

Summary

In the Middle Ages the succession to the throne was governed by the elective-hereditary principle and the lifelong principle, because the lords were chosen by the boyars, the higher clergy and the wealthy townsmen among the descendants of the former lords. Unfortunately, the democratic character of the institution of lord's electivity at Romanians did not prevented the production of harmful results, caused by the endless civil wars initiated by the ambitions of the direct competitors to the throne, as well as by the secondary ambitions of the factions and conspirators who supported one another or another candidate hoping to accede to power if the one supported by them triumphed. As a result, the political assassinations and the permanent interference of the neighbor Great Powers in the country's affairs for supporting certain pretenders has significantly reduced the rights and power of voivods, fact which has effectively weakened the two Principalities.

Within this mechanism, the role of the Ottoman Porte was the most destructive because the replacement of lords at almost every three years made for every new lordship to become a new concession made to the suzerain power, the lordship being sold at the auction: the one that offered the most was preferred. The system of arbitrary intervention of the Ottoman Porte for appointing and dethroning the lords was generalized along with the institution of the Phanariot regime. Moreover, besides the fact that they were appointed and revoked directly by the Ottoman Porte, the Phanariot lords were hired in the Ottoman administrative hierarchy. However, immediately after the institution of the Phanariot regime, Romanians have tried to repossess with the help of the Court of Vienna the ancient rights of Moldavia and Wallachia, which had been trenced in the course of time by the Ottoman Porte: native lords, chosen for life by the boyars and the country's clergy, as well as the limitation of Turkish intrusions in the political life of the country.

In return, along with the defeats of the Ottoman armies by the tsarist troops, Russia has obtained the right, in agreement with the Sublime Porte, to impose four royal families as candidates at the throne of Principalities. All these aspects have significantly contributed to the restriction of the Romanian Lands' autonomy, in the prejudice of the suzerain and protective power.

At the same time, the need of balance between the Great Powers was also materialized through the circulation of certain foreign projects which were alien to the immediate grievances of Romanians, through which it was proposed the union of the Danubian Principalities in a buffer state which – for the most part – was designated with the name of kingdom. At the head of the new state,

the former lords were to be replaced by a monarch originating from the European royal families and who would usually have the title of king or duke.

In return, during the Revolution of 1848 it was asserted more firmly the desire of union of all Romanians in one kingdom, empire or republic of Dacia. However, the idea of restoring Dacia in the form of kingdom, empire or even republic did not necessarily meant – in the view of 1848's – the constitution of a modern form of government, different from the medieval lordship, but –in particular –the realization of a national and independent state which would comprise all Romanians. As a result, the rank of the new state should underline more the envisioned territorial extension of the former Principalities to the entire territory inhabited by Romanians, rather than designate the revolutionaries' choice for a certain form of ruling. In fact, regarding the form of government of the state, the options of the heads of the Revolution in Romanian Lands were not well-established, so that the references to this problem are few and, very often, contradictory. Therefore, in the three programmatic documents which contain practical provisions for this subject, the revolutionaries of the 1848's were attributing the ruling of the new state to a prince originating from a foreign dynasty or to a native lord who would be elected among all the levels of the society or only among the ones "that enjoyed political rights".

Only in the favorable political context created by the Crimean War, the Romanian political people have tried and have succeeded in internationalizing the Romanian problem. As a result, the Romanian's fight focused on the problem of Union as well as on the choice of Principalities' form of government, connecting both desiderata to the solution of the Eastern Question, through the creation of an independent kingdom, under the ruling of a prince from a foreign dynasty at the Danube Mouths who would be able to stop the tsarist expansionist politics.

In this context, the National Party has militated in the country as well as abroad in favor of the union and a foreign prince, chosen from a European royal family. As a result, the European public opinion, as well as some diplomatic representatives of the Great Powers recognized the necessity of the Principalities' union under the ruling of a foreign prince as being the expression of the country's most passionate desire. This fact was proved by the decisions of the Ad-hoc divans from Bucharest and Iași (October 1857), through which Romanians have asked, among others, "The Union of the Principalities in a single state with the name of Romania" and "Hereditary foreign lord, chosen from the European ruling dynasties, whose heir should be raised in the country's religion".

