

## ROMANIA AND THE CENTRAL POWERS (AUGUST 1913 – JUNE 1914)

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**Abstract:** *The author researched the orientation of Romania's foreign politics regarding the politico-military groups of the great powers, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, during the period between the Treaty of Bucharest from 1913 and the crisis from July 1914, which prefigured the ignition of the First World War.*

*The study represents a thorough treatise of the evolution of the relations between Romania and Austro-Hungarian Empire, which were mostly determined by the politics of the Hungarian government towards the Romanians from Transylvania, but also by Wien's and Berlin's diplomatic efforts to maintain Romania in the political orbit of the Central Powers.*

*The author emphasizes the main factors that contributed to Romania's detachment from the Central Powers and to its external politics reorientation towards the Entente.*

**Keywords:** *external politics orientation, politico-military groups, alliance treaty, the Hungarian government's politics in Transylvania, public opinion, external politics reorientation.*

The unfolding of the Second Balkan War drew attention to the nonconformity of the Romanian foreign policy, in comparison to that of Austro-Hungary, and the precarious alliance between the two countries, which had recently been renewed. Concomitantly, the disputes between Romania and Austro-Hungary reflected the shaping of an older tendency of distancing Romania from the Austro-Hungary, a fact that actually contributed to the aggravation of the existent crisis within the Triple Alliance. The evolution of Austro-Hungarian-Romanian relations in the period following the Peace Conference in Bucharest took the same path, indicating that the divisions between the two countries were linked not by temporary factors, but by objective factors, which were the very foundation of Romania's foreign policy.

As is known, King Carol I was long aware of the imminent disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a situation that would have made it possible to unite Romania with the territories inhabited by Romanians from across the Dual Monarchy. Timing of such outcome was difficult to predict. On the other hand, the Romanian sovereign remained, as he characterized himself, "a good Prussian and a good German"<sup>1</sup>. In his view, maintaining political orientation towards Germany was a crucial reference point of Romania's foreign policy. Therefore, following the Treaty of Bucharest, having regard to the good relations between Bucharest and Berlin, Carol I assured both Ballplatz and the Wilhelmstrasse, that Romania will continue to pursue a foreign policy with the Central Powers<sup>2</sup>. In turn, Titu Maiorescu did the same. N. Iorga wrote about the Romanian Prime Minister saying that "Titu Maiorescu, going against public opinion, did not miss any opportunity to say that Romania's foreign policy has not changed a thing"<sup>3</sup>. Beyond these statements, which were made at the highest level, the political

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<sup>1</sup> B. von Bülow, (1928), *Mémoires*, IV, Paris, p. 431.

<sup>2</sup> Gh.N. Căzan, Șerban Radulescu-Zoner, *Romania and the Triple Alliance (1878-1914)*, Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 362

<sup>3</sup> N. Iorga, (1999), *Under three kings. History of a struggle for a national and moral ideal*, Publisher Pro, Bucharest, p. 147.

reports of representatives of the Central Powers in Romania were alarming, revealing a different outlook. The governments of Vienna and Berlin were thoroughly informed of the Romanian people's growing animosity towards the Habsburg monarchy, the progress of the Entente's influence in Romania and the Bucharest government's position in its relations with the Central Powers, which had evolved from essentially platonic statements of fidelity to the Triple Alliance, to the admission that it was theoretically impossible to apply the clauses of an old secret treaty that had been renewed just a few months before the outbreak of the Second Balkan War<sup>4</sup>.

We believe that it is appropriate to insist on some of these political reports, seldom used in history, because they are highly suggestive for evidentiating the new course of Romanian foreign policy after the Peace of Bucharest. Thus, in a note from the Imperial German Legation in Romania to the Chancellery in Berlin, on 14/27 August 1913, Waldburg, the German charge d'affaires of the Romanian capital, shows that **“following discussions with His Majesty the King, he characterized the relationship between Romania and Austro-Hungary as being poor** (author's underlinement). *Unfortunately, there have recently been new indications of hostile acts against Romanians in Hungary, such as the banning of a Romanian teachers' gathering*<sup>5</sup>. In the same note, Waldburg shows that King Carol I told the Minister of Austro-Hungary, Fürstenberg, that *“he will not tolerate a great Bulgaria and, if necessary, will back Serbia against Bulgaria. The plenipotentiary was very amazed and immediately sent legation counselor Baron Haymerle to Vienna. In Vienna, however, it was stated that it is impossible for Austro-Hungary to accept a “greater Serbia”, and therefore must side with Bulgaria”*<sup>6</sup>.

In another report to German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, on 3/16 September 1913 Waldburg mentions some of the appreciations made by I.I.C. Brăianu, head of the Liberal Party and alleged future Prime Minister: *“Aversion toward Austro-Hungary is so great that now you can hear almost every educated man speaking against the neighbouring monarchy. [...] While animosity against the befriending country in the vicinity has gained ground, French and Russian influences had started, which have found zealous promoters in Mr Schebeko and Mr Blondel. In particular, the French plenipotentiary conducted an intense activity in favour of Russia and, admittedly, not without success. Sympathy for the neighboring country has of course not been developed, but it is not to be overlooked that Bessarabia is as good as forgotten, while **the eyes of every Romanian are focusing, more than ever before, on Transylvania. It is easy to see that this trend, through aversions developed against Austro-Hungary, is gaining the necessary extension** (author's underlinement). *Hungary's awkward politics, which recently went back to treating the problem of the dioceses<sup>7</sup>, increases Romania's animosity against the**

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<sup>4</sup> About the political content of such reports see Gh.N. Căzan, Serban Radulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 365-367.

