

THRONES – BETWEEN DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES AND POLITICAL INTERESTS. ROMANIAN-BULGARIAN PROJECTS OF DYNASTIC MARRIAGES, 1921–1926

ТРОНОВЕ – МЕЖДУ ДИПЛОМАТИЧЕСКИТЕ СТРАТЕГИИ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИТЕ ИНТЕРЕСИ. РУМЪНСКО-БЪЛГАРСКИ ПРОЕКТИ ЗА ДИНАСТИЧЕСКИ БРАКОВЕ, 1921–1926 г.

Изследването ни се основава на три проекта за династичен брак между представители на царските фамилии на Румъния и България за периода между 1921 и 1926 г., като краят на последния на практика идва през 1930 г. Става въпрос за уговарянето на брак между принцесите Мариоара или Илеана и цар Борис III.

Фактът, че двете страни не успели да постигнат съгласие при договарянето, само доказва, че макар и географски близки, Румъния и България били две страни, чиито основни интереси не съвпадали: България винаги предявявала териториални претенции към Румъния, Гърция и Сърбохърватското славянско кралство, докато Румъния съобразявала външната си политика с близостта си до регионални съюзи като например Малката Антанта. И последно, но не и по важност, като причина за пропадането на преговорите за сключване на гореспоменатия брак може да бъде посочено и ориентирането на България към лагера на ревизионистите – факт, потвърден и от брака на цар Борис с принцеса Джована Савойска на 25 октомври 1930 г.

Ключови думи: Румъния, България, външна политика, регионални съюзи, династичен брак и външна политика.

The Offensive of the Romanian Royal House in the European Policies in the First Inter War Years

Romania represented, after 1918, the most important vector in the South-East, given the territorial and international by right situation extremely circles favourable, as well as the extraordinary view, in the political, diplomatic and media of the Royal family, induced especially by the actions and charisma of Queen Maria (Pakula 2003; Gauthier 2004). For any Bulgarian main decision factor, the net disadvantaged situation of the dynasty in Sofia was obvious. Also the placing in two different political European arenas of the two members of the royalty, contributed to this, because, if King Ferdinand of Romania chose, in 1916, to join the war against Germany and the implicit exclusion from the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen family, Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria decided to stay, till the end, beside Kaiser Wilhelm II¹.

In the first years after the peace settlements established in 1919–1920, due to the direct political involvement of Queen Maria, Romania dynastic relationships with the Royal Families of Greece (Tudorancea 2007: 145-152) and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom. Under these circumstances, a *marriage* or even a *dynastic alliance* with Bulgaria, in case the Bulgarian Royal House had been expelled, would have solved the territorial disagreements as well as those of strategic nature².

In Romania's case, the dynastic alliance was a subject discussed in the political circles, taking into consideration the proposals which came on behalf of Hungary's leaders, who were thinking of a solution, having Ferdinand as King³, but also on behalf of Poland that regarded Prince Nicolae as an opportunity after the death of Marshal Józef Piłsudski⁴. Although from Sofia, the intentions were aimed at a *dynastic marriage* – by means of which Tsar Boris would have remained on the throne, without implying in a political sense the Royal House of Romania, while the dynastic alliance meant the abdication of the young Tsar Boris III and, implicitly, it meant giving up the Saxe-Coburg and Gotha dynasty. Under the given political situation, the aim of the leaders from the South of Danube was an obvious one: to find a way out of the international isolation for Bulgaria by means of a *dynastic marriage* with one of the Romanian Princesses.

Boris and Marioara: A Marriage Gained by Aleksandar Karageorgević. Romanian Dynastic Plans of Consolidating the Little Entente(1921–1922)

Immediately after consolidating his power on an internal level, Aleksandar Stamboliiski set out an ample diplomatic campaign intending to find a way out from isolation for the country. In his attempt, he obtained the approval and officially visited Romania, during January 9–13, 1921. In Bucharest he managed to meet important political factors, such as the Peasant Party leaders, the President of the Council of Ministers, General Alexandru Averescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Take Ionescu and last but not least King Ferdinand and Queen Maria (Jordan 1985: 103-115).

