Dervilly said that, thanks to the commendable initiative of Grigore Capșa, "today... the Bucharest has a confectionery and a pastry which are able to rival with the greatest houses of the kind from Paris ... Boissier, Marquis, Potel și Chabot .... They are the best of the alimentary establishments due to the care shown to all the delicate preparations, which are the table's luxury. Many of the greatest Parisian establishments hired, in different circumstances, workers from the Capșa House that became masters"<sup>7</sup>.

The products quality and presentation, the owner's solicitude and the styled and obliging personnel attracted the young Prince Carol I and his wife, Princess Elisabeth, two of the first customers, then the other members of the royal family, then Romania's king and his intimates, then the Palace's high functionaries. Long before he became supplier of the Princely Court of Serbia and of the Royal Court of Bulgaria, in 1875 and in 1908, Grigore Capșa received, after only one year of activity, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1869<sup>8</sup>, the license no.39 as a supplier of the Romanian Princely Court and then Royal Court. In the same time he received the Medal „Bene Merenti”, first class, which was only the first of a long series of recompenses. Carol I will give him the decoration „Romania's Star”, until the officer rank<sup>9</sup>. Grigore Capșa was one of the first persons decorated with the

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<sup>6</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], Capșa. 1852-1942, f. 140 la M.N.I.R., no. inv. 291.961.

<sup>7</sup> „L'Encyclopédie Contemporaine” no. 436 from 15 June 1900, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> Central Historical National Archives (further on it will be quoted A.N.I.C.), Royal House Fond, file 77/ 1866, f. 4.

<sup>9</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 122, in *loc.cit.*

Romanian national order “Romania’s Crown”<sup>10</sup>, reaching the commander rank. At all times the king Carol I and the other members of the royal family shown a deep respect and consideration to the Capșa House and its owners.

One of the most significant moments is the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom and the holidays that followed, for this occasion, between 10 and 13 May 1881. The day of 11 May 1881 was dedicated to the parade of the 43 “symbolic carts”<sup>11</sup> for the historical and economical becoming of Romania. King Carol I and Queen were to receive the “parade at Michael the Brave’s statue, and the symbolic carts were concentrated on the Highroad from where they would cross the Victoria Pathway”<sup>12</sup>. The monarchs were to assist “from the dais build in front of the Academy’s Palace at two a clock in the afternoon at the historical convoys parade organized by the corporations, Dobrudja, students, foreign colonies”<sup>13</sup>. The convoy was opened by the organizing members of the Executive Committee, followed by the students and costumed men who impersonated characters from the national history. After that followed the carts of agriculture, National Theatre, commerce, florists, weavers, dyers, shoemakers, hatters, bakers, sewers, cabmen, tramways, the sigh shooting Society, hunters, “the great Romanian National Masonic lodge”<sup>14</sup> and others. According to the press and the eye witnesses opinion “this parade was a great success for the organizers as well as for the artists who drew the carts or made them”<sup>15</sup>. „The allegoric cart of the confectionery and of the restaurants owners... created, made and staged by Grigorie Capșa” was one of the most inspired ones, along with those of the tramway Society, Lemaître foundry or the reunited Oppler and Luther brasseries<sup>16</sup>. In one of Carol Popp de Szathmari’s watercolours<sup>17</sup>, but also in the period photographs, it is pulled by three pairs of bulls preceded by two men on horseback who carries the flags of confectioneries and of restaurant owners. The cart itself is an oven placed under a baldachin on which it was written down “Capșa Confectionery”. On the table that surrounds the oven some confectioners were preparing sweets while others were baking them. In a corner some gentlemen elegantly dressed were sitting at a table, clinking champagne glasses. Other confectioneries accompany the cart carrying chocolate cakes, from which one was reproducing the royal crown. Before them walked Grigore Capșa himself, wearing a tailcoat, the decorations and in the right hand the top hat.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 105.

<sup>11</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altădată*, vol. I (1871-1884), București, 1935, p. 294.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> L’Indépendance Roumaine, year 5, no. 1.097 from 29 April (11 May) 1881, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op.cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 295.

<sup>16</sup> L’Indépendance Roumaine, year 5, no. 1.096 from 28 April (10 May) 1881, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> “The confectioneries and restaurant owners allegorical cart convoy parading before his Majesty the King on the Elisabeth Boulevard with the occasion offered by the Festivity of the crowning on the 11 May 1881. Composed, made and staged by Grigorie Capșa”, watercolour by Carol Popp de Szathmari, in the private archive Mircea M. Possa-Mihai Boureanu.