<sup>5</sup> I. Ardeleanu, V. Arima, G. Ionel, M. Musat (coord.), *1918 to Romanians. The completion of the national-state of the Romanian people. External Documents (1879-1918)*, vol I, Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1983, p. 343 (to be quoted in *1918 for Romanians*).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> By a new Church subdivision (1912) Romanian dioceses were allocated to the newly established Greek Catholic episcopate Hajdúdorog by the Hungarian government, following its policy goals for Magyarization. In connection with this problem, I.I.C. Bratianu intervened with the Hungarian government led by Count Tisza, but without it leading to a successful outcome for Romanians in Transylvania. The formation of a Hungarian language Greek Catholic archdiocese in Hajdúdorog, in the North-Western area of the Romanian territory, provoked violent impressive assemblies and press campaigns. Also, the 57 Romanian MEPs in the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest expressed a total lack of confidence of the Romanian population against the Hungarian government, which developed and drafted an electoral law designed to circumvent the introduction of universal suffrage. See Teodor Pavel, *Romanian Movement for*

state”<sup>8</sup>. I.I.C. Bratianu added that **“good relations with Austro-Hungary depend entirely on treating the problem Romanians are having in Hungary** (author’s underlignment). *In Romania there are strong organic ties with compatriots from there*”<sup>9</sup>. Waldburg, at the end of his report, concluded: *“It is almost not to be feared that political relations between Romania and Austro-Hungary will witness a change as long as King Carol, with his proven power, leads the destinies of this country. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that in the country’s largest circles the problem of the Romanians in Hungary is felt as a thorn in their flesh. A more benevolent treatment of the issue by Austro-Hungarians could be the key to creating lasting relationships with the neighbouring state”*<sup>10</sup>.

In a letter dated October 21/November 3, 1913, the Chief of the General Staff of Austro-Hungary, Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Leopold Berchtold, made the following remark about Romania’s foreign policy, after reading an article published in the press by N. Iorga: *“Regarding everything exposed in this newspaper article and the information that I received from a trusted source, I would allow myself to express the opinion that **we can no longer count on Romania to side with us in a future war, because Romania may well be found amongst our enemies** (author’s underlignment), although at the outbreak of war will probably wait, to eventually to side with the strongest. **The idea of “Greater Romania” has gained solid ground to such an extent that Transylvania and Bessarabia are the closest targets toward which Romania reaches, for now more intensely toward Transylvania than Bessarabia** (author’s underlignment)”*. Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf, as a highly responsible official, suggested the solution he was expecting to the Austro-Hungarian chief diplomat: *“Given the crucial importance that this issue has for war preparations that fall within my professional competence, I must say that we have an unconditional duty to succeed, according to what has been formally established, in the joining of Romania by a treaty of the Triple Alliance - as members of the alliance treaty concluded between them (author’s underlignment) - for, if not, we know not what we can count on and will eventually be exposed - as I have said before - to the danger of hostilities on Romania’s part. For now, while King Carol lives, this extreme direction is unlikely, but as recent history has shown, the king has been dragged against his own conviction into an action that certainly was not in our interest and this could be repeated”*<sup>11</sup>. About the successor to the Romanian throne, Prince Ferdinand, which “is very accessible to outside influences and in particular those of his wife”, Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf expressed his opinion that **“he offers no guarantee that he will remain on our side in difficult times** (author’s underlignment), by facing all the elements that will descend on him. Prince Carol – adds the Austrian general – is different, but in the monarchy’s point of view he is no better. He has his mother’s intelligence and impulsiveness, he was educated in her spirit and the spirit of Romanian chauvinism (in particular by Professor Iorga), is hostile to foreigners and **already passes as creator of “Greater Romania”, which is equivalent to the**

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*National Unity and diplomacy of the Central Powers (1878-1914), vol II (1894-1914)*, Publisher Facla, Timisoara, 1982, p. 114-115. It is significant that a delegation, to which Vasile Lucaciu was a part of, went to Rome to inform to express the Romanian Opposition to the establishment of the archdiocese in Hajdúdorog. However, the Vatican issued papal bull recognizing the new bishop, despite the Romanian protest. For details, see Liviu Maior, *The Romanian national movement in Transylvania. 1900-1914*, Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, p. 94-95.

<sup>8</sup> *1918 for Romanians*, vol. I, p. 348.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 349.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 351.

**conquest of Transylvania and Bessarabia** (author's underlignment)".<sup>12</sup>

As for the above mentioned article written by Iorga, attached to General Conrad von Hoetzendorf's letter, we highlight only a few of the Romanian savant's opinions: *"The future policy of Romania is the nation's political interests, supported by the energy, solidarity and organization of all Romanians. [...] Even now I am against an alliance with Austro-Hungary. Who do you ally? The Austrian half which means nothing, or the Hungarian half which is hostile to us? Austria, in my opinion, has no future. [...] What does Germany rely upon? On the German element. Considering Austria's division, Germany would rather prefer, in my opinion, to attach the Germans than to support an entity on its deathrow"*.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the hostile attitude of Austro-Hungary, manifested by public opinion in Romania, but also among political leaders in Bucharest or men of culture, created a state of concern in the capitals of the Central Powers, both Berlin and Vienna becoming aware that the perpetuation of this state of mind could influence Romania's foreign policy orientation. To counter the possible reorientation of Romania towards the Entente, Ottokar Czernin, an outstanding political personality, a friend of Franz Ferdinand's and considered Berchtold's successor to lead Austrian diplomacy, was named as minister of Austro-Hungary in Bucharest in November 1913. In accordance with instructions, Ottokar Czernin needed to consider *"clarifying misunderstandings arisen between Vienna and Bucharest [...] in the last Balkan crisis, to exercise influence over the leading factors and on public opinion in Romania, in order to resume the close cooperation policy with Austro-Hungary and, in any case, to hastily clarify our relations with Romania"*.<sup>14</sup> It is significant that among the many details that accompany the presentation of the objectives of his mission in Bucharest Czernin noted: ***"I certainly do not want to bring into question the loyalty and reliability of the German prince as an ally (King Carol I – author's note) who has ruled for decades, with a wise and firm hand. But in Romania, more than in other countries, the monarch is forced - due to foreign origin of the dynasty - to heed the voice of the people in the far-reaching decisions of foreign policy. That the mood of the Romanian people was only apparently friendly to us has been proven by the recent past. As long as such attitude dominates public opinion in Romania, especially in the army, we cannot expect that the king would have sufficient power at a given time to determine the Romanian people to fulfill their duty as allies and brotherhood in arms with us*** (author's underlignment). *It would serve no purpose to close our eyes to these events. But rather we have a frank discussion in Bucharest and insist that the Romanian people be enlightened about the relationship of alliance with the Monarchy and, therefore, which side Romania will take in the case of important decisions. [...] Only when His Majesty the King and the Romanian Government – through the official publication of the treaty - will prove their firm determination to remain in unconditional alliance with us and once public opinion in Romania will have somehow ratified this decision, by its own will, may we consider that full reciprocity in our relations with Romania has been restored, which alone would enable us to trust in alliance with Romania and to make it the hub of our Balkan policy* (author's underlignment).<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after his official appointment, Ottokar Czernin realized that the publication

