

ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND CAROL I

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From the very first year of his reign in Romania, Prince Carol of Hohenzollern got involved directly in the external politics of his adoptive country. The small Danubian state which was to be ruled by the foreign prince 48 years (1866-1914), was settled at the confluence of the neighbouring Great Powers influences and subjected to their evolution. Therefore it was necessary to develop a balanced politic so to achieve the Romanian nation's objectives: independence and the reinforcement of Romania's role in south-eastern Europe. This thing was not so easy and Carol the Ist and the Romanian diplomacy confronted many problems on the external plan.

First of all, the main obstacle was Turkey, which wanted to own a big part of the Balkans and imposed very hard conditions for the recognition of the new prince. They wanted to respect the existing vassal relations, the name of Romania was out of discussion, the hereditary princely dignity was not recognized and so on. In the context of the conflicts between Serbia and Crete, the Ottoman Empire didn't diminished its intransigence and accepted the mediation offered by emperor Napoleon the IInd between Istanbul and Bucharest. France didn't wanted to offer a very decided support to Romania, although Napoleon had influenced the election of Carol the Ist. Both France and England had their own interests in Turkey.

But the most important obstacle for the Romanians was cleared away in October 1866, when Carol I paid a visit to Istanbul and received the ordination of investiture from Sultan Abdul-Aziz. On that occasion, he knew how to avoid „certain humiliations prepared for him with subtle Byzantine cunning”¹.

The fact the Prince did not observe all the canons established by the Porte shows Romania's striving for independence. At the same time, the discussions with the diplomatic corps in Turkey's chief town, the fact that the prince was granted the „Osmanie”, Order the imperial guard parade in front of the prince, acts never allowed before to any Romanian prince, meant the prince was shown the political respect imposed by the diplomatic usage. Back to Bucharest, Carol affirmed the sultan had officially recognized him as the Prince of Romania.

In 1867, in his address delivered at the opening of the Parliament, he strongly asserted that the relationships with the foreign powers had become normal. But not for long time, for both the Prince and the Romanian diplomacy had to show ability in politics, both for keeping the country's stability abroad and for dealing tactfully with the new powers which were suspicious about any of Romania's movements.

¹ N. Iorga, *Politica externă a Regelui Carol I*, 1991, p. 44.

The Romanian orientation towards the Christian neighbours from across Danube led to the forming of some regional alliances in Balkans, especially with Serbia and Greece. The purpose of the Romanian diplomacy was to support the Balkan nations against the Ottoman suzerainty. It signed with Serbia a treaty but with Greece no alliance was materialized. Anyhow, Romania's attitude was disapproved by the Great Powers.

After 1868 could be noticed even a major reorientation in the external politics, when the coalition government led by Dimitrie Ghica declared that the main target of the Romanian diplomacy was to cultivate the good relations with the Great Powers. These were considered by Carol I as the safest means to achieve Romania's goals and wanted to get closer to Germany and Austro-Hungary.

The directions of the country's foreign policy were also made evident, among others, by the high level visits paid to Romania's Court by princely or royal guests, opportunities taken for solving many important matters. The same rules and standing customs were observed at Romania's royal court as with other Courts in relation to reception of guests, receptions, audiences etc. Carol I had learned the importance of observing the court ceremony from his father, Carol Anton of Hohenzollern, who had recommended him to apply the standing customs of the Court of Berlin and not the Levantine ones. However, in Romania there were no written and invariable rules regarding the reception of foreign sovereigns and princes (this situation being still present after 1875, when the court's marshal, Theodor Văcărescu, elaborated the Ceremonial Rules, further complemented in 1881). Thus, the reception ceremonies were organized according to the personal directions of Carol I, for each case apart, each of such ceremonies being an indication not only of the etiquette observed at the sovereign's residence, but also the nature of the country's international relationships.

Royal guests were received in Bucharest and later on in Sinaia, in a festive atmosphere, planned by the sovereign and by the officials.

The visit to Bucharest of the Prince Mihai Obrenovici of Serbia (April, 1867) was classified as one of those visits enjoying special attention by the public opinion. It seems the Serbian prince asserted that both countries had the same interests in breaking up with their vassalage toward the Turkish (this visit resulted into the signing of a Romanian-Serbian alliance treaty, one year later).

Jerome Napoleon, Royal Prince of France, also enjoyed a beautiful reception in Bucharest, a visit much commented by the European press. Arriving on June 12/ 24, 1868, the Prince was enthusiastically welcome by Romanians „by virtue of the name Napoleon and in memory of the kind acts of France”².