However, the problem of the foreign prince was considered a mandatory obligation for the

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stability, power and prestige of the new state. As a result, it is easy to understand why the National Party did not give up the idea of a foreign prince not even after the provisions of the Paris Convention were made known. In spite of the hostile provisions of the Convention's decisions, Romanians have tried to obtain by their own means at least a part of what Europe had refused. As such, they concentrated their actions on the creation of a national state, through the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as lord of the two Principalities, leaving open the problem of the state's form of government desired by the representatives of the National Party.

In this situation, the introduction of a foreign prince from a European monarchic family and the kingdom's proclamation should have been solved in a future favorable internal and international political context, because only a foreign prince could guarantee obtaining the union and the independence. As such, despite the opposition of the Great Powers to accomplish these grievances, they remained Romanians' most important objective, being recognized by Al. I. Cuza, as well as by the other members of the National Party.

Eventually, after the realization of the deed accomplished at January 24th 1859, the internal political situation proved that without the resolution of the above-mentioned desideratum, the future of the Principalities became uncertain. As such, starting with 1864 the lord as well as the representatives of the "monstrous coalition" has started the undertakings for bringing a foreign prince. This was possible after the palace coup from February 11th /23rd 1866 when, after an intense diplomatic activity, the governing circles from Bucharest have succeeded in accomplishing the desideratum of the National Party from the period following the Revolution of 1821, the institution of constitutional monarchy governed by a foreign prince from a European royal family.

However, the idea of the creation of a kingdom was always maintained and was mentioned, directly or indirectly, in declarations or documents along with the idea of independence, because it would be abnormal to imagine an enterprise for obtaining such a title for a state under suzerainty.

The accession of a Hohenzollern to the throne of the country was an additional motivation. We notice even since 1866 the existence of a preoccupation for the choice of the official title, "Highness" or "Serene Highness", which would represent the most worthily the prince and which would consolidate the country's international status.

Between 1866-1877, even if there succeeded many governments, radical or moderate, conservatory or liberal, the problem of independence remained alive. Only the approach methods were different, the one of the "accomplished deed" or the one of the political-diplomatic treaties.

On this background also appears the problem of the kingdom's proclamation and there existed some significant moments, as the ones from 1868, 1870, 1873 and 1877, when it was tried to approach the moment, the failure being caused by the oscillation of international relations in a way which was adverse to us.

Subsequently, between 1878 and 1881, it was passed to the stage of practical political-diplomatic actions with the purpose to introduce the royalty in Romania.

The first great success was the adoption of the title "Royal Highness" for Carol at 9th /21st September 1878, after the moment when, because of the opposition of Austria and Russia, the kingdom could not be proclaimed, although it would have been a logical consequence after obtaining the independence. However, the title of "Royal Highness" drew us near this ideal. Practically, at that moment, in 1878, Austria-Hungary obtained a deferment for the accomplishment of this Romanian plan.

The government considered the solution a favorable compromise because it should impose to a hostile parliament the ratification of the Treaty of Berlin, therefore it was opportune in order to consolidate its position, to be successful in the kingdoms' problem. Then, the compliance with the Austria's requirements was a wise action because Russia represented a continuous threat. Last but not least, the acceptance by the powers of a gradual change of Carol's title, created a precedent for the subsequent attempt to proclaim him king. At the same time, for Romanian diplomats, the undertakings for the international recognition of the title of "Royal Highness" were a good opportunity to test the limits proposed by the great powers, and possibly, to grasp the type of obstacles that were to be met. Because Romania suddenly passed from "ecstasy" to "agony", from the victories on the front to territorial imputations and the recognition of independence in humiliating conditions, the Romanian political people should find solutions for the reassertion of national politics. Consequently, the base of new undertakings became exactly the acceptance of a new appellation as well as the right to send or receive plenipotentiary ministers.

The return of Boerescu at External Affairs was a beneficial one because after his diplomatic tour from 1879, there were made important steps in the problem of succession, which was honorably controlled at the end of the year 1880, with the approval of the emperor Wilhelm and through the change of family letters, Ferdinand becoming the new heir.

The proclamation deed was prepared in a few important steps among which is enumerated the conferment of the title of "Royal Highness" for Carol, in 1878, the testing of the great cabinets

in 1880 or the regulation of the succession to the throne, completed at the end of the same year. At the same time, the deed was accomplished in very unfavorable conditions.