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 351-352.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 352.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 352.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 364.

of the treaty of alliance with Romania would be impossible because the Romanian public opinion was categorically against it. In his report to the chief diplomat of Ballplatz, dated November 22 / December 5, 1913 he stated, among other things, that **“the issue of Romanian domestic policy is absolutely inseparable from that of foreign policy** (author’s underlignment). [...] *In a national unitary state there is sometimes one state of mind, while here there are always more, which annul and paralyze one another. We have not fought and we never will fight a war which is backed by the sympathies of the entire monarchy. [...] In a national unitary state, in which sometimes all its people have **one will** (author’s underlignment), **no monarch could wage a war against the will of his people, no matter how many written treaties would morally require him to do so. Should he try, he would risk his throne and dynasty and still achieve nothing** (author’s underlignment). Czernin was of the opinion that *“with us being forced to admit that **His Majesty the King will never go against the whole public opinion, a pro-Austrian state of mind should be created within the Romanian circles. Certain recent events in foreign policy have not strengthened sympathies for the monarchy here, but the great thorn in the peoples’ side is not the issue of the “review”<sup>16</sup>, nor is it last year’s foreign policy, but rather the sins of earlier Hungarian governments that are now reaping the benefits** (author’s underlignment). *His Majesty the King spoke with horror of the policy pursued by the coalition”<sup>17</sup> [...] and “Mr. Take Ionescu, certainly one of the greatest minds in the Kingdom, said: << **no man who has eyes in his head can ignore the fact that this is the vulnerable point of our relationship**>>“(author’s underlignment). Given Romania’s perspective, Czernin showed that determining the publication of the secret alliance between Romania and Austro-Hungary, *“has the unconditional premise of changing the people’s attitude and, therefore, the problem of domestic policy”*. The Austrian diplomat was aware that King Carol I *“will not go against the state of mind of the entire Romanian people, and this mood is dependent on the situation in Hungary.”* Therefore, Czernin concluded: **“Your Excellency’s order to achieve publication of the alliance is impossible without solving the Hungarian-Romanian issue and without completely changing the public opinion here** (author’s underlignment)<sup>18</sup>.***

Similar assessments were made by Count Haymerle, adviser to the monarchy in Bucharest, in a long statement dated 3 / December 16, 1913, referring to Romania’s mood which had become hostile towards Austria-Hungary, following Vienna’s attitude towards Romania during the “Balkan crisis” and the situation of Romanians in Transylvania. Regarding the publication of the treaty of alliance, the Austro-Hungarian diplomat believed it to be inappropriate and even dangerous. He believed that, beforehand, the Hungarian government must make a series of reforms in favour of Romanians, so that *“controversy created by people here will lose ground in Transylvania itself”*. This would lead to a change in attitude in Romania towards Austria-Hungary. Haymerle warned Vienna: *“The premature use of this necessary measure (Treaty publication - author’s note) could even lead to an open break [...]. However, when the mood will improve again – and the monarchy’s representation here has been assured that they can hope to achieve this through a pact with the*

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<sup>16</sup> Czernin refers to review the powers of the Peace Treaty of Bucharest of 1913, proposed by Russia and supported by Austria-Hungary, at the request of Bulgaria, to the displeasure of the Romanian government.

<sup>17</sup> Coalition of the governing party in Hungary in the years 1906-1910, whose name is linked to voting the "plural" law, the draft which was written by Count Gyula Andrassy, and measures implemented about Magyarization. About the Romanian national movements, in reaction to the Hungarian government policy, for a wider view see Liviu Maior, *op. cit.*, p. 102-111.