The background of this visit was, however, one of deep dissatisfaction of France with Romania. One of the reasons was the intention of Carol I to replace the French military mission by Prussian instructors. The second reason was the

² *Ibidem.*

Romanians' intention to get closer to Russia. Indeed, at the time, Romania was finding it would be better to enter into friendly terms with Russia, which could become a dangerous enemy at any time.

That is why the Romanian mission sent to Petersburg, in 1868, provoked a diplomatic unrest of the great powers. Emperor Napoleon III even blamed Carol of an intention of proclaiming independence and the Kingdom on May 10. Following this rumor, not only France, but England and Austria were furious, too.

But, despite the kindness of the inhabitants of Bucharest, the guest seemed to be uncompromising. There is only one explanation for the Prince's "original" conduct: Prince Napoleon was still dizzy because of the speed of the eight-horse coach that transported him between Giurgiu and Bucharest. It seems that travel had not been too pleasant, as in spite of the Prince's request to have the coachman slow down the pace of the horses, the amphitryon had given opposite orders. Thus, after such a „joke”, Prince Napoleon breathed freely when the coach arrived at the palace in Bucharest. While Prince Carol was proud of the opportunity to show what the Romanian coach system could do, Jerome Napoleon told him: „Romania does not need railways, for, here, the coach services are as fast as the railways ones”³.

Cheers did not affect the French Prince in the least, he had no smile for the young ladies who were throwing him flowers from the windows; but he said this to I.C. Brătianu' teeth: „you are entirely into Russian waters”⁴. However, the friendly reception went on. On June 13/ 24, he was taken to the monasteries round Bucharest and, in the evening, a picnic was organized for numerous participants at Cotroceni, with lights, fireworks and folk dances. In spite of all these, this attempt to regain, somehow, France's confidence did not have the expected success, for, one year later (1869), Prince Carol was asked: which are your relations with Austria?

The opportunity for strengthening the realtions with Austria-Hungary occurred during Prince Carol's travel to the West, in 1869.

After a visit to Livadia (there even appeared rumors about a marriage to Princess Maria, the daughter of Tsar Alexander II), in order to prove he was not enfeoffed by Russia, Carol felt it was his duty to go to Vienna and to the Western Europe. On his return, he was already married to Elisabeth of Wied. They stayed for one and a half day in Vienna, where they met the Archdukes Albrecht and Karl Ludwig, and in Pest where they met empress Elizabeth, and many Romanians, too.

However, Emperor Franz Joseph received Carol in his capacity as Prussian prince rather than that as Romanian sovereign, as he had been welcome in Russia. A new attempt of entering into closer relations was occasioned by the emperor's leaving for the inauguration of the Suez Channel. M. Kogălniceanu, who had learned that the Romanian ministers were to be received at Rusciuc, promptly acted to have Franz Joseph allow Romania receive him on Romanian territory, at

³ *Memoriile regelui Carol I al României - de un martor ocular – real*, 1992, vol. IV, p. 44.

⁴ N. Iorga, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

Vârciorova. The aim was the recognition as an autonomous state, a fact Austria tried to avoid.

Between 1871-1877, Romania's international acts were meant to clearly define it as an entity. Starting with the conclusion of the Romanian - Austro-Hungarian Convention on telegraph services and of the Romanian - Serbian Convention on postal services (1871) and of the Romanian - Russian Convention on postal services (1873), till the establishment of Romanian diplomatic agencies in Berlin (1872), Rome (1873), Petersburg (1876), or the conclusion of trade conventions with Austro-Hungary (1875) and Russia (1876), everything shows that our country acted as a free and independent state. Romania's independence, declared on May 9, 1877, was to be confirmed by the Romanian soldiers' exploits at Plevna, Rahova, Smârdan or Vidin.

Under the circumstances of the war of 1877, Prince Carol organized a special welcome to Tsar Alexander II of Russia, at Ploiești, on May 25 mai/ June 6. Carol had intended to welcome him at Iași, but the Tsar wanted a meeting at the Russian General Headquarters, camped at Ploiești. The Tsar was accompanied by a 700-persons' retinue, and 1000 horses. On June 15/27, the tsar, accompanied by his four sons, was invited for lunch at Cotroceni. In the evening, there was a short theatre performance while during the lunch, Russian and Romanian regiments' musical parts were played. Details on the echo of the imperial visit are to be found in the letters the Great Duke Vladimir sent to his wife. In one of the letters, he mentioned he had liked the horses, coaches, men servants ... and that the welcome had been "excessively bright"⁵.

