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## From Hostility to Friendship: the Russian-Romanian Relations in the Years Prior to the Outbreak of the First World War

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### Abstract

Due to its diplomatic isolation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Romania's foreign policy turned towards Germany and Austro-Hungary, although the Romanian politicians, as well as the broader public, wanted to obtain Transylvania, a province belonging to Budapest. Romania started getting closer to Russia during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, understanding the need to get Russian support for their Great Romania project. In turn, the government in Saint-Petersburg realized that the kingdom on the Danube could be important to the European balance in the Balkans, as a bridge between the Russian Empire and the Slavic states of the Balkans. In March 1914 the heir to the Romanian throne Prince Ferdinand and Princess Marie visited Russia, and this was followed three months later by the reciprocal visit of Tsar Nicholas II and the imperial family. Due to these visits, which were widely covered by newspapers in Russia and Romania but also in other European countries, Russian-Romanian relations became much tighter. The visits were not without consequences. Although Romania was still formally an ally of the Central Powers when the First World War started, it preferred to remain neutral and two years later it entered the war siding with Russia, France and Great Britain.

**Keywords:** Tsar Nicholas II, King Carol I, the Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaevna, Heir Prince Ferdinand, Prince Carol, the Triple Alliance, the Triple Entente, Russian-Romanian visits, Constantza, newspaper articles.

### 1. Introduction

Although Romania had won its independence following the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War, a confrontation in which the Romanian army had joined the Tsarist forces in military operations against the Ottoman Empire, Russian-Romanian relations went through a cooling phase immediately after victory against the Ottomans, which explains why Romania's foreign policy turned to the Triple Alliance. Not only the Russian Empire's control over Bessarabia, a province they had annexed in 1812 following the Treaty of Bucharest, but also the annexation in 1878 of the counties of southern Bessarabia, Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail (for which Romania got the Dobrudja and the Danube Delta in exchange) were the main reasons that Russian-Romanian relations were anything but friendly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The mistrust in Romanian government circles and especially the suspicions of King Carol I regarding Saint Petersburg's politics on maintaining the status quo in the Balkans were increased by the fact that after the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War the principality of Bulgaria had become a genuine Russian protectorate.

Although the Romanian state wanted to obtain Transylvania, a province which had belonged directly to Budapest since 1867, the foreign policy of the government in Bucharest turned to Austro-Hungary and Germany simply because they wanted to end the diplomatic isolation which they found themselves in. Romania, whose independence had been recognised for the first time following the San Stefano Treaty (19 February/3 March 1878) and then reconfirmed by the Berlin Treaty (1/13 July 1878), was tied to the

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Triple Alliance through a document signed in 1883 with Austro-Hungary, later joined by Germany and Italy. This treaty, that was renewed on a yearly basis, for the last time in 1913, had a defensive character, its second article stating that:

If Romania were attacked without any provocation from its side, Austro-Hungary undertakes to provide timely support and assistance against the aggressor. If Austro-Hungary is attacked under the same circumstances at one of its sides that borders Romania, the latter shall be immediately subject to *casus foederis* (Mamina, 1997: 28).

This orientation of Romanian foreign policy lasted for over 30 years and was noticed both by the Saint Petersburg government and by the Russian press. Through its attitude, the Romanian state could change the power relations between the Russian Empire and Austro-Hungary as the military plans of the Triple Alliance relied on cooperation with the Romanian army against Russia which, in the event of a war between Austro-Hungary and Russia, was supposed to cover the right flank of the alliance by attacking Odessa (Crețu, Racovițan, 2017: 120). Even though the situation is presented in a slightly exaggerated light by the “Svet” newspaper, the passage below describes the discontent of the article’s author with regard to Romania’s relations with the Triple Alliance:

The Kingdom of Romania, which is almost entirely integrated into the interests and aims of the Triple Alliance which were so eagerly adhered to by all its state and army men, has close and friendly bonds with Austro-Hungary and is entirely solidary with its strong neighbour in all the details of its Eastern Policy. Thus, their mutual relations are such that we could not doubt that Romania is ready to assist Austro-Hungary wherever it is ordered to do so (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 8. Svet, 8 July 1898).

Still, Romanian politicians and the country’s press and public opinion were mostly favourable to the Entente powers and especially to France, which explains why the 1883 treaty was kept secret, known only to the king and the prime-ministers (Mamina, 1997: 28)<sup>1</sup> that succeeded to the realms of the Romanian government, and was never subject to parliamentary ratification. In early 1914, the forming in Bucharest of a government managed by Ion I. C. Brătianu, known for his affinity with the Entente, increased the French and Russian influence in Romania further, especially considering the Romanian prime-minister’s expression of his clear intention for Transylvania, which was a province with a Romanian ethnic majority belonging to Hungary, to become a Romanian territory.

The day shall come when the Austro-Hungarian edifice will collapse and the disparate elements that make it up will follow their own aspirations. We must stand prepared to welcome our brothers from Transylvania without any opposition and, to this end, Russian support may prove helpful (Oprea, 1998: 59).