<sup>18</sup> See the content of the entire report of *1918 for Romanians*, vol. I, p. 373-383.

between Count Tisza and Romanian's in Hungary – it must be published". Also interesting are considerations regarding the alleged reasons for which King Carol I categorically opposed the publication of the treaty of alliance between Romania and Austria-Hungary: "If so far, even when we had many sympathies around here, the King held back an existent issue, he did it not out of fear that the treaty would become unpopular, but rather because, making it known, would upset Russia, united with the Balkan states, at the time under Russian influence, and against Romania. While Romania seemed not to be engaged in any endeavour, all the powers were looking to gain her friendship".<sup>19</sup>

In his report to Berchtold, in December 26, 1913 / January 8, 1914, Ottokar Czernin also recounts the mood in Romania. Among other things, it stated: "*Extremely vain and subject to fleeting dispositions, the psychology of the people has seen a complete transformation over the last year. Before the Balkan war the dominant opinion was that without a large state Romania will not achieve anything. The easy conquering of the new province (Quadrilateral - author's note), without our help or Russia's, and, as many claim, against the will of our Monarchy, has completely repressed the former sense of dependency, making room for a rampant sense of pride (author's underlignment). This even extends to the king himself, a very wise man, who is completely overcome by this hypnosis, considering that Romania's "success" springs from intentional politics. However he completely dismisses the fact that his command for mobilization was made under the threatening position of the people [...] But last year's events have one more important effect on the whole of Romania's politics. Last year the rare event occurred when "Vox Populi" became "vox Dei." The people's desire to take part in the war forced the king and government to mobilize and triumph, so it is no wonder that the value of "public opinion" increased excessively (author's underlignment)*".

In such conditions, it became clear to Czernin Ottokar that "*it is not easy to steer politics in the direction that Your Excellency (Count Berchtold - author's note) sees fit*". He shared the chief diplomat's view that maintaining Romania's old political orientation would be impossible "*unless we work systematically with <<whip and oats>>. For now - added Czernin - the latter option is on the agenda ...*". From this perspective, Czernin believed they must act so as to persuade the Romanians that "*their close relationship with us is not only possible, it is vital*". In this respect, the Austro-Hungarian diplomat expressed hope for a successful Hungarian-Romanian agreement, on the situation of Romanians in Transylvania, but also in the effect that threatening Bulgaria would exercise in Bucharest. In connection with the last point mentioned, Czernin appreciated that: "*... concerning us, we must have 'someone' in the Balkans and if that 'someone' is not the Romania then it will be Bulgaria. If the Romanians will see that we are indeed capable of forging an alliance with Bulgaria, then they will rush to fulfill our wishes. [...] If we manage to stir up the belief that Bulgaria wholeheartedly wants an alliance with us, but that we do not yet wish to agree, because first we want to know how to further develop our relationship with Romania, then my modest powers will be seriously supported*". Otherwise, Czernin was definitely willing to resort to pressure, "*we must not withhold from the Romanians, the fact that behind the kindness and benevolence lays a serious and threatening iron will. Should they not side **with us**, then we will act **against them**, and we must prepare the ground for them to believe in this iron will*"<sup>20</sup>.

The anti-Austrian mood manifested in Romanian society represented a major

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 383-386.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 387-392.

obstacle for policy makers in the Romanian capital in maintaining the old political guidance to the Central Powers. Since this could have affected the Romanian-German rapport, the actions of Germany's diplomatic envoys in Bucharest intensified toward the end of 1913. German diplomacy in Bucharest became more careful and sensitive to changes in Austro-Hungarian-Romanian relations as soon as King Carol, and future Prime Minister, I. I. C. Brătianu, raised an issue in December 1913 regarding the impossibility of any military cooperation with Austria-Hungary, as a result of unfavorable public opinion in Romania toward the Dual Monarchy. On December 6, 1913 Waldthausen informed Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg that both the future prime minister Brătianu and King Carol I have declared that, in the political conditions of that time, in which the entire public opinion was against Austria-Hungary due to the policy of national oppression of the Hungarian government "***the Romanian people will not go along with Austria in the event of war*** (author's underlining)". "*It is not enough to have treaties, they must also be popular,*" declared King Carol to the German diplomat.<sup>21</sup> The German minister did not only communicate these important statements in Berlin, but also to his colleague Czernin from the Romanian capital, which immediately had a conversation with I. I. C. Brătianu, followed by a hearing with the King, on which occasion he found out the same thing.<sup>22</sup> Following these discussions, Czernin filed a report to Count Berchtold, on December 8, 1913, which stressed the need of a quick and favourable settlement of the issue of Romanians in Hungary. In the document, Czernin characterised the lack of any value, in the near future, of the secret treaty of alliance between Romania and Austria-Hungary, as representing no more than a mere "*scrap of paper*"<sup>23</sup>.

The misalignment problem regarding the Triple Alliance of Romania occurred when a conflagration had been left open in late 1913, at such a time when the political circles in Bucharest had not yet foreseen an immediate European conflict<sup>24</sup>. This trend increased with the important governmental change made in early 1914 by appointing I. I. C. Brătianu as prime minister, known for his filoantantist political orientation. It can be said, in a sense, that the decision to reorientate Romania's foreign policy had been made by King Carol I himself, when late in 1913 on December 8, he warned Vienna as much through his plenipotentiary accredited ministry in Bucharest, and the establishment of a new government headed by I. I. C. Brătianu could only confirm the existence of such political options.

Even before the government takeover, King Carol I informed the I. I. C. Brătianu about Titu Maiorescu's renewal of the secret alliance treaty with the Central Powers. The leader of the P.N.L. party reacted negatively, saying he could not commit to maintain the treaty in the event of war<sup>25</sup>. "*I doubt, sir, that the Romanian government would implement this treaty*" is said to have been declared by the great Romanian politician<sup>26</sup>.

His coming to power was achieved at a time when the Central Powers were desperately struggling to firmly maintain the Romanian foreign policy orientation. Czernin's sustained diplomacy in Bucharest was, as it is known, in conjunction with the renewal of talks between the Hungarian government in Budapest and the Romanian National Party in Transylvania. Under pressure from the ruling circles of Vienna, the Hungarian Prime Minister Istvan Tisza decided in the autumn of 1913 to offer the

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<sup>21</sup> Apud Gh. N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 368-369.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 369.