Germany set itself up as proponent but it always reminded us that “the road to Berlin passes through Vienna” and whose objectives we were advised to be taken into account. Precisely this fact proved to be extremely difficult to be observed because Austria has firmly conditioned the recognition of the royal title to the concession in the “Danubian question”. Therefore, even if our political people have carried out multiples undertakings through Ion Bălăceanu in Vienna or through I. C. Brătianu and V. Boerescu in Bucharest, in the conditions of maintaining the intransigence of the Bicephalous Monarchy, there was outlined more and more clearly the necessity of the kingdom’s proclamation in the form of an “accomplished deed”.

The completion of the deed is connected to the context of assassination of the tsar Alexander II, at March 1st /13th 1881, and of the institution of a state of confusion immediately after it happened, fact which left Romanians the possibility of maneuver.

The internal events connected to the rhythmical interpellations of G. Vernescu (March 6th /18th 1881), respectively, Titu Maiorescu (March 13th /25th 1881) were the necessary impulse which determined the government to prepare the proclamation, by advancing many times the date initially proposed (May 10th /22nd; April 8th /20th ; March 22nd /April 3rd), the initiative being suddenly imposed on March 14th/26th in an atmosphere of enthusiasm in the Chambers which, in the following days, has come over the entire population of Romania.

The recognition of the new state was realized relatively quickly, in ten days, but there were not absent the conditions imposed by Russia and accepted, for political reasons, by Germany and Austria-Hungary.

It is also interesting the fact that the rise of Romania at the rank of kingdom brought back to the fore a re-evaluation of the international reports. Germany supported us in order to make us slide towards its politics and in order to ensure for Austria-Hungary a safety at its southern border and at the Danube in particular in front of the pan-slavism extension. But it also sympathetic to the conditions imposed by Russia in order to recognize our kingdom, fact which proves an approach to the latter in the desire to “cut” France’s way towards a possible partner. Then there could be obtained the collaboration in the problems of the Orient and against certain revolutionary tendencies.

The Kingdom of Romania did not mean something “larger” from the point of view of

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borders, but “more” within the international relations. It was a title much better defined in the diplomatic documents of the time, a status which expressed more stability, a natural consequence of gaining the independence by a state with this surface and number of inhabitants and the attribute of heredity cancelled definitively the wish of other candidates to accede to the throne.

The new rank determines the Romanian political people to have more firm positions towards the interferences of Austria-Hungary, in the Joint Commission or the “customs war”, advancing until the “freeze” of relations for approximately one month, at the end of the year 1881.

In addition, the Kingdom of Romania did not cease to be a kingdom of Daco-Romanians, the authorities from Bucharest being involved, in the first place, in the cultural support and on the territory of political interventions also, of the Transylvanians, Bukovinians and even of the “Koutsovlachs”, therefore outlining a firmer national politics.

We also notice that after the proclamation of the kingdom and coronation, the political concern for the Royal House did not cease, but on the contrary. There were even cases around Romania as, for instance in Bulgaria and in Serbia, where the sovereigns had more serious problems in maintaining their throne and in ensuring a stable political life for their states. The Romanian political peoples have succeeded in consolidating the kingdom’s position through a series of laws and opportune decisions. Therefore, the reinforcement of the status of Kingdom of Romania was firstly realized through a series of measures with symbolic value, namely: introduction of the currency “Romanian Crown”, adoption, in the diplomatic documents of the appellation „Votre Majesté” (“Your Majesty”) for king Carol, introduction of the official denomination of Kingdom of Romania in the Constitution revised in 1884, change of the blazon through the appearance of the royal steel crown above the pavilion, issuance of a new coin of 5 lei with the mention of the royal title and with the engraving of the new blazon of the country. The Law of the Crown’s Domain, adopted in 1884 consolidated the financial position of the Royal House, but also brings an extension of its international prestige, emphasizing the position of equal between the other kingdoms on the continent. Although it has been voted in a rather tensed situation, in time, it has been noticed that the administration of the domain was involved in the forest development, their rational exploitation, in the restoration of certain old churches, of school buildings or, most of all, in their equipment and, very often, if there were demands, it has taken action in other territories than the ones it was in charge with.

On the other hand, the regulation of the succession in the manner established through the letter exchange between the princes of Hohenzollern in 1880 was achieved in the years 1889-1890,

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through the settlement in the country of the heir apparent, Ferdinand and through the establishment of his marriage with Marie of Edinburgh. In this way there were set up the bases of the appearance of a stable national dynasty in discrepancy with the political situation around the Romanian borders. The reinforcement of the kingdom had beneficial consequences in the following years, Romania being recognized as a pole of stability and even of power in the South-East of Europe and having a rhythmical development at the internal level.

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