After 1881, the famous Bucharest firm and its owners – Grigore Capșa and his wife, Marie Obéline Capșa, were included, in the ceremonial of the annual celebration of the day 10 of May – the national day. Ștefan Capșa remembered that „for years, on the 10 of May, when the chariot <<à la Daumont>> that carried the monarchs from Palace to the Metropolitan seat stopped at Capșa. Here, one of Grigore Capșa’s daughters was lifted by her father or mother to offer the Princess, the future Queen Elisabeth, a wonderful flowers bouquet”<sup>18</sup>.

As supplier of the Royal Court, Grigore Capșa and his commerce house used to receive the invitation to organize all the official dinner parties where the Monarchs were present. On the 14/ 26 of September 1896 was celebrated the inauguration of the Iron Gates canal in the presence of the King Carol I, the Austrian – Hungarian Emperor Franz Iosef I and of the Serb King Alexander<sup>19</sup>. Grigore Capșa had the honor to prepare and serve first the official dinner party at Turnu-Severin, then the lunch, on the 16/28 September 1896, in the imperial train<sup>20</sup> which lead the three monarchs to Bucharest. The contemporaries thought that, during the Austrian–Hungarian Emperor’s visit to Bucharest the Capșa House was one of the most wonderful decorated and illuminated buildings on Victoria Street, along with Tobacco Administration, the Finances Ministry, the Official Monitor, Club Jockey, the Continental Hotel<sup>21</sup>. According to the already traditional habit, it was launched a new confectionery product – bonbons named after the Emperor Franz Iosef, “delicious as only the Capșa House knows how to do”<sup>22</sup>. There were also presented „gorgeous albums, wrapped in richly illustrated satin. The upper illustration represents the portrait of the Emperor (Franz Iosef – n.n.) and of the King (Carol I – n.n.), in center the Peleş Castle and as framing the Austrian and Romanian flags”<sup>23</sup>.

When the foundation stone of the new Constanța harbor was established, for three days – 16/ 28-18/ 30 October 1896 –, Capșa House was at all times present. In the first day was served a lunch at Cernavodă, where the invitation’s train made a stop, in the great hall where, a year before had been organized „the feast for the Cernavodă Bridge inauguration (Carol I)”<sup>24</sup>. In the evening of the same day, at the official festivity took part, along with the members of the Romanian royal family, the King Alexander of Serbia and the brother of Tsar Nicolae II, the Great Duke Boris Vladimirovici<sup>25</sup>. Capșa ensured the culinary contains and the good serving at the festive banquet, Capșa himself surveying everything. Each guest had the surprise to find, before his cover, “a black box...

<sup>18</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 180, in *loc.cit.*

<sup>19</sup> “L’Independance Roumaine”, year 20, no. 5.894 from 17 (29) September 1896, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, no. 5. 895 from 18 (30) September 1896, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, no. 5. 894 from 17 (29) September 1896, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, no. 5. 925 from 19 (31) October 1896, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

with the commemorative medal issued with this occasion .. an album with picture postcards of the ancient and future harbor and the habitual menu ... of the Capșa House, written with golden letters with the royal initials”<sup>26</sup>. The second day the same firm ensured the menu “served on the river (Danube – n.n.) by the royal family”<sup>27</sup>, and on the 18/ 30 October 1896 served the lunch on the ship „Orient”, to one of its regular “clients”, the King Alexander of Serbia. With this occasion were served the new creations of Capșa confectionery mend to remember his the years when, as a teenager, visited with his mother the Capșa House: the “Alexander” chocolate and bonbons, presented in a box that had the king’s portrait on the lid. Satisfied and delighted by the services offered by Capșa House, the young Serb monarch decorated with the “Tacowo” order some members of the staff<sup>28</sup>.