<sup>23</sup> "*Der Bundesvertrag zur Zeit nicht viel mehr West ist als die Tinte un das Papier auf das er geschrieben ist*". *Ibidem*, p. 369. Historian Vasile Cristian mentioned that this particular saying belongs to the austro-hungarian diplomat Förgach. See V. Cristian, *1878-1914*, in vol. *Romania in International Relations*, (coord.: L. Boicu, V. Cristian, Gh. Platon), Publisher Junimea, Iași, 1980, p. 372.

<sup>24</sup> Gh.N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

<sup>25</sup> Anastasie Iordache, (1994), *Ion I.C. Brătianu*, Publisher Albatros, Bucharest, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup> Apud V. Cristian, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

Transylvanian Romanians minor economic, administrative and religious concessions.

In fact, as noted, Count Tisza, characterised by great political shrewdness, had not simply intended to take diversionary action, which was apparent in the very proposals he had made to the representatives of the PNR party in the negotiations. By granting superficial concessions, the Hungarian prime minister sought to weaken the opposition of the Transylvanian Romanians, by trying to tempt them into abandoning major claims such as the recognition of political and ethnic individuality of the Romanian community in the Austro-Hungarian state. A dualist and a supporter of the close alliance with Germany, Count Tisza sought by this maneuver he conducted, to show a benevolent attitude toward the Ballplatz diplomacy and give a certain satisfaction to the ruling circles of Berlin, who were very interested in improving the relationship between Romania and Austria-Hungary. The Romanian delegation rejected the Budapest office proposals to give up the known fundamental national claims, which marked the irreconcilable nature of the conflict. In these circumstances, the Romanian-Hungarian negotiations were interrupted in mid-February 1914, without reaching any result<sup>27</sup>. Their conduct occasioned broad expression of feelings of national unity of Romanians on both sides of the Carpathians, with a particular resonance in the European public opinion.

The fact that the Romanian-Hungarian negotiations in Budapest were just a maneuver by the Hungarian Prime Minister Istvan Tisza, designed to keep Romania in the political orbit of the Central Powers, was in fact well spotted by the diplomatic circles in Bucharest. In the 17/30 January 1914 report from the Minister of Belgium in Bucharest, M. van Ypersele de Strihou, to the Belgian Foreign Minister Julien Davignon, regarding the claims of the Romanians in Transylvania, and relations between Austria-Hungary and Romania show that *“here the world is skeptical about the possibility of a Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation”*. The Belgian Minister indicated that the heavy going and the likely failure of their talks was due, among other things, to the Hungarian chauvinist opposition who believe that *“such a policy endangers the unitary character of the Hungarian nationality”*. Without being open about the diversionist character of the treaties initiated by the Prime Minister of Hungary, because they were not concluded at that time, the Belgian diplomat rhetorically asked: *“Was Count Tisza really impressed by the attitude of the opposition?”*<sup>28</sup>

The failure of Ottokar Czernin’s and Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza’s initiatives boosted the mood of the Romanian society, hostile to an alliance between Austria-Hungary and Romania. Romanian public manifestations were closely followed by the Austro-Hungarian diplomats. Minister Czernin’s reports concerned both domestic politics and foreign policy. Among other things, he notes Cultural League activities, public demonstrations, shows and press articles for the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Austro-Hungarian diplomatic efforts to prevent such events were then shown<sup>29</sup>.

On 11/24 February 1914, Earl F. of Georgi, the Imperial and Royal Minister of War, sent Tisza the report made by District Commander of the Gendarmerie noting that Bucovina Cultural League in Romania had expanded its activities in Bukovina, Transylvania and Upper Hungary. The document also showed that, among other things: *“In Romania, the Bessarabia problem ceased to be the order of the day, considering generally that in the case of war Russia can count on the protesting of Romanians in Transylvania. [...] In Romania*

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<sup>27</sup> Gh.N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 387-389. About the conduct of the negotiations about the Romanian-Hungarian Forum in Budapest, for a wider perspective see Liviu Maior *op. cit.*, p. 131-143. Also, Teodor Pavel, *op. cit.*, p. 116-118.

<sup>28</sup> 1918 for Romanians, vol. I, p. 392-396.

<sup>29</sup> *Central Historical National Archives* (to be quoted *C.H.N.A.*), Fond Royal House, file no. 16/1913. Reports of the Minister of Austria-Hungary in Bucharest, O. Czernin, to Minister of Foreign Affairs Berchtold, from January to June 1914.



important military preparations are underway to support the mobilization and the general opinion is that the blade of such preparations is directed against Austria-Hungary. And among the Romanian army, reigns a spirit hostile to the monarchy, which, during demobilization, erupted sharply. In speeches to the reserves, at their release, officers have warned them of the fact that by next spring a large mobilization is expected, aiming to free the Romanians who suffered under the yoke of Hungary”<sup>30</sup>.

In a long report by Ottokar Czernin to Berchtold, 27 February/11 March 1914, the Austrian diplomat drew attention again, very strongly to “the situation in Romania which is becoming increasingly unfavourable.” “The competency of my duty befalls not on advising Your Excellency and it is far from it. But by my duty I am obliged to draw the attention of Your Excellency that **we are slipping down an inclined plane at frightening speed** (author’s underlignment) and that there is no time to lose, that it would be an ostrich policy to leave things as they are, despite the risk of being accused of repeating this one hundred times, it must be strongly reported once again and maintained that **the Austro-Romanian alliance is currently a worthless scrap of paper** (author’s underlignment). In case of conflict such as war, Romania will not lean on the monarchy; the current situation is **least favorable** for us”. The Austrian diplomat indicated that, since the Treaty between Romania and Austria-Hungary is a secret, “**the Romanian diplomats accredited abroad believe that it is not at all against the intentions of their king, representing a policy that leads Romania in the arms of the Triple Entente. Among them are many who prefer the Entente’s powers to the Triple Alliance because they believe that the king, government and their country are free due to this** (author’s underlignment)”. He stated that neither King Carol I is no longer willing to support the old political orientation of Romania: “**His Majesty is older than the years he has accumulated, his wish is no longer to swim against the current** (author’s underlignment)”. Czernin convincingly warned that one aspect is “certain”: “**That missing the five Romanian army corps in a possible Russian war, may not be the most important thing. But the absolutely necessary strengthening of the Transylvanian border against Romania, which will cost hundreds of millions, will be unavoidable, because of the austrofobic state of mind, which always turns on by itself and therefore increases steadily, to transform Romania from an ally to an enemy** (author’s underlignment)”.<sup>31</sup>