## 2. Discussion

### The Romanian-Russian visits of 1912–1913

Despite the existence of the secret treaty of 1883, Romania had actually started getting closer to Russia during the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars. In its turn, the government in Saint Petersburg realised that Romania had a significant importance for the exercise of its influence in the Balkans as the kingdom on the Danube could act as a bridge between Russia and the Slavic states while also counterbalancing the Austro-Hungarian influence in south-eastern Europe (Pohoăț, 2011: 2). Proofs of the closer Russian-Romanian ties in the years before the outbreak of the First World War were both the visit of the heir to the Romanian throne, Prince Ferdinand, and Princess Marie to Saint Petersburg and the coming of Tsar Nicholas II to Constantza accompanied by a large delegation as well as by the members of the imperial family. Among the Russian-Romanian visits of the early twentieth century it is worth mentioning the coming of a delegation made up of the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna and the Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich to Predeal in 1907 as well as the fact that a Romanian military mission travelled to Saint Petersburg in January 1914 to take part in the inauguration of a monument dedicated to the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevich. As is well known, these official visits are not random now and nor were they then, but rather have an important signification as they show the good political relations between two countries and a desire for cooperation in various fields.

The first discussions regarding the visit to Saint Petersburg of the Romanian heir to the throne took place in 1912 when a Russian military mission travelled to Bucharest led by the Grand Duke Nicholas Mihailovich, who was to hand King Carol I the baton of field marshal of the Russian army on behalf of Tsar Nicholas II. The Grand Duke Nicholas Mihailovich arrived in Bucharest accompanied by a large entourage and was welcomed at the railway station by King Carol I himself and by high Romanian military and civil dignitaries. The Russian military delegation was led to the Royal Palace where it was welcomed by Queen Elisabeth. In their three-day stay, from 26 November/9 December to 29 November/12 December, countless

<sup>1</sup> Not all Romanian prime-ministers were informed about the existence of this treaty or about its provisions. Thus, Theodor Rosetti (4–10 April 1888) and Petre S. Aurelian (3 December 1896 – 12 April 1897) did not know anything and other prime-ministers were given only some information. It was only Petre P. Carp (19 July 1900 – 27 February 1901), Titu Maiorescu (10 April 1912 – 17 January 1914) and Ion I. C. Brătianu, who acted as prime-minister during almost the entire First World War, that knew the text of the treaty in detail.

banquets and receptions were organised for the Russian guests. The field marshal's baton was handed over to the king at a festivity organised at the Royal Palace and followed by a Te Deum in the presence of the Russian and Bulgarian army men who had come to Bucharest to celebrate 35 years since the conquest of Plevna (28 November 1877), one of the main battles of the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War. Organised to counterweight the influence in Bucharest of the visit of the Austrian general Conrad von Hoetzendorf, the Chief of Staff of the Austro-Hungarian Army, the aim of the visit of the Russian military delegation was to untie Romania from the Central Powers and draw it onto the side of the Entente (Buşe, 2013: 14).

Postponed in 1913 due to Romania's participation in the Second Balkan War, but also to the fact that there was a Conference of Bucharest that year, the visit of Prince Ferdinand and his wife to the capital of the Russian Empire started on 15 March 1914 when they arrived in Tsarskoye Selo<sup>1</sup> and were received at the railway station by the tsar and tsarina, their daughters, the tsar's mother Empress Marie Feodorovna and also by a guard of honour whose commander was the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevich (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Peterburgskii Kurier, 16 March 1914). In honour of the Romanian guests, on 19 March the Russian minister of foreign affairs, Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov<sup>2</sup> organised an official lunch followed by a reception to which all the ambassadors accredited in the capital of the Russian Empire were invited (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Novoe Vremia, 21 March 1914). On the second day, a concert was organised at the Smolni Institute<sup>3</sup> on the occasion of the anniversary of 150 years since the founding of that institution; besides the Romanian royal family members, the concert was also attended by the members of the Russian imperial family together with the tsar and the tsarina (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Novoe Vremia, 21 March 1914). On 21 March they organised a breakfast at Tsarskoye Selo attended by 67 people, among which, again, the tsar and the tsarina, countless ministers of the Russian government and, of course, the Romanian guests. This important visit ended on 23 March when the Romanian delegation, led by Prince Ferdinand and Princess Marie, headed towards Ungheni<sup>4</sup>, the only place where the Russian railways joined the Romanian railways. One must mention that during this visit the Romanian Prince Carol, future king of Romania between 8 June 1930 and 6 September 1940, who was a member of the Romanian delegation, asked for the hand in marriage of the Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaevna, the tsar's older daughter, but was turned down. An important contribution to the initiative of asking for the tsar's daughter in marriage came from Constantin Diamandy, who had been recently appointed minister plenipotentiary of Romania to Saint Petersburg, as well as from the French ambassador accredited to the capital of the Russian Empire, Maurice-Georges Paléologue, who played an important role in setting up the French-Russian alliance before the outbreak of the First World War. There was even a rumour that when confronted with the princess's answer, the Romanian prince wanted to ask for the hand of the tsar's second daughter, the Grand Duchess Tatiana Nicolaevna, but only to save face. There is no exact knowledge as to why the plan to marry Carol to the tsar's oldest daughter failed, but certainly the tsar was not willing to give his first daughter to a prince coming from a small kingdom that had been proclaimed only in 1881 and whose independence had only been recognised three years prior to its proclamation. Besides, Princess Marie,<sup>5</sup> the future queen of Romania, the mother of Prince Carol, was a first cousin of Tsar Nicholas II. Moreover, one could not ignore the fact that in accordance with some very persistent rumours of the time that were also covered by the Austrian press, the