After having proclaimed state independence, the foreign policy changed significantly. On September 9/ 12, 1878, the Cabinet Council decided Prince Carol I should be addressed by "His Royal Highness", this aiming both at Romania's acknowledgment as an independent and sovereign state and at the increase of the Hohenzollern dynasty reputation in the relationship with the other European monarchies⁶. The next step was the proclamation of the Kingdom (March 14/ 26) and the coronation of King Carol and of Queen Elisabeta on May 10, 1881.

After 1881, Romania guided its foreign policy toward Bismark's Germany, which had become the greatest power in Europe, Romania's choice being also motivated by Russia's evident hostility. Since chancellor Otto von Bismark had several times pointed out to King Carol I that the way to Berlin was necessarily passing through Vienna, on October 18/30, 1883, Romania signed a treaty with Austro-Hungary, through which the two states committed themselves to support each other in case of an unprovoked attack. On the same day, Germany adhered to the same treaty – concluded for a 5-year period.

Concluded for state reasons, but not popular in Romania, due to the policy of oppression the Habsburg monarchy exercised against the Romanians in

⁵ Regele Carol al României. *Cuvântări și scrisori*, vol. I, 1877-1886, p. 20-37.

⁶ I. Scurtu, *Istoria românilor în timpul celor patru regi 1866-1947, Carol I*, vol. I, 2001, p. 118.

Transylvania and Bucovina, the alliance was kept secret. However, during that period, the alliance took the country out of its isolation, certain security warranties were obtained and the position of the Hohenzollern dynasty grew firm. Although the matter concerning the Romanians in Transylvania had not been approached, Carol I was hoping the cordial relations with Austro-Hungary could change their fate, even in the perspective of their unification with their mother-country.

Under such circumstances, a good opportunity to exhibit the good relations between Romania and Austro-Hungary was the visit to Bucharest of Archduke Rudolf, the throne heir, and of his wife, Archduchess Stephanie, on April 13-14, 1884. The guests were welcome at Smârdan by the Minister for Public Works and by the general in command of the army Corps II, after which they travelled by the royal train to Filaret Railway Station. There, they were welcome by the king and by the queen, accompanied by a numerous suite, and they were seen to the Palace. There were honor guards and music at Smârdan, Filaret and in the palace yard. In the evening, a procession with torches was organized. The next day, they attended a military parade in the field at Băneasa, and a ball was organized in the guests' honor in the evening. The princely couple left in the evening, after the ball, making for Turnu-Severin⁷.

In 1883, the inauguration of Peleş castle was a special opportunity for the guests of King Carol I. The first to pay a visit to Peleş was Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, accompanied by his sister, Princess Maria and her husband, count Gustav d'Erbach Schönberg (September 5-8, 1884). The guests visited Predeal, Buşteni and Azuga⁸. The next to come, during the same year 1884, were Archduke Rudolf and Archduchess Stephanie, for the second time in Romania.

The archducal couple arrived at Predeal train station on September 13, accompanied by a numerous suite, and were welcome by the Romanian sovereigns. Carol I was wearing the uniform of the Austro-Hungarian Regiment 6 infantry, which he owned. By a special ceremonial, the guests were seen to Peleş. This time again, the king did his best to show magnificent hospitality. Visits were organized to Sinaia monastery, the church, the Girls School and the town of Sinaia; a bear baiting and a visit to Urlătoarea waterfall followed, the evening ending with a Chinese lanterns procession and fireworks⁹.

Among the important guests of the Romanian sovereigns was also Empress Elizabeth (the beautiful Sissy), who arrived at Peleş on May 2, 1887, in strict incognito¹⁰. Austria's Empress came from Mehadia, where she had enjoyed the baths, and she was accompanied by the Great Master ceremonies of her Court and by a lady in waiting. On that occasion, a copper bathtub was ordered for the toilet

⁷ "Monitorul Oficial" [*Official Gazette*], no. 9, 13/ 25 April 1884, p. 133; also see *30 de ani de domnie ai Regelui Carol I. Cuvântări și acte. 1881-1896*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1897, p. 88.

⁸ *30 de ani de domnie ai Regelui Carol I. ...*, p. 100.

⁹ "Monitorul Oficial", no. 130, September 16/ 28, 1884, p. 2939.