Analyzing the alarming news, Berchtold, in his instructions to Czernin, on 13/26 March 1914, asked him not to further insist to King Carol for the publication of the Treaty of Alliance, but to explain to him and to his political leaders that only an honest and open accession of the Triple Alliance could ensure the independence of Romania. Berchtold indicated that he had not definitively abandoned the idea of publishing the treaty, when in fact the timing was “*very unfavorable*”, but that it will be possible in the future, thus seeking the support of the German government: “*Therefore, Berchtold stated, I have but recently brought up this matter with the German office and I got the impression that Berlin is not disparaging Romania’s current position as a danger to the monarchy and to the Triple Alliance. I have sources that make me believe that the Germans are trying to persuade the Romanian decisive factors on the full loyalty of our policy and to draw their attention to the need to clarify the current ambiguous situation. Given the intimate relations between Berlin and Bucharest, the German government is able to undertake, under the friendliest form, such a step and, given the nature of the object, the German government can do it more naturally than we would be able to. Also, in these circumstances, if Berlin were to exert any type of influence on*

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<sup>30</sup> 1918 for Romanians, vol. I, p. 396-398.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 398-411.

the Romanian government or King Carol, I believe that the prospect of obtaining a positive outcome is more favourable than if we raise claims in this regard in Bucharest. By this, I do not mean - Berchtold added - that we need to behave passively towards adverse developments in Romania. On the contrary, without a direct request to disclose known relationships to the alliance, if Your Excellency should be so kind as to oblige that in the talks with His Majesty the King and the men at the head of state of Romania, always attract attention with a relentless perseverance and calm about the benefits a frank and as open an accession of Romania to the powers of the Triple Alliance and to emphasize that this policy has been in the past and will in future only be able to protect the full independence of Romania and to defend the country of the external dangers." Berchtold believes that "it is highly likely that the most accessible argument in Bucharest would be that both the isolated position and the positioning of the Russian side, despite the temporary benefits, could only render Romania dependent on the great northern neighbor and that for Romania it is imperative that it maintains the essential friendship with the Monarchy and the Triple Alliance as a counterweight against the Russian superpower"<sup>32</sup>.

Despite the optimism shown by Berchtold, from Bucharest things were seen differently. In his report dated March 20 / 2 April 1914 to the chief diplomat in Vienna, Czernin Ottokar darkly portrayed the mood against Austria-Hungary and showed the lack of a successful prospect of the assigned mission to persuade Romanians that the sincere accession to the Triple Alliance is in Romania's interest. "Your Excellency you think that influence from Berlin will bring the desired success. I am not convinced of it ...", answered Czernin. Assessment was based on the indubitable argument "that His Majesty King Charles himself told **me** (Czernin - author's note) that <<**as things stand at the moment, Romania cannot not go into war with the monarchy**>> (author's underlinement). [...] I tried several times to draw your Excellency's attention, continued Czernin, to the fact that there are two conflicting orientations: a pro-austrian one, to which the King, Maiorescu and a small minority of the highest circles belong, and another, opposed to the former, which calculates very differently." Especially after the failure of Romanian-Hungarian negotiations, the Austrian diplomat stated, "**the entire** (author's underlinement) public opinion took an anti-Austrian stance, or rather anti-Hungarian. In other words, between the two conflicting orientations here, the pro-Austrian and the opposing, recent weeks have seen a fundamental shift in favour of the latter". Czernin warned that if the King Carol, however, would be willing to maintain the country's old political orientation, this would be impossible because of public opinion: "**He is distanced by a large trench of public opinion over which he will not pass, unless he is forced** (author's underlinement)." Czernin expressed doubt that the King would ever implement the treaty of alliance with Austria-Hungary. In addition, Czernin pointed out that the Franco-Russian diplomacy was taking advantage of the state of relations between Romania and Austria-Hungary because "the French and Russians do not watch like spectators and do not wait, but work hard to exploit the situation, which has already been prepared for them through the failure of the negotiations in Budapest [...] and **are quite satisfied even to succeed only in permanently separating Romania from us, without a direct accession to them** (author's underlinement)."<sup>33</sup>

Czernin understood very well that the fundamental objective of the Great Powers of the Entente policy in Romania was the separation of the Romanian state from the Triple Alliance system and its joining with the Entente. From this perspective, the Entente could consider it a success to obtain Romania's neutrality, in case of a war between

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 411-417.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 419-427.