On the occasions from autumn 1896, Capșa House will also launch the sweets “Carol I” and “Constanța”<sup>29</sup>, the bonbons „Boris”, „François Joseph” and „Le Souverain”<sup>30</sup>. At the wedding and the arrival of the heir Princes, in 1892-1893, Grigore Capșa dedicated them a series of confectionery products, both to Ferdinand and his beautiful young wife. Among them were the creme „Princesse” and the icecream „Princesse Marie”<sup>31</sup>. At the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, Capșa House, as supplier of the Royal Court, prepared and served, in the best conditions, banquet menus. One of them was organized on the 1/ 3 July 1898, “to celebrate the launch of the ships King Carol and Princess Maria”<sup>32</sup>, another one was dedicated by the Romanian Artillery to King Carol I, in May 1902, at 25 years from the proclamation of the national independence. A banquet was organized by the External Ministry, on the 11 May 1906, as part of the jubilee celebrations for 40 years of King Carol I’s reign.

The presence of the commerce house, so skillfully lead by Grigore Capșa, is sensed on all the balls from the high Bucharester society, beginning with those organized by the Royal Palace where, after 1892, the throne heirs were permanent. The presence of the heir princes and especially the young and beautiful Princess Maria’s appetite for this kind of parties, gave the King Carol I the occasion to miss, as much as he could, from these parties. Whenever he could he incriminated his niece’s inclinations. Even though he had to be present at the balls and suppers organized at the Palace, he was retiring at 1,00 or the latest at 3,00 in the night. After the king’s departure the party was loosing from its sobriety and coldness and

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 122 in *loc.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> “L’Independance Roumaine”, year 20, no. 5. 894 from 17 (29) September 1896, p. 1; no. 5. 925 from 19 (31) October 1896, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Receipts kept from Capșa House, f. 17-18, in the private archive of Mircea M. Possa-Mihai Boureanu.

<sup>31</sup> The menu of the banquet organized on 11 May 1906, M.N.I.R., no. inv. 291.978.

<sup>32</sup> The menu “to celebrate the launch of the ships King Carol and Princess Maria”, with the personal signature of Grigore Capșa, M.N.I.R., no. inv. 291.976.

became more exuberant, in a more relaxed atmosphere. From a description made by the famous chronicler of the society life in the last quarter of the XIX century, Mișu Văcărescu-Claymoor, we find out interesting and sometimes spicy details about the ball organized after the Easter of 1896 in the house of general G. Manu. Mișu Văcărescu-Claymoor mentioned the presence of the Royal Highnesses Prince Ferdinand and Princess Maria and he described her clothes. She was wearing „with her usual grace and elegance a dress Queen Amélie style from white satin, bodice in pleated points of silver brocade, surrounded by garlands of roses, pointed by turquoises surrounded by brilliants.” Regarding the buffet, Claymoor says with enthusiasm: „Capșa House made wonders”, because it was transformed in “a delight place”. Grigore Capșa and his firm also set the table and organized the party in an impressive way: „in front of each table companion is placed the menu, framed with roses, lilac and buds”. In the morning took place “the great distribution of flowers, rosettes, Eastern eggs with surprises charming bibelots”<sup>33</sup>. One of the great attractions in Bucharest around eastern was “The Capșa House exposition of eggs and surprises”. It included eggs made of gold, silver, bronze, porcelain, faience, satin, wood, most of them being real art objects. At the ball organized in February 1902 at the Royal Palace<sup>34</sup>, Capșa House served the buffet and supper. This time King Carol was also present, but he retired, as usual, around 3,00 o’ clock, leaving the princely pair as hosts until the end of the party, around 6,00 o’clock in the morning.

As supplier of the Royal Court, Grigore Capșa had to be present, with his products, also at the charity “kermises” organized in the Park of Cotroceni Palace, under the high patronage of Princess Maria. Such were those organized by the societies „Obolul” and „Materna, on the 21 May 1902, when „all the distinguished society from Bucharest wanted to assist and to support this beautiful festivity”<sup>35</sup>. Although it had rained a bit “a lot of luxurious groups stretched on the Cotroceni street”, and in front of the “Palace’s monumental gate madams Zoe D. Sturdza and Maria E. Petrescu were selling tickets”<sup>36</sup>. In a „modern-styl” pavilion was improvised a bazaar leaded by Princess Maria dressed in a national costume from Sinaia area, helped by a group of young ladies, also dressed in national costumes. Among them were Pia Brătianu, Elena Râmnicănu, Lola Aurelian, Ana Lahovary, Ioana Ghica, Eliza Băicoianu, Elena L. Catargi. There were also present officers of the Regiment 4 Roșiori, who’s honorary commander was the heir Princess<sup>37</sup>. „Tireless and charming, the gracious Romanian Princess sold numerous art objects made by the very hand of Her Highness. [...] There were paintings, embroideries, furnitures, bibelots etc., along with other donations made by artists and

<sup>33</sup> “L’Independance Roumaine”, year 20, no. 5.739 from 2 (14) April 1896, p. .