The visit at Pelișor (Sinaia), on January 11, 1921, was not at all an accidental one, but, moreover, it proposed extremely ambitious objectives. The arguments are put at hand by Constantin Argetoianu who, in his memoirs, describes the meeting and reports how, at a certain moment, “while he was chewing, the tall bulky man (Stamboliiski) squeaked the chair and turned towards Queen Maria and told her something”. After a moment's hesitation, Nicolae Mișu⁵, one of Romania's oldest experienced officials, Minister in London, collaborator of Liberal Prime Minister I. I. C. Brătianu and member of the Romania's delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris, being present as translator at this meeting, said in French: „His Excellence admires Princess Mignon (Marioara) very much and congratulates Your Majesty on having a child like this” (Argetoianu 1996: 193). The Queen answered this remark simply by saying: „he is very polite, very polite” (Argetoianu 1996: 193). If we are to believe the Minister of Internal Affairs of Averescu's government, the words that the Bulgarian high official used were, in fact, out of any pattern: he, “grunting” to Mieiu, continued “you!, ask the harridan (this was the Queen) if she wants to

give away in marriage the fat girl (this was Mignon) to our King... I like her, there is plenty to catch with your hands” (Argetoianu 1996: 193). The original marriage proposal, as presented above had a similar answer on behalf of the Queen. At least from the interpretation made by Nicolae Mișu we bear in mind: “the harridan considers that the fat girl is not for you” (Argetoianu 1996: 193).

The episode in Pelișor, in January 1921, is also mentioned by Queen Maria. She, on the contrary, considered as necessary to stress the primeval and uncivil qualities of her “bulky, strong and broad-shouldered” interlocutor, “you feel his strength immediately, but it is not a pleasant one, a man of an extraordinary energy, a peasant by birth who has the exact manners required in order to be accepted in a saloon” (Maria, Regina României 2006: 23). By reading her diary it could be concluded that the sovereign and the Princess answered the Bulgarian Prime Minister’s “sharp look” only with smiles and not with favourable signs (Maria, Regina României 2006: 23). The Queen insists, in the same text, on the details of this unusual visit, mentioning, for example, some of the flattering considerations of her interlocutor, Stamboliiski insisting that she was “one of the most important statespersons in Romania, if not the most important”. Being a skilled politician and irreproachable diplomat, Maria was not impressed by these flattering observations, which were meant to convince her to sustain the Bulgarian territorial demands which aimed at the exit to Aegean Sea, in Thrace.

Relying on these basic sources, taking into consideration also the diplomatic records we can advance the hypothesis that the Bulgarian Prime Minister’s visit aimed, in essence, at convincing the Romanian Royal family to agree with the idea of marrying one of its daughters to Tsar Boris III. With respect to this, in January 1921, media in Belgrade published some allegations that were to cause “a deep dissatisfaction” within the political circles in Belgrade, according to which Princess Marioara was bound to marry the Tsar Boris of Bulgaria⁶. Stamboliiski’s proposal is argued enough, also by the analysis of the Romanian diplomatic correspondence, which is a new one concerning this subject, several months later.

Romania’s Minister in Paris, Dimitrie I. Ghika, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on October 24, 1921, suppositions according to which the French press published a telegram from Belgrade, which insisted on the marriage of Princess Marioara of Romania with the Bulgaria’s sovereign, event that would have been planned by the Bulgarian Prime Minister during his visit at Pelișor⁷. The text also insists on the fact that the mentioned marriage would have helped Bulgaria’s integration in the international community, at the beginning in the Little Entente, an action supported by the Czechoslovak government⁸.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Take Ionescu, demanded the Romanian Legation in London to deny any news referring to this project after the British press had initiated a similar campaign. The diplomacy’s leader in Bucharest drew Dimitrie I. Ghika’s attention to the fact that a Parisian “Journal”, in November 1, 1921, included allegations about the foreseen marriage and for a better argumentation; there appeared a picture of Princess Marioara beside the Tsar of Bulgaria. Take Ionescu, being faced with this challenging