¹⁰ "Monitorul Oficial", no. 27, May 6/ 18, 1887, p. 514.

cabinet made available to the Empress¹¹. They used to say about Sissy that, after her marriage to Franz Joseph, she had claimed a bathroom at their conjugal residence, a fact that had horrified the Court of Vienna who took that for ... a stupid English fashion.

The empress was a good friend of Queen Elisabeta, both of them being passionately fond of the German romantic poetry. The two ladies walked in the outskirts of Peleş Castle, while Carmen Sylva showed the Empress her latest literary creations. The Empress left the next day, Carol I and Elisabeta accompanying her to Predeal¹². Until 1898, during each travel abroad, the Romanian sovereigns used to pay visits to the Empress, with whom they were close friends.

Queen Natalia of Serbia, who only stayed a day, also enjoyed the ceremonial King Carol I employed in recognition of royal rank. The Queen of Serbia arrived at Sinaia on August 31, 1888, was welcome at the train station by King Carol I, together with the ladies in waiting, while at and by Peleş she was received by Queen Elisabeta. After the lunch taken at 17 h, Carol I saw the Queen to the railway station¹³.

A rigorous ceremonial was to be employed for Archduke Karl Ludwig and his wife, Archduchess Maria Theresia, who stayed at Peleş during the period September 5-8, 1888. The visit took place under circumstances of political unrest: the liberal government, led by I.C. Brătianu was turned over and the conservatory "Junimist" government took over. The treaty between Austro-Hungary and Romania kept being valid for other three years, but Vienna and Berlin found the alliance was in danger as a result of the political unrest in our country. Besides these, the relationships of these states with Russia were worsening.

The guests were welcome at Predeal by the Romanian sovereigns with their suites, in the presence of the minister Goluchowski and of the Austro-Hungarian diplomatic mission members. At Sinaia railway station, they were welcome by the authorities, the garrison officers, the President of the Senate and by a numerous audience. Maria Theresia was particularly delighted by the visit for she was fond of hunting and the hosts organized a bear baiting, upstream Urlătoarea waterfall¹⁴. Those who met the archduchess at Peleş thought she was a modern woman, who was doing engraving, photographing and was smoking cigars.

Little after the archducal couple had left, another important guest of King Carol I was coming to Peleş: the Duke of Wales, the future king Eduard VII of Great Britain. The Prince arrived at Bucharest on September 21. The reception was impressive. King Carol I came to Gara de Nord (a railway station of Bucharest, t.n.) accompanied by the prime-minister and the members of Romania's

¹¹ R. Scheffer, *Orient Regal. Cinci ani la Curtea României*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 63.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ "Monitorul Oficial", no. 120, September 2/ 14, 1888, p. 2915.

¹⁴ "Monitorul Oficial", no. 126, September 10/ 22, 1888, p. 3043.

Government, by the members of the Court of Cassation and of the Court of Accounts, by the Mayor of Bucharest, the Local Council, the Chief Commissioner of the Police, by directors in the ministries, generals, officers and by the guard of honor. Later on, after having attended the blessing of the waters to be supplied to the Chief Town, at the Summer house in Cișmigiu Garden, he was seen to Sinaia. Here, the guest was welcome at the station by Queen Elisabeta and the Prince of Wied, in a special ceremony¹⁵. The Duke of Wales had formerly met Carmen Sylva, when Queen Victoria had considered her an eligible for marriage¹⁶. It seems Prince Edward had been a little bit affraid of the young lady's gravity and had not agreed to the proposal.

At Peleş, in honor of this visit of the British, theater performances in English and Romanian languages were organized, parts of Shakespeare's work being obviously included. King Carol I had scrupulously prepared everything, by collecting, through diplomatic channels, information on the Prince's preferences. He was served best quality wines, which His Royal Highness of Great Britain highly honored. On September 25, the heir of the British crown left Sinaia, carrying with him pleasant memories, a fact also confirmed by the telegram of thanks Queen Victoria sent to King Carol.

Emperor Franz Joseph, who visited Romania during the period September 16-18, 1896, was welcome in special solemn ceremony. King Carol I took this event for a great political success. „They had done all their best and had appealed to the town's and country's benevolence for welcoming the old emperor in the due manner. King Carol I insisted on showing this venerable sovereign every honor and respect; this visit was satisfying both his policy and likes, and, for King Carol, policy and likes were always hand in hand”¹⁷.