<sup>34</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 141 in *loc.cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Nicolae G. Pravilă, *Majestatea Sa Regina Maria a României. Însemnări biografice*, București, 1916, p. 43.

<sup>36</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 143 in *loc.cit.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

dilettantes”<sup>38</sup>. Left of the pavilion functioned “an American bar organized by Capșa [...] leaded by the ladies Elena Simu, Aristia Dissescu, Maria Hagi Panteli”<sup>39</sup>. In the next years these manifestations will take place with the invaluable participation of Capșa House, in the huge Cotroceni Park. Such was the evening party organized by Princess Maria on 22 May 1904<sup>40</sup>, for the benefit of “Materna” society.

At the anniversary of 60 years of existence of the famous Bucharester House, in January 1913, King Carol I transmitted to the firm’s management, through his private secretary, Louis Basset, “the most sincere wishes so that the future of this industrial settlement, be as blessed as its worthy past”<sup>41</sup>. In this way the King was underlying its merits and was thanking Capșa House for the services brought to the Romanian Royal House, whenever it needed.

Unfortunately, the man who represented the firm’s “worthy past”, its founder, Grigore Capșa, was no longer alive at this anniversary. He died on the 23 December 1902, in the Christmas Eve, when Capșa House, veiled in the tempting smell of sponge cakes and traditional “surprises”, was assaulted by its numerous clients. The man who founded the Bucharester modern confectionery and pastry commerce and contributed to its thriving, gained success and honor only due to his tireless work. To the already mentioned decorations added, in 1900, the Serb order “Tacowo”, in commander rank. A few years earlier, King Alexander of Serbia gave him the same order, in officer rank. Recognizing his merits and competence, “The European Scientific Institute”, elected him as a member, in the Parisian union organized in 1885. With the same occasion they handled the society’s medal, engraved with the owner’s name: “A. M. G. CAPȘA” (To Mr. G. Capșa – n.n.)<sup>42</sup>. On the 25 June 1889, another European society with professional character, France’s “National, Manufacturer and Commercial Academy” “in the national Assembly organized in Hotel de Paris, accepted as a member Mr. Capșa (Grigore – n.n.) from Bucharest”<sup>43</sup>. Finally, his guild brothers, considering his the best on them, chose him in 1896, President of the Commerce and Industry Chamber in Bucharest. It was a “period when the problem of the too high interests and the too

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<sup>38</sup> Nicolae G. Pravilă, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>39</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 143 in *loc.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op.cit.*, vol. III (1901-1910), București, 1936, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> The letter of Louis Basset to Nicolae Zanne, București, 12/25 January 1913, f. 1 v, M.N.I.R., no. inv. 292.096/.

<sup>42</sup> M.N.I.R., no. Inv. 295.518. Founded in 1849 at Smirna and stopping the activity for a while, “The European Scientific Institute” was refounded in Paris, in 1877 by L. C. Larapide-Delisle and, according to some clues from his emblem – balance, torch and motto “One for all and all for one” –, it could be a masonic type society. We haven’t got any clues that Grigore Capșa would have take part in a French or Romanian masonic lodge, subordinated to those in France, but on the contrary, he himself considering this society among those with scientific and professional character in which he was a member.

<sup>43</sup> The member diploma of “the National Agricol, Manufacturing and Commercial Academy” from France, 25 June 1889, in the private archive of Mircea M. Possa-Mihai Boureanu.



expensive transportation of the local products were very worrying for the Romanian merchants manufacturers<sup>44</sup>.

Grigore Capșa was a member of the Conservative Party, instituting this tradition in the Capșa family who's members, with only one exception<sup>45</sup>, activated in this party until its disappearance from the Romanian political stage. Grigore Capșa entered in the militant politic in 1891 and was elected, during two legislatures, senator of Capital's First College<sup>46</sup>. As a wealthy and respected citizen, he activated, starting with May 1874, in the second company of the Civic Guard from The Red Color, where we find him in 1880 as member of "the officials corps from the Civic (Red) Guard's second legion from Bucharest"<sup>47</sup>. Between 1899 and 1901 he became member of the Communal Council<sup>48</sup>, Capital's mayor being Barbu Ștefănescu-Delavrancea.