<sup>1</sup> Tsarskoye Selo [the village of the tsar] hosts one of the two imperial palaces that are close to Saint Petersburg and the favourite residence of the last tsars, including Nicholas II. The Bolsheviks renamed the village Detskoye Selo [the village of the children] but today it bears the name of Pushkin. Although presently the town is named after the great poet and playwright who is considered the founder of modern Russian literature, the palace resumed its initial name of Tsarskoye Selo. During the Second World War, the building was conquered and completely devastated by the German army, including the famous Amber Room, an absolutely exquisite piece of interior design. Today the palace and the famous chamber are restored (Palatele).

<sup>2</sup> S. D. Sazonov was the foreign affairs minister of Russia between November 1910 and July 1916.

<sup>3</sup> The building was erected between 1806 and 1808 by architect Giacomo Quarenghi as the seat of the Nobili Smolni Girls' Institute. Its creation was due to a 1764 decree of Catherine the Great and its existence was an important step forward in the access to education of women in Russia. The institute functioned under the patronage of the Russian empress until the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution (Nelipa).

<sup>4</sup> A village in Romania on the right bank of the Prut River.

<sup>5</sup> Of English origin through her father, Princess Marie was the second child of Duke Alfred of Edinburgh and of Marie Alexandrovna Romanov who had become a duchess of Edinburgh by marriage. She was born on 29 October 1875 and was the heiress of two ancient, imposing monarchic traditions. Missy, as she was called, was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, the "Grandmother Queen", but also of Tsar Alexandre II, the "Grandfather Emperor". Since her father was constantly travelling at sea on increasingly longer and more frequent journeys, little Marie was raised in England almost exclusively by her mother who, although not at all indifferent to the influence of Great Britain in the world in the late nineteenth century, remained loyal to the Saint Petersburg customs which she considered superior to the British mores. In 1881, during her first journey to Russia, when she was only 6 years old, Missy was amazed by the imperial pomp and the splendour of the churches and understood that part of her belonged to Russia (Gauthier, 2004: 7–14).

Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaevna fancied her cousin, Dmitri, who was also the son of the Grand Duke Pavel Alexandrovich, the uncle of Tsar Nicholas II (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Schlesische Zeitung*, 26 April 1914).

The Russian press saluted the visit paid by the Prince Ferdinand, future King of Romania, emphasising the significant political importance of his coming.<sup>1</sup> In an article published on precisely the day when the Romanian delegation arrived, the “Peterburgskaia Gazeta” mentioned the fact that the prince came to Saint Petersburg “surrounded by the great aura of his sympathy for the Russian people and of the mutual sympathies of Russia for the distinguished guests” (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Peterburgskaia Gazeta*, 15 March 1914). It was anticipated that friendly relations between Russia and Romania would develop further after this visit while also reminding of the military collaboration between the two states during the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War when the Balkan Christians had rid themselves of the dominance of the Ottoman Empire and Romania had had its independence recognised by the great European powers (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Peterburgskaia Gazeta*, 15 March 1914). Nor did they forget about the recent Balkan Wars where Romania had shown solidarity with the Russian Empire in the settlement of the Balkan issues, underlining the fact that the “intrigues of Vienna” were not successful in attracting the Romanian Kingdom towards the Austro-Hungarian interests (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Peterburgskaia Gazeta*, 15 March 1914).

The visit was also widely covered by the press of the Triple Alliance countries, especially by the Austro-Hungarian newspapers; it was shown that the coming to Saint Petersburg of the distinguished guests would result in an even greater closeness between Russia and Romania and also in the latter’s exit from the influence of the Triple Alliance (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Reci*, 15 March 1914). In general, the Austrian gazettes explained this closeness by pointing out the mistakes of Austro-Hungarian diplomacy while, in an article entitled “Russisch-Rumänische Freundschaft”, the Viennese newspaper “Reichspost”, an organ of the Christian-Social Party, showed the importance that the Romanian state had in opening Russia’s road to the Black Sea straits, considering that Bulgaria’s foreign politics were already favourable to the Central Powers (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Reichspost*, 26 April 1914). Since the visit was frowned upon both in Vienna and in Berlin, some German newspapers preferred so say almost nothing about this event and “hide” it from their readers. But a newspaper in Frankfurt, mentioned by the “Novoe Vremia” newspaper, did not shy from stating that after the visit of the Romanian delegation to Saint Petersburg, Romania had either entered the orbit of the Triple Entente in the worst-case scenario regarding German interests or, in the best-case scenario, it had merely separated itself from the Triple Alliance and thus gained the freedom to choose the camp that was more favourable to it in the future. The explanation for this situation, as given by the author of the article published by the Frankfurt publication, is simple. The support of the Triple Alliance states was too weak to induce Romania to promote a foreign policy in line with the alliance’s vital interests, for Viennese diplomacy perceived the Romanian Kingdom as a “power of the Danube” and not as a Balkan state, a position which had, nevertheless, been disproven by Romania’s participation in the Second Balkan War and by its affirmation as the main Balkan power (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Novoe Vremia*, 16 March 1914).