situation for the diplomatic position of Romania, demanded the denial of all similar news, defining them as “*l’invention ridicule*”⁹. Serbian newspapers informed, based on official statements that King Aleksandar was bound to leave on January 6, 1922 to Sinaia where, together with the Romanian Royal family, he would celebrate Christmas and New Year’s Eve in the Old Orthodox manner and he would also celebrate his engagement with Marioara. According to Belgrade’s “Pravda”, starting with January 5, 1922, “this meeting of the two rulers would eliminate all misunderstandings which came up between Yugoslavia and Romania regarding the Peace Treaty in Paris”¹⁰. The type of disagreement that press in Belgrade made reference to was related to the well known Wilsonian dogma, at the Peace Conference, of Take Ionescu – this claimed the taking over of the entire Banat, appealing to the national self-determination principle, while I. I. C. Brătianu, being more moderate, agreeing with the ideas of the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, was rather trying to reach a compromise in order to come to an agreement. It would be very interesting to notice the fact that, in what concerns the dynastic relationships, both with the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom and with Greece, Take Ionescu’s political plans were respected – *The Little Entente in five* (Ionescu 1921) – and the project of Eleftherios Venizelos which had the same components.

Under the given conditions, on February 20, 1922, at Royal Cotroceni Palace the engagement was celebrated, and on June 8 in Belgrade, the wedding between Princess Marioara and King Aleksandar Karageorgevič took place. This action was one of the so called “marital conquests of the Balkans”. With respect to this, the marriages of Carol and Elena of Greece (Lee 2005: 77–87), in 1921, and the marriage of Elisabeta (daughter of Ferdinand and Maria) with George II of Greece (Gauthier 2004: 132; Pakula 2003: 385–386), in the same year, as well as the discussions upon the reestablishment of the Albanian monarchy where Wilhelm de Wied, the nephew of Queen Elisabeta of Romania (wife of Carol I), was installed as King in 1913¹¹, had been written down previously.

Among the political and diplomatic basic sources about failure of the marriage project between Marioara and Boris we conclude that the reserve of the Royal House which would have been found itself in an extremely delicate situation, considering the dynastic relationship, that had just been established, with the Royal House of Greece, a country towards which Bulgaria had its main territorial demands. Also the role of the officials and Bucharest’s diplomacy was an important one, because they were in an unpleasant situation, considering the fact that there would have been regional implications related, finally, to the entrance of Bulgaria in the Little Entente, a mission that was difficult to achieve taking into consideration the territorial disagreement between Bulgaria and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom.

The political-dynastic score of “the Mother in Law of the Balkans”: the marriage project between Tsar Boris III and Princess Ileana (1923)

Although it was concluded without a positive finalisation, the Romanian-Bulgarian dynastic marriage project was valid, a proof of this being the starting off of a second

attempt in 1923, under different international and internal political conditions, but having the same aims.

Compared to the context of 1921, in Sofia, Stamboliiski's government had been replaced by that of Aleksandăr Tsankov, as a result of the coup d'état that took place on June 9, 1923 and of the assassination of the Agrarian leader, also in Bucharest as head of the government was no longer General Averescu, but the Liberal Ion I. C. Brătianu. At an international level, Bulgaria did not manage to get through the previous crisis, while Romania succeeded in consolidating both its strategic position in the relationships established with the Great Powers, within the Little Entente and its position within the Balkan dynasties.

Analyzing closely the political changes on the Romanian side, the media in Vienna and Prague, that we consider to be, above all, the best informed in the Central and South-East Europe during the Inter War period, were allocating an important space to the possible marriage between Boris and Ileana. Quoting the information picked from the press, the Minister of Romania in Prague, Constantin Hiott, underlined the insistent circulation of the rumour regarding the future relationship of Princess Ileana and the Tsar of Bulgaria, adding that "King Boris leaves soon for this purpose"¹². Also this time, as in 1921, the answer of the Romanian representatives in Bucharest was prompt, but it was less determined than in the previous situation, only replying that "the news is inexact"¹³. After only one day, on June 22, 1923, a similar note was recorded on behalf of the Minister of Romania in Vienna, Ioan Mitilineu, who noticed, not without being surprised, the special interest for this marriage in the Austrian political circles. Also in this case, the wording "inexact news" was reused, and the information had to be denied only "verbally"¹⁴.