Righteously believed the fate's spoilt, he actually proved to be quite a regular man. He died tormented by a disk hernia<sup>49</sup> and seemingly by ... diabetes<sup>50</sup>, but mostly by the death of his only son, Anton, a law student, of only 21 years old, in a stupid riding accident. Capșa had prepared him to step onto his footsteps. Grigore Capșa left behind a solid and profitable affair and his heirs – Nicolae Zanne, son in law and Ștefan Capșa, nephew –, respecting the moral testament of its author, will ensure its stability and prosperity until the beginning of the Second World War. To prove this affirmation it is enough to remember three of the most memorable events from the history of "House Gr. Capșa", as the firm was called after its founder's death: 1905 – the activity's extension to Sinaia, first of all due to the existence of the Peleș Castle and the presence of the royal family and, during summer, of the Bucharester upper crust, in the mountain spa. "Capșa Villa"<sup>51</sup> was placed on Ghica Boulevard in Sinaia, in a new building, especially build and "arranged with terraces and a huge consumption hall"<sup>52</sup>. Here were served especially confectionery and pastry products, coffee, tea and lesser kitchen products. The visitors of "Capșa Villa" were profiting of concert and symphonic music, leaded by Grigoraș Dinicu and his orchestra, a thing which couldn't happen in Bucharest; 1906 – its active presence during the yearly jubilee, Capșa House having its own pavilion in the "Romanian General Exposition" from Carol Park<sup>53</sup>;

<sup>44</sup> Dr. Nicolae Angelescu, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> It is about Ionel Nicolaescu (1892-1981), entered in the family by marrying with one of the nephews of Grigore Capșa, Margareta, daughter of Anei of Montlebert, former Capșa. He was a member of the National Liberal Party, becoming a senator.

<sup>46</sup> George Potra, *Din Bucureștii de ieri*, vol. I, București, 1990, p. 406.

<sup>47</sup> Romanian Academy Library, Stamps, F VII 25.280-92.

<sup>48</sup> Constantin Bacalbașa, *op.cit.*, vol. II (1885-1901), București, 1928, p. 263.

<sup>49</sup> Marie Obéline Capșa, *Historique véritable des deux maisons de confiserie Capsa à Bucarest*, Paris, 1909, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Mircea M. Possa, *Calea Victoriei nr. 36: Capșa*, in "Cotidianul" on 4 June 1992, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Images of the „Capșa Villa” from Sinaia, in the archive Mircea M. Possa-Mihai Boureanu.

<sup>52</sup> [Ștefan Capșa], *op.cit.*, f. 153.

<sup>53</sup> The pavilionul of Capșa House at the General Exposition, 1906, M.N.I.R., no. inv. 292.065.

1922 – the banquet organisation, the menu preparing and serving<sup>54</sup> “at the crowning feast” organized in the Unity Hall at Alba-Iulia. These celebrations followed the crowning of King Ferdinand and Queen Maria as Sovereigns of the Great Romania.

## **UN FURNIZOR AL CURȚII REGALE ÎN TIMPUL LUI CAROL I GRIGORE CAPȘA**

- Rezumat -

În studiul de față, autoarea face o radiografie pertinentă a uneia din firmele cu renume ale Bucureștilor care, deși are o vârstă venerabilă de peste 150 de ani, și-a păstrat, aproape intact, renumele, fapt care se datorează, în principal, celui ce a înființat-o pe locul și în clădirea unde funcționează și astăzi - Casa Capșa. Dar cofetăria deschisă sub firma „La doi frați, Constantin și Grigore Capșa”, la 23 aprilie 1868 la parterul Caselor Slătineanu, nu era prima cofetărie din București, situată tot pe Podul Mogoșoaiei (din 1878 Calea Victoriei – n.n.) și aparținând de asemenea unor membri din familia Capșa.