### **The visit of Tsar Nicholas II to Constantza (1/14 June 1914)**

The first concrete step towards planning the visit of the tsar to Romania was taken in early April 1914 when Constantin Diamandy asked the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg to ask the chief of the Russian diplomacy, Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov, to accept the visit of Nicholas II to Bucharest (Oprea, 1998: 60). To avoid seriously offending Germany and Austro-Hungary, who were Romania’s allies, the government in Bucharest had to remain careful even though Romanian diplomacy had started to count increasingly on the support of the Entente powers. In consequence, fearing a strong reaction from the Central Powers, the Romanian minister plenipotentiary asked his French counterpart in the Russian capital to make the initiative of the Russian sovereign’s visit seem like a Russian proposal and to sell the idea of the Russian and Romanian diplomats discussing certain international problems in Bucharest as a desire of France (Oprea, 1998: 60). Sazonov accepted the idea of the visit but suggested that the Romanian diplomacy used the coming of the Russian sovereign to his summer retreat at Livadia, as the journey to Constantza could be interpreted as merely an extension of the route, and since the Romanian monarch had visited Russia in July 1898,<sup>2</sup> the Russian emperor could be seen as having “an old debt to pay to King Carol I” (Sazonov, 1927: 118). Just as three months before, when a Romanian royal party had visited Russia, rumours about an engagement

<sup>1</sup> Prince Ferdinand became King of Romania in the autumn of 1914, on 10 October, after the death of King Carol I, his uncle. Ferdinand I, also referred to as the Unifier, due to the fact that it was during his reign that Greater Romania was constituted, reigned until 20 July 1927 when he passed away.

<sup>2</sup> On 13 July 1898, King Carol I, the Romanian heir Prince Ferdinand, prime-minister D. A. Sturdza and a party largely made up of army men left from Sinaia to Warsaw. From here, the royal party travelled to Vilnius, Peterhof and Saint Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire, where the Romanian monarch brought flowers to the tombs of Tsars Alexandre II and Alexandre III and to the tomb of the Grand Duke Nicholas. The Romanian guests continued their journey to Moscow where they visited the Kremlin on the 20 July and four days later they got to Kiev. On 26 July, Carol I and his entourage returned to Sinaia. The visit was the first stage of the Russian-Romanian reconciliation which led, during the First World War, to the abandonment by Romania of the Central Powers and to it joining the Entente (Damean).

between the Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaevna and Prince Carol made their appearance again. In his book first published in 1921, Pierre Gilliard, the foreign languages teacher of the tsar and tsarina's five children mentioned an interesting dialogue that he had had with the Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaevna:

"Tell me the truth, monsieur: do you know why we are going to Rumania?"

In some confusion I replied:

"I believe it's a courtesy visit. The Czar is going to return the visit the King of Rumania paid him some time back."

"Oh, that's the official reason ... but what's the real reason? I know you are not supposed to know, but I'm sure everyone is talking about it and that you know it ..."

As I nodded in assent, she added:

"All right! But if I don't wish it, it won't happen. Papa has promised not to make me ... and I don't want to leave Russia."

"But you could come back as often as you like."

"I should still be a foreigner in my own country. I'm a Russian, and mean to remain a Russian!" (Gilliard, 1921: 94).

One must notice that this important political event happened in a very tense international context in Europe, as proven by the fact that two weeks afterwards, the Sarajevo incident happened which triggered the outbreak of the First World War. The fact of limiting the extension of German and Austro-Hungarian influence in the Balkans and the Middle East was mentioned in the Russian foreign political plan as drawn up by Sazonov in early 1914, and the improvement of Russian-Romanian relations was part of that plan (Uribeš, 1968: 235-236). Constantza, a town with only 28,000 inhabitants at the time, had only been chosen because it was Romania's only port to the Black Sea, which facilitated the visit of the tsar and of the Russian imperial family because they travelled on the imperial yacht "Standard". They arrived accompanied by a sizeable delegation whose members were soon to play an important role in the participation of Russia in the war which broke in the summer of 1914, and here we could mention the foreign affairs minister, Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov,<sup>1</sup> and the chief of his chancellery, Baron Mavriki Fabianovich Schilling, and the Russian minister plenipotentiary in Bucharest, Stanislav Alfonsovich Poklevski-Koziell,<sup>2</sup> but also countless representatives of the Army Commandment.