On September 15, 1896, the emperor had attended the inauguration of the works for the channel at Porțile de Fier, intended to facilitate the navigation on the Danube. On Franz Joseph's invitation, King Alexander I of Serbia also attended this festivity. The next day, on September 16, King Carol I left for Craiova, where he would welcome the august guest. When they arrived by Chitila, the army of the fort there and all the batteries north of Bucharest greeted the suite by rounds of cannon. At the railway station, he was welcome by the royal family and by the Duke of Saxa Gotha Coburg, Pricess Maria's father, who had come to Romania on September 6. The mayor of the Chief Town offered him bread and salt on a gilded silver tray, as well as two cups, all of them copies of Pietroasa treasure pieces.

Arches of triumph made of verdure and flowers were placed in the streets, and ribbons in the Empire's colours were tied to white pigeons flying in the sky. In the evening, the Palace, the theater and the buildings on Calea Victoriei were

¹⁵ “Monitorul Oficial”, no. 138, September 25/ October 7, 1888, p. 3294.

¹⁶ I. Bulei, G. Badea Păun, *Monarhi europeni. Marile modele 1848-1914*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1997, p. 133.

¹⁷ Maria, Regina României. *Povestea vieții mele*, 1991, Bucharest, p. 273.

lighted by huge imperial garlands of multi-colored bulbs¹⁸. Other surprises were waiting for him at Peleş, where he arrived the next day. Here, a special room was fitted up for the Emperor („Kaizerzimmer”); they organized a trip to the outskirts of the palace, a picnic at Poiana Stâinii, where the Emperor, on a rock (later on called Franz Joseph), admired the scenery of the Carpathians. During the outdoor lunch, Regiment 1 Engineers Corps and two musicians groups played specific music. The way back to Peleş castle was original as the guests were accompanied by the musicians all the way through the woods¹⁹.

The august guest left Sinaia on September 18, in the evening, leaving King Carol I pleased with this visit. Although nothing was officially said about the destiny of the Romanians in Transylvania, subject to an aggressive hungarization process, and about the events concerning the Memorandum movement members (1892-1895), the subject was not avoided during private discussions.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Romania's policy was balanced between the great powers and it maintained friendly relations with all the states. The main objective consisted in keeping the country as long as possible apart from any European conflict (a neutrality under the Triple Alliance).

An evidence of the close relations between the Central Powers and Romania were the events of the 70th anniversary of King Carol I, on April 8/21, 1909. In fact, it was an expression of the esteem of Vienna and Berlin enjoyed by the King. Thus, on April 6/ 19, Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, the Heir to the German Crown, came to Bucharest. **(photo 1)** Emperor Wilhelm II insisted on the special magnificence for this visit, for Carol to thus forget the German Sovereign's indifference so far. The Crown Prince, accompanied by a numerous suite, was welcome at the North Station by Queen Elisabeta and Princess Maria, while the king was waiting for the guests at the Palace.

During this visit, Wilhelm II commissioned Romania's King general field marshal of the German army. The Crown Prince handed over to him the truncheon and insignia of the highest military rank which, outside Germany, only Emperor Franz Joseph had been promoted to. They said this visit was less formal and, although the royal palace had paid it plenty of attention, it did not have the same impact upon the population²⁰.

During the same year, on June 27, another Prince Heir came to Romania, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his morganatic wife, Sofia of Hohenberg. The heir to Austro-Hungary's Crown, (after the death of the archdukes Rudolf and Karl Ludwig), came to Peleş with a masterly pretense, i.e. he pretended to be a great great friend of the Romanians and a similarly great enemy of the Hungarians. „Not loving the

¹⁸ „Monitorul Oficial”, no. 138, September 22/ October 4, 1888, p. 4683, 4687, 4688.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 4689.

²⁰ Ion Bulei, *Viața cotidiană în timpul lui Carol I. Lumea românească 1900-1908*, București, missing year, p. 169.

Hungarians, he tried to protect the Romanians oppressed by the Hungarian domination. For that reason he liked King Carol, so his visit was very welcome ...”²¹.

At Sinaia railway station, the guests were welcome by King Carol I and Queen Elisabeta, by Ferdinand and Princess Maria, accompanied by their suites and by high officials. Several hundreds of Romanians, who had come from Ardeal, wearing national costumes were also present during the reception. The King invited Franz Ferdinand in his coach, to his right, and, similarly, the Queen invited Duchess Sofia. It was Sofia’s first visit abroad and the first time she was welcome according to her rank, a fact somehow embarrassing to the Court in Vienna.