Din acest motiv, pentru a ajunge la activitatea casei de comerț întemeiată și condusă de Grigore Capșa, autoarea ne face cunoscute o serie de amănunte legate de venirea în țară a vrednicei familii de aromâni Capșa, către sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea, când Dumitru Capșa, plecat din Moscopole (Epir), se stabilește în București practicând meșteșugul cojocăriei. Doar unul dintre băieți, Constantin îi va urma într-ale meseriei, devenind „cojocar de subțire pe piața Bucureștilor”. Căsătorit cu Ana Vasiliu, fiică de negustor aromân din Ploiești va deveni tatăl a doisprezece copii, din care-i vor trăi nouă – opt băieți și o fată. Din cei opt băieți, patru ajung „domni” (un medic, un teolog, un matematician și un inginer), iar ceilalți patru învață și practică meșteșugul cofetăriei, primul școlit ca ucenic la un cofetar, fiind Vasile care, împreună cu frații săi Anton și Constantin deschide, la 12 iulie 1852, prima cofetărie Capșa ce se afla la parterul Hanului Damari, vis-à-vis de Biserica Zlătari.

În ceea ce-l privește pe mezinul familiei, Grigore, se va specializa în arta patiseriei, cofetăriei și bucătăriei franțuzești, cu ajutorul pecuniar al fraților mai mari, la celebra casă de comerț pariziană Boissier, timp de patru ani. Deschizându-și propria afacere pe care, din 1872, o va conduce singur, ajutat de soția sa franțuzaica Marie Obéline Vautier, Grigore Capșa n-a dorit să copieze întocmai produsele franțuzești, ci a încercat și reușit cu succes să pună de acord cofetăria, patiseria și bucătăria franțuzească, completând-o, combinând-o și îmbunătățind-o, cu cea autohtonă, dominată de produsele de factură orientală. Datorită priceperii,

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<sup>54</sup> M.N.I.R., no. inv. 291.980.

talentului și inventivității sale și a lucrătorilor lui francezi și români, Grigore Capșa, numit, cu temei, către sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea „maestrul cofetăriei și al bucătăriei moderne”, a reușit să-și transforme meșteșugul în adevărată artă. Mărturie stă renumele de care s-a bucurat în țară, dar și peste hotare probat de numeroase premii și concursuri începând chiar cu mențiunile obținute la expoziția universală de la Paris din 1867, pe când își făcea stagiul de pregătire la Casa Boissier și culminând cu cele trei medalii de aur și două Grand Prix-uri primite pentru participarea sa la expoziția universală din capitala Franței din anul 1900.

În consecință, nu este de mirare faptul că la numai un an de la crearea firmei, la 12 iulie 1869 primește brevetul cu numărul 39, de furnizor al Curții Princiare și apoi Regale a României, fiind recompensat cu medalia „Bene Merenti”, clasa I, cu decorația „Steaua României”, până la gradul de ofițer, numărându-se printre primele persoane decorate cu ordinul național „Coroana României”, până la gradul de comandor. În 1875 Casa Capșa va deveni furnizor al Curții Princiare a Serbiei, iar în 1908 a Curții Regale a Bulgariei. Totodată Grigore Capșa a fost primit în rândurile membrilor unor societăți de profil, din Europa, iar confrății săi l-au ales în 1896, președinte al Camerei de Comerț și Industrie București. În sfârșit, ca membru al Partidului Conservator a ocupat poziția de senator pe parcursul a două legislaturi.

Probând prin numeroase exemple, autoarea articolului demonstrează că, în calitate de furnizor al Curții Regale, Grigore Capșa, iar după săvârșirea sa din viață în 1902, cei care i-au succedat în afaceri la de acum, „Casa Gr. Capșa”, asigurau serviciul și produsele la toate balurile de la Palat, chermezele de binefacere patronate de membri ai familiei regale și princiare a României, între care cel mai adesea s-a făcut remarcată fermecătoarea Principesă și apoi Regină Maria, la mesele festive ocazionate de evenimente precum inaugurarea Podului Carol I de la Cernavodă (1895), inaugurarea canalului Porțile de Fier și punerea pietrei fundamentale a noului port Constanța (1896), banchetul încoronării de la Alba-Iulia (1922) ș.a.

Concluzionând, autoarea reușește să demonstreze cu probe indubitabile de ce Grigore Capșa merită pe deplin numele de „glorie națională” pe care i l-au dat chiar contemporanii săi, iar Bucureștii îi datorează, în bună parte, titulatura de „Micul Paris” atribuită lui, pe bună dreptate, mai ales din primele decenii ale secolului al XX-lea.