Although the official announcement of the mayor of Constantza, Virgil Andronescu, about the tsar's visit was only made on 16 May, the inhabitants of the town managed to mobilise for the important event. Buildings such as the Mircea cel Bătrân High School and the Sanitary Service were renovated, together with the streets where the troops were to march off. The established route of the official procession was decorated with garlands and lampions which gave the town a festive feeling. Three tribunes were prepared, summing 9,000 seats, and the Constantza town hall was bombarded with requests to get official seats (Ionescu). The "Expres Comercial" local newspaper gave a vivid description of the town:

From the port to the other end of the town they built imposing arches of triumph and reception pavilions and the whole town is decked with Russian and Romanian flags for it portrays the twinning of two peoples whose interests are such that they maintain a close and honest friendship (Ionescu).

Another local newspaper, "Liberalul Constanței", noted that "there is a splendid alley tying the Queen's pavilion to the pavilion that had been specially built to receive the Russian sovereigns. The alley continues into the town like a road of flowers, scattered with chrysanthemums and daisies" (Ionescu).

In an article entitled "Rumyniya i Rossiya" published on 22 June, "Novoe Vremia", a Russian newspaper of Saint Petersburg, acknowledged the financial efforts made both by the Romanian government and by the town's administration, mentioning that over 5 million francs had been spent to decorate and embellish the town, which was a considerable amount back then (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 8. Novoe Vremia, 22 June 1914).

All the inhabitants of the Romanian harbour to the Black Sea were called to contribute to the good development of the event, and the mayor Virgil Andronescu even issued an ordinance asking the citizens to decorate their houses as a token of appreciation for the important guests that were expected. Published in the local newspaper "Weekend Adevărul", the personal viewpoint of the city mayor leaves no doubt about his decision to give the tsar, the imperial family and the high Russian dignitaries the most beautiful welcome.

Faced with the high honour bestowed upon our city on this occasion, the city itself shall try to give our distinguished guests the most beautiful welcome so as to be at the height of the solemnity of the moment, which also requires significant expenses besides the rather important amounts spent by the state (Ionescu).

Early in the morning, the motorcades of ambassadors, generals and other high officials started heading towards the port together with locals and Romanians from all over the country as well as foreigners. This was

<sup>1</sup> As he could not withstand to travel by sea, Russia's foreign affairs minister got to Constantza by train, arriving on 30 May (Duca, 1992: 30).

<sup>2</sup> S. A. Poklevski-Koziell was the minister plenipotentiary of Russia to Romania between 1913 and 1917 with a 10-month interruption in 1916-1917 when General A. A. Mossolov was the head of the Russian Legation in Bucharest. After the Bolsheviks took power, Poklevski-Koziell refused to continue his diplomatic activity and preferred to be a political emigrant to Romania, where he died on 1 May 1937 (Guzun, 2016: 35, note 30).

a festive moment such as Constantza had never known before as the number of those who came into the town was estimated at 100,000 people (Ionescu).

The “Standard” accompanied by the yacht “Almaz”, escorted by the crusader “Kagul” and four torpedo boats, entered the waters of the Constantza port at 9:45 a.m. and half an hour later the tsar got off the ship and set foot on Romanian land. It was the first time a tsar of Russia together with his imperial family had arrived in Romania. It was also their last visit abroad prior to their tragic end. They were welcomed by King Carol I dressed in a Russian field marshal’s uniform – bearing the field marshal’s baton that had been handed to him two years before on behalf of the tsar, by Prince Ferdinand and his son, Carol, both dressed in Russian military uniforms according to their rank in the tsarist army. Canon rounds were fired in salute and the bells of the cathedral and all the churches of the area were tolled. The tsar, the king and Prince Carol reviewed the guard of honour, and then the Romanian monarch introduced to the tsar the members of the royal family and the Romanian dignitaries (Ionescu). This was followed by a Te Deum in the cathedral, celebrated by the Lower Danube bishop (Gilliard, 1921: 94), and at 1 p.m. a private lunch was served to the two families in the pavilion of Queen Elisabeth while the members of the two parties dined at the Casino. At 4:30 p.m. they took tea on the imperial yacht and then both the hosts and the guests watched the military parade of the 5th Corps of the Romanian Army. The parade also used modern technology, aeroplanes and heavy field howitzers; then, the king really wanted to show the tsar the port of Constantza which had cost the Romanian state about 100 million francs (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Novoe Vremia, 22 June 1914). The evening started at 9:00 p.m. with an official banquet attended by 84 people, where Carol I made a welcome speech in French for his Russian guests to which the tsar replied in the same language (Gilliard, 1921: 95). While the Romanian monarch’s speech was more reserved, as it was well-known that he had never forgotten Germany,<sup>1</sup> his home country, even though he had resided in Romania since 1866, the tsar’s speech was a friendly criticism of Carol I’s foreign policy with emphasis on the fact that the alliance with Russia was a natural one, justified by the favourable attitude of public opinion and by the community of faith, both countries being orthodox (Crețu, Racovițan, 2017: 127–128). The festive dinner lasted two hours, and then the imperial party withdrew as the organisers displayed both torches and fireworks and the music of a brass band (Ionescu).