The day’s program was various: car drives to Poiana Țapului, Bușteni and Azuga, gala performance in the palace theater hall, folk feasts, a visit to Cuibul Prințesei (Princess’ Nest), beautifully decorated by carpets and flowers²². **(photo 2)** But for the Romanians, the most important moment was the audience the Archduke granted to the Transylvanian delegation and the receipt of the written complaint comprising the Transylvanians grievances. It seems Franz Ferdinand was impressed by the Romanian dances and songs, by the beauty of the costumes and people’s faces (especially the face of the beautiful Melania Ionescu, a young lady from Transylvania, who had come to Sinaia especially for this visit).

Although most of the newspapers took the visit paid by Franz Ferdinand for a an acknowledgement of the good relations and especially of the long time friendship between the King of Romania and the Emperor Franz Joseph, the situation was, actually, different. A supporter of the federalization of the Empire, the Archduke had declared himself the Romanians’ friend, but very many people doubted his philo-Romanian feelings, especially considering how violent the incidents and disputes between Hungarians and Romanians were. The climax was reached when Ferdinand, Crown Prince of Romania, on his way to Coburg, did not get the visa from the Hungarian railways clerks, his carriage was attached to a train directly going to Germany, the pretext being the very poor state of the way.

Among the guests that came to Sinaia, which had become a beloved place to the relatives of King Carol I and of Queen Maria, was King Gustav II of Sweden, a first cousin of Carmen Sylva, who came in April, 1910, and Netherland’s mother-queen, Emma, herself a cousin of Romania’s Queen. Bulgaria’s king Ferdinand I of Saxa-Coburg had come several times.

Carol I did not especially like the king of Bulgaria, but „...their mutual courtesy was faultless and worthy of esteem, like a long development of the perfect conduct”, Queen Maria said in her memoirs²³.

The aggressiveness of Bulgaria, the territorial claims of which threatened the balance of forces among the states in South-East Europe, was an actual source

²¹ Maria, Regina României, *op.cit.*, p. 307.

²² “Monitorul Oficial”, no. 76, July 4/ 17, 1909, p. 3213.

²³ Ion Bulei, *Viața cotidiană...*, p. 167.

of concern for Bucharest. The two Balcanic wars (1912-1913) tried Romania's alliance with Austro-Hungary (which was supporting Bulgaria, too), and offered France the possibility of winning Romania closer to Entente. Russia, on the other hand also initiated an approach to Romania care of the Minister Serghei Sazonov. A way to express this policy was the sending over to King Carol I, on November 26/ December 9, 1912, the 25th anniversary of the surrender of the Pleven fortress, of the Russian army marshal's truncheon and insignia. The Great Duke Nicolae Mihailovici handed the high decoration over to the Romanian Sovereign, in a festive circumstances, and, in his toast, King Carol I thanked the Tsar for having chosen that anniversary, as a remembrance of the battles the Romanians and the Russians had fought in Bulgaria²⁴. Moreover, as soon as 1890, Tsar Alexander III also considered that it was high time for the two countries' relationships to be improved, and therefore he presented to the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldova a very expensive icon, in memory of the war. Later on, Russia adopted a favorable position in relation to the memorandist movement.

After the tension during the years 1878-1879, an important step toward the normalization of the relations between the two countries was the meeting of King Carol I and Tsar Nicolae II in Sankt Petersburg, in July 1898, when Romania's Sovereign and his suite enjoyed special attention. Under such circumstances, on June 1/ 14, 1914, Carol I was looking forward to the Tsar's visit.

Nicolae II arrived in Constanța by the imperial yacht „Standard”, and he was accompanied by the tsarina and their children, by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Serghei Sazonov, and, of course, by a numerous suite. They were welcome in the port, present being the Regiment of cavalry which first entered Bulgaria in 1913, and the Tsar was asked to agree to Regiment's bearing his name²⁵. **(photo 3)** Of the ceremonies, worth mentioning is the Tedeum at the cathedral of Constanța, held in Russian and Romanian, followed by a sightseeing in the town decorated by flags and flowers, a parade, during which King Carol I himself led the parade, then the day ended by a magnificent banquet. In his toast, King Carol I defined the country's foreign policy as follows: „Romania's steady and unchanged target is to contribute, by constancy and cordial relations among all the states in this part of Europe, to the maintaining of the remunerative peace, which solely allows these countries to reach the prosperity they wish”²⁶.