Austria-Hungary and Russia or of a continental one involving the great powers of the two opposing political and military groups. Pointing out the danger to Austria-Hungary, Czernin nevertheless reached erroneous conclusions regarding the significance of any neutrality policy that Romania could adopt in the case of an Austro-Russian conflict: *“I declare that the Romanian policy is tortuous, but in no case unfavourable or nearsighted. And what is this policy? Repeating last year’s tactic at an increased scale.”* Czernin stated in this regard that most of the population and political circles *“firmly believe that a war will break out sooner or later between the Monarchy and Russia and want to be prepared in one way or another for this case. This means that Romania will wait at first, and then join the victorious party “with its one million soldiers”, to deal the death blow to the defeated, thereby taking either Transylvania or Bessarabia. Newspapers here more or less openly print this daily, the people declare it everywhere as do the officer corps, deputies and ministers think so as does Cotroceni, where one day the main role will not be played by men. I do not find the aforementioned policy to be honest, or very reliable for others, but **from a Romanian point of view** I cannot consider it foolish or unfavourable.[...] The logic of this policy is far too pervasive and too clear to be removed from peoples’ minds, and last years memories, of when this policy prevailed, can not simply be erased.”*<sup>34</sup>

From a historical perspective, Czernin's assessments about the significance of a policy of neutrality which Romania would adopt in the event of an Austro-Russian war seem to be groundless. The expectant Romanian army, in this case, could not be determined to wait for a favourable time to take action, with one side or another of the warring camps, depending on which way the balance would tilt once the military forces engaged in combat. Without going into details, we only emphasize the idea that the possible neutrality, which Czernin suggested when he drafted the report to Berchtold, could not be justified in such a “pragmatic” manner. He himself stated that in the case of the outbreak of a European war, in which Austria-Hungary and Russia would evidently take part, Romania's decision must take account of the mood of public opinion, which was hostile towards the Dual Monarchy. Therefore, any expectation of the Romanian army could be justified only for completely different reasons than those related to waiting for predictions of the result, in which case the Romanian army would enter the battle alongside the strongest belligerent. In addition, Czernin’s assessments show a total misunderstanding of the meaning of the conditional neutrality policy Romania adopted during the “Balkan crisis”, until its entry into the war against Bulgaria. As for the assertion that *“Romanian politics are in fact disingenuous”* we can only observe that Ottokar Czernin contradicted himself, since the Austrian minister, accredited in Bucharest, had received clear warning from King Carol himself that in event of war Romania will not side with Austria-Hungary, which determined him to admonish Vienna that the treaty of alliance between the two countries is merely a *“scrap of paper”*.

For this reason, Czernin noted that his mission aimed at keeping Romania in the Triple Alliance was impossible to meet. Czernin clearly explained to Berchtold: *“Your Excellency expresses belief that with <<tireless perseverance and calm>>, I would be able <<to obtain Romania’s sincere accession, as openly as possible, to the Triple Alliance>>, because, as your Excellency argues, this accession is in the interest of Romania, because it is the only policy <<able to protect the full independence of Romania and to spare the country from external threats.>> [...] If Your Excellency were here only eight days in my place, you would be convinced of the impossibility of the task that Your Excellency has entrusted me with”*.<sup>35</sup>

Because this attitude, contrary to that of the chief diplomat of Ballplatz, could have resulted in withdrawal from his post, Czernin added: *“I am too imbued with a sense of*

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 424-425.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 424-425.

*discipline not to comply with all of Your Excellency's provisions and orders as long as I maintain this post. But it is contrary to my entire thread of being, if I pretend to Your Excellency that I consider the potential success of an action that I am convinced has none. I am too imbued by the seriousness of my assignment to be convinced to report even the slightest alteration of my own convictions [...] But I could never bear to be required in time to blame myself for peril I did not anticipate on time*".<sup>36</sup>

Even efforts that Berlin would make in this respect, Czernin, as we saw, deemed them if not useless, at least inefficient. Basically, Czernin concludes that Romania is lost to the Triple Alliance. Therefore, in his extensive report to Berchtold, he did not even propose a solution to overcome the impasse reached in Romania's relations with Austria-Hungary. However, he suggests that such a solution could be found in Budapest, as he noted: *"Our tactics here had to change when the Hungarian-Romanian negotiations failed. Until then there was hope that the current pro-Austrian attitude would dominate and we would be able to dismantle anti-Austrian elements. And if - as many people think, **but not me** - the whole question of Transylvania was only a pretext, a screen hiding the King and his advisers, behind which they could lead another policy, then, if this screen was removed, they would end up in a situation we could have exploited for ourselves. This favorable situation was not created, the understanding beyond the mountains failed and, mathematically, since that day, began anti-Austrian demonstrations, in theater, the League (League of Culture - author's note), in the press and on the street. The liberal party, which was never courageous to begin with and was always at odds with what we stand for, lost its courage entirely when it began observing that the public opinion started leaning towards an anti-Austrian, or rather, anti-Hungarian orientation."*<sup>37</sup>.

The trend of Romanian foreign policy shifting towards the Entente was not known only in Vienna<sup>38</sup> and Berlin<sup>39</sup>. Gradually, the entire European diplomatic world noted this reality, as was also widely debated in the press. Significantly, it seems, in this regard, the report dated March 25 / April 7, 1914 from the Minister of Belgium in Berlin, Baron Beyens, to J. Davignon, Minister of Foreign Affairs: *"Lately, media and politics in Berlin are concerned over Romania and **the new orientation of its foreign policy** (author's underlining). It has been discussed whether Romania will completely abandon the Triple Alliance camp to join the Entente or rather French-Russian alliance. [...] **The Balkan War** - stated the Belgian diplomat - **toppled the structure of Romanian foreign policy and modified its alliance system** (author's underlining). [...] Today, the Liberal government is in power in Bucharest for some time longer and is, in all likelihood, led by the Bratianu brothers. Their education and ideas that formed the basis of their political formation does not bring them closer to Germany. Their liberalism sooner resembles French radicalism. They completed their higher education in France. This does not necessarily mean they were influenced by the Republican government. They are, above all, Romanians of the most uncompromising nature, the most hostile to foreign interference, regardless of which side it comes. It is known perfectly in Berlin. Her, in Wilhelmstrasse it is expected, as far as I could tell, that **Romania, under the direction of the Bratianus and with consent from the King, disappointed by the Austrian friendship, will resume full freedom of action in its free hand policy and to become more of***

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 425-426.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 425-426.