Everything that happened, as it has been described above, was analyzed attentively at Sturdza Palace, the headquarter of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic actions that followed entitle us to state that the press reports, often denied immediately by Bucharest, were based on first hand information very close to the Royal Palace. Moreover, it can be focused argument a report from Sofia, of the Legation's holder, Constantin Langa-Rășcanu, from September 8, 1923, according to which the Bulgarian Minister in Bucharest, Ivan Ficev, had a long meeting with the new head of government, Aleksandăr Tsankov, at the end of which the Prime Minister would have demanded negotiations to happen faster regarding the signing of the agreement concerning the ending of the Romanian-Bulgarian litigations (that were left after the First World War) and, alike, the establishment of some tight and trustful relationships between the two states¹⁵. These political premises, Tsankov agreed, would have been absolutely necessary in order to revive discussions regarding a marriage between Tsar Boris III and Princess Ileana. Langa-Rășcanu insisted, in his report, on the fact that this matrimonial relationship was "warmly wished in the political circles"¹⁶, for this purpose the government in Sofia organizing an official visit of the Tsar to many European capitals, among which Bucharest, occasion that would have given him the opportunity to meet the influential Romanian Royal Family.

Also this time, the Bulgarian sovereign did not succeed in visiting Bucharest, as Tsankov wanted, this was not accomplished mainly due to the refusal of the Romanian part, whose attitude was not favourable to the collaboration with the new government. We also notice, with respect to this, the existence of some commentaries within the diplomatic circles, at the beginning of 1924, about possible princely Romanian-Italian marriages – Prince Nicolae and Princess Mafalda (daughter of King Victor Emanuel III) or Princess Ileana and the Heir Prince Umberto – which aimed at occupying the vacant throne of Albania¹⁷.

The obvious failure of the second project required a reevaluation of its objectives and strategies, under totally different political conditions, in 1926. We are sure that, behind this there were – as during 1921–1923 – the same personalities who had also promoted and established the institution of “the Mother in Law of the Balkans” for Queen Maria¹⁸: the sovereign herself, Ion I. C. Brătianu and I. G. Duca. Although it seemed out of date, after three years in which the Romanian Royal House was confronted with the problems caused by the fact that Carol gave up the throne (the event on January 4, 1926) and King Ferdinand’s agony, in Bucharest the marriage of Princess Ileana was becoming a very popular subject. Under these circumstances, in June 1926, the Bulgarian media announced the possible marriage of Boris with Giovanna di Savoia, the daughter of King Victor Emanuel III of Italy¹⁹. Certainly, this marriage was seen in Sofia as a victory taking into consideration Italy’s ascendance on the international politics. On the other hand, the Fascist diplomacy was trying to gain a strategic influence in Bulgaria and in the Balkans, while by doing so it would have consolidated the Bulgarian throne, the fears expressed by the anti-Yugoslavian and anti-Romanian circles being put at ease.

Synthesizing the analysis of the Romanian-Bulgarian relationships in the first Inter War decade, based on a possible dynastic marriage between Tsar Boris and one of the Princesses in Bucharest, we are entitled to declare that the above mentioned projects, in the three stages – 1921, 1923, 1926 were part of some political processes, minutely prepared by the diplomats of the two countries. If for Bulgaria the objective to follow was clear – the stepping out from the international isolation created by the failure of the First World War, Romania refused systematically to enter this type of combination, which would have damaged its relationships with Greece and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom. These reasons did not impede Romania to give the impression that it became interested in this immediately after the Romanian dynasty’s situation had been damaged by the renounce of throne of Carol, on January 4, 1926 and the death of King Ferdinand on July 20, 1927.