Carol I considered the Tsar's visit to Constanța as an important day, but, unfortunately, it was a last reception of an emperor. The old King was ill, and the decision taken by the Crown Council on July 21/ August 3, 1914 concerning the declaration of Romania's neutrality when the First World War began deeply affected him for he could no longer control the foreign policy of Romania.

²⁴ Regina Maria, *op.cit.*, vol. II, p. 289.

²⁵ *Cuvântările Regelui Carol I. 1887-1914*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1939, p. 459.

²⁶ Dr. C. D. Severeanu, *Din amintirile mele. (1853/1929)*, vol. II, 1929, Bucharest, p. 69.

Many years had passed since the King gave an interview to the newspaper "Neue Freie Presse". The journalist of Muntz has asked him if the country's external policy was leaded and influenced directly by him. The King had answered "I don't deny that the international policy we are developing is not answering to my taste. But is the only reasonable one"²⁷.

During his long reign (1866-1914), King Carol I strongly marked Romania's evolution. The constitutional monarchy became a reality, and the Kingdom of Romania was enjoying a high international reputation.

CAROL I ȘI POLITICA EXTERNĂ A ROMÂNIEI

- Rezumat -

Încă din 1866, Principele Carol I de Hohenzollern s-a implicat direct în politica externă a României, țară care se afla în acea perioadă la confluența intereselor marilor puteri vecine. Principalele obiective care au stat mereu în atenția lui Carol au fost: salvarea existenței Statului, afirmarea lui în sud-estul Europei și, în perspectivă, obținerea independenței. Acestea erau în același timp interesele națiunii române și impuneau o politică diplomatică echilibrată, în condițiile în care Turcia, Rusia și Austro-Ungaria se împotriveauă alegerii unui principe străin pe tronul României.

Principala piedică în calea realizării năzuințelor românești era Turcia, care încă stăpânea bună parte din Peninsula Balcanică. Ea pune condiții dure pentru recunoașterea noului domn: respectarea relațiilor de vasalitate existente, neacceptarea denumirii de România, nerecunoașterea demnității princiare ereditare ș.a.

În contextul conflictelor cu Serbia și Creta, Imperiul Otoman își mai scade din intransigență și, în 12/24 octombrie 1866, în timpul vizitei la Istanbul, Principele Carol de Hohenzollern primea firmanul de numire din partea Sultanului Abdul-Aziz. Prin această numire, Poarta Otomană recunoștea practic unirea perpetuă a celor două țări române.

În primii ani ai domniei lui Carol, diplomația românească s-a orientat spre creștinii de peste Dunăre, sprijinindu-i în lupta pentru înlăturarea suzeranității otomane. De aceea, s-a dorit conturarea unor alianțe regionale, în acest scop înscriindu-se și tratatul încheiat între Domnitorul Carol I și Prințul Milan Obrenovič, la 20 ianuarie 1868.

Atitudinea Românie a fost însă dezaprobată de marile Puteri, de aceea, după 1868, se constată o reorientare a politicii externe. Țintă principală devine cultivarea bunelor relații cu Austro-Ungaria, Germania și Rusia. O convenție

²⁷ Ion Bulei, *Viața cotidiană în timpul lui Carol I*, București, 2004, p. 180.

comercială, în 1875, cu Austro-Ungaria și una cu Rusia în 1876 sau înființarea agențiilor diplomatice la Berlin (1872), Roma (1873), Petersburg (1874), demonstau faptul că România se manifesta ca un stat independent. Proclamată pe 9 mai 1877, independența României, pecetluită prin luptă de armata română la Plevna, Rahova, Smârdan sau Vidin, avea să determine mutații semnificative în politica externă a României. Prestigiul lui Carol I a crescut considerabil, iar modificarea statutului internațional al României impunea o schimbare a rangului domnitorului. Astfel, după proclamarea Regatului (14/26 martie 1881), Carol și Elisabeta se încoronază, la 10 mai 1881. După aceste evenimente, un merit esențial i-a revenit lui Carol I în orientarea României spre Germania, care devenise prima putere a Europei.

În contextul în care Bismark îl atenționase pe Carol că drumul spre Berlin trece neapărat prin Viena, România semnează la 18/30 octombrie 1883 un tratat cu Austro-Ungaria, prin care acele două state se angajau să-și vină în ajutor în cazul unui atac neprovocat (practic era vizată Rusia). În aceeași zi, a aderat la tratat și Germania.