<sup>38</sup> Wider perspective in the Archive of Foreign Affairs, Fund 71-1914, E<sub>2</sub>, Part II, Vienna 1914-1924, vol. 24. Political reports from Vienna in 1914 (to be quoted A. F. A.).

<sup>39</sup> For a wider perspective see A.F.A., Fond 71-1914, E<sub>2</sub>, Part II, Berlin, Cairo, Cernăuți, Copenhagen Cristiania, Durazzo, 1914-1924, vol. 9. Political Reports from Berlin, 1914.

**a Balkan power** (author's underlinement)<sup>40</sup>.

New Romanian foreign policy orientation did not lead diplomatic leaders from Ballplatz to abandon the diplomatic battle for Romania, before the Entente, especially as Vienna hoped for an effective intervention in this regard from Berlin in Bucharest. To calm public opinion in Romania, which began to increasingly manifest against the alliance with Austria-Hungary, the Austrian diplomacy took the initiative to publish **the Red Book** (April 1914). Public disclosure of documents contained in the work, carefully selected by Ballplatz, was said to justify the policy to Vienna during the Balkan wars, which suffered much negative coverage in the Austro-Hungarian press. It was an attempt to "restore" the image of the Vienna office within the public opinion, which among other things, would not forgive the fact that the policy promoted by Count Berchtold alienated Romania from Austria-Hungary. In particular, **the Red Book** was intended to persuade the Romanian public opinion of the support that Austria-Hungary gave Romania during the Balkan wars<sup>41</sup>. The Ballplatz diplomacy's "maneuver" had limited effect on public opinion in Austria-Hungary, because the Viennese press printed extensive reviews revealing **the Red Book's** biased character, having failed to convince savvy political analysts<sup>42</sup>. It was no different for public opinion in Romania; the effectiveness of such an action was very low, because, as noted, the real reason for the new Romanian political orientation was Romania's interest in the issue of releasing co-nationals from Transylvania and establishing national unity.<sup>43</sup>

In turn, German diplomacy was concerned with keeping Romania in the Triple Alliance. Maintaining good relations during "the Balkan crisis" and following the Peace Conference in Bucharest, offered Berlin the possibility to take credible measures in Bucharest for this purpose. The German government, Wilhelm II personally, proved to be concerned with improving Romania's relations with Austria-Hungary. Wilhelm II had planned a visit to Bucharest, which he subsequently cancelled, but instead intervened several times in Vienna and Budapest, conscious of the fact that Romania can only be kept in alliance with the Central Powers by improving its relations with the Dual Monarchy. However, for this, favourable actions for the Romanians in Transylvania had to be taken and the Hungarian government's policy of denationalization to be stopped. In this regard, Wilhelm II had several meetings with Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Romania primarily regarding the issue of keeping Romania in the Triple Alliance. During the last of them, at Konopiste on June 13 1914, common landmarks of Germany and Austria-Hungary in South Eastern Europe were established. Among other things, maintaining Romania on the side of the Central Powers had a leading role. Under this plan, both Berlin and Vienna had to take action in Budapest in order to influence the Hungarian government to improve the situation of Romanians in Transylvania. It is significant that Archduke Franz Ferdinand, having said that Tisza is in fact guilty of the state of relations between Romania and the Triple Alliance, asked the Emperor Wilhelm

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<sup>40</sup> For a wider perspective see *A.F.A.*, Fond 71-1914, E<sub>2</sub>, Part II, Berlin, Cairo, Cernăuți, Copenhagen Cristiania, Durazzo, 1914-1924, vol. 9. Political Reports from Berlin, 1914.

<sup>41</sup> Diplomacy in Vienna in May had initiatives with that same purpose previously, but proved to be inefficient. In regards to this connection the pressures the Ballplatz had made for the Titu Maiorescu government, to whom he had acted upon, so that the Green Book may not be in the list of documents that may have tarnished the "allied" image of Austria-Hungary (See *C.H.N.A.*, Fund Royal House, file 65/1913, f. 1-6). Also, the request made by Ottokar Czernin to the former prime-minister Titu Maiorescu to hold a speech in parliament at the end of his term in office, in which to "interpret a once open and genuine <revision>" so as to leave "a statement to his austrofile thinking". Czernin desire had been fulfilled "in the most loyal way". (*1918 for Romanians*, p. 391).

<sup>42</sup> Articles to be seen "Neue Freie Presse" (29 April 1914) and "Die Zeit" (7, 8 and 9 May 1914). *A.F.A.*, Fund 71-1914, E<sub>2</sub>, Part a II-a, Vienna, 1914-1924, vol. 24. Political reports from Vienna. 1914, f. 15-20; 24-33.

<sup>43</sup> V. Vesa, *Romania and France at the beginning of the XXth Century (1900-1916). Pages of Diplomatic History*, Publisher Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1975, p. 53.

II to instruct the German Ambassador in Vienna, Tschirschki, that whenever he has the opportunity to meet Tisza to repeat the sentence: "*Sir, think about the Romanians!*"<sup>44</sup>.

In conclusion, during the period between the Peace of Bucharest, in August 1913, and the international crisis of July 1914, which would lead to the outbreak of World War I, the Austro-Hungarian and German diplomats had a very little influence in Bucharest. The Romanian public's hostile opinion regarding Austria-Hungary essentially contributed to this due, in most part, to the Hungarian government's policy towards Romanians in Transylvania. As a result of the insufficient coordination of diplomatic action taken by the Vienna and Berlin governments, the new foreign policy orientation of the I.C. Bratianu government, the tense state of relations between Romania and Austria-Hungary created a fertile ground for Entente action in order to attract Romania.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55; V. Cristian, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