The fact that the two Royal Houses did not reach a consensus whose result to be a dynastic marriage, proves that, although being geographically close, Romania and Bulgaria were two countries whose major political interests did not converge: Bulgaria was expressing continuously its revisionist claims towards Romania, Greece and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, while Romania was organizing its foreign policy depending on the affiliation to the regional organizations, especially the Little Entente. Last but not least,

among the failure's sources we can establish Bulgaria's orientation towards the revisionist camp, phenomenon confirmed also by the marriage of Tsar Boris with Princess Giovanna di Savoia, on October 25, 1930.

NOTES

¹ For more details regarding Bulgaria's situation after the First World War see Lamouche 1923; Logio 1936; Pavlov, Danev, Cain 2002.

² A generous perspective in analysis: Citirigă 2007: 201–222.

³ Information regarding the dynastic alliance projects is also to be found in the diplomatic Romanian archives which are very little known. For example, see Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, București (Archive of the Foreign Affairs Ministry – still A.M.A.E.), fond 71/1914 E2 partea a II-a, vol. 26, pp. 80-90. Also see Chiper 1992; as a basic source about the Romanian-Hungarian alliance also see Petrescu-Comnen 1992; Petrescu-Comnen 2005; Buchet 1999: 29–31.

⁴ In this sense, Florin, Citirigă 2009: 171–190; Florin 2006: 19–32; Enescu 1991: 152.

⁵ A complete biography at Cain 2007.

⁶ Jordan 1999: 38. It is interesting to underline the fact that Belgrade, during 1919–1921, represented an important centre of creating and publishing information, more or less real, referring to the Romanian Royal family and mainly related to the marriage of King Aleksandar to Princess Marioara, on one hand, and the pressures that the issue of Banat represented. In this way, the first information referring to the dynastic alliance between Romania and Hungary appeared in Belgrade, within the political and diplomatic circles, they were republished in the officious „Politika” (on September 22, 1919)–A.M.A.E., fond 71/1914 E2 partea a II-a, vol. 26, p. 90, telegram 456/23.09.1919 from Constantin Langa-Rășcanu, extraordinary envoy and plenipotentiary Minister in Belgrade, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and „Demokracja”, on September 18, 1919; Ibid, p. 90; telegram 431/19.09.1919. Also in Belgrade, in June 1919, news was spread by the Greek press according to which Heir Prince Carol had committed suicide (A.M.A.E., fond 71/1900-1919 RS, vol. 110, p. 67, telegram 350 dated 12.06.1919 from N.N. Filodor, extraordinary envoy and plenipotentiary Minister in Athens, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

⁷ A.M.A.E., fond 71/1920-1944 Dosare speciale, vol. 57, p. 1.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. p. 3. It is interesting that, also in the Autumn of 1921, news, according to which the Hungarian Prime Minister, Béthlen István, gave a presentation of a two variants project – a tripartite confederation between Romania, Transylvania and Hungary or a personal alliance (under King Ferdinand or one of his sons) – ideas that Take Ionescu considered to be unreal and ephemeral, were spread within the Romanian political circles. In this respect, supposing that the new rumours which had their origin in Budapest, aimed at the recently settled Little Entente, as in the case of the rumours concerning Marioara's marriage to Boris, Bucharest adopted an unusually firm position, considering the statements as being “an absolute forgery”. „Universul”, December 4, 1921, apud Petrescu-Comnen 1992: 160.

¹⁰ A.M.A.E., fond 71/1920-1944 Dosare speciale, vol. 57, p. 20.

¹¹ For more details see Florin 1994: 487-494.

¹² A.M.A.E., fond 71/1920-1944 Dosare speciale, vol. 64, p. 1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Jordan 1985: 101. Queen Maria aimed at a consortium in order to rival the Habsburg one. With respect to this, during a dialogue with a contemporary biographer – Mabel Potter Daggett, she declared that “she won’t marry Ileana to anyking if she does not love him”, adding that “the princess who do not have a throne to offer Ileana, do not have to ask her hand anymore”. – cf. Pakula 2003: 398.