Alianța cu Austro-Ungaria, încheiată din interese de stat (s-a avut în vedere situația românilor din Transilvania), a fost ținută secretă și a însemnat, pentru acea perioadă, o garanție de securitate pentru România.

La începutul secolului al XX-lea, România ducea o politică de echilibru între Marile Puteri și de amicitie cu toate statele. De aceea, ambițiile teritoriale ale Bulgariei din 1912-1913 au constituit o reală sursă de neliniște la București, ele amenințând răsturnarea echilibrului de forțe. Cele două războaie balcanice au pus altfel la încercare alianța României cu Austro-Ungaria (care sprijinea Bulgaria) și a oferit Franței posibilitatea de a atrage România mai aproape de Antantă. Rusia, de asemenea, a inițiat o apropiere de România.

Orientările în politica externă a României s-au evidențiat printre altele, și prin vizitele la nivel înalt făcute de oaspeți princieri sau regali la Curtea României, proleji cu care se rezolvau multe probleme importante. Ceremoniile de primire se desfășurau după instrucțiunile personale ale regelui, după cum era înscris și în Ceremonialul întocmit de mareșalul Curții, Theodor Văcărescu, la 1875. Instrucțiunile regelui arătau, dincolo de eticheta ce exista la reședința suveranului, relațiile externe ale țării în anumite perioade.

Oaspeții regești erau întâmpinați la București, mai târziu și la Sinaia (după 1883), într-o atmosferă sărbătorească, pregătită de suveran și de oficialitățile române.

S-au bucurat de o atenție deosebită în timpul vizitelor făcute în țara noastră, printre alții: Principele Milan Obrenovič al Serbiei (aprilie 1867), Jérôme Napoleon, prințul moștenitor al Franței (iunie 1868), Arhiducele Rudolf, moștenitorul Austro-Ungariei și soția sa, Arhiducesa Ștefania (aprilie și septembrie 1884), împărăteasa Elisabeta a Austro-Ungariei (mai 1887), Arhiducele Karl Ludovic al Austro-Ungariei și Arhiducesa Maria Theresia (septembrie 1888), Ducele de Walles, viitorul rege Eduard al II-lea al Marii Britanii (septembrie 1888).

Un mare succes politic a fost considerată vizita împăratului Franz Joseph (16-18 septembrie 1896). Străzile Bucureștilor erau feerice, cu arcuri de triumf din Veneția și flori, porumbei albi, legați cu panglici în culorile imperiului, brăzdau cerul. Seara, Palatul, teatrul și clădirile din Calea Victoriei erau iluminate de coroane imperiale din becuri multicolore. Alte surprize i s-au pregătit la Peleş, unde a ajuns a doua zi. O dovadă a bunelor relații dintre Puterile Centrale și România au dat-o manifestările prilejuite de împlinirea a 70 de ani de către regele Carol I, la 8/21 aprilie 1909. Cu această ocazie, Principele Friedrich Wilhelm, moștenitorul tronului Germaniei, aflat în vizită în România, i-a înmănat suveranului român bastonul și însemnele de general feldmareșal al armatei germane, acordate de împăratul Wilhelm al II-lea. De asemenea, ca o consacrare a bunelor raporturi cu Viena, se înscrie și vizita Arhiducelui Franz Ferdinand cu soția sa Sofia de Hohenberg (iunie 1909).

Un semn de apropiere a Rusiei de țara noastră a fost acordarea bastonului și a însemnelor de mareșal al armatei ruse, lui Carol I, la 16 noiembrie/9 decembrie 1912, cu ocazia sărbătoririi a 35 de ani de la căderea Plevnei.

Întâlnirea dintre Carol I și țarul Nicolae al II-lea, la Constanța, la 1/14 iunie 1914, considerată de bătrânul rege drept o zi mare, semnifică însă o îndepărtare de linia alianței din 1883.

La izbucnirea primului război mondial, regele Carol I era bolnav, iar hotărârea de neutralitate a țării, luată de Consiliul de Coroană din 21 iulie/3 august 1914, l-a afectat profund, pentru că nu mai putea controla politica externă a României. În acele zile dramatice, regele a semnat totuși, la 18 septembrie/1 octombrie 1914, Convenția secretă între România și Rusia. Astfel, drumul spre Antantă și intrarea României în războiul pentru unitatea națională, erau deschise.