The Russian and Romanian newspapers were unanimous in their appreciation of the meeting in Constantza between Tsar Nicholas II and King Carol I, the members of the Russian imperial family and those of the Romanian royal house as well as between the high civilian and military dignitaries of the two countries. Thus, a special envoy of “Novoe Vremia” present at this important event wrote that there was not the slightest lack of harmony in Constantza and that the “meeting of the monarchs and their families was as cordial as possible and surrounded by the clearly expressed sympathy of the people” (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Novoe Vremia, 22 June 1914). In the vision of the same special envoy, cordiality, sympathy and content were the suitable words to describe the meeting in Constantza, words which were if anything understated when compared to the reality. Further on, as if to anticipate the alliance which was to be sealed between the two countries during the First World War, it was said that “there is something still undefined but which promises a lot in the atmosphere of the Russian-Romanian relations” (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Novoe Vremia, 22 June 1914).

The event that took place on 1/14 June 1914, the day when Constantza was the most important place in Europe, was fully reflected in the local press which gave detailed descriptions of the visit of the Russian sovereign and his family. “Expres Comercial” was a publication which came to some interesting conclusions, reproduced hereafter: “Whatever hides behind the curtains of this visit, whatever one may say, we must admit that it is a great honour, a reason of pride for us to have the Tsar of all Russians together with all his Family cross our threshold” (Ionescu).

A Bulgarian politician whose name was not mentioned by the “Novoe Vremia” and who was present at the tsar’s visit to Constantza, although saying that he saw none of the passionate enthusiasm that he would have seen had the Russian sovereign gone to Bulgaria, Serbia or Montenegro, did admit that the people of the town and the Romanian government circles displayed feelings of joy and a state that was close to enthusiasm, which was the most one could expect from the Romanians, considering that Romania had been separated from Russia for such a long time, like a beautiful sleeping girl isolated by a forest full of thorny shrub, an allusion to the evil effects of the diplomacy of the Triple Alliance states, especially Austro-Hungary, on Russian-Romanian relations (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. Novoe Vremia, 22 June 1914).

As expected, the tsar’s visit to Constantza was watched with a great deal of interest in Germany and Austro-Hungary, countries which were interested in keeping Romania on their side; the German and Austro-Hungarian newspapers wrote countless articles on this event. While the national newspapers displayed a rather reserved attitude, limiting themselves to presenting the toasts held by the two sovereigns, the party newspapers, especially those of the opposition, commented on the visit in detail. The latter publications underlined the fact that Romania had become very important for the European balance in the Balkans, but there were plenty of malicious comments that, following the meeting in Constantza, the Romanian kingdom

<sup>1</sup> Karl Eitel Friedrich Zephyrinus Ludwig von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was born in 1839 as the second son of Prince Karl-Anton von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern family. In 1866, he agreed to become the ruler of the United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia, which later became Romania. His family was related to the Royal House of Prussia as well as to countless other royal families reigning in Europe (Lindenberg, 2003: 5–27).

had become nothing but a political and economic vassal of the Russian Empire to whom it had offered its help in the control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Between the lines one could even read veiled threats as they sought to remind Romanians that their country had a predominant position in the Balkans due to the support received from Austro-Hungary and not from Russia; there were even requests to strengthen the Austro-Hungarian border with Romania (Crețu, Racovițan, 2017: 128).

The formal aspect of the visit was just a smoke screen for the discussion of political problems, especially those of the Balkans which worried the tsar. The talks between Nicholas II and Carol I were held on the “Standard”, where the tsar also gave audiences to prime-minister Ion I. C. Brătianu and to the foreign affairs minister Emil Porumbaru. S. D. Sazonov had long talks with Romanian politicians, especially with the head of government, and besides Constantza, the Russian diplomat also visited Bucharest and Sinaia in the three days spent on the Romanian territory. In the event of a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Greece for control over the Aegean Islands, it was established that both the Russian Empire and Romania would take a similar attitude, condemning the actions on land of the Turkish military forces. The 1913 Treaty of Bucharest<sup>1</sup> was recognised by both parties as a guarantee of stability in the Balkans, which gave great satisfaction to the Romanians as Russia gave its support to the detriment of Bulgaria. Romania’s uncertain relation with Austro-Hungary, given that the government in Vienna had supported Bulgaria during the Balkan Wars, thus affecting Romanian interests, was a reason for concern for Sazonov, but Brătianu assuaged the fears of the head of the Russian diplomacy, as proven by the report the Russian minister drew up for the tsar on 11/24 June 1914.

Brătianu replied that Romania was by no means forced to participate at any war without a direct impact on its personal interests... As a synthesis of everything that I have seen and heard during my three day stay in Romania, I must report to your Imperial Majesty that I returned from this journey with the best impressions; I must acknowledge the Romanians’ favourable attitude towards us while allowing myself to hope for the further development of our good neighbourhood relations (Guzun, 2016: 35–36).