¹⁸ During a private discussion, Queen Maria told I. G. Duca, “I am in a very good mood, maybe it does me good to be called the Mother in Law of the Balkans”. – cf. Pakula 2003: 398–399.

¹⁹ A. M. A. E., fond 71/1920–1944 Bulgaria, vol. 48, p. 36.

SOURCES

Argetoianu 1996: Argetoianu, C. Memorii. Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri, vol. VI, 1919–1922. București.

Buchet 1999: Buchet, C. Proiecte de uniune dinastică româno-maghiară. – Magazin istoric, no. 11 (392), November.

Cain 2007: Cain, D. Un trimis al Majestății Sale, Nicolae Mișu. București.

Chiper 1992: Chiper, I. Proiectul unirii coroanei României și a Ungariei. – Expres Magazin, no. 6 (80), February 12–19.

Citirig 2007: Citirigă, D. Tronuri între strategii diplomatice și interese politice. Proiecte româno-bulgare de căsătorii dinastice. – In: F. Anghel, M. Cojoc, M. Tiță (coord.). Români și bulgari. Provocările unei vecinătăți. București.

Enescu 1991: Enescu, M. F. Principele Nicolae. Încercare de portret veridic. – In: Prințul Nicolae de Hohenzollern. În umbra coroanei României. Ed. by G. Buzatu. Iași.

Florin 1994: Florin, A. Influențe românești în Albania prințului Wilhelm de Wied, 7 martie-3 septembrie 1914. – Revista istorică, no. 5-6, tom V.

Florin 2006: Florin A. Guvernul N. Iorga și un proiect româno-polon de uniune dinastică, 1931–1932. – In: Nicolae Iorga. 1871–1940. Studii și documente. Coord. C. Bușe. Vol. II. București.

Florin Citirigă, 2009: Florin, A., D. Citirigă. Fighting the Odds: Dynastic Projects of the Romanian Monarchy during the Interwar. – In: Porfirio Sanz Camaño, Jesus Garcia Molero coord. De las Monarquias autoritarias a la Democracia (siglos XIV–XX)/De la monarhia autoritară la democrație (secolele XIV–XX). Târgoviște.

Gauthier 2004: Gauthier, G. Acvile și lei. O istorie a monarhiilor balcanice din 1817 până în 1974. București.

Gauthier 2004: Gauthier, G. Missy. Regina României. București.

Ionescu 1921: Ionescu, T. Mica Înțelegere. București.

Jordan 1985: Jordan, C. De l’histoire des relations roumano-bulgares: Aleksandăr Stamboliiski à Bucarest. – In : Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie, A. D. Xenopol. Iași, XXII, 1.

Jordan 1999: Jordan, C. România și relațiile internaționale din Sud-Estul european: probleme ale păcii, securității și cooperării 1919–1924. București.

Lamouche 1923: Lamouche, L. La Bulgarie. Paris.

- Lee 2005:** Lee, A. G. Regina-mamă Elena a României. București.
- Logio 1936:** Logio, G. Bulgaria – Past and Present. Manchester.
- Maria, Regina României 2006:** Maria, Regina României. Însemnări zilnice, vol. III. București.
- Pakula 2003:** Pakula, H. Ultima romantică- Viața reginei Maria a României. București.
- Pavlov, Danev, Cain 2002:** Pavlov, P., I. Danev, D. Cain. Istoria Bulgariei. București.
- Tudorancea, 2007: Tudorancea, R. Le double mariage dynastique helléno-roumain (février-mars 1921). “Historical Yearbook”, Bucharest, IV.
- Petrescu-Comnen 1992:** Petrescu-Comnen, N. Campania românească din 1919 din Ungaria. Amintiri și documente inedite. – Revista Istorică, no. 5-6.
- Petrescu, Zamfir (eds.) 2005:** O primă experiență comunistă în Ungaria. Ed. by N. Petrescu, G. Zamfir. București.