Considering that trading between the two countries was at a low, the visit to Constantza was also an occasion to talk about the defence of Russian-Romanian trading interests in the Black Sea<sup>2</sup> and about the attitude that the Russian Empire would have had if Austro-Hungary had attacked Serbia. Although Russia wanted peace to be preserved, as Sazonov declared, he seems to have said to Brătianu that his Imperial Majesty’s government would not be able to watch as the Serbians were crushed and that the Russian Empire would defend them no matter the consequences.<sup>3</sup> As is widely known, in an ironic twist of fate the First World War, which was to shock all mankind through the number of lives lost and its duration, broke out only two weeks after this statement was made precisely because Serbia was attacked by Austro-Hungary.

The crossing of the Austro-Hungarian border by Ion I. C. Brătianu and S. D. Sazonov during their journey to Predeal had a certain symbolic importance for the politicians in Bucharest, and their entrance onto Austro-Hungarian territory anticipated the crossing of the Romanian troops into Transylvania in August 1916, once Romania had abandoned its neutrality.

Following the historic visit of the tsar and his imperial party to Constantza, as well as the visits of S.D. Sazonov to Bucharest and Sinaia, it became clear that if a war were to break out in Europe, Romania was not to be seen as an enemy of Russia. Even if the kingdom on the Danube formally remained an ally of Germany and Austro-Hungary, the field was set for a Russian-Romanian collaboration, which happened two years later, when Romania decided to abandon its neutrality and join the First World War. Given that Romanian-Russian relations had become so cordial, no one mentioned the issue of Bessarabia, a province incorporated into the Russian Empire at the end of the 1806–1812 Russo-Turkish War.

Even though Dmitriy Nikolaevich Chikhachev<sup>4</sup> was not a diplomat, but a member of the Duma, the publication in the spring of 1914 of a book he had written under the title of “Sovremennaya Rumyniya:

<sup>1</sup> The Second Balkan War ended on 22 July 1913 when Bulgaria asked for an armistice. The Treaty of Bucharest was signed at the end of this war on 10 August 1913 and through its provisions Bulgaria lost almost everything that it had conquered during the First Balkan War. South Dobrudja was given to Romania and the government in Sofia was forced to accept the Turtucaia–Balcic line as the new Bulgarian-Romanian border. After the signing of this treaty, Romania not only got bigger, but also increased its prestige (Hitchins, 1996: 173).

<sup>2</sup> In 1914 Russian-Romanian commerce was insignificant; Russia exported to Romania manufactured products, horses and a small amount of wheat while Romania was sending to Russia mostly salt and oxen (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Novoe Vremia*, 29 May 1914).

<sup>3</sup> Later on, the prime-minister Ion I. C. Brătianu publicly stated that, as he desired to prevent Germany and Austro-Hungary, Romania’s allies, from expanding their power, but also to defend general peace in Europe, he conveyed Russia’s desire to implement its pan-Slavic politics and to protect the Serbs. Unfortunately, his warning was not taken into account in Berlin, or in Vienna (Duca, 1992: 30).

<sup>4</sup> Dmitriy Nikolaevich Chikhachev (1876–1918) was a Russian public figure and politician, and a member of the State Duma of the 3rd and 4th convocations of the Podolsk province. He was a hereditary aristocrat, being Landowner of the Pskov and Podolsk provinces. His father was Admiral Nikolai Matveyevich Chikhachev, while his mother was Baroness Eugenia Fedorovna Korf. In 1897 he was in army as a member of the 17th Don Cossack Regiment, but he retired in the following year. He was the Mogilev-Podolsky district

Putevyye zametki” [Modern Romania: Travel Notes] led to a better understanding of the Romanian realities in Russia, as the author managed to provide a brief presentation of Romania and its public opinion. Although his visit to the Romanian kingdom only lasted a few days, D. N. Chikhachev managed to have discussions with many Romanian politicians, diplomats, consuls and ministers, and even with King Carol I. Considered by the “Novoe Vremia” newspaper as a genuine report to Russian society, his writings noted Romania’s closeness to Russia, as the visit of the tsar to the kingdom on the Danube was nothing other than a way of sanctioning that situation (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Novoe Vremia*, 29 May 1914). “A friend that had been lost and found by Russia” is the characterisation of Romania in the newspaper article where the book is presented, the author noting its more than friendly attitude towards the Russian Empire even though it had not been long before, in 1912, that Romanians had demonstrated against the Russians on the occasion of the celebration of 100 years since the Empire had gotten their hands on Bessarabia (FAMR. F. Petrograd. D. 12. *Novoe Vremia*, 29 May 1914).

As an extra argument for the tightening of the relations between the two countries, D. N. Chikhachev also made an interesting parallel between the two peoples, noting that the Romanian landowners spent important amounts of money abroad, that the Romanian peasants were being oppressed by the Jewish leaseholders and that the local students stood out through their laziness and only studied to get their degrees. According to the same author, the kingdom on the Danube boasted a great affluence of foreign capital, mostly French, as the Romanians were pro-French and anti-Semites; the latter was said to be a deeply rooted national feature (Chikhachev, 1914: 12–15, 65).

### 3. Conclusion

This series of Russian-Romanian visits opened by that of King Carol I in 1898 left its mark on Romania’s foreign policy when the First World War broke out on 15/28 June 1914. Faced with this major event, the government in Bucharest had to define its attitude as all the other pre-existing problems moved into the background. Although Romania had adhered to the Triple Alliance since as early as 1883, the Crown Council<sup>1</sup> convened at the Peleş Castle in Sinaia on 21 July 1914 decided to maintain Romania’s neutrality statute, a decision favourable to the Entente. On 14/27 August 1916, after over two years of neutrality, Romania declared war on Austro-Hungary and gave its military cooperation to Russia, France and Great Britain, whose ally she actually was.

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leader of the nobility between 1899 and 1906 as well as the honorary judge of the peace for the Mogilev-Podolsky district. In 1906 he was elected chairman of the Podolsk Agricultural Society, while five years later was a full member of the Kiev club of Russian nationalists. In 1907 he was elected as a member of the third State Duma for the Podolsk province, advocating the gradual introduction of universal education. In 1912 he was re-elected to the State Duma as a member of the Russian nationalists and moderate-right faction. Between April and June 1916, he was a member of a parliamentary delegation chaired by A. D. Protopopov, which visited a number of European countries. From the beginning of the First World War, he voluntarily entered at the disposal of the commander-in-chief of the Southwestern Front. After the February Revolution he carried out the instructions of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma. After the October Revolution, he participated in the organisation of the Volunteer Army and served as an officer in a Cossack unit. He died in one of the first battles. He was married and had a son. Between 1907 and 1917 he published eight works (Belrussia).

<sup>1</sup> This was an ad-hoc institution whose existence was not covered by the 1866 Romanian Constitution but was convened in exceptional moments to guide the government attitude.



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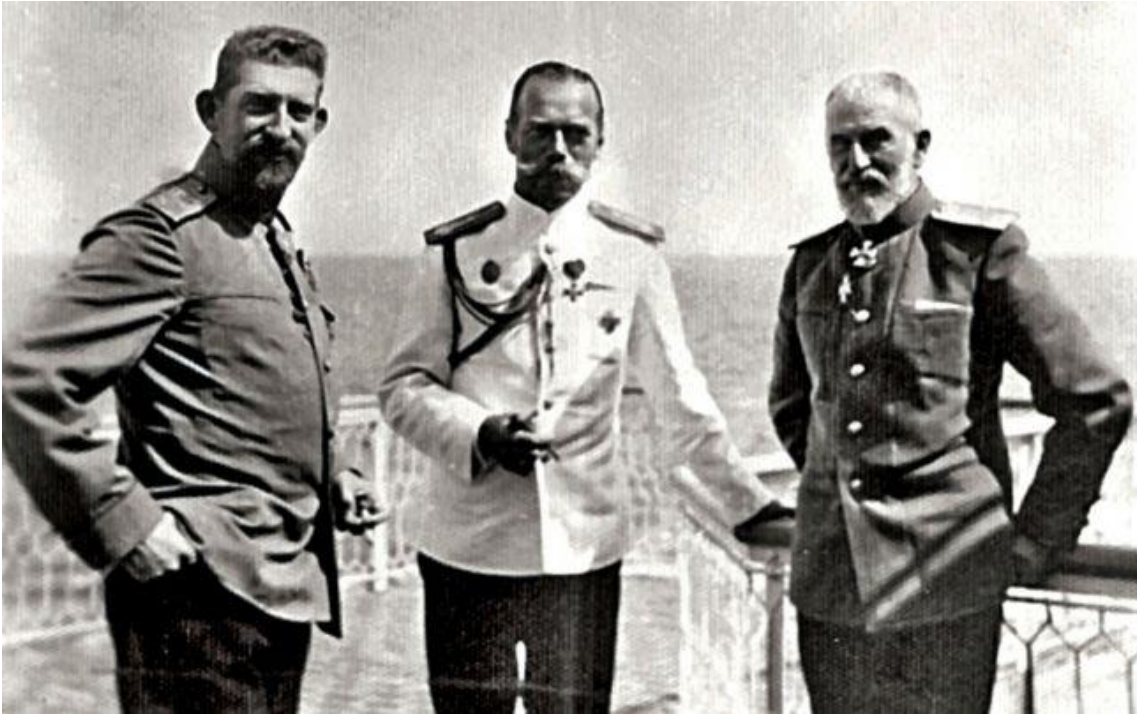
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#### Appendix



**Fig. 1.** Arrival of the tsar and the imperial family in the port of Constantza (1/14 June 1914)  
Source: The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Romania



**Fig. 2.** Heir Prince Ferdinand, Tsar Nicholas II and King Carol I (Constantza, 1/14 June 1914)  
Source: The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Romania



**Fig. 3.** Tsar Nicholas II and King Carol I saluting the crowds (Constantza, 1/14 June 1914)  
Source: Gabriel-Octavian Nicolae



**Fig. 4.** Members of the Russian imperial family and members of the Romanian royal family (Constantza, 1/14 June 1914)

Source: The